UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

Creating Spaces for Dialogue: Participatory Action Research in Free Humanities Programs in Canada

by

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance, a thesis entitled "Creating Spaces for Dialogue: Participatory Action Research in Free Humanities Programs in Canada" submitted by Laurie Meredith in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Abstract

Using a Participatory Action Research (PAR) methodology, directors of Free Humanities programs collaborated to research, act and reflect on the challenges and rewards of Clemente-inspired programs in Canada, which acknowledged a rupture from Earl Shorris' *Clemente Course in the Humanities* but had yet to fully expound their similarities and differences. Identifying common critical issues they experience – from finding sustained funding to responding to academic and other pressing student needs, directors shared approximately one year of dialogue and reflections and presented collectively in a workshop panel at St. Thomas University's International Liberal Arts Conference in Fredericton, New Brunswick, September 30 – October 2, 2010. While the programs acknowledge and to some degree lessen the economic and social barriers of their students, the programs themselves contend with many of these same barriers in the struggle to sustain free humanities courses.

As the directors continue to collaborate, we identify the core ethical concerns from within. This is a community researching itself and participating in an educational social movement. *Creating Spaces for Dialogue* is a participatory action research study into how and why we do what we do. It is an opportunity for learning collaboratively, reflecting on the links between theory and practice, and then communicating what we learn about the pedagogical and philosophical underpinnings of the Canadian programs. As educators, the spirituality of our practice comes through not only in what we teach but the way that we teach; it enters into the 'why' and the 'how' in the process of what we do. As conscientious educators, we have to be aware of our praxis and reflect on how our practice informs theory and vice versa because what we believe about people is

manifested in and through our relationships, our dialogue. Intuitively and analytically, each program has been developing its own approaches to engaging participants in dialogue. This dissertation focuses on analysing an intuitive ethic of care that directors of Canadian Free Humanities programs have been infusing into their work. Findings include ways that directors of these programs are well positioned to extend their collaborative research from discourse to social action.

Key words: ethics of care, dialogical learning, Participatory Action Research (PAR), community development, adult education, critical pedagogy.

Preface

In 1995, Earl Shorris, a New York journalist and social critic, started a radical movement to offer humanities courses to disenfranchised citizens at the Roberto Clemente family guidance centre in Lower Manhattan (Shorris, 2000). Using the Socratic method, the course model has come to be known as "*The Clemente Course in the Humanities*" and now has a core curriculum and affiliation with Bard College, with Clemente trademarked programs throughout the United States (www.clemente.bard.edu). Iterations of the Clemente-like courses exist in Mexico, Australia, and even the Sudan (Shorris, 2000). In Canada, nine known programs operate independent of Shorris' organisation, yet all have acknowledged drawing inspiration from the Clemente program (Radical Humanities Conference, 2008).

In Calgary, at the *Radical Humanities: Coast to Coast Symposium* in the fall of 2008, participants recognized the Canadian trend to remain inspired by Earl Shorris' *Clemente Course in the Humanities* while modifying program delivery to the unique needs and offerings of the local populations and environments. Yet, as varied as they may be, at the core of these Clemente-inspired Canadian programs remains a desire to communicate the liberating richness of the humanities in stark contrast to the forces of poverty. Since the symposium, no formalized dialogue group had been established to connect the Canadian programs; but the desire to connect remained among directors.

The meanings that people bring to and draw from these varied interpretations of Clemente-inspired programs make for a rich qualitative research project in social education because the premise of these courses is to partake in dialogue for the express purpose of increasing individual public engagement – the *vita activa* (Shorris, 2000). The

natural complexity of this basic dialogical premise includes the interpretation of *how* to put in motion and sustain the activity of *dialogue*. Part of the design process of the "Clemente-inspired" programs is to create a space that fosters an environment safe enough for instructors and students to engage in meaningful dialogue.

Although the desire to dialogue may be strong, the ability to sustain it remains challenging under the constrained circumstances of the great majority of the programs. Ironically, while the programs acknowledge and to some degree lessen the economic and social barriers of their students, the programs themselves contend with many of these same barriers in the struggle to sustain free humanities courses. Drawing from my theoretical studies, my response to these programs – that believe in the transformational power of reflection for their students – was to put into action the very practice of reflection and public engagement.

Acknowledgements

Creating Spaces for Dialogue: Participatory Action Research in Free Humanities Programs in Canada involved the energy, passion, and critical attention of many people who practice a strong ethic of care. This doctoral work moved beyond conventional and traditional form to explicitly engage participants in Participatory Action Research (PAR), a non-traditional methodology that intentionally includes multiple opportunities for participants to collaborate throughout the research, action, and reflection processes. I thank the participants of this study who took the risk to engage with me in this research and continue to carry our culture of research forward: To the directors and co-ordinators of Free Humanities Programs in Canada, my colleagues who have become co-researchers and friends; Mary Lu Redden, Margot Leigh Butler, Becky Cory, Joanne Muzak, Doug West, Anne McDonagh, Jill Zmud, and Mark Blackell.

Throughout our research, the participants acknowledged the depth and breadth of inspiration and learning that we are privileged to share with program participants: To the participants of free humanities programs in Canada, and, in particular, to the participants of *Humanities 101: An Odyssey* and *Community Learning in the Humanities*; to Dr. Paul Papin, who continues to renew and strengthen our shared commitment to *Community Learning in the Humanities*, and to his family who miss him on Wednesday nights.

Continuous support and encouragement to pursue PAR for this doctoral work came from Stasha Huntingford, whose own personal ethics is matched with her academic strengths and social activism. I look forward to our dialogues as she pursues her PhD.

While it may appear that serendipity has played an enormous role in my life throughout the last four years, I acknowledge three people who have been integral to the completion of this thesis: To the supportive and "tough, loving, critical" members of my committee; Drs. David C. Jones, Pat Tarr, and Sandra Wilde. In particular, Dr. Pat Tarr has been a guiding force since the beginning of this journey – even before the conceptualization of this study, and I thank her for supporting me along with my intention to bring the rich early childhood educational philosophy of Reggio Emilia into the field of Adult Education.

And to Jennifer Grimm, the friend I am proud to call my sister.

Dedication

To my inner circle:

To my daughter, Mary, who strengthens my “image of the child” daily;

To my parents, Don and Sharon, who continue to provide and exemplify “attentive love;”

To my brother, Mike, who demonstrates that a position of privilege can be congruent with an ethic of care.

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Knowledge without action is useless, and action without knowledge is dangerous.

Sathya Sai Baba. (Quoted in Jones, 2008, p. 67)

What I finally decided, after three or four years of reading and studying and trying to figure this thing out, was that the way to do something was to start doing it and learn from it. That's when I first understood that you don't have to look for a model, you don't get the answers from a book. You look for a *process* through which you can learn, read and learn. I was conscious at that time – slowly became conscious because I had all this academic background, you see – that the way you really learn is to start something and learn as you go along. You don't have to know it in advance because if you know it in advance you kill it by clamping this down on the people you're dealing with. Then you can't learn from the situation, can't learn from the people.

Myles Horton, *We Make the Road by Walking*

Prologue

Metaphor of Constellations

> *Education may be thought of as a constellation of encounters, both planned and unplanned, that promote growth through the acquisition of knowledge, skills, understanding, and appreciation.* (Noddings, 2002, p. 283)

I view my own incremental understanding of an ethic of care as a constellation. When I imagine a night sky filled with stars, I see some stars shine brightly in the forefront; others, barely visible to the naked eye, I detect hanging in the background but don't yet discern them. As I trace patterns of constellations and try to describe them to a friend, it does not necessarily matter which star I point to first because it is the composite I am outlining that matters in the end. Perhaps my friend has already seen the constellation or can expand it by connecting to another bright star. My field of vision may be obscured by a cloud and then suddenly clear, making the connections possible. As a group of friends convene, we may all be using the same star but in a different pattern, expanding and contracting our understandings as meanings shift.

When I read a pattern in the night sky, I am prepared to look for familiar shapes and be open to new ones – whoever might point them out to me:

> Not surprisingly, practitioners of PAR [Participatory Action Research] currently engage a range of theoretical sources including feminism, poststructuralism, Marxism and critical theory as they take shape through pragmatic psychology, critical thinking, practices of democracy, liberationist thought, humanist and transpersonal psychology, constructionist theory, systems thinking, critical race theory and complexity theory. (Kindon, Pain, & Kesby, 2007, p. 13)

My understanding of an ethic of care starts with developing my 'Relational Self' and is much like trying to make meanings out of the constellations in the sky. I have relied on many "guides," some of whom have identified the same "big stars." When I read that Paulo Freire of Brazil listed Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky as one of his most influential guides (Horton & Freire, 1990), the connection I had already made to Reggio Emilia philosophy was reinforced knowing that the principal Reggio founder, Loris Malaguzzi, also drew from, amongst many, Vygotsky (Malaguzzi, 1998). Cluster constellations surround Nel Noddings (2002; 2003; 2005), Maxine Greene (1973; 1978) and Hannah Arendt (1998; 2003), who all pointed me to Kant's 'transcendental subject' and the ensuing existential theorists like Simone de Beauvoir, Jean-Paul Sartre and Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1948/2008), who debated the fear and freedom of the problematic 'autonomous self.' Studying the Brazilian's struggle for freedom, Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (2009) addressed the problem through the Subject's 'conscientization;' and Henry Giroux (1988; 2005; 2010) and fellow critical pedagogue bell hooks (1994; 2000; 2003; 2006; 2010) took up Freire's term and contextualized it to the United States.

Efforts to liberate "Selves" from objectivity stretch from early childhood educators to adult education pedagogues, from many points around the globe. Loris Malaguzzi literally brought the children to paint with easels in the *piazza* (town square) to physically and symbolically demonstrate their creative abilities as well as their place in public life (1998), just as Myles Horton advocated for civil rights by educating poor southerners at his Highlander school, where Rosa Parks attended just months before refusing to give up her seat to a white man on the bus in Montgomery (Bell, Gaventa, &

Peters, 1990, p.xxiv). The sources of their inspiration and praxis came as much from theory and vision, as from the very people they engaged with on a daily basis; as Horton said;

> I think of my grandfather, who was an illiterate mountaineer and who had a good mind, although he couldn't write his name. He used to say, "Son you're talking about all these ideas, and you got your wagon hitched to a star, but you can't haul anything in it that's not down on earth." I know you have to have it hitched to the star, and he did too, but it's also got to be down on earth where something practical can be done. You have to tie the practical with the visionary. (Horton & Freire, 1990, pp. 176-177)

In my field of vision are pedagogues who have filled their wagons with praxis – a way of being in the world, committed to "reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it" (Freire, 2009, p.51).

In creating the dialogue space for Canadian directors of Free Humanities programs, I have met more bright stars. The interdisciplinarity of these remarkable guides continues to expand and deepen my belief that the way to develop an ethic of care is to attend first to the 'Self' and keep revisiting it, as Freire says;

> Then when I meet some books – I say "meet" because some books are like persons – when I meet some books, I remake my practice theoretically. I become better able to understand the theory inside of my action. (Horton & Freire, 1990, p.36)

Or as spiritual guru Sathya Sai Baba says;

> Learning all about external things without knowing your real self is like studying the branches of a tree, ignoring its roots. There are many fruits on the tree. We can see the fruits. What happens if you water those fruits? They will fall down. But if you water the roots down below, the tree flourishes and will give fruits which can be enjoyed. You have to develop self-knowledge and self-confidence and then only can you help others. (as quoted in Jones, 2008, p. 25)

Through bell hooks' candid exploration of her self-actualization (1994; 2000; 2003; 2010), David C. Jones' shared dialogue of his 'higher self' (2005; 2009), and Sathya Sai Baba's wisdom to 'self-realization' (Drucker, 1993), I continue to explore the spiritual concepts of 'real self,' 'true self,' an 'ideal self,' 'habitual self,' 'authentic self,' and 'self-actualization.' These many "bright stars" in my night sky, regardless of religious orientation, all recognize the place to start an ethic of care:

> First, SELF; then help; improve yourself, teach yourself, reconstruct yourself, and then proceed to solve the problems of others. That reconstruction is quite easy, provided you inquire calmly into your own personality. (Sathya Sai Baba quoted in Jones, 2008, p. 22)

Central to the pedagogies of Freire, hooks, Giroux, Horton, Malaguzzi, Arendt, Noddings, Greene, Rinaldi, Dahlberg, Moss and Pence (to name a few "bright stars") is the kind of dialogic learning that views participants as Subjects encountering their own constellations. Also in my field of vision are the people who I care for and those who care for me. People who continue to teach me *first what it means to be cared for, then to care for intimate others*, so that I may respond with ability and an ethic of care. They are my family and friends, close colleagues and neighbours; people who make up my "inner

circle" are, arguably, participating more in transforming my world, keeping my wagon down on earth.

We are developing an ethic of 'Self' care for dialogic learning contexts. Listen. Love. Engage.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Understanding ourselves and our society demands a capacity to look in and look out, forward and back (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). It is inherently risky because of its unsettling nature. Through the study of the humanities there is a meeting of the abstract and the tangible; the reason, the emotion, and the spiritual; fiction and non-fiction. At its best, the humanities can serve as such a powerful reflection of ourselves that we are prompted to examine our truths and consciously act to live meaningful lives – perhaps necessitating and urging personal or social change.

I believe that the humanities help us delve into the essential questions of life. What is the meaning of life? What is the meaning of *my* life? Who am *I*? Who are *you*? Who am I to you? What kind of person do I want to be? What kind of world do I *live in*? What kind of world do I *want* to live in? What happens when I die? The questions are universal and timeless. At some point, even as children, we become aware of our own *ego* and our own mortality. But then what do we do with that awareness?

These transformational questions can be explored through the humanities (in the traditional disciplines of literature, philosophy, history, art, and music), analysed through critical pedagogy, and fully realized through spiritual reflection and engagement. As sage Sathya Sai Baba says, "Spirituality implies recognition of the true Self, and self-realization is simply acknowledging and living the life of that Self" (Jones, 2008, p. 17). As educators, the spirituality of our practice comes through not only in what we teach but the way that we teach; it enters into the 'why' and the 'how' in the process of *what we do*: "Educators must never forget that our task is to contribute to the development of fully

human beings, not merely to provide productive workers for the national economy" (Noddings, 2006, p. 218-219). In this spirit, popular education movements in the last century have contributed to making full citizens of students, such as Myles Horton's *Highlander Centre* in the United States and Paulo Freire's *Recife Popular Culture Movement* in Brazil. In their 'talking book' (a recorded dialogue), Freire says;

> What fascinates me in reading good books is to find the moment in which the book makes it possible for me or helps me to better my understanding of reality, of concreteness. In other words, for me the reading of books is important to the extent that the books give me a certain theoretical instrument with which I can make the reality more clear vis-à-vis myself, you see. This is the relationship that I try to establish between *reading words and reading the world*. (Horton & Freire, 1990)

In this same relational spirit, studying the humanities opens up a space to discuss, reflect, and write about what it means to be human in the world.

Reflection and Self-awareness through the Humanities

The famous statement from Socrates has remained pertinent over the ages: "The unexamined life is not a fit life for man" (Shorris, 2000, p.7). Through the humanities, the great thinkers, writers, and artists can draw us all back to Socrates' challenge, whether we want to confront it or not. For example, Tolstoy's Ivan Ilyich reveals how he evades the challenge:

> In the depths of his soul Ivan Ilyich knew that he was dying, but he could not get used to the idea, and, more than that, he simply did not and could not take it in.
>
> All his life the example of a syllogism he had learned in Kiesewetter's logic – Caius is a man; men are mortal; therefore Caius is mortal – seemed to him to be correct only in relation to Caius and in no way to himself. There was Caius the man, man in general, and that was quite fair – but he was not Caius and not man in general. He was always quite, quite different from all other beings. (Tolstoy, 2004, p. 36-37).

As long as Ivan distances himself from his mortality – by climbing the social ladder and accumulating material wealth, he contrives to distract himself from examining the meaning of his life. Eventually, we see that Ivan is tormented not so much by his imminent death as by his conscience. The life he lived – the aristocratic life of privilege, *sans regard* to the true meaning of life – was not right:

> – everything said one thing to him: "Not the right thing. Everything you once lived by and now live by is a lie, a fraud, hiding life and death from you." And as soon as he thought that, his gall rose and with the gall agonizing physical suffering and with the suffering the knowledge of inevitable, imminent death. (p. 57)

While Ivan's internal suffering manifests itself as physical illness (brought on by an absurd accident in his quest to decorate his living room), Tolstoy's reader can choose to

view Ivan's death (and so-called life) *vis à vis* his/her own mortality or to refute it as Ivan once denied relating himself to the truth of Caius' syllogism.

The first time I read Tolstoy's novella, *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*, was in a university humanities class – but it was no ordinary class. Following our individual reading of *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*, we discussed suffering, life, death, class struggles, and our individual interpretations to our *raison d'être*. Our instructor challenged us on our assumptions about class, truth, and social values; we challenged each other more or less directly to examine our meaning of life. We had only been in class together a few short weeks, yet some felt comfortable enough to share parts of their existential crisis in large group discussion; others chatted one-on-one or in smaller groups. Some had faced these big life questions because of health scares, depression, divorce, addictions, or for less cataclysmic reasons. It would be presumptuous on my part to assume our discussion around Tolstoy's novella trumped any one student's previous encounter with existential thoughts and beliefs. What became increasingly apparent was that we all had our personal story to relate to the text and to the dialogue in play. There was an intersection of multiple narratives – our own, as well as Tolstoy's. We were reading Tolstoy and learning about ourselves and each other.

It was not my first humanities class, this one with Tolstoy; and I already knew of the power of narrative and allegory to illicit personal responses, maybe even transformation – I expected it of my classmates and of myself. By 25 years of age, I already had a Bachelor of Arts in English Literature and a Master of Arts in French Literature; I came from the privileged middle-class and from a family that valued a liberal arts education. Now at 34 years of age, with a bit of life experience in hand (but by

no means all of life's experiences), I sat in a university classroom ready to re-examine this life of privilege – the one which allows for the space to reflect on my understanding of life's meaning through the powerful catalyst of literature, art, philosophy, music, and history.

But as I said, it was not an ordinary university class. In this class, I was the director of a program that offered free university courses to low-income people, who otherwise would not have the financial means to take a university humanities course. My classmates included students, tutors, mentors, and a social worker; each had their personal story and reasons for being there. Some had histories of addictions, abuse, mental or physical illness; some had previous post-secondary experience, in Canada and/or abroad; all had a desire to learn.

Origins of "Clemente-inspired" Programs: Earl Shorris' *Clemente Course in the Humanities*

Earl Shorris, a New York journalist and social critic who had interviewed hundreds of poor Americans, initiated a free humanities course for the poor at the Roberto Clemente Family Guidance Center in 1995. Believing that Socrates "was the first to exemplify the connection between the political world and the humanities" (2000, p. 5), Shorris organised his program using the "Socratic method" with the aim to show poor, disenfranchised Americans the way to the *vita activa* – the engaged life of citizenship.

His opening remarks to the first cohort of students speak directly to his belief that knowing the humanities makes a difference in life and not knowing the humanities contributes to class inequalities:

> "You've been cheated," I said. "Rich people learn the humanities; you didn't. The humanities are a foundation for getting along in the world, for thinking, for learning to reflect on the world instead of just reacting to whatever force is turned against you. I think the humanities are one of the ways to become political, and I don't mean political in the sense of voting in an election, but political in the broad sense: The way Pericles, a man who lived in ancient Athens, used the word 'politics' to mean activity with other people at every level, from the family to the neighborhood to the broader community to the city/state in which he lived.
>
> "Rich people know politics in that sense. They know how to negotiate instead of using force. They know how to use politics to get along, to get power. It doesn't mean rich people are good and poor people are bad. It simply means that rich people know a more effect method for living in this society.
>
> "Do all rich people or people who are in the middle know the humanities? Not a chance. But some do. And it helps. It helps to live better and enjoy life more. Will the humanities make you rich? Yes, absolutely. But not in terms of money. In terms of life." (Shorris, 2000, p. 127)

His premise remains that by providing access to the riches of the humanities, poor people enter a more reflective space that leads them to the *vita activa,* the life of engaged citizenship in the Socratic sense.

In his book, *Riches for the Poor: The Clemente Course in the Humanities*, Shorris describes the rationale for his program; the first year of the course; his vision of the curriculum; and subsequent iterations of it in different parts of the world (2000). While he concedes to errors and refinements, he feels that the basis of the program remains the same:

> The end remains to bring the students into the public world, to take them from the isolation of poverty to the political life of citizens. The means is still to use the Socratic method to teach the humanities at the university level in a form that integrates the disciplines. (p. 118)

Since the first course in 1995, Shorris' program has gained permanency through Bard College, New York, and institutions can choose to affiliate their programs with the now named "*Bard College Clemente Course in the Humanities*" (www.clemente.bard.edu). However, not all programs have chosen to affiliate formally with Bard College. Programs following a similar philosophical vein to Shorris' *Clemente Course in the Humanities*, but not connected organizationally, I referred to initially as "Clemente-inspired" but as our story of the Canadian programs unfolds it will become apparent why the language shifts to "Free Humanities Programs."

Free Humanities Programs in Canada

At the onset of this research, Canada currently had nine programs inspired by "*The Clemente Course in the Humanities*." Each iteration has its own unique interpretation to program delivery, but all seek to provide disadvantaged adult learners access to significant texts, ideas, professors and classroom dialogue. None of the programs are linked directly with Shorris' Bard Course, but acknowledge its inspiration directly or indirectly.

Programs in Canada stretch from coast to coast; Vancouver, Victoria, Nanaimo, Edmonton, Calgary, Thunder Bay, Toronto, Ottawa, and Halifax. As new as the Canadian programs are (Vancouver's being the oldest one at thirteen years old), already their histories are little known and risk being lost. Another history that is at risk of being lost is the first gathering of Canadian Clemente-inspired programs – the stories of the participants of the Radical Humanities National Symposium.

In the fall of 2008, the University of Calgary hosted the first national symposium of Clemente-inspired programs, organized by Drs. Janet Groen and Tara Hyland-Russell who were studying the transformational effects of the humanities programs on students (Groen & Hyland-Russell, 2006). Participants included directors, students, instructors and academics. Many of the directors present at the 2008 symposium urged a continued dialogue following this rich encounter, but no sustained dialogue and certainly no collaborative dialogue had continued amongst directors. No academic research had been conducted on the experience of the directors, either.

I participated in the conference as a graduate student in Dr. Janet Groen's University of Calgary online course that was created around the *Radical Humanities: A*

coast to coast symposium. It included University of Calgary graduate students from across Canada who met over the three day event (October 3-5, 2008). Collectively, we took notes on break-out sessions, which were later compiled and distributed to the symposium participants (I refer to it as, "*RH sumposium summary_think tank & next steps*").

Significantly, during the symposium, representatives of Toronto's *University in the Community* called attention to the Workers Education Association's historical role in providing adult education to workers in marginalized settings in Canada. This commentary seemed to echo the sentiments of many participants (personal notes from symposium); while there was much appreciation for Earl Shorris' *Clemente Course* and the momentum of the community programs springing up, participants identified a number of historical sources of inspiration. While giving his keynote address, Shorris suggested the need to adhere to the *Bard Course in the Humanities* curriculum and program (which was gaining trademark status around that time); however, the Canadian programs resisted the push to be formally aligned with Shorris' program (RH sumposium summary notes_think tank and next steps, 2008). Participants argued the value of incorporating feminist, indigenous and generally more post-modern perspectives into the curriculum. Some pointed out the importance of resisting the patriarchal history of the "Canon." Discussions also arose about the use of the Socratic Method and the trend to steer away from the traditional didactic tool towards community learning methods from critical pedagogy.

Groen and Hyland-Russell's research contribution was significant in bringing together the Clemente-inspired programs and exposing the philosophy of the programs to

the academic and public forum, but much more work was needed to tease out the differences and similarities that began to be exposed during the symposium. For the most part programs were working very much in isolation because each one had its own origin story, was funded separately, and had its own governance structure.

As participants of the 2008 Radical Humanities symposium discussed possible next steps, many supported a Canadian web-based structure to maintain contact:

> If some sort of web presence was developed, four content areas were suggested:
>
> - Administration of Program – what works and what doesn't
> - Students and Alumni – areas to meet, discuss, stay connected
> - Courses and Public Programs
> - Programs – philosophies and what they are all about.
>
> (RH sumposium summary notes_think tank and next steps, 2008)

The desire to communicate came from within the community; however, since the symposium, no such formal structure had been developed even though the need for dialogue and connection remained.

When I became the program director of *Humanities 101: An Odyssey* in June 2009, I had the opportunity to reconnect to this informal Canadian network of programs because I had already met or knew of many of the directors. I discussed with them informally, one-on-one, their experiences of running these complex and challenging programs, which helped me navigate the logistics of the fall 2009 program start-up, but no forum had been established to sustain group dialogue. We did identify to each other

how important it was to stay connected to help support and learn from each other because of our unique programs and contexts.

Conception of the Study: Creating Spaces for Dialogue

> *Intuition implies the act of grasping the meaning, significance, or structure of a problem or situation without explicit reliance on the analytic apparatus of one's craft.* (Bruner, 1969, p. 60)

My doctoral research and community work found synergy when I took the director position of *Humanities 101: An Odyssey* in June 2009, but it was not until the fall of 2009 that I acted on an opportunity for a collaborative research project. The fiscal agent of *Humanities 101: An Odyssey* was St. Mary's University College (STMU), so the program was housed on the STMU campus where I had an office. As early as July 9, I received a forwarded email from my new colleague, Dr. Julia Murphy (anthropologist and *Humanities 101: An Odyssey* instructor), which announced St. Thomas University's *International Conference on the Liberal Arts* in Fredericton, New Brunswick. The title of the conference, *Looking Back and Moving Forward: The Next 100 Years of Liberal Arts – Confronting the Challenge*, caught my colleagues' attention, as did the description:

> Internationalization, corporatization, the impoverishment/diminishment of government funding, and legacies of religious involvement are among the challenges that are having an impact on Liberal Arts education. Such realities challenge the autonomy, accountability and perhaps even the integrity of Liberal Arts education. The focus of this conference is multidisciplinary; it will be of particular interest to faculty, students, and universities with a strong Liberal Arts component.

The conference came to my attention again, through an internal St. Mary's University College memo. With four months of experience as a director at that point, I thought of the "Clemente-inspired" programs which are likewise, if not more so, challenged to prove their worth and constantly on the verge of losing funding. Because the humanities and liberal arts (I will use these terms interchangeably) do not fall neatly into quantitative valuation, describing the value of critical thinking, existential questioning, and self-reflection is an ongoing challenge in the context of colleges and universities that are increasingly pressured to supply the labour market. Small community-based initiatives or marginalized programs like ours also feel the pressures of funders, who want to see the "results" – the measureable outcomes – of money "invested" in "the poor." If the liberal arts in general are concerned about being pushed to the margins, our programs have even more to be concerned about – and, therefore, perhaps more to contribute to the discussion about the value of the humanities and the critical thinking they support. Intuitively, it occurred to me that this conference could be the opportunity to launch the Canadian programs into the focussed discussion we desired and at the same time extend our knowledge and relationships to the larger academic community.

My contribution to this process was to help facilitate the coast to coast dialogue through the establishment of the directors' dialogue forum, knowing that this alone could not fully accomplish all four content goals originally set out by the 2008 symposium participants, but it would initiate a long overdue conversation that needed to be brought into a larger forum. While contributing to the first three areas of content, the directors would take the lead in discussing the fourth point (identifying the program philosophies "and what they are all about,"). I also knew that our discussion would not be

"conclusive:" In fact, it continues to demand intense collaborative reflection and dialogue even beyond my thesis work. From the onset, I viewed the practice of dialogue as a process – one I describe as a dialogic learning relationship.

Having already started to develop collegial relationships with some of the directors, I shared the conference information with some of them and asked if they would be interested in participating in designing and researching with me. Part of the research design included creating a space to develop relationships between participants – getting to know each other's programs as well as the other directors. Each of us has our own philosophical and pedagogical influences from our personal studies and individual lived experience. At the initial stage of directors' dialogue forum, I was not fully aware of the other directors' philosophical and pedagogical viewpoints; but I was in the practice of reflecting on my own lived-experience and identifying the philosophical and pedagogical influences that factor in to *how* and *why* "I do what I do." To initiate our discussion, I could offer my reflections to my colleagues for further discussion and refinement. Each of us has our own personal story that influences our way of being in the world – stories that had yet to be exposed at the onset of this study.

Part of my story was that I was pursuing my PhD in Education while being the director. I made my position explicit to the other directors: I wanted to not only start a conversation with them about how and what we do but also document this process through the academic conventions of a research study that would lead to my PhD thesis, but more importantly to our collective understanding of our programs and each other. I consulted with my supervisor and immediately applied for ethics approval that would link

collaborative research and individual scholarly work, using the following preliminary research design:

> **Methodology:** This research will address the desire of directors of Canadian Clemente-inspired programs to have a sustained dialogue. Five directors have already communicated with me their willingness to partake in an e-dialogue. Our dialogue is set to be hosted on the Radical Humanities: Coast to Coast Symposium website (www.radicalhumanities.ucalgary.ca) within a Blackboard shell – a secure web based discussion board.
>
> Over the course of one year, the directors of Clemente-inspired programs will be invited to collaborate in a sustained e-dialogue on issues that we jointly feel are paramount to the programs. My framework is action research, which gives us an approach to share our voices and experiences in a format that favours research/action/reflection in a cyclical and reflexive way.
>
> Through an e-dialogue and a panel presentation, we will aim to 1) develop meaningful and sustained organisational relationships, 2) deepen our understanding of ourselves and our programs in relation to our academic communities, and 3) expand our experiences to other academics and community agencies.
>
> Many of the participants will be attending a workshop and discussion panel at an International Liberal Arts Conference to be held at St. Thomas University in Fredericton September 30 - October 2, 2010. I am asking other Clemente-inspired Canadian program directors to work collaboratively in 1) an e-dialogue leading up to the conference and after it and 2) a face-to-face focus group dialogue at the conference.
>
> When the directors meet at the conference we will have a face-to-face dialogue and a follow-up reflection through our e-dialogue space over two months following the conference. Reflecting on the conference, the presentation and the effects of sustained dialogue will further clarify our understandings and provide me with the occasion to share my fully developed PhD thesis direction with the contributing participants.
>
> Having e-text to refer to, my discourse analysis [later revised to Participatory Action Research analysis] would be applied following the last series of e-dialogue. This will be the moment for me to compile both the e-text and the in-person reflections for my thesis. Our dialogue will provide not only an opportunity for us to share our experiences in a workshop and paper presentation model at the conference, but also contribute to my PhD research and thesis. In turn, linking the conference with my PhD further embeds the humanities programs deeper into the academic dialogue.

(Meredith, 2009 Ethics Application)

Knowing that each program has a unique approach to delivery of the program, based on local contexts, the purpose of our collaboration was not to standardize the programs. The rationale for creating a collaborative dialogue was to seek greater understanding and deeper meaning, and then to share these perspectives with the academic and broader communities. I considered that it may lead to the creation of a national umbrella organisation for the Canadian programs; but based on the dialogue from the Radical Humanities symposium, the uniqueness of each program would need to be preserved to recognize the diversity of program delivery and the resistance to conformity.

As the directors collaborated in a dialogue forum, our intention was to identify the core ethical concerns from within, as a community researching itself and participating in an educational social movement. *Creating Spaces for Dialogue* is a participatory action research study into how and why Clemente-inspired program directors do what they do. It is an opportunity for learning collaboratively, reflecting on the links between theory and practice, and then sharing what we learn for social change. Of greatest importance and interest to me is sharing and communicating the pedagogical and philosophical underpinnings of the Canadian programs, which acknowledge a rupture from Earl Shorris' *Clemente Course in the Humanities* but have yet to fully expound their similarities and differences. As educators, the spirituality of our practice comes through not only in what we teach but the way that we teach; it enters into the 'why' and the 'how' in the process of what we do. As conscientious educators, we have to be aware of

our praxis and reflect on how our practice informs theory and vice versa because what we believe about people is manifested in and through our relationships, our dialogue.

Anticipated Ethical Tensions

The directors' dialogue was designed as an occasion for directors to share and reflect on their programs with people who understand and can relate to the stories and experiences being told.

> Narrative inquirers, in developing or explaining their work with other researchers, find themselves almost inevitably at the *formalistic inquiry boundary*, as other researchers read through their work for the formalistic terms that apply: a person is a member of a race, a class, a gender, and may be said to have varying degrees of power in any situation. Part of the tension for a narrative inquirer is to acknowledge these truths while holding to a different research agenda. (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 45) (Emphasis mine)

As the director *Humanities 101: An Odyssey*, I was aware of my position of privilege. In the past, I had paid for courses such as the ones being offered; now I was being paid not simply to sit in, but to observe the dynamics of the class and evaluate what the impact of studying the humanities had on the students. In my role as director, I was to report back to my supervisors so that they, in turn, could report to the investors and stake-holders the value of this program that offered free credit courses in the humanities to people who face material and non-material barriers to university. As a student of the humanities, I was already 'converted,' so to speak, over to the humanities. My personal convictions

held to the value of the humanities for reflective purposes, and my position as director required me to evaluate these premises for the purpose of program evaluation, which remain the intellectual property of St. Mary's University College.

Concerns about my dual role of director and PhD student-researcher were addressed. I was treading on ethical boundaries to study a context wherein my position could be viewed as potentially coercive (certainly in the academic tradition). As the director, I would not be mistaken by any of the others in the class as a 'student,' even though I participated as a 'co-learner' who read the texts and contributed to class discussion – a kind of 'participant observer' in this role. As a PhD student, I did not want to be an academic *voyeur* (coming in to a field and extricating knowledge), but my director position of privilege and power could not be dismissed. I considered many qualitative methodological angles (including narrative inquiry, auto-ethnography and ethnomethodology) before settling on Participatory Action Research, which I felt held me to the highest ethical research principles – ones which involve viewing all participants in the study as Subjects (not merely subject matter) who contribute to the entire research process.

Readers will examine my "work for the formalistic terms that apply" and they will anticipate my interpretation of my position of power as researcher. The tension exists between my area of research and my area of work: "[N]arrative inquirers need to reconstruct their own narrative of inquiry histories and to be alert to possible tensions between those narrative histories and the narrative research they undertake" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 46). My studies have led me to this position; and, my work informs what I research; and then my research informs how I work, and ultimately who I am

(becoming). I adhere to a conscientious cycle of research, reflection, and action; therefore, my own subjectivity is under cyclical observation and evaluation. By sharing my personal observations with other directors, I include them in this process that can be visually expressed like the wheels of a clock. Through their participation, the directors also arrive with their own cyclical cycles of reflection, action and research – their own subjectivity.

Creating a Reflective Space for Directors

I recognize the reflexivity of my context. I both inform and am informed by the interaction with the humanities at the level of my studies and my work. Because this raises ethical considerations about researching what I am directing, for the purpose of my PhD research, I intentionally shifted the focus of my research away from the classroom in which I take part as a co-learner 'with privileges' towards a new space in which I take part as a co-learner with other directors of programs such as the one I direct. It was my initiative to ask other directors to join in an electronic dialogue to discuss our programs.

By moving the experience of being a director of a program into another dialogue space, comprised of other program directors, I transgress formalistic inquiry boundaries – purposefully and intentionally. By creating a new space for this dialogue, this new field for observation diminishes some of the power politics (that can potentially occur between a director and the students being directed) but in no way is it less subjective – it is arguably more subjective because we remove an important element of triangulation. That is to say, in the dialogue of directors – who act as sole interpreters of their programs – there is an absence of the students' voices to counter or concur with the directors'

interpretations. This becomes a study of what the directors say they are experiencing, making it a multi-layered interpretive process through which our learning is documented only in part by what is shared in this virtual dialogue.

Examining what we are doing as directors, and being aware of the inter-subjectivity of this exercise, reveals another set of tensions. What the directors share should not be read as absolute "truths" but, rather, can be read as a "narrative" process that invites reflection and action. As Thomas King says, "The truth about stories is that that is all we are;" it is his refrain in his Massey Lectures, *The Truth about Stories: A Native Narrative* (2003). King, at the end of each telling (or retelling) of a story, hands over the story to his reader, challenging us with statements like:

> Take Charm's story, for instance. It's yours. Do with it what you will. Tell it to friends. ... Forget it. But don't say in the years to come that you would have lived your life differently if only you had heard this story.
>
> You've heard it now. (p. 29)

King coyly challenges his reader to take up the story; to be accountable for retelling the story; to partake in the storytelling process; to engage in a very human enterprise – to see us as tied to the story. Suddenly we have been pulled into the story, a boundary has been transgressed; the experience cannot be undone; the story has been lived and now it is up to us to tell it – or not. Herein lies the tension of narrative experience, if and how to interpret the meaning of a lived experience. Whose story is it? What responsibility is there to respond to new stories, new knowledge, and to share it all?

As a concept and as a theory, narratives document us and help us understand ourselves and our world when we choose to take up the challenge to question and search for meaning. Jean Clandinin and Michael Connelly "see individuals as living storied lives on storied landscapes" (2000, p. 24):

> Narrative inquiry is a way of understanding experience. It is a collaboration between researcher and participants, over time, in a place or series of places, and in social interaction with milieus. An inquirer enters this matrix in the midst and progresses in this same spirit, concluding the inquiry still in the midst of living and telling, reliving and retelling, the stories of the experiences that make up people's lives, both individual and social. Simply stated, … narrative inquiry is stories lived and told. (p. 20)

Clandinin and Connelly qualify this matrix as a "*three-dimensional narrative inquiry space*, with temporality along one dimension, the personal and the social along a second dimension, and place along a third" (p. 50); otherwise stated as the *when*, *who*, and *where* of an event (or a process). While I could anticipate directors sharing their own stories as well as their interpretations of the stories they have been told, I could not predict what stories or what interpretations would be shared, nor the transformational effects on the narrators or their audiences. As each inquirer (each director, in this study) enters the matrix, the complexity of the inquiry intensifies and the limitations of the study are revealed. With so many elements in the confluence of this dialogue space (personal and social, temporality, and place), I did not intend to prescribe (impose) or predict the outcomes of the dialogue *a priori*.

In line with the qualitative theoretical framework of critical pedagogy (that resonates with my literary background and serves to structure my way of thinking), the study is both interpretative and participatory. While my PhD dissertation is ultimately my interpretation of the events brought forth in the dialogue group, and while I have been instrumental in constructing the research field, I also incorporated the Participatory Action Research methodology because of 1) its purposeful intention to ensure the voice of the participants be heard in the design phase and through the direction of the study, and 2) the explicit agenda to create social change (Kindon, Pain, & Kesby, 2007):

> Participatory research accepts and embraces the idea that all knowledge is situated, that neutrality is neither possible nor desirable, since we all have some interest or worldview. Research collaboration is rooted in such an awareness, and participants are valued for the array of interests and perspectives they bring to research. Like an increasing number of other social researchers, advocates of PAR question the assumption inherent in research 'as usual' that researchers have the exclusive right to represent respondents. However, they go beyond limited attempts to give the 'other' a 'voice' in academic texts, by recognising participants' ability to represent themselves *throughout* the research process and to help direct that process.... Advocates of PAR make a virtue of sharing and clarifying roles, responsibilities and decision making on an ongoing and reiterative basis. (Manzo & Brightbill, 2007, p.37)

Making meaning of our experiences as directors has been at once a personal and a social (collaborative) process that has taken us forward and backward (temporally) and has

helped us situate our programs (in time and place). Each participant inquirer has brought his/her own worldview and own experience of being a director of a unique humanities program. Ultimately, each director can only represent *their own* subjective interpretation of their program, which is all the more reason for me to guard against speaking for them: "As the principles of participatory research remind us, true participation belongs to those who take part, not those who write about them" (Schneider, 2010, p. 28).

Overview of Chapters

In chapter 2, I explore how I have been moved towards the pedagogical practice of dialogue. My interest in social justice in education began in the field of early childhood education and continues into non-traditional adult education, as the same concerns of *voice*, *legitimacy*, *rights*, and *responsibilities* find common ground in critical pedagogy. An historical glance at education reveals how many teachers have implicitly and/or explicitly participated in silencing young children (Cannella, 2002; James, Jenks & Prout, 2005). To remedy this hegemonic practice, social justice educators have begun to radically change early childhood environments and relationships to foster dialogue between and within the community (Dahlberg et al., 2007; Kessler & Hauser, 2000; Rinaldi, 2007). So, too, in adult education; dialogue is used not only as a tool for sharing ideas, beliefs, values and assumptions, but also to shape and transform social and political landscapes through the reflexive nature of dialogue (Bohm, 1996/2008a, 1996/2008b; Freire, 2009, 1990; Giroux, 1988, 2005, 2010; Greene, 1973 & 1978; hooks, 1984, 1994, 2000, 2003a, 2003b, 2006, 2010) In both the Reggio Emilia early childhood educational philosophy and community-based adult educational philosophy, dialogue is viewed as

essential to interpreting and transforming both the individual and the collective, the social and the political being.

By retracing some of the key literature that resonates with my own worldview, I have begun to identify similarities between the early childhood educational philosophy from Reggio Emilia and the liberatory pedagogies of adult community-based educational programs such as those of Paulo Freire from Brazil and Myles Horton from the United States. Within the field of critical pedagogy is an expanding constellation of connected theorists and practitioners embracing participatory education, such as bell hooks (Gloria Watkins) and Henry Giroux. I recognize that there are many more educational practices that could inform my developing pedagogy of practice, particularly those that include rich, spiritual messages; but these are the community-based educational ideas I have been exposed to the most thus far in my academic journey and for which I will use as points of reference as I critically analyse the Canadian Clemente-inspired programs throughout the dissertation.

Because I draw from the rich philosophical and pedagogical practices of Reggio Emilia educators, I see the possibility of an educational system that honours the voice of children and adults. I see how Earl Shorris values of the humanities for the reflective practice and critical thinking that it can support; but like in Reggio, this requires revisiting the way in which the current educational practices (and necessarily the relationships that play out within that context) get negotiated. *What I believe about learners* – their potential and strengths – is what needs to be made evident through my relationships and practice. This was the praxis to be critically evaluated through this research – as much in the methodological creation of the study as in the research analysis.

How am I facilitating the participation of diverse and multiple voices? The literature review embeds my choice of Participatory Action Research methodology within the context of ethical dialogic learning encounters.

Chapter 3 describes how and why my initial research design favoured participatory strategies. My methodological framework is Participatory Action Research, which gives participants an approach to share our voices and experiences in a format that favours research/action/reflection in a cyclical and reflexive way. My research design offered multiple occasions for this pattern of research/action/reflection to be shared amongst the directors. It also allowed for participants to contribute to the process of the research design, as is customary in PAR. Chapter 3 describes how our research unfolded by using four characteristic PAR techniques (Fals-Borda, 1991); 1) collective research, 2) critical recovery of history, 3) valuing and applying folk culture, and 4) production and diffusion of new knowledge. It also links Reggio's theoretical and practical processes of *progettazione* and *pedagogical documentation* to this study's research design and future potential.

Chapter 4 details the actions we, the directors, took to share our knowledge of the Free Humanities programs in Canada. The structure of this chapter follows the cycle of research, reflection, and action that we undertook to gain greater depth and understanding of our practices and our guiding principles. Significantly, this chapter references the collaborative document that the directors published through the St. Thomas University Liberal Arts online conference proceedings. It also includes the consequent reflections on the document by the participants themselves. The last section of this chapter includes the

process in which a few of the participants created long term action plans for further research collaborations.

Chapter 5 is my analysis of the collaborative process of establishing our Canadian network of Free Humanities programs and our ongoing Participatory Action Research projects. This is also a space to identify the concerns that directors raised about the ethic of care in the programs, including their own Self care. In this section, I identify the significant importance of *Creating Spaces for Dialogue: Participatory Action Research in Free Humanities Programs* and speculate on the prospects of future PAR projects with other participants in this field.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW: ETHICS AND CONTEXTS

This chapter is divided into two parts; the first draws on literature that develops my ethical stance to creating a dialogic learning space through Participatory Action Research; and, the second part describes a website-based, contextual overview of each of the nine Canadian programs offering Free Humanities classes (Vancouver, Victoria, Nanaimo, Calgary, Edmonton, Thunder Bay, Toronto, Ottawa, and Halifax). Intentionally, I present here first the information I collected about these programs and distributed to the participants prior to the data collection that was done collectively and became the main document of this research study, "Stories of dialogue: Collaborative reflections from directors of Free Humanities programs" (Meredith, Roffey-Redden, Cory, Butler, West McDonagh, Blackell, Muzak & Zmud, 2010). In Chapter four, I expose the process of developing our collaborative document and some of the data we generated. And in Chapter five, I return to it to for analysis of our process and data.

Ethics

The philosophical branch of ethics contains numerous long-debated terms that suggest morals, values and norms for "Subjects," but I will limit my discussion here to a very select group of references that help build my position that supports what I consider to be an ethical stance to dialogic learning. I cannot in this space provide a full analysis of the philosophical history of these terms, but will mention where I have drawn my postmodern understanding of them. The discussion draws insights from critical educators

to support an ethical stance to my pedagogical practice of dialogic learning and my choice to use Participatory Action Research (PAR) for my research methodology.

Developing an Ethic of Care through Dialogic Learning

> *Taking a postmodern perspective means that we can no longer fall back on knowledge as universal, unchanging and absolute, but must take responsibility for our own learning and meaning making. Postmodern ethics means each of us, from childhood, must take responsibility for making difficult decisions. We are our own moral agents, bearing responsibility for making – constructing – moral choices.* (Dahlberg et al., 2007, p. 56)

As we feel the effects of postmodern thinking, each of us has to develop the critical capacity to make moral decisions without the backup of some overarching, philosophically rational code (or religion/leader/parent/teacher) telling us what to do. After a moment of 'shock' or 'crisis,' people may experience what Alfred Schutz called "wide-awakeness" of their situational Self: "By the term 'wide-awakeness' we want to denote a plane of consciousness of highest tension originating in *an attitude of full attention to life and its requirements*" (Schutz as quoted in Greene, 1978, p. 163) (Emphasis mine). Wrestling with the inherited malaise of disintegrating rational thought, Maxine Greene warns educators how this awareness of autonomy creates a moment of fear, silence, paralysis, perhaps even revolt because of this "freedom" that imposes new responsibilities on the Self: "He may realize, as never before, that he is responsible for his moral choices, that – with dissonance afflicting him and no one to turn to for a resolution – he is dreadfully free" (1973, p. 183). Greene uses the modal *may*, inviting a discussion around possibility: why is it that not everyone takes up the challenge to

consciously examine his or her subjectivity? The issue becomes one of "responsibility:" Breaking down the etymology of the word forces a discussion of who is *able* to *respond/give response* to the needs of this Self and how. This is an ethical tension that first requires unpacking concepts of "Subject" and "intersubjectivity" in light of who is a Self.

This research draws insights from critical educators to support an ethical stance to pedagogical practices of dialogic learning. The use of PAR aligns with the process of learning and dialogue:

> PAR is an 'orientation to inquiry' which demands methodological innovation if it is to adapt and respond to the needs of specific contexts, research questions or problems, and the relationships between researchers and research participants. PAR also values the processes of research as much as the products, so that its 'success' rests not only on the quality of information generated, but also on the extent to which skills, knowledge and participants' capacities are developed through the research experience. (Kindon et al., 2007, p. 13)

As I connect common ethical points of PAR and critical pedagogy, I develop and deepen my personal understanding of my own *ethic of care*. This is a process that, while informed by theory, requires sincere and vigilant reflection on an ongoing basis because just as a Self is contextual, relational, and dynamic, so are ethics; and, "advocates of PAR cannot assume that they have adequately addressed ethics simply by adopting a participatory approach" (Manzo & Brightbill, 2007, p.36). Since my primary method of research is the use of dialogue, I will attend to the construction of the "Self" because the

development of a strong image of the Subject has implications for the possibility of dialogue as an ethical practice. Then, I will explore dialogue as the possibility of an intersubjective encounter – also exposing the dangers of dialogue in the absence of an ethic of care. I will put into theoretic "dialogue" the ethical strands of PAR and critical pedagogy with Earl Shorris' *Clemente Course in the Humanities*, a program designed to teach the humanities to disenfranchised citizens and modeled after the *Socratic Method* (2000). Finally, I will describe how my understanding and development of an ethic of care serves me in the PAR project with Canadian directors of Free Humanities programs.

From 'Subject-Object' to 'Selves'

Philosophers, psychologists and pedagogues have increasingly challenged the belief that only rational thought can lead to an understanding of oneself, arguing in favour of *being in the world* and *with the world* – embracing and protecting relationships of intersubjectivity. Greene returns to Schutz' concept of "wide-awakeness" to contend with the rupture from positivist structures. She understands how Schutz' position contributes to the Subject's construction of itself, that this

> heightened consciousness and reflectiveness are meaningful only with respect to human projects, human undertakings, not in a withdrawal from the intersubjective world. ... Human beings define themselves by means of their projects and that wide-awakeness contributes to the creation of the self. (Greene, 1978, p. 163)

The relevance of these pedagogies to Earl Shorris' *Clemente Course in the Humanities* lies in the connection to dialogue as a means of increasing reflection and engagement with and in the world.

Shorris touched on this concept in two ways – anecdotally and historically. First, as he researched systemic causes of multi-generational poverty, he met Veniece Walker, an inmate at the Bedford jail. She said,

> "You got to begin with the children … You've got to teach the moral life of downtown to the children. And the way you do that, Earl, is by taking them downtown to plays, museums, concerts, lectures, where they can learn the moral life of downtown … a moral alternative to the street." (Shorris, 2000, p. 97)

Shorris interpreted this suggestion through his knowledge of historical Ancient Greek civilizations. Influenced by his position of privilege and power, Shorris returned to what he knew and valued – education through the humanities. Plays, museums, concerts, lectures are rife with cultural references to how humans live and interpret their world. Veniece Walker understood experientially that access to participate in the myriad interpretations of the world needs to begin early in life. Shorris transposed the message beyond children to all of humanity: "The case for the humanities as a radical antidote to long-term poverty rests finally on the question of who is born human and to what extent a person is capable of enjoying his or her humanity" (2000, p. 115). This is the core ethical concern of viewing a person as a Subject and ensuring an understanding of his or her subjectivity.

Constructivist and constructionist pedagogies share common ground in recognizing that the 'Subject' is a social being; both perspectives agree that pedagogues encourage collaborative learning opportunities. Where they differ is in the *constructionist* view that the Subject should have "the possibility to produce alternative constructions before encountering scientifically accepted constructions" (Dahlberg et al., 2007, p. 55). Simply put, this is a distinction between *acquiring* socially constructed knowledge versus participating in the *constructing* of it. There are also similar implications for the status of the Subject as person: While the *constructionist* perspective would agree that there have been multiple external social forces contributing to the construction of the Subject, the important distinction the constructionists add is their belief that the Subject contributes to its own self-construction.

PAR shares this orientation towards creative and collaborative meaning making, employing such research methods as "dialogue, storytelling and collective action … to explore issues and relationships" (Kindon et al., 2007, p.16). PAR and Reggio practices seem to be in dialogue, agreeing that "the possibility exists to create, then enlarge, a space for critical thinking, for meaning making, for making choices, for taking responsibility, for developing new types of conversations and practices" (Dahlberg et al., 2007, p. 17); "When facilitated appropriately, methods within PAR embody the process of transformative reflexivity in which both researcher and participants reflect on their (mis)understandings and negotiate the meanings of the information generated together" (Kindon, et al., 2007, p. 17). Central to the learning processes is the valuing of *relationships* as much as, if not more, the creation of knowledge. As such, participants in the process are no longer the subject (lower case 's') or 'objects' of the research/study;

rather, they are valued as Subjects in their own right. The teacher/researcher must remain committed to this view or the ethic of care will be compromised.

Pedagogies that stress commitment to participatory relationships all have strong images of the Subjects in the dialogic encounter; Reggio's pedagogy of listening is founded on a strong 'image of the child;' Nel Noddings' attentive love develops from the 'relational Self;' and, bell hooks' engaged critical pedagogy builds on Paulo Freire's 'conscientization' of the Subject. Significantly, all three pedagogies respond to a social, political and personal rupture from a system of power struggle. Likewise, PAR makes explicit that the commitment to the subject/subject relationship requires an authentic Subject participation that *voluntarily* and through *practice* ruptures dominant systems and structures: "This is the essence of participation" (Fals-Borda, 1991, p. 5). Each pedagogy offers an alternative to dominating forces that emboldens participatory and reflexive actions - to listen, love, and engage.

Reggio's 'Image of the Child' in the Pedagogy of Listening

Reggio Emilia is a municipality in Northern Italy, internationally renowned for their rich and ethical early childhood pedagogical theories and practices.[1] Reggio's

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[1] Because the Reggio pedagogues do not want to promote their schools as 'models,' "Reggio-inspired" is a term commonly used to identify a school's philosophical and pedagogical inspiration. Carlina Rinaldi says, "Reggio is a metaphor and a symbolical place. … Reggio is a place of encounter and dialogue" (2007, p. 197).

pedagogy is born out of an intentional will to break from fascist Italian politics after the Second World War (Malaguzzi, 1998);

> Reggio's municipal schools have pursued the aspirations of their founders, whose experience of fascism had 'taught them that people who conformed and obeyed were dangerous, and that in building a new society it was imperative to safeguard and communicate that lesson and maintain a vision of children who can think and act for themselves.' (Dahlberg & Moss, 2007, p. 15)

Reggio Emilia has been changing because of the committed efforts of the early childhood educators who have started with the belief that children are rich and capable, endowed with *a hundred languages* – a metaphor coined by Loris Malaguzzi in his poem, *The Hundred Languages of Children*, to express the richness of possibilities and abilities of children (Edwards, Gandini, & Forman, 1998). In his poem, Malaguzzi describes how adults take away the hundred languages of children through conforming cultural practices (of education, religion, decorum, standardized testing etc.) that limit children's expressions.

By coming into a discussion about learners with the belief that they are born rich, capable and citizens with rights, the onus of how they express their citizenship rests on the kinds of relationships and contexts offered to them:

> The image of the child is above all a cultural (and therefore social and political) convention that makes it possible to recognise (or not) certain qualities and potentials in children, and to construe expectations and contexts that give value to

> such qualities and potentials or, on the contrary, negate them. (Rinaldi, 2007, p. 83)

The way that we create and perpetuate 'the image of the child' can be likened to the way that social and political systems hold onto 'the image of the poor.' Merely replacing the word "child" or "children" with "poor" in the above citation helps see how closely related are the struggles for citizenship for any marginalized group whose voices are not given legitimacy. As Rinaldi points out, the cultural construction of the image of the child conditions not only children but adults. It is *what we believe* about children (or 'women,' or 'the poor,' or 'the immigrants,' etc) that contributes to the perpetuation of social conditions. *What we believe* also determines how that message gets transmitted through relationships, rights, educational contexts, and dialogue.

On the basis of a strong image of the child, Reggio's *pedagogy of listening* draws from Emmanuel Levinas' ethics of an encounter. Levinas

> argues that there is a strong Western philosophical tradition that gives primacy to knowing. Through this will to know, we grasp the other and make the other into the same …. The ethics of an encounter attempts to counter this grasping through respect for the absolute alterity of the Other. (Dahlberg & Moss, 2007, p. 14).

To practice a *pedagogy of listening* requires a strong image of the Subjects in an encounter and an ethic of care that does not seek to transform the Other into the same (Dahlberg & Moss, 2007, p. 15). The lessons to investigate from Reggio pedagogy are not only to listen but *how* to listen and how to overcome the challenges of listening; "listening as an active verb that involves interpretation, giving meaning to the message

and value to those who offer it" (Rinaldi, 2007, p. 65). This lesson applies just as much to an adult education context.

Noddings' 'Relational Self' in Attentive Love

Another contemporary pedagogue that emphasizes an ethic of care is Nel Noddings, who has written at length about the 'Relational Self' (2002; 2003; 2007). She identifies liberalism as a source of contention for developing healthy relations;

> First, liberalism makes a faulty start when it bases its tenets on the mature, rational being; second, its emphasis on freedom creates major dilemmas in how to relate to beings who are not (or are thought not to be) fully rational; and, third, its emphasis on equality, combined with its highly selective definition of self, gives rise to social policies that treat equality as sameness. (2002, p. 70)

In *Starting at Home: Caring and Social Policy* (2002), Noddings constructs an ideal for moral development by using the home as a model of ethical relationships. She makes a deliberate break from discussing the Self as a fully formed rational being by starting with "an ideal" home of caring, relational beings. Her theoretical background draws from a rich array of philosophers, psychologists, and pedagogues, as she blends fiction and non-fiction to describe her care theory: "The basic argument is that people who are directly responsible for the care of others (if they themselves have been adequately cared for) will likely develop a moral orientation that is well described as an ethic of care" (2002, p. 28). The risk, of course, is that people may have experienced 'pathologies' of care and not recognize care from harm and so perpetuate undesirable or unhealthy relationships. An

ideal ethic of care is educative – "learning first what it means to be cared for, then to care for intimate others, and finally to care about those we cannot care for directly" (p. 31). Noddings calls this practice, *attentive love*, and has similar characteristics to the *pedagogy of listening*; "attentive love listens, it is moved, it responds, and it monitors its own action in light of the response of the cared for" (pp.136-37). There is a dialogic relation to be learned that deepens interdependency through care-ful listening not domination or control. An important ethic of self-care is implied in this dialogic relation.

Freire's 'Conscientization' in bell hooks' Engaged Critical Pedagogy

Because of the influence of the popular education programs, a kind of cultural/educational revolution has also been influencing the academic field. Significantly, more effort is made to create a participatory community in classroom settings that value the experience of the students. The image of a professor lecturing to a passive audience is fading – providing that the class is small enough to create a community for dialogue:

> The role of the educator is not to 'fill' the educatee with 'knowledge,' technical or otherwise. It is rather to attempt to move towards a new way of thinking in both educator and educatee, through the dialogical relationships between both. The flow is in both directions. (Freire, 1974, p. 125)

bell hooks writes, "...Working with critical pedagogy based on my understanding of Freire's teaching, I enter the classroom with the assumption that we must build 'community' in order to create a climate of openness and intellectual rigor" (2003, p. 40).

Only then, hooks writes, can teachers give students "the education they deserve and desire" (p. 44). Like Freire, hooks advocates that students must develop "critical consciousness" by becoming participants in, and not mere receivers of, their own education. *Conscientização* is Freire's term that describes the process "by means of which the people, through a true praxis, leave behind the status of objects to assume the status of historical Subjects" (Freire, 2009, p. 160). "Freeing students to interrogate, to resist, to reframe and re-imagine with joy, passion, and ecstasy" (hooks, 1994, p. 8) is the central work of teachers, according to hooks. Education is liberation when it creates voice and critical awareness for students and teachers (Giroux, 1988).

Also drawing from a position of self-awareness and care, hooks uses love to counter domination: "The moment we choose to love we begin to move towards freedom, to act in ways that liberate ourselves and others. That action is the testimony of love as the practice of freedom" (2006, p.250). hooks, who self-identifies as a Black feminist scholar from the South, describes how Freire's work helped to develop her pedagogy that confronts "politics of domination, the impact of racism, sexism, class exploitation and the kind of domestic colonization that takes place in the United States" (1994, p.46). She said, "There was this one sentence of Freire's that became a revolutionary mantra for me: 'We cannot enter the struggle as objects in order later to become subjects'" (1994, p. 46). For hooks, "engaged pedagogy begins with the assumption that we learn best when there is an interactive relationship between student and teacher" (2010, p. 19). It is a pedagogy that requires careful attention to the Self:

> Progressive, holistic education, "engaged pedagogy" is more demanding than conventional critical or feminist pedagogy. For, unlike these two teaching

> practices, it emphasizes well-being. That means that teachers must be actively committed to a process of self-actualization that promotes their own well-being if they are to teach in a manner that empowers students. (hooks, 1994, p. 15)

In all of her writing, she offers her own personal testimonies of the controversies and challenges to arguing for community engagement. She shares openly her moments of joys as well as her struggles and moments of burn-out. Emphasizing love, self-love and self-awareness, she shares how she disengaged for a 'Time Out' and re-engaged in the struggle against domination.

Breaking from historical systems of dominance that had silencing effects, the value placed on the development of the Self in all three pedagogies also leads to reinforce the importance of intersubjectivity through dialogue, with particular regard for who the Other is; a child, a student, a peasant, a poor or disenfranchised citizen. This core belief is compatible with the PAR approach: "According to participatory theory, such a relationship must be transformed into subject/subject rather than subject/object" (Fals-Borda, 1991, pp. 4-5).

Intersubjectivity Implies Rights and Responsibility

> *To hear those who have most often been ignored, silenced, and even perceived as having no voice, we must accept them as real, legitimate human beings. We must accept that they can speak for themselves and search for ways that we can learn to listen.* (Cannella, 2002, p. 166)

Rather than recoiling into silence or recreating a power struggle, as Maxine Greene warns can happen, these pedagogies make intentional efforts to engage the Other

and *with* the Other – and, in so doing, demonstrate the *ability to respond* ethically, without subsuming the Other or, importantly, being subsumed by the Other. "Wide-awake" to their own Selves, "the moral life may be achieved through active attention and through walking about among other human beings and through the acknowledgement that signifies responsibility" (Greene, 1978, pp. 154-155). These pedagogies broaden the concept of responsibility to include alternative ways of listening – ways of acknowledging the Other as a "Self." This level of intersubjectivity implies that each Subject in the encounter has rights to voice and be heard and a responsibility to listen – this includes listening to one's Self, which I will return to later in the section on an ethic of self-care.

Herein lies a belief in a predisposition (not necessarily a guarantee) that an *ability to respond* can be found in children and adults. Carlina Rinaldi says, "Very early in life, children demonstrate that they have a voice, but above all that they know how to listen and want to be listened to. Sociality is not taught to children: they are social beings" (2006, pp. 66-67). Noddings emphasizes that dialogue and engagement build selves: "Our problem, as parents and teachers, is not to make our children autonomous …, but to supervise their encounters, help them think about their encounters, and evaluate those experiences honestly" (2002, pp. 115-16). By basing her theory on the 'relational being' in contrast to the 'rational being,' Noddings rescues us from the malaise of autonomy by valuing encounters that build a critical capacity towards self-understanding and an ethic of care rooted in intersubjectivity:

> We feel this paradoxical need to force children to "become autonomous." If we were seriously concerned about the development of autonomy, however, we

> would not behave in this way; even if we set autonomy aside, the benefits of self-understanding, evaluation of one's desires and interests, and practice at decision making seem unquestionable. (2002, p. 116)

In contrast to prioritizing how to be autonomous, the focus of education should be on learning responsibility in intersubjective meaning making processes – putting into practice the reciprocity of listening.

hooks also describes alternative ways of listening in her classroom that promote meaningful dialogue:

> In the engaged classroom students learn the value of speaking and of dialogue, and they also learn to speak when they have something meaningful to contribute. Understanding that every student has a valuable contribution to offer to a learning community means that we honor all capabilities, not solely the ability to speak. Students who excel in active listening also contribute much to the formation of community. (2010, p.22)

Rather than insisting on equal 'air time' for each student, hooks emphasises that the act of speaking is encouraged for meaning making and that, again, students' varying capacities for contributing to dialogue is valued. Again, rather than competing to speak, "active listening" supports the view that relationships and community building take precedence.

By viewing intersubjective practice in early childhood and adult education settings, we see the scope and possibility of strong relationships occurring in theory and praxis. In deconstructing dominant and oppressive systems through intersubjective relationships, all participants' endeavour to engage in creating the environment (social and political) and

acknowledge the Other as able to respond in varying capacities. If all commit to this as a learning process, all are seeking new ways to listen to how the Other can respond: "The collective pursuit of these goals in social, educational and political practice turns all those involved into organic intellectuals of the working classes without creating permanent hierarchies" (Fals-Borda, 1991, p. 5). In sync with PAR, all three pedagogies value the Subject as participating as a member in the community, assuming the rights and responsibilities of a citizen in appropriate measures.

Being understood by the community as participating members with rights, learners engage with the Other (adult, child, parent, teacher) as they are able. These are the sites of tension, as *abilities to respond* are tested and negotiated. These moments of tension contribute to developing Selves becoming increasingly self-aware; as Greene says, "Using whatever capacities they have available, each one must himself or herself perceive the consequences of the acts he or she performs. Mustering their own resources, each one must embark – "through choice of action," as Dewey put it – upon the formation of a self" (1978, p.47). The alternative, as Greene warns, is to retract into a state of slumber, not taking true responsibility:

> If individuals act automatically or conventionally, if they do only what is expected of them (or because they feel they have no right to speak for themselves), if they do only what they are told to do, they are not living moral lives (p. 49).

In the Reggio Emilia philosophy,

> the young child is understood and recognized as being part of, a member of, society. He or she exists not only in the family home, but also in the wider world outside. This means being a citizen, with citizen's rights and, as he or she is capable of assuming them, citizen's responsibilities. (Dahlberg et al., 2007, p. 50)

This kind of tension also surrounds, for example, the *UN Convention on the Rights of Children*. In an interview with Swedish early childhood education pedagogue, Gunilla Dahlberg, Rinaldi speaks to the importance of *how* we talk about children:

> I feel strongly that when I talk about children I talk about human beings, and when I talk about human beings I talk about children. I know that I run a risk here, in a society where children are never included in the definition of human being and civil rights. And it's true that politically now we have to continue to talk about children and childhood. But I think that when we have to discuss rights, we have to discuss rights of human beings. To discuss the rights of children on a different table, separated from the table at which we discuss about human rights, I think this also is risky. (2007, p. 187)

Even educators concerned with the rights of children tend to separate children and adults based on developmental or biological needs; but as Rinaldi says, *this is risky* because the same principle applies to any marginalized group whose voices need legitimacy. "I am being careful not to identify children with adults, but to recognise them both as a part of humanity. Because only if we create this link is there hope for human beings" (Rinaldi, 2007, p. 188).

Nodding picks up on this debate, as well, and positions her ethics "to show that rights do arise from needs" (2002, p. 53). Her focus on distinguishing between *inferred* and *expressed needs* cautions us to move slowly in the legacy of liberalism: "Our language today, in liberal democracies, is saturated with talk of rights. We should dig beneath this talk for the wants, desires, interests, and needs that gave rise to it" (p. 54). This is another way of pointing out the importance of intersubjective listening in dialogic learning because "it is not always easy to distinguish needs from wants" (p. 185). An expressed "need" (or inferred need, for that matter) may not necessarily be appropriate and require re-thinking and possibly a certain degree of coercion in critically analysing a choice; for example, Noddings describes a situation wherein "Ms. A" convinces her son that he needs to take a third year of math if he intends to get into the elite university he has expressed interest in (p. 65). To show the relational dynamic of ethical encounters, Noddings later cites a father/son discussion about their differing views on college, wherein the father is pushing the son to go to an elite college and the son is expressing another life path (pp. 184-185). Noddings clearly acknowledges the risks of coercion, as well as the risk of not acting at all;

> such a project demands exquisite sensitivity to cultural differences and power relations, resistance to the temptation to act self-righteously in "helping" others, and recognition of the ever-present possibility that one may do more harm than good. … We must find a way to avoid coercion where we can and yet not fall into a paralysis that allows a deplorable waste of human potential. (2002, p.67)

Acting (or not acting) on inferred or expressed needs can be harmful to either or both the cared-for and the care-giver. It could damage the relationship between the Self and the Other, one or the other or both. Without falling into paralysis, a consideration of alternatives and potential consequences necessitates pause. Balancing the needs of both the cared-for and the care-giver is not static or particularly predictable because of the plurality of needs and abilities (or degrees of abilities) to respond to the intersubjective needs that change under different contexts, relations, and time.

A belief in children as rich and capable does not suggest that they are *equally* capable and should follow the same curriculum or be parented or taught the same way. Noddings recognizes their diversity and, subsequently, advocates for a view of equality based on responding to needs: "Children are not interchangeable parts. They are not equally capable physically, intellectually, or emotionally, and they have wonderfully different gifts and interests. Beyond certain vital skills, children need different courses of study to flourish" (2002, p. 89). This appreciation for alterity does not suggest a hierarchy; rather, a realistic understanding of ethical practice responds to the changing and variable needs of people. Just as succinctly, R.S. Peters summons us to consider these differences in relation to justice and rights: "The notion basic to justice … is that distinctions should be made if there are relevant differences and that they should not be made if there are no relevant differences or on the basis of irrelevant differences" (R.S. Peters quoted in Greene, 1978, p. 225).

Historically and even in our present day, differences are cited to justify sexism, racism, ageism and other discriminating practices. And differences are also cited to

justify important protection of people, who based on their differences require special care. This tension is the site to be leery of coercion:

> This renders it easy for me to convince myself as coercing others for their own sake, in their, not my, interest. I am then claiming that I know what they truly need better than they know it themselves. … I may declare that they are actually aiming at what is in their benighted state they consciously resist. … Once I take this view, I am in a position to ignore the actual wishes of men or societies, to bully, oppress, torture them in the name … of their "real" selves. (Berlin as quoted in Noddings, 2002, p. 67)

Maxine Greene arrives at the same concern and calls it, *malefic generosity*, based on Freire's description of a false sense of generosity that, in effect, perpetuates oppressive structures – also known commonly as the *charity model*.

> The oppressor is solidary with the oppressed only when he stops regarding the oppressed as an abstract category and sees them as persons who have been unjustly dealt with, deprived of their voice, cheated in the sale of their labor – *when he stops making pious, sentimental, and individualistic gestures and risks an act of love.* (Freire, 2009, p. 49-50) (Emphasis mine)

Being or recognizing oneself as a 'self' does not make one an 'ethical self;' Greene and critical pedagogy suggest refocusing on self-awareness:

> I do not know if the ability to be present to oneself and to one's initial situation can guarantee authenticity in being present to others or make less likely malefic generosity. It does appear, however, that attentiveness to one's own history, one's

> own self-formation, may open one up to critical awareness of much that is taken for granted, as it may to the importance of breaking with created structures. (Greene, 1978, p. 103)

If the Self is not aware that he or she is causing harm, an Other may bring this critical knowledge to him or her, provided that this Other feels strong enough or supported enough by others: "*In any classroom setting, it is vital that professors, like students, receive constructive critical feedback*" (hooks, 2010, p. 120). Freire's concept of 'conscientization' figures strongly in hooks' *engaged critical pedagogy*, which puts the onus of self-awareness on the teacher, who in turn engages the community to create the dialogic learning environment:

> When teachers teach with love, combining care, commitment, knowledge, responsibility, respect, and trust, we are often able to enter the classroom and go straight to the heart of the matter, which is knowing what to do on any given day to create the best climate for learning. (hooks, 2003, p. 41)

All three pedagogies explore the importance of citizenship in the sense of rights and responsibilities, and this is of particular importance in the context of marginalized people who may or may not have legislated or perceived rights in their community. Rinaldi's focus on the link that creates space for distinction *and* inclusion is an important component to recognizing the inherent richness and capabilities of 'the poor,' who have been historically and culturally marginalized from fully participating as citizens. From the epistemological belief that humans are born rich and capable, it is the dehumanizing cultural practice to deny people (children, 'the poor,' 'women,' 'immigrants' etc.) the

possibility to express themselves and participate in the construction of their knowledge and identity (self-awareness). It is the possibility to voice and participate in processes – such as education and research – that needs to be validated, legitimized, and put into practice. In a democratic country, there is reason for all to be concerned when any segment of a population is denied voice: "It is not those whose humanity is denied them who negate humankind, but those who denied that humanity (thus negating their own as well)" (Freire, 2009, p. 55).

Listening needs a 'listening context'

In an educational context, being aware of my own ability to listen, to take in the Other's point of view, is not enough. It has to be a reciprocal practice:

> Listening as the premise for any learning relationship – learning that is determined by the 'learning subject' and takes shape in his or her mind through action and reflection, that becomes knowledge and skill through representation and exchange. Listening, therefore, as 'a listening context', where one learns to listen and narrate, where individuals feel legitimated to represent their theories and offer their own interpretations of a particular question. … Understanding and awareness are generated through sharing and dialogue. (Rinaldi, 2007, pp. 65-66)

An ethic of care needs a 'listening context' to test itself. Participants need to listen *and narrate* – test their theories and be willing to hear others. If others are not listening – we are not in a listening context, we are not in a dialogic learning context.

When dialogue reaches a breaking point, Rinaldi says, “I think that centring on the child, the image of the child and education as the main focus of our attention is one of the values to which people, including families, are responsive” (p. 155). Starting from the image of the child, if I am listening (willing and able to listen), but I am not in a ‘listening context’ where my theories, feelings and thoughts are not being listened to, I am at risk of harm. This awareness brings us to the highest tension – a moral choice for the Self. The context of the dialogue needs to be evaluated. “There should definitely be a hierarchy of responsibilities. But there shouldn’t be a hierarchy that abolishes dialogue, exchange and, most importantly, respect” (Rinaldi, 2007, p.161). This includes all Selves in PAR.

Ethic of care includes self-care

Noddings says that “at least one adult in the home listens to the needs expressed there and responds in a way that maintains caring relations. The way of relating characterized by attentive love is educative” (2002, p. 284). Her theory includes a dialogic encounter between caring Subject, ‘A,’ and cared-for Subject, ‘B:’

i. A cares for B – that is, A’s consciousness is characterized by attention ... and

ii. A performs some act in accordance with i), and

iii. B recognizes that A cares for B

(Noddings, 2002, p. 19)

The essential feedback from B to A characterizes an encounter between two 'Relational Selves.' Another essential component of an ethic of encounter is that the cared-for Subject not be turned into the objectified image of the care giver, preserving the Otherness. This structure is at once reminiscent of Freire's concern for oppressive relationships; "Any situation in which "A" objectively exploits "B" or hinders his and her pursuit of self-affirmation as a responsible person is one of oppression" (Freire, 2009, p. 55). By advancing an ethic of care that is at once relational and intersubjective, there are, in fact, two needs that have to be addressed through this encounter. Both A and B need responses (verbal or otherwise); therefore, the dialogue should lead to learning responsibility – an ability to respond/give response:

> If the encounter is part of a continuing relationship or series of encounters, B's responses become part of what A receives in the next episode. These responses are essential both to the completion of a particular episode and to the health of future encounters. They are the means by which A monitors her efforts, and they provide the intrinsic reward of caring. Without such responses, parents, teachers, counselors, and doctors suffer disillusionment, fatigue, and eventually burnout. (Noddings, 2002, p. 19)

Embedded in Noddings' ethic of care is also an ethic of SELF-care. It allows for the broader definition of dialogue, to promote an 'internal' dialogue – one which the Self must be prepared to investigate honestly.

Self-care requires self-awareness

Real and authentic relationships are powerful educational forces. They also require energy to be able to respond with love, to listen and engage: "To perform with excellence and grace teachers must be totally present in the moment, totally concentrated and focused. When we are not fully present, when our minds are elsewhere, our teaching is diminished" (hooks, 2003a, p. 14). Any well intended ethic of care is compromised if the caregiver neglects his or her own needs or inner circles' needs: "Children raised by people whose caring extends beyond the inner circle *without sacrificing the special quality of care that is rightly expected there* learn that care is not a commodity to be selfishly hoarded" (Noddings, 2002, pp. 177-178) (Emphasis mine). But those people who do not care for the Self while attending to the needs of Others suffer harm to the Self and their inner circle. Far from a discussion around narcissism, this kind of discussion returns to the concept of "self-love." hooks openly shares how she came to a point when she needed a 'Time Out:'

> I knew it was time for me to take a break from the classroom when my mind was always someplace else. And in the last stages of burnout, I knew I needed to be someplace else because I just simply did not want to get up, get dressed, and go to work. I dreaded the classroom. The most negative consequence of this type of burnout is manifest when teachers begin to abhor and hate students. This happens. (2003a, pp. 14-15)

hooks' honest testimony reinforces the need for the Self to be 'self-aware,' 'wide-awake' to his or her own needs. 'Engaged pedagogy' brings an awareness of the Self that allows

for an ethic of Self-care, legitimizing the needs of the care-giver and the cared-for: "The female search for love has to begin with the work of self-love. That old saying that if you don't love yourself you cannot love others just happens to be true" (hooks, 2010, p. 167). Educating for the well-being of the Selves involved in a dialogic encounter includes educating an ethic of Self-care.

Being dominated by the sheer number of "Others" is also harmful to a Self: "Even the best, most engaged classroom can fail under the weight of too many people" (hooks, 1994, p. 160), particularly if the needs of each of these Selves are great. This is where the values of community engagement and Self-awareness reach a critical point. As the community recognizes the needs of the Selves, the community either strengthens through intersubjective support or finds that the needs of the Selves may overwhelm. This breaking point is contextual, relational and dynamic, and so requires Selves to be "wide-awake" to their fluctuating abilities to respond.

In a "pink collar" profession such as teaching and social work, in which women typically fill the "caregiver" role, feminist theory adds important insight into monitoring the abilities to respond to needs:

> Teachers are not therapists. However, there are times when conscious teaching – teaching with love – brings us the insight that we will not be able to have a meaningful experience in the classroom without reading the emotional climate of our students and attending to it. (hooks, 2003a, p.133)

As Noddings concurs, this includes reading our own well-being; and that is not possible without self-awareness. This is the encompassing scope of an ethic of Self care. Listening

for the well-being of participating "Selves" is not easy even within supportive 'listening contexts.' Attentive love that includes self-love builds self-awareness and the critical capacity to read the tensions surrounding the Selves' abilities to respond. Spiritual guide, Sathya Sai Baba, says: "In short, the best maxim for helping people either in worldly matters or in the spiritual field is: 'Help them to help themselves' or 'Self-help is the best help'" (Jones, 2009, p.36).

Creating Spaces for Critical Dialogue

> *One common goal of many of these programs is their focus on social action and change for the betterment of some part of the community. Educators who work in these programs believe that education and training can be a powerful tool in assisting learners to take control over their own lives.* (Merriam, Caffarella & Baumgartner, 2007, p. 32)

In reference to the field of adult learning, Merriam, Caffarella and Baumgartner identify succinctly the inherent subversive element of community-based educational programs that include social justice goals. Shorris, also identified radical social change as the ultimate goal of his *Clemente Course in the Humanities*. Beyond studying excellent texts, *The Clemente Course* "is a humanities course, taught with the assumption that the study of the humanities will lead to a citizen's life" (2000, p. 174). This assertion is significant in two ways: 1) beyond suggesting the use of the "Socratic Method," the assumption does not describe the conditions under which learning or studying the humanities is to take place. In other words, the focus on studying the humanities (certain notable texts that Shorris later describes as "curriculum") does not take into account the kind of pedagogical environment and relationships that have to do with coming into

citizenship 2) Shorris uses the term "citizen's life" to mean engaged in public life – the *vita activa*. His assertion is that there are some people (the "poor") in society that are not living the life of "citizenship." Shorris' suggestion for marginalized and disenfranchised people is to study the humanities for a path towards citizenship (an engaged life) and carries with it the assumption that what they are living is not a citizen's life. This requires an understanding of what citizenship is; who is a citizen? What does it mean to be a citizen? What system is in place that is denying people (and which people) an engaged life of citizenship? What level of social and political change is being summoned? What community (or communities?) need be addressed for this change to happen? Can a particular curriculum really suffice to ensure transformation?

Many of these questions can be addressed on a theoretical level, but theory alone cannot create the requisite change. To that end, a combination of theory and practice need to be in dialogue, and pedagogues from Reggio Emilia and critical pedagogy have spoken directly to that need at a community level and at a very personal level; "Theory and practice should be in dialogue, two languages expressing our effort to understand the meaning of life" (Rinaldi, 2007, p.190); Freire says, "We have to understand how books as theory and practice as action must be constantly dialectically together, that is, as a unity between practice and theory" (Horton & Freire, 1990, p. 21).

As these pedagogues do, I believe epistemologically that knowledge is not learned in isolation, it is co-constructed within the context of the community. That said, defining *community* can be an extremely onerous task in highly diverse populations, such as we have in Canada, and it can also be very risky as it may lead to further marginalization when confronted with systemic and dichotomous belief structures of "us/them",

"subject/object", "rich/poor". For this reason, an understanding of the kinds of relationships that are developed and developing (past, present and future) in a community education environment is paramount to learning what it means to lead a citizen's life and how we go about doing that. "Such questions involve us in ethical thinking, the aim of which is to become clearer about what is involved in moral decisions, to come closer to being free and autonomous beings in charge of our lives" (Greene, 1973, p. 220). In light of Reggio, hooks' and Noddings' work, I would argue further that an ethic of care is paramount; an ethic of care that includes commitment, authentic participation, and the development of interdependent support structures to mitigate the plurality of needs for all participants.

The use of critical pedagogy in adult education contexts such as the *Free Humanities programs* helps students and teachers deconstruct the historical power relations. Rather than focusing on the Socratic Method or Shorris' particular curriculum, the use of critical thinking and self-reflection through the humanities and social sciences remain powerful methods for dialogic learning. Greene had also linked the concept of "wide-awakeness" to support the value of the arts and humanities:

> If it is indeed the case, as I believe it is, that involvement with the arts and humanities has the potential for provoking precisely this sort of reflectiveness, we need to devise ways of integrating them into what we teach at all levels of the educational enterprise; we need to do so consciously, with a clear perception of what it means to enable people to pay, from their own distinctive vantage points, "full attention to life." (1978, p. 163)

This is the critical juncture between "wide-awakeness" or "conscientization" and an ethic of care. It's not merely studying the humanities that will lead to a citizen's life. It is reading texts that help understand the world in an environment that recognizes participants as subjects. It may be the case that the students inform the teacher about texts – the flow in both directions. It is valuing the Subject and ensuring that the Subject feels valued, loved, cared for, so that in turn, this relational, contextual, dynamic "Self" can first pay "full attention" to his or her needs and then possibly go into the world and carry on the work of caring for others –interdependently, as Noddings advocates. As hooks points out, the development of community is essential in this process. The study of the humanities as a liberatory curriculum cannot be sustained through texts alone or a specific curriculum model; rather, it is through the possibility of Subjects participating in dialogic learning.

Creating Spaces of Dialogue: Directors' Forum

> *People attracted to work in community-based adult learning programs, whether paid or volunteer staff, often come with a passion for a cause that gives them the drive to stay with this work, even under the most trying conditions. On the downside, the very nature of many community-based organizations often puts them on the path to an unending search for resources. This continuing search for and worry about resources, in combination with long and often difficult working conditions, can lead to staff burnout very quickly, even for the most committed individuals.* (Merriam et al., 2007, p. 33)

My research method is inspired from my personal experience of being a director of a Free Humanities program. The hope is that as a community of practitioners we create a space for an ethic of care and Self-care, for openness, for sincerity that deepens self-

awareness. This is an opportunity to attend to our "Selves," to inform our "selves," to listen, to love, to engage. Realistically, we need to evaluate which needs (inferred and expressed) we can respond to according to the criteria Noddings' sets out; signs of stability; instrumentality; reasonableness; intensity; harmlessness – for all participants. This applies as much to the programs and their directors as to the participants in the programs.

This research requires a commitment from individuals likely already overextended in time and energy. Collectively we need to find the value that keeps us coming back to dialogue if we are to create an environment and 'listening context' for shared meaning-making. As we listen to each other, we are reminded of the struggles of participants in our respective programs as well as our own struggles in our positions as directors: "Clearly, emotional distress may be an after-effect of physical trauma or witnessing a physical threat …, but in ethnographic and grassroots research it might also result from directly witnessing the poverty or suffering of others" (Adams and Moore, 2007, p. 45). As directors of programs designed to reach people who suffer marginalization, poverty, and many other possible traumas, we witness daily the effects of dominating forces. Our abilities to respond to these dominating forces should be fuelled by a love that takes into account an ethic of 'Self' care.

> It is essential to our struggle for self-determination that we speak of love, as love is the necessary foundation enabling us to survive the wars, the hardships, and the sickness and the dying with our spirits intact. It is love that allows us to survive whole. (hooks, 2010, p. 176)

How do we sustain these demanding programs while responding to the needs of all participants? How do we keep our "Selves" going without burning out, rupturing our "selves" or our contexts?

> Living in postmodern conditions therefore puts considerable demands on the process of pedagogy. The challenge is to provide a space where new possibilities can be explored and realized through enlarging the reflexive and critical ways of knowing, through construction rather than reproduction of knowledge, through enabling children [Subjects] to work creatively to realize the possibilities and handle anxiety. (Dahlberg et al., 2007, p. 56)

The above stated challenge requires a critical analysis of the spaces available for authentic, *reflexive and critical ways of knowing*. As a group of directors, we had previously identified the need for such a space, particularly because of the unique situation of our program contexts but also because of our understanding of the larger educational context of contemporary universities and colleges.

Contexts

> *Universities and colleges have been largely abandoned as democratic public spheres dedicated to providing a public service, expanding upon humankind's great intellectual and cultural achievements, and educating future generations to be able to confront the challenges of a global democracy. As a core political and civic institution, higher education no longer is committed to addressing social problems. Instead, it has become an institution that in its drive to become a primary accomplice to corporate values and power makes social problems both irrelevant and invisible. Steeped in the same market driven values that produce a vast range of hardships and suffering in the*

> *larger social order, higher education mimics the inequalities and hierarchies of power that inform the failed financial behemoths-banks and investment companies in particular—that have become public symbols of greed and corruption. Not only does neoliberalism undermine civic education and public values and confuse education with training, it also treats knowledge as a product, promoting a neoliberal logic that makes no distinction between schools and restaurants (Gutman 2000). Under such circumstances, public life and civic education are not eliminated by the forces of neoliberalism as much as they are closely harnessed to its market-driven policies, social relations, values, and modes of understanding.* (Giroux, 2010, p.186)

Free Humanities programs are in unique positions to counter neoliberalism and lend their experiential knowledge to a struggling public education sphere that is being overwhelmed by the forces of capitalism. The directors have first-hand experience in bridging the realm of (identity-crisis ridden) institutionalized higher education and the non-profit world of real life, human struggle. We can and do engage in discussion and debate about the value of credit versus non-credit learning; the pressures of funders and evaluation outcomes; the increasing challenges of meeting multiple literacy levels through evolving pedagogical practices; and the valuing of people as Subjects – regardless of their social and economic circumstances. As different as each program is, they all share this common context of offering an alternative path to education and an opportunity for self-realization. Although none of the programs (as of yet) explicitly identify self-realization as part of the marketing strategy, all acknowledge to some degree the potential for the humanities and liberal arts to lead citizens to "the examined life" and the "*vita activa*" – supposing that learners are provided and contribute to the dialogic learning context:

> Democracy places civic demands upon its citizens, and such demands point to the necessity of an education that is broad-based, critical, and supportive of meaningful citizen power, participation in self-governance, and democratic leadership. Only through such a supportive and critical educational culture can students learn how to become individual and social agents, rather than merely disengaged spectators, able both to think otherwise and to act upon civic commitments that "necessitate a reordering of basic power arrangements" (Wolin 2008, 43) fundamental to promoting the common good and producing a meaningful democracy. (Giroux, 2010, p. 189)

Canadian Free Humanities programs

> *PAR emphasises dialogic engagement with co-researchers, and the development and implementation of* context appropriate strategies *oriented towards empowerment and transformation at a variety of scales.* (Kindon et al., 2007, p. 2) (Emphasis mine)

I offer here a brief overview of the known "Clemente-inspired" courses in Canada that stretch from coast to coast; Vancouver, Victoria, Nanaimo, Edmonton, Calgary, Thunder Bay, Toronto, Ottawa, and Halifax. This overview (collected predominantly in the spring of 2010) draws directly from the programs' websites and web-based publications for the purpose of demonstrating that while there is information available to the general public, the varying depth of information for each program highlights some of the intrinsic challenges faced by the individual programs to garner academic and community engagement. Identifying when the information was collected helps to underscore how the history of these programs can be lost; since I collected this

information, some websites have changed their information or have disappeared (more discussion on the ephemeral nature of web text in chapter four). Here, I leave the following program information in the format that I first collected it as it bears relevance to how and why I shared this information in the process of the collaborative research as we developed context appropriate research strategies.

Many of the program directors had only a vague understanding of what sister programs offered and how they offered their courses. The following information serves as a historical snapshot of web-based literature on the programs from the spring of 2009, as well as a point of reference for our collaborative research process. By sharing this information with all of the directors involved in this study, we could each gain general understanding of each other and then make necessary corrections and updates for our future research, presentations, and publications.

Vancouver: *Humanities 101*

Vancouver was the first location in Canada to offer a Clemente-inspired program. In 1998, the University of British Columbia (UBC) accepted the proposal from a staff member and a student at UBC who had heard in the news of Shorris' *Clemente Course in the Humanities* (Shorris, 2000). Now in its eleventh year [thirteenth year by the end of this study in 2011], it has the financial support of the Faculty of Arts, academic support from UBC professors, [and community support in the Downtown Eastside and Downtown South where its participants reside – *added later by* Dr. Margot Butler, their current director, who articulates that "Hum is in an uneasy relation with the Clemente model and does not share its view of participants' lives in relation to the traditional role

of the Humanities; many participants are engaged in political lives before they take Hum courses, and bring much of value with them to the Programme" (Personal communication, September 20, 2011)]. Their eight month Hum 101 course "focuses on relevant, interdisciplinary approaches to critical and creative thinking from the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences" and does not offer it for university credits (www.humanities101.arts.ubc.ca/humanities/courses/humanities-101.html). Through the years, they have added follow-up courses for alumni, including "Writing" for developing writing skills, and "Hum 201" for students who have completed both "Hum 101" and "Writing." A number of other community-based initiatives have resulted from the program, such as free Friday night lectures, Saturday night documentaries and Sunday reading and writing groups. Thirteen years of academic and community engagement arguably puts Vancouver's program in the forefront of Free Humanities program exposure. (www.humanities101.arts.ubc.ca)

Victoria: *University 101*

University 101 is housed at the University of Victoria and has a strong alumni system. Their first two interdisciplinary non-credit courses are "UNI 101," a course in the Humanities, and "UNI 102," a course in the Social Sciences. They also offer month long courses to students who have completed "UNI 101" and "UNI 102." Academic, community, and corporate sponsors contribute to providing meals, bus tickets and childcare subsidies, recognizing these as barriers to low-income people. The goal of *University 101* is "to provide introductory academic courses to people whose economic and social circumstances normally pose obstacles to university education." Although the

term *vita activa* is not explicitly mentioned on the website, the reason for taking a course like UNI 101 or 102 is listed: "Because critical thinking and a passion for learning are elements of citizenship that can and should be shared amongst everyone. Humanities and Social Sciences give us ways to understand our own society and history." *University 101* requires that prospective students attend an information session in the community before applying for the course, which gives the program a profile in the community as well as a public forum for questions and comments. (www.web.uvic.ca/uni101)

Nanaimo: *Nanaimo Clemente Program*

Nanaimo's course is the only Canadian program to have "Clemente" in the name, but there is no official affiliation beyond drawing attention to the inspiration. Gathering information about their program is a piece-meal process because they do not have a course website. Clay Armstrong, an English teacher at Malaspina College (now called Vancouver Island University), wrote a book review on Shorris' *Riches for the Poor*, which prompted interest in the community in the spring of 2004 (College Quarterly). Some specific information about the Nanaimo course can be found in articles from funding organizations that have supported the program over the years; for example, the Vancouver Foundation, which provided almost $62, 000 in 2008, documented the program in their quarterly magazine (Spring 2009, p. 14 - 15). Currently offering accreditation through Vancouver Island University, the program is described as a highly collaborative community project:

> A no-cost, adult learning course in the humanities designed to foster reflective thinking and to encourage the seeking of post-secondary education. This is a

> collaborative project of the Faculty of Social Sciences, Centre for Continuing Studies and community partners. (Vancouver Island University – Adding Value to Your Community *Brochure*)

Classes are held at the Princess Royal Family Centre, a drop-in centre in downtown Nanaimo. Through this community collaboration, childcare is available at the centre, and meals, bus tickets, books and events are free.

Edmonton: *Humanities 101*

Humanities 101 in Edmonton is linked to the Community Service-Learning Program in the Faculty of Arts at the University of Alberta, and a link from the Community Service-Learning page offers a brief description and some history of past courses:

> Humanities 101 is a community-based outreach program designed to ensure that community members with a love of learning have access to educational experiences. The program offers **free** non-credit university-level courses for people living in Edmonton's downtown and surrounding areas who are passionate about learning and knowledge, especially those whose economic situation, academic experience, financial and social well-being are compromised. Humanities 101 provides non-vocational training that aims to empower students to use critical thinking in everyday life and inspire a passion for lifelong learning. (http://www.uofaweb.ualberta.ca/arts/CSLHOME.cfm)

Past courses are listed and identify that classes meet once a week at the Boyle Street Community Services Centre, a downtown drop-in. No direct reference is given to the Clemente course; but, again, the name of the course makes reference to the other Canadian programs, loosely connecting it in programming goals and structure. The particular wording of their program description significantly emphasizes that it is not a vocational training program, which Clemente-inspired programs insist distinguishes them from other approaches to poverty: "There are many paths out of poverty. Those who know poverty least concentrate on jobs and money" (Shorris, 2000, p. 98).

Calgary: *Humanities 101: An Odyssey* (formerly *Storefront 101*)

Calgary's program was in its second iteration when I was the director (2009-2010). The first version, *Storefront 101*, was initially a community-based partnership that drew support from the City of Calgary, local universities and colleges, and a number of agencies dealing directly with marginalized people (Groen, 2005). *Storefront 101* offered a total of 10 humanities courses between 2003 and 2008, ranging from history, philosophy, English literature, and Eastern religions. Students had the option of earning three 100-level credits from St. Mary's University College, a small liberal arts institution in Calgary.

The second iteration of the Calgary program, *Humanities 101: An Odyssey*, came from Alberta provincial government funding grant, *Innovation Fund: Access to the Future Fund* (letter, April 21, 2009). Executive Committee members from St. Mary's University College, Ambrose University College, and the University of Calgary formed a three-way university collaboration for the program. Two interdisciplinary courses in the

humanities, HUM103 and HUM105, offer students an opportunity to get three 100-level credits through St. Mary's University College (STMU) per course. Classes are held on the STMU campus twice a week, and students get books, tuition, transportation, hot meals and childcare subsidies when needed (www.humanities101.stmu.ab.ca).

As many programs have experienced, one-time funding grants that have time limits on spending created program instability and, at present, *Humanities 101: An Odyssey* risks not operating in the fall of 2010 [ultimately, it did not resume in the fall of 2010; instead, *Community Learning in the Humanities* was established in June 2010 by a group of alumni students, staff, and instructors with support from the Calgary Public Library].

Thunder Bay: *Humanities 101: A Lakehead University Community Initiative Program*

Thunder Bay's program has the most in-depth program research available on their website. The first pilot program concluded in May 2007 with a pilot report that is available on their "History and Program Development" page. The academic approach to their program is complemented by the high level of community support partnerships. The history of their program reveals a two year period of committee preparation prior to the start of the first pilot course. Two master's theses related to the Humanities 101 program are published on their site as well.

A significant departure from other Canadian Clemente-inspired courses is their decision to offer just one 13 week semester class to participants per year, in the fall; but, like many of the other programs, the classes are taught by volunteer professors and the director attends each class. (http://humanities101.lakeheadu.ca/)

Toronto: *University in the Community*

University in the Community in Toronto is run through a partnership between the Workers' Educational Association of Canada (WEA), the Davenport Perth Neighbourhood Centre and the University of Toronto, and funded by the Trillium Foundation (www.weacanada.ca/university.asp). Currently, volunteer instructors teach eight week long courses that meet once a week for two hours.

> The longstanding history of the WEA's community education dates back to 1917: The WEA of Canada is "dedicated to enriching the learning opportunities for the adult lea[r]ner and its objectives include calling attention to and spreading knowledge of educational opportunities and helping people acquire knowledge essential to intelligent and effective citizenship." (from WEA's constitution) (www.weacanada.ca/programs.asp)

Although their constitution shares many of the basic elements of Earl Shorris' vision of his *Clemente Course in the Humanities*, there is no direct mention of it on the WEA website even though the program focuses on the humanities:

> **What are the Humanities?** The Humanities try to answer the big questions of life. What is the meaning of life? How should we live our lives? What is a moral life? What is the best route to a happy life? What do I owe myself? What do I owe others? In studying the Humanities, we learn how philosophers, poets, artists and historians through the centuries have tried to answer these questions and we try to

discover what we ourselves think the answers are.

(www.weacanada.ca/university.asp)

The WEA has a history of 'liberal arts' programs, yet significantly, the use of the term 'humanities' in the *University in the Community* program draws an indirect link to the Clemente inspiration, as does the general delivery model.

Ottawa: *Discovery University*

Discovery University (DU) is housed within the Ottawa Mission, a non-profit, faith-based ministry which offers basic services such as food, shelter, clothing; health care; addictions treatment; and chaplaincy. The community agency involvement of the Ottawa Mission, which supports *Discovery University*, also provides for web and community exposure:

- Discovery University provides an opportunity for people experiencing homelessness or living on low income to study Humanities courses, with the emphasis on debate and critical thinking skills.
- Discovery University has been operating in Ottawa for the past 4 years through a partnership between the University of Ottawa, St. Paul's University, First Baptist Church, volunteers and social service agencies in the community.
- DU introduces students to the demands and challenges of a university-level course in a supportive and approachable manner.
- The goal of DU is to develop a new sense of citizenship and commitment to learning and problem solving that could ultimately lead to personal growth and

social change.

• The Ottawa Mission supports Discovery University as it strives to bring personal understanding of marginalized adult students to those in the wider Ottawa community.

"It has increased my interest in life and learning"

~Student (http://www.ottawamission.com/index.php?q=discuni.html)

The *Discovery University* program is summarized succinctly, again without reference to the origins of the *Clemente Course*, and with very little reference to its own program history or program delivery details.

Halifax: *Halifax Humanities 101*

The *Halifax Humanities 101* website makes the most obvious and direct reference to its inspiration from Earl Shorris' *Clemente Course*, with quotes from his book:

"The Humanities provide the most practical education. The Humanities teach us to think reflectively, to begin to deal with the new as it occurs to us, to dare." - Earl Shorris: American writer, founder of the Clemente Course in the Humanities and author of Riches for the Poor.

Halifax Humanities 101 has been inspired by this vision of bringing the riches of Humanities education to those living below the poverty line. Each Tuesday and Thursday afternoon, students gather at a local library to participate in lectures, engage in discussion, and exercise their minds in a safe, supportive and encouraging environment. (www.halifaxhumanities101.ca)

Of all the Canadian programs, *Halifax Humanities* follows Shorris' suggested "Great Books" curriculum the closest. Drawing from their local King's College Foundation Year Program (www.ukings.ca/foundation-year-programme), *Halifax Humanities* selects texts from five time periods; the Ancient World; the Middle Ages; Renaissance and Reformation; the Modern World; and Contemporary European and North American culture (www.halifaxhumanities101.ca/halifax_101.html). Taught by volunteer professors from six local universities and colleges, *Humanities 101* runs for eight months, meeting twice a week. Professors also support an alumni group that meets on Saturdays, again, at the local library.

Contextualized Community Learning Process

From the overview of Canadian programs it is clear that local contexts shape each program differently and that no two programs run exactly the same or like Earl Shorris' *Clemente Course in the Humanities*. But from the collective snapshots, it can be surmised that the history of each program could attest to the need to be responsive. Contexts shift through funding and agency changes; teaching and staff turnover; and fluctuations in students' lives and circumstances – to name just a few factors. Describing what holds each program together as an organizational entity is a challenging pursuit – let alone describing how all nine programs find commonality.

Each program is in its own process of becoming; unfolding a history that cannot possibly be documented fully through websites – for practical as well as political reasons. Entering into a collaborative dialogue with directors comes with a need to acknowledge and honour the process of learning each program and director is already engaged in. As

participants in this research study, we all have to gain an understanding of each others' programs – as well as where each director is in the learning cycle (researching, reflecting, acting). What past experiences have (in)formed their learning processes? How can we (in)form each other? Although some directors may know each other and each others' programs to a certain degree after the 2008 symposium, some are new and some have not had the time or resources to learn about each other and others. Knowing some of the directors, myself, I know that what is written on their websites barely scratches the surface of the depth and intensity of these programs, the students, and their directors. It is through the process of dialogue that we will be able to further contextualize our programs and our learning to understand our similarities and differences.

The delivery of the programs vary in relation to the contextualized locations; but as varied as these programs are, the strongest commonality we all have is the commitment to students who would not easily access higher education learning opportunities or, for some, sustain their learning because of any number of circumstantial factors (factors that are often so intertwined as to blur the source of the struggle – chronic under-employment, poverty, abuse, addiction, illness, social isolation and the like). The highly contextualized situations of the students, the programs and the directors ensure a dynamic learning opportunity. None of the programs share a curriculum, yet often the strong sense of purpose for our learning contexts remain linked, which reminds me of what Reggio pedagogue Carlina Rinaldi describes as a "contextualized curriculum" that has more to do with a process of valuing the participants than meeting objective knowledge goals:

> If the curriculum is conceived as a path or journey, it will be a path or journey that has, in our opinion to sustain these competences as fundamental values for knowledge and for life. It should favour competences for learning, the learning to learn through reflection and self reflection, through the 'hundred languages'. A curriculum of this kind can be defined as 'contextual' in the sense that it is determined by the dialogue among children, teachers and the environment surrounding them. It can arise from a proposal by one or more children or teachers, from a natural event or from something found in the news. But the emphasis on context also values participatory strategies and the possibility that not only families but the community to which children belong could participate in curriculum. *I use the concept of 'participation' here in the sense of each subject being capable of influencing and being influenced by other subjects, so participating in the destiny of each and of all.* (Rinaldi, 2007, p.205) (Emphasis mine)

The directors dialogue forum creates such a "contextual" opportunity for us to all participate in strengthening and deepening our understanding of each other and, hopefully, of ourselves, too. It is the potential for reflexive learning that stimulates the contextualized community learning process of research, reflection and action – moving the learning inside and out of our dialogue spaces to engage in the essential element of Participatory ACTION Research.

Summary

Notably, this study has to take into account the intricate relationships between the directors and the students and instructors in their respective programs; the directors and each other; the directors and their varying degree of influence on their program delivery because all of these relationships influence the ways in which we can participate and learn. The sheer number of dialogic learning contexts that can be found in these relationships indicates that there are many "starting" points to this collaborative research. To bring in the metaphor of constellations here, each of us is arriving with certain reference points already traced in the sky. In the process of discovering which stars we share as prominent guides, we will show and point out others to each other. And the process that we experience together as directors will most probably influence the relationships we have in our programs and create new spaces for dialogue and learning. It will, if approached with authenticity and an ethic of care, transform us. This process is not designed to end with this study.

CHAPTER 3: INTUITIVE AND ANALYTIC PROCESSES: WHAT WE ARE DOING (METHODOLOGY)

> *Ten of them crossed a river, wading to the other bank. In order to find out whether all had arrived safe, one fellow counted the rest and declared there were only nine. Each of the ten counted the rest, and everyone agreed there were only nine survivors. One of them had definitely been drowned. So, the ten started wailing aloud in their bereavement, and a passerby was drawn to the group in sympathy. He saw there were ten, all right. The mistake was – the man who counted left himself out; he ignored himself, in counting the rest.*
>
> *This is the mistake every one of these encyclopaedic intellects commit; they count everyone except themselves; they know everything except the workings of their own minds, and the methods by which they can attain inner calm. So, you must know who you are and then, if necessary, try to know about other persons and objects. Now it is all topsy-turvy.*
>
> Sathya Sai Baba (quoted in Jones, 2010, p. 12)

The relevance of the above quotation to the Free Humanities directors' dialogue is precisely the point of using a methodology that, in its design, insists on participants personally seeking a better understanding of themselves while learning about others and other knowledge. In this same spirit, the directors (including myself) all needed to be "counted" and to "count ourselves" without ignoring our own intuitions, experiences, and beliefs. In essence, this chapter describes the work of "Self" discovery, purposely exposing the important challenges we impose(d) on ourselves and each other during this process. It is through both individual and collective reflection, research and action that

we could name *how* and *why we do what we do*. Establishing the process of how we came to recognize ourselves as a learning group is the focus of this chapter and the reason we chose Participatory Action Research as the research methodology for this particular study. Throughout this discussion, I continue to link Reggio's philosophical and pedagogical practices, which have influenced my understanding of participatory learning and research communities.

The design of this research project came about through a combination of intuition and circumstance but strengthened with knowledge of participatory practices that insist upon reflection, research and action. This was not a random confluence of people discussing a chance event; rather, a meaningful opportunity for dialogue brought together a group of people who share common concerns for the future of democratic, public spheres of education. As Chapter two explored, pedagogues – in many places of the world, and from early childhood to adult education contexts – have been challenging the purpose and meaning of education if it does not reflect – through theory and practice – the values of democratic engagement. The importance of what we are doing is in relation to how we are creating learning contexts: "Critical pedagogy attempts to understand how power works through the production, distribution, and consumption of knowledge within particular institutional contexts, and seeks to constitute students as informed subjects and social agents" (Giroux, 2010, pp. 192-193). To accomplish this laudable task requires both intuitive and analytic strategies for creating critical thinking environments:

> Critical pedagogy opens up a space where students should be able to come to terms with their own power as critically engaged citizens; it provides a sphere

> where the unconditional freedom to question and assert is central to the purpose of higher education, if not democracy itself. (Giroux, 2010, p. 193)

This Chapter describes how the participants of Free Humanities programs are *Creating Spaces for Dialogue* by blending analytic strategies with our intuitive processes. By choosing PAR as a research methodology, we scaffold our experiential learning with a theoretical framework wherein "participatory analysis is integrated in the research process from the beginning" (Cahill, 2007, p. 184).

Intuition and Research Design Process

> *In contrast to analytic thinking, intuitive thinking characteristically does not advance in careful, well-defined steps. Indeed, it tends to involve maneuvers based seemingly on an implicit perception of the total problem. ... Usually intuitive thinking rests on familiarity with the domain of knowledge involved and with its structure, which makes it possible for the thinker to leap about, skipping steps and employing short cuts in a manner that requires a later rechecking of conclusions by more analytic means, whether deductive or inductive.* (Bruner, 1969, p. 58)

Traditionally, the methodology chapter of a dissertation describes the step-by-step approach that the researcher has followed in gathering and analysing data; however, the high degree of intuitive processes at work in the context of Free Humanities programs makes participatory analysis "an ongoing iterative approach" (Cahill, 2007, p. 185). The second part of this chapter will detail the analytic techniques of PAR and Reggio, but I will begin with describing my intuitive approach to this project and the subsequent bolstering of analytic techniques. Writing this chapter *after* completing the research

collection, however, makes this a kind of historical interpretation of an already intuitive process:

> Surely the historian ... leans heavily upon intuitive procedures in pursuing his subject, for he must select what is relevant. He does not attempt to learn or record everything about a period; he limits himself to finding or learning predictively fruitful facts which, when combined, permit him to make intelligent guesses about what else went on. (Bruner, 1969, pp.66-67)

Likewise, I will start with an abbreviated historical account of how the timely announcement of an international liberal arts conference created an impetus for the collaborative research project involving nine directors of Free Humanities programs in Canada.

Finding a Catalyst for Dialogue

My first correspondence with Dr. John Coates, conference chair of *Looking Back & Moving Forward; The Next 100 Years of Liberal Arts – Confronting the Challenges*, was generated at an intuitive level, sharing the speculative nature of the conference title. Re-reading an email I sent to Dr. Coates highlights some of the intuitive elements that this research stemmed from, as well as the inherited language from the Clemente model that I claimed (at the time) linked the Canadian programs:

> Dear Dr. Coates,
>
> My name is Laurie Meredith. I am the Executive Director of Humanities 101: An Odyssey, a program that offers free university credit courses to low-income people in Calgary, Alberta. There are a number of programs across

> Canada that offer similar yet unique programs, stretching from Nanaimo, BC to Halifax, NS.
>
> While each one is slightly different, the bond that links us is providing low-income citizens access to the richness of the humanities.
>
> I would like to know if there would be room in your conference for a number of the Canadian directors to present their programs - each one being unique to their local needs.
>
> It would be my pleasure to approach the directors and suggest a collaborative presentation if you feel that we would be a valuable contribution. I am sure that we'd find support for at least one paper as well. I would like to know your suggestions for the most optimal form of presenting our programs.
>
> Please let me know your thoughts on this, or any questions you may have.
>
> Sincerely,
>
> Laurie Meredith
>
> (Personal communication, October 7, 2009)

Analysing my own positioning statement (as a director), my use of inherited language ("access to the richness of the humanities"), and *a priori* general knowledge of the Canadian programs (offering "similar yet unique programs"), I see how my academic training provided the analytic tools to approach the challenge of writing a proposal but how I favoured my intuitive approach to the problem. I suppose I could have suggested presenting on my own, but I intuitively knew that a collaborative presentation from directors would contribute a far deeper understanding of the Canadian programs. Also, I suggested directors as co-presenters/researchers because I had already been warned about the ethical considerations of researching students:

> It is the intuitive mode, however, that yields hypotheses quickly, that hits on combinations of ideas before their worth is known. In the end, intuition by itself yields a tentative ordering of a body of knowledge that, while it may generate a

> feeling that the ordering of facts is self-evident, aids principally by giving us a basis for moving ahead in our testing of reality. (Bruner, 1969, p. 60)

Dr. Coates' immediate response (also intuitive in nature) confirmed that a panel of directors would be a significant contribution and that research on the impact on students would be of interest. Again, I was confronted with what I knew was the main interest for people – the students: how are they impacted and changed from their experience? From my academic research on PAR techniques, I knew that the potential for including students in our research could be done in ethical ways. Sharing these techniques with the directors was one approach I could suggest to position the programs in the academic dialogue without resorting to traditional, hierarchical research paradigms. It also occurred to me that this would and should initiate much more than one conference presentation:

> The process of PAR is cyclical. Researchers and participants identify an issue or situation in need of change; they then initiate research that draws on capabilities and assets to precipitate relevant action. Both researchers and participants reflect on, and learn from, this action and proceed to a new cycle of research/action/reflection. ... Together they develop context-specific methods to facilitate these cycles. ... This methodological openness reflects PAR's commitment to genuinely democratic and non-coercive research with and for, rather than on, participants. (Kindon et al., 2007, pp. 1-2)

The Fredericton conference could be viewed as just the start of a cycle of research; and the importance of beginning with strong, ethical research principles was of paramount concern to me.

Engaging Research Participants

As I shared this idea with a few of the directors by phone and email, I quickly learned that they also had concerns about ethical research practices. Some had not heard of PAR but had intuitively protected the exploitation of students' experiences in their respective programs and felt that tension around student evaluations and funder outcomes measurements; they welcomed PAR articles that I sent them and expressed their desire, again, to learn more about each others' programs. One director who was already familiar with PAR principles told me that my commitment to a PAR methodology was the reason she was willing to participate in the study and research – knowing that her voice was not to merely be represented (passively) but that she would represent herself (actively). The process of engaging the directors as research participants came easy because these were already *engaging* people, who made a practice of engaging others in meaningful dialogue.

By the end of October, I had drafted with input from one of the other directors the following proposal for the Fredericton Conference, scheduled for September 30 – October 1, 2010:

> **Title: Stories of Dialogue:** Collaborative Reflections from Directors of Free Humanities Programs
>
> **Type of Presentation:** Workshop panel of 3-4 program directors with paper presentations (Discussion can be in English and French); [confirmed panel includes Mary Lu Redden of Halifax Humanities; Laurie Meredith of Humanities 101: An Odyssey (Calgary); the rest TBA].
>
> **Objectives:** Collaborative reflection on issues confronting Clemente-inspired Humanities programs; sharing with academic and non-academic communities.

> **60 word abstract:** Through a collaborative reflection, Canadian program directors of Clemente-inspired Humanities courses will share with colleagues, academics and community agencies the unique and varied approaches to offering free humanities courses to people facing material and non-material barriers to education. Identifying common critical issues they experience, – from finding sustained funding to responding to academic and other pressing student needs – directors will share a year of dialogue and reflections.
>
> **200 word abstract:** Why offer free humanities courses to people living in poverty? What is it about the humanities that can draw people of varied, often non-traditional backgrounds into sustained and meaningful dialogue through humanities texts? What are people bringing to this dialogue, and what are they getting out of it? How do we define success under these circumstances? Directors, instructors, and students of Clemente-inspired humanities programs entertain these integral questions from the Canadian Pacific coast to the Atlantic coast.
>
> In Calgary, at the Radical Humanities: Coast to Coast Symposium in the fall of 2008, participants recognized the Canadian trend to remain inspired by Earl Shorris' Clemente Course in the Humanities while modifying program delivery to the unique needs and offerings of the local populations and environments. Yet, as varied as they may be, at the core of these programs remains a desire to communicate the liberating richness of the humanities in stark contrast to the forces of poverty.
>
> Two years later, using a Participatory Action Research (PAR) model, directors and friends of free humanities programs collaborate to research, act and reflect on the challenges and rewards of Clemente-inspired programs in Canada. Through their own sustained dialogue, they offer stories of their experience to gain deeper understanding of dialogue, relationships, community, and the stories of the humanities.

The basis of this conference proposal became the catalyst for my PhD research design, and the PAR methodology (welcomed by the participants) contributed to supporting the ethical and intuitive modes of the participatory research process.

Ethical Considerations and Academic Procedures

My first interest was to have the opportunity for the directors to re-engage in dialogue; the second interest was to embed our process in the academic structure of my dissertation. Intuitively, I felt that the other directors would welcome both projects

simultaneously, but only after I had received positive initial feedback from at least a few of the Canadian directors did I submit an ethics form to the University of Calgary's Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board (CFREB) in November (See Appendix 3 for the e-dialogue consent form and face-to-face dialogue consent form). After approval from the CFREB, I sent a group email to all of the directors I had listed from the Radical Humanities 2008 symposium (seven email addresses at the time), with the formal request to join the dialogue group and, if possible, the conference presentation panel:

> Dear Directors,
>
> I have two things to propose to you – they can be linked or not depending on your interest.
>
> 1. I was wondering if you would be interested in collaborating for a conference in Fredericton, NB next year – Sept 30-Oct 2, 2010?
>
> St. Thomas University is hosting an international conference on the liberal arts. I've contacted Dr. John Coates, the organizer, and proposed that some of the directors of Humanities programs across Canada collaborate to give an experiential workshop. He has agreed that we could have a panel of directors.
>
> Would you like to join a group of directors in collaborating on a panel? Here are some links to the conference:
>
> http://stualumni.isetevents.com/eventDetail.aspx?id=14046
> http://w3.stu.ca/stu/uploads/news/5631/CallForPapers_English.pdf
>
> 2. I am a Phd Student at the University of Calgary (Graduate Division of Educational Research) working on my PhD proposal and I think that linking the conference with my PhD research would be another way to put the humanities programs into the academic dialogue. I am envisioning the directors collaborating in an e-dialogue on issues that we jointly feel are paramount to the programs. My framework is Action Research, which supports sharing our voices/experiences in a format that favours research/reflection/action in a cyclical and reflexive way. I am starting with asking if directors would like to participate in this collaborative discussion. I can forward you more articles about the research method if you are unfamiliar with it. For those directors who wish to go to the conference in Fredericton, there will be an additional opportunity to take part in a face-to-face dialogue.

> I would like us to be able to start the e-dialogue by mid-December (December 10th 2009) and sustain it for one year. This does not mean that you have to add comments daily; rather, it allows us enough time to explore not only our own ideas but also have the time to reflect on others' comments and engage in a more sustained dialogue. For the purpose of my research, I have indicated December 10th, 2010 as the last day I'd be accumulating data for my thesis.
>
> Don't feel that agreeing to the conference requires partaking in my PhD research or that agreeing to the e-dialogue requires traveling to Fredericton.
>
> I have attached a consent form that has been approved by the University of Calgary ethics board for the purpose of the e-dialogue. If you should agree to taking part in the e-dialogue, please sign the form and email it back to me or send it by mail to the address below.
>
> Please let me know your thoughts. I'd be happy to explain on the phone, too! Just give a good time to call.
>
> Laurie Meredith
> PhD Student University of Calgary
> Graduate Division of Educational Research
> (Personal communication, December 8, 2009)

I sought ethics approval from the University of Calgary as an academic formality that has relevance to scholarly conduct, but another level of ethics has to do with community-development, relationship building, and sustainability. Even with formal university ethics approval, unless community members demonstrate ethical behaviour in their day to day interactions, the level of trust, engagement and validity of research can be negatively impacted. Although the academic procedure of ethics governance is not in conflict with PAR ethical principles, PAR pushes the ethical considerations one step further than "do no harm to others": "If an action research project does not make a difference in the lives of the people involved, it has not been successful" (Stuart, 1998, p. 299). Under such expectations, it is easy to anticipate conflicting views of what constitutes "making a difference" and why the opportunity for participants to determine the direction of the research needs to be included throughout the process. Even determining when a research

project has reached a "(mini-)conclusion" has to be evaluated in reference to evaluating how it has "made a difference" according to the participants.

This is an important juncture for intuitive and analytical thinking because an ethic of care in PAR goes beyond academic pursuits of knowledge (re-)production toward real change for individual people and, in the grandest possibility, for society. Change cannot be forced upon participants by the principle researcher. Identifying that change has occurred, that the research has "made a difference," should be accessible at the juncture of intuitive and analytical thinking. Completing the cycle of *research, action, and reflection* – optimally having a series of such cycles – helps to validate not only change but the involvement of the participants throughout the cyclical process. As Jerome Bruner suggests, intuition can establish a hypothesis or a direction to investigate, but analysis has long dominated education:

> The complementary nature of intuitive and analytic thinking should, we think, be recognized. Through intuitive thinking the individual may often arrive at solutions to problems which he would not achieve at all, or at best more slowly, through analytic thinking. Once achieved by intuitive methods, they should if possible be checked by analytic methods, while at the same time being respected as worthy hypotheses for such checking. Indeed, the intuitive thinker may even invent or discover problems that the analyst would not. But it may be the analyst who gives these problems the proper formalism. Unfortunately, the formalism of school learning has somehow devalued intuition. (1969, p. 58)

Intuitively, many of the directors had already recognized the need to create a space for dialogue – I was not acting alone on this; translating our intuitions into formal academic language (knowledge production) becomes the work of analysis. Engaging collaboratively in the analytic process can be a time consuming activity for people who have scarce reserves of time and energy, so facilitating the process requires *the complementary nature of intuitive and analytic thinking*. Again, PAR and Reggio principles complement each other through recognizing both approaches.

Analytic Design Process: PAR Techniques and Pedagogical Documentation

Reggio's pedagogical practices of *progettazione* and *documentation* have been a seminal source of inspiration for the research design of this study. Translating the theoretical and practical relevance of this early childhood education philosophy into this study with directors of adult education programs also highlights the potential for recognizing directors and students of the Free Humanities programs as capable researchers and learners, which is integral to the future relevance of our research practices involving Participatory Action Research. Editors Guidici and Rinaldi of Harvard Project Zero (of the Harvard Graduate School of Education) and Reggio Children (of Reggio, Italy) published a collaborative project, *Making learning visible: children as individual and group learners*, which serves as an excellent example of putting theory and practice in dialogue:

> The design of the book reflects the nature of our investigation. Our research is based on the notions that theory can result from as well as contribute to classroom practice, and that documentation of learning processes is critical to the research

> enterprise, as is the presence of multiple perspectives and languages. Rather than prescriptions, we have tried to provide a set of educational points of reference or orientation. By making individual and group learning visible, we hope to contribute to the collective inquiry into teaching and learning and to the creation of what Carlina Rinaldi terms "a culture of research." (2001, pp. 22-23)

Just as Reggio pedagogues value all the members of their community (teachers, children and parents) as integral to the learning environment and the "culture of research," Free Humanities programs share the potential for such ethically-minded community-based research. Having already developed the ethical stance to recognizing the subjectivity of research participants in Chapter two, here I detail how I planned to incorporate multiple opportunities for my co-researchers to be involved in the research design and implementation, including knowledge production and its dissemination.

Putting PAR and Reggio in dialogue, this study infuses Fals-Borda's four PAR techniques in a complementary way with the four features of group learning described in *Making learning visible*. As in Chapter Two, I read any reference to "children" as equally applicable to any rich and capable *learner*, which serves the intention of discussing the possibilities of opening up future research collaborations with more participants of Free Humanities programs. Now, as directors of different yet similar programs, we are capable of expanding our research-learning first to each other and then to others in a cycle of research, action, and reflection.

The following table shows how the parallel nature of these participatory research approaches structures the four main elements of my proposed research design:

Table 1: Research Elements: Four PAR techniques & Four Features of Learning Groups		
Fals-Borda's Four PAR Techniques (1991)	**Four Features of Learning Groups** (Krechevsky and Mardell, 2001, p. 286)	**Four Elements of the Proposed Research Design**
1. **Collective Research**	The members of **learning groups** include adults as well as children.	**Co-researcher Participants**: Directors of Free Humanities programs as a learning group conducting collective research.
2. **Critical Recovery of History**	**Documenting** children's learning processes helps to **make learning visible** and shapes the learning that takes place.	**Individually and collaboratively documenting** our histories, comments, insights, program details, etc. to increase the potential for reciprocal learning.
3. **Valuing and Applying Folklore**	Members of learning groups are engaged in the **emotional** and **aesthetic** as well as the **intellectual** dimensions of learning.	**Creating spaces for critical dialogue** to develop and strengthen relationships between organisations and people.
4. **Production and Diffusion of New Knowledge**	The focus of learning in learning groups extends beyond the learning of individuals to **create a collective body of knowledge**.	**Collaborative conference presentation and creation of a co-authored on-line document** ("Stories of Dialogue").

Collective Research: Learning Groups

The first PAR technique is *collective research*, which differs from traditional scientific research that test out a pre-formed hypothesis:

> Ideally, in such cases [PAR projects] the grassroots and their cadres are able to participate in the research process from the very beginning, that is, from the moment it is decided what the subject of research will be. They remain involved at every step of the process. (Fals-Borda & Rahman, 1991, p 7-8)

Methods for how information is to be collected are negotiated and then reviewed together: "This collective and dialogical method not only produces data which may be immediately corrected or verified. It also provides a social validation of objective knowledge which cannot be achieved through other individual methods based on surveys or fieldwork" (Fals-Borda & Rahman, 1991, p 8). The process is also referred to as a kind of "organic" process which requires frequent review.

In Reggio, this organic process is called *progettazione*:

> The use of the noun *progettazione* in the educational context, at least in Reggio Emilia, is in opposition to *programmazione*, which implies predefined curricula, programs, stages, and so on. The concept of progettazione thus implies a more global and flexible approach in which initial hypotheses are made about classroom work (as well as about staff development and relationships with parents), but are subject to modifications and changes of direction as the actual work progresses. (Guidici & Rinaldi, 2001, translator's note, p. 17)

Although a Reggio teacher, or *pedagogista*, may propose a learning topic or idea for the children to investigate, the project is influenced and worked on by the group of people engaged in the learning context – including children, teachers, staff, parents and community members. Teachers are "teacher-researchers" in Reggio schools, making them continual learners who draw in children and parents as active contributors to the reflective process of learning. The learning group observes, interprets, documents and determines the process as it is unfolding contextually: "*Progettazione* is a strategy, a daily practice of observation-interpretation-documentation. When I speak of 'contextual curriculum' I am really attempting to explain the concept of *progettazione*" (Rinaldi, 2007, p.206).

In this study, the organic process of our collective research shares the sense of a *learning group* as described in *Making learning visible*, "a collection of persons emotionally, intellectually, and aesthetically engaged in solving problems, creating products, and making meaning" (Guidici & Rinaldi, 2001, p.16). For the free humanities directors, this is happening on more than one level. Recognizing that as directors we are engaging in group learning in our individual programs, this study puts us together as yet another learning group, linked by our common pursuit to create dialogic learning contexts for and with others. Now, our collective research is to observe-interpret-document the *how* and *why* of our daily practice in our different yet similar, contextualized settings.

Using the directors as a focus group was not meant to definitively exclude other participants of the programs; but, strategically, it began a process that continues to force the directors to examine if their programs' philosophies match "what they are all about."

It has also created a small enough group of practitioners to engage in a deep discussion on the confluence of theory and practice – the realm of *praxis*.

While it would have been valuable to have the voices of the students, instructors and other learning community members for this study, I chose to reduce the focus group to the directors as there were the concerns of coercion. This was the first time most of the directors had heard of PAR, and my intention was to introduce many of the ethical advantages of collaborative research with the people best positioned to carry this practice forward in local contexts:

> A participatory approach in which people directly impacted by the problem being studied are involved in every aspect of the research has the potential to produce knowledge about the perspectives and experiences of people themselves that is not available in any other way. (Schneider, 2010, p. 4)

My hope was that by beginning with PAR principles, this study would extend beyond the purpose of my PhD data research into an established ethical practice in our community-based programs.

Many of the directors/co-ordinators of the humanities programs were known to me via the Radical Humanities Symposium that was held in October, 2008. I knew in advance that many of them have PhD's and Master's degrees, so they were familiar with academic procedures, ethics and research. Because of their academic strengths and empirical experience with and awareness of the population involved in the humanities programs, they were a particularly valuable focus group to be involved in a dialogue project that examines the confluence of theory and practice. Most importantly, by

including them from the first stage of research, we could examine together PAR practices and determine how we could take the initiative to expand our own inquiries into their larger community of learners in the future, without suggesting uniformity.

Critical Recovery of History: Documentation

In the municipality of Reggio Emilia, each infant-toddler and preschool centre creates its own learning group and, therefore, identity. Reggio insists on not prescribing a sort of "model" school to be duplicated; yet, the Reggio schools do not operate in isolation. They are connected purposely through their *pedagogisti*, who facilitate the discussion around the learning of not only one particular school but also the learning taking place in other schools. This practice increases the relationships in, among and between learning groups, and it helps to validate the meaning-making process by deepening and extending the learning:

> We are aware that the medium we choose for documenting the experience observed – in other words, for making it visible and sharable – contains limitations and sources of bias that can be favourable only when multiple documents, media, and interpretations are placed side by side. Because this procedure enables discussion and the comparison of ideas, it permits us to analyze and formulate hypotheses and predictions, and thus consolidate our thinking. (Rinaldi, 1998, p. 121)

The learning group that I envisioned (by developing a directors' forum) could attempt such a collective research approach that would not threaten the identity of the respective

programs, but would benefit by placing our programs 'side by side' to engage in a discussion of *how* and *why* we do what we do. This encourages us to develop the practice of collaborative documentation to learn how to articulate our processes.

Influenced by the work of Reggio pedagogue, Carlina Rinaldi, I view the critical recovery of history through the lens of process and, therefore, an opportunity for collaborative and reflexive learning: "Documentation is the process of reciprocal learning" (Rinaldi, 1998, p. 121). As Chapter 2 highlighted, some of the programs have considerable information listed on their websites but for the most part we have limited knowledge of each other. But the documenting of our programs' histories is only one level of critical recovery that needs the directors' focus; documenting our own learning of *how* and *why* we do what we do is a process for reciprocal learning that extends beyond one singular learning group. Like in the municipality of Reggio Emilia, sharing the documentation process allows us to validate our hypotheses, find our similarities and differences, and turn the learning process in on ourselves:

> Documentation offers the teacher a unique opportunity to re-listen, re-see and re-visit ('re-cognition'), both individually and with others, the events and processes in which she was the co-protagonist, either directly or indirectly. This re-visiting gives us the opportunity to interpret the various documents produced, together with our colleagues, giving sense to the events that took place and thus creating common meanings and values. (Rinaldi, 2007, p.58)

Ultimately, this allows others to learn how we see the process; it makes it visible to all the community, and it is the community that determines the value of the event, the process and the learning.

Fals-Borda's calls this second technique a *critical recovery of history*, which inextricably links a group and its individual members to a sense of identity. Recovering a history should suggest the need for multiple perspectives and interpretations of events, which is reminiscent of Bruner's discussion about the intuitive nature of historical documentation. In the case of the Free Humanities programs, the histories of the Canadian programs have not been thoroughly documented and risk being lost as the people in the respective communities move on. Some of the people with the historical knowledge of the programs are the directors. If the directors themselves do not have the histories, they may have access to key community members who do know more of the history. Another important component of the documentation technique is valuing the contributions of all community members, not just academics (or directors in this case). This legitimizes the voices of all community members and opens the way for v*aluing and applying folk culture*.

Valuing and Applying Folk Culture: Emotional, Aesthetic, and Intellectual Learning

Fals-Borda's third technique "is based upon the recognition of essential or core values among the people" (Fals-Borda & Rahman, 1991, pp. 8-9). These values are iterated by the participants through the development of relationships:

> In this principle, relationships with participants are held as a high priority. Feelings and emotions form the basis for considering what action to take.

> Relationships occur with participants, either as unique individuals or as members of the collective they represent, but they are present and they guide ethical actions on the part of the researcher. (Stuart, 1998, p. 308)

Insisting on having the directors as co-presenters and co-researchers strengthens the relationships and identities of the programs as well as the participants. It also, as Stuart suggests, guides the ethical actions of the researcher because relationships are more important than acquiring knowledge. *Creating a space for dialogue* is just as much, if not more, about creating a space to strengthen relationships as it is about generating knowledge. The stories and issues that directors share in this space speak to their essential and core values; but, intuitively, it is easy to imagine how the depth of learning and the expression of these emotional and aesthetic thoughts are contingent on the creation of caring and ethical relationships:

> Another way to think about this feature is that what a learning group learns is not separate from *how* the group learns (another false dichotomy). The way learning groups form and function is integrally related to what the group comes to understand. The process of working, feeling, and thinking together can be as important as the content of learning. (Krechevsky & Mardell, 2001, p. 292)

Just as change cannot be forced, deep and caring relationships cannot be imposed; rather, valuing members of a learning group requires time *being* together (in dialogue – observing, interpreting, documenting) to get to know one another and build trust. All the while, members need to anticipate development, change and fluidity in the group over time because this is part of the learning process.

I did not want to predict *a priori* nor alone what essential core values our learning group would focus on, which is why the intuitive process included asking some of the other directors for their initial feedback on the proposed conference and invitation to imbed our learning process in the PhD research; but, nor was I starting from scratch. I had not only been part of the 2008 Radical Humanities Coast to Coast Symposium, I had also approached it from a research perspective because I was taking part in it as a graduate student in a University of Calgary on-line course. Having first been introduced to the people and the programs through the language and lens of Earl Shorris' *Riches for the Poor: The Clemente Course in the Humanities*, I was scaffolding my knowledge of the Canadian programs from an outsider, academic position, and yet I became part of the symposium as a participant. Once I became the director of *Humanities 101: An Odyssey*, I had another position – more internal; but, I was new to the community. I had just begun to establish relationships with the instructors, students, tutors, mentors, staff, and executive committee members in Calgary at the same time as re-creating another community with the program directors from across Canada. Knowing that what I was part of in Calgary had connections to other programs (across Canada, the United States, Mexico, Australia) helped me realize the potential for identifying similarities and differences. I also knew that if we were to succeed at creating a space for dialogue, we had to value the process as much as the knowledge we could share with each other. One of the core values we shared from the start was honouring and respecting the uniqueness of our contextualized programs. Representing that uniqueness required us to start from a space that welcomed difference while promoting solidarity.

In Reggio, the environment is considered the "third teacher" because of how this place expresses the values of the people who create through aesthetic dimensions (Gandini, 1998; Tarr, 2001 & 2004). Vea Vecchi, a Reggio pedagogue and artist, defines an aesthetic dimension:

> Perhaps, first and foremost it is a process of empathy relating the Self to things and things to each other. It is like a slim thread or aspiration to quality that makes us choose one word over another, the same for a colour or shade, a certain piece of music, a mathematical formula or the taste of a food. It is an attitude of care and attention for the things we do, a desire for meaning; it is a curiosity and wonder; it is the opposite of indifference and carelessness, of conformity, of absence of participation and feeling. (2010, p. 5)

Creating spaces for dialogue (the project) was designed with the idea that a space was needed for the directors of the programs to share their ideas, thoughts, concerns, histories in order to get closer to articulating *how* and *why* we *do what we do*. We needed a learning space (with an aesthetic dimension) that would be safe for risk taking; for critical dialogue that would challenge and support us. We needed a space to research collectively, to inform each other and our Selves – to count our Selves in the learning process of something that we all recognize as bigger than just any one of us:

> Why should research be undertaken in a group? Among the many reasons that appear in this work, there is one I would particularly like to underscore: research embodies some very strong emotional aspects that underlie each individual's commitment, increase in awareness, personal search for meaning, and the

> affective relationships inherent in a reflective stance that is consciously adopted. In short, learning involves the learner's emotions. Groups are undoubtedly ideal structures for being receptive to learners' personal needs, such as worries, doubts, and desires, but they are also an unrivalled tool for the solution of social problems. (Rinaldi, 2001, p. 151)

The third technique of PAR (*valuing and applying folk culture*) is similar to Reggio's "third teacher," an environment that takes into account the emotional, aesthetic and intellectual dimensions of learning. The environment is more than physical space, it is the combination of influences people, objects, spaces, etc. And significantly, both PAR's valuing and applying of folk culture and Reggio's recognition of the multiple layers of environmental influences lead to supporting collective productions of new knowledge that could never have been accomplished by one researcher alone: "Individuals are not just constructing individual understanding but, over time, a public and collective understanding that has meaning beyond what each person has understood. ... Documentation offers a research orientation, creates cultural artifacts, and serves as a collective memory" (Krechevsky, 2001, p. 259).

Production and Diffusion of New Knowledge: Create a Collective Body of Knowledge

*Production and diffusion of new kn*owl*edge*, Fals-Borda's fourth technique, is "integral to the research process because it is a central part of the feedback and evaluative objective of PAR" (Fals-Borda & Rahman, 1991, p. 9). This process is at once a way of giving back to the community as it is a way to expand community, which, in regards to

relationship centred practices, is why this process needs to be embedded in collaborative work. Producing a new body of knowledge within a learning group and sharing it with others re-energizes the cycle of reflection, research, and action; and, an important element of this research design is to include more than one mode of production:

> PAR emphasises the production of different outputs before journal articles are even conceived (such as community reports, newsletters, presentations, websites, video, drama productions, art exhibitions, training packages and campaign materials). (Pain, Kindon & Kesby, 2007, p. 31)

Broadening the academic emphasis on written texts (journals articles, books, theses), our *Creating Spaces for Dialogue* research project centered around a conference presentation (main event) that could include an on-line conference proceeding document (after the event) and possibly a journal article at a later date. But even before the conference, we would have opportunities to share other modes of production that we engaged in within our programs and communities as a way of getting to know each other and our programs. The process of sharing our previous and current productions, research, and reflections (done on an individual or program level) could be considered as an *action* for our learning group – further enriching the depth of our group research and reflection for the purpose of "making a difference" for directors as well as other participants in our respective programs. In this sense, dialogue (spoken and written word) with each other would initiate another cycle of action, reflection, and research – effectively making talk *action* and a catalyst for producing new knowledge as well as a method for diffusing it.

In this knowledge sharing process, PAR emphasises that the language of communication must be able to reach diverse groups if social transformation is to occur and that "the resulting plain and understandable language is based on daily intentional expressions and is accessible to all, avoiding the airs of arrogance and the technical jargon that spring from usual academic and political practices" (Fals-Borda & Rahman, 1991, p. 10). For our learning group, this conscious language practice means we have to be versed in both academic and political jargon (to navigate university-level texts and discourse) but *choose* to be clear in our language with each other and with our program participants. *To be clear* in our language is not to "dummy-down" language: *To be clear* is to ensure that what is being said exposes and breaks down power dynamics and leads to new shared meaning-making. Language can be empowering and/or disempowering; therefore, it is an ethical decision to consider *how* we use language as much as *what* language we use. Again, Reggio's metaphor of *one hundred languages* reiterates the importance of valuing more than one mode of language and purposely drawing on emotional, aesthetic and intellectual dimensions of learning. This applies to the documentation process as well as the form.

In this fourth technique, "there is an obligation to return this knowledge to the communities and workers' organizations because they continue to be its owners" (1991, p. 9), which means that the information that is collected and shared can be reviewed and owned by the community and not coveted by academics. In both Reggio and PAR, the collaborative process of collecting data includes collaborative "ownership" of the new body of knowledge, but it does not require total consensus – tensions can be exposed, as these are sites of learning: "You need to do research and to have confrontation" (Rinaldi,

2007, p.198). Showing that each program operated differently and had its own identity was as important as increasing our overall solidarity in providing access to education.

This is the balance of acknowledging the "Self" in the collective; the "I" in the "we." Conducted ethically, this is not a threatening process but a strengthening one. The same sentiment has been expressed beautifully by Carlina Rinaldi in reference to how we can approach creating spaces for dialogue:

> So much 'new' can be generated when we abandon the presumption that we possess incontrovertible truths or, on the other hand, that we are in the throes of a crisis and thus have no identity or values with which to confront the genetic mutations that are being produced and which produce us. (*Added by CR when editing the book*: 'genetic mutations' is a metaphor for the profound transformation we are experiencing, a transformation which is changing the very essence, the very way of being of society and people, because it is transforming our way of entering into relationships and interacting and our concepts of space and time.) In this context, we will see ourselves not as 'mothers' or 'fathers' of the new, but as children in our own right who are generated by the new, provided we are able to seek out that which unites, and unites us, rather than that which divides us. (Rinaldi, 2007, pp.79-80)

The production of new knowledge has the effect of 'genetic mutations' that Rinaldi suggests; there is something 'new' that is created by encountering different ideas and people. By considering ourselves 'children' – not 'mothers' or 'fathers' – we can find

solidarity (fraternity) with each other. We do not become each other; we are linked together.

Personalizing the process and the outcome, like Thomas King suggests, is critical for accepting responsibility; once a 'Self' has heard something new (a story in its many mutations, like Charm's story – which is, incidentally, a creation story) you cannot honestly say you have not, in some way, been brushed with alterity:

> Take Charm's story, for instance. It's yours. Do with it what you will. Tell it to friends. ... Forget it. But don't say in the years to come that you would have lived your life differently if only you had heard this story.
>
> You've heard it now. (p. 29)

It becomes a question of choice and action. What do *you* ***do*** with the new knowledge? PAR insists that this lead you to action, guided by the ethical relationships developed in the process; and the Reggio practice of documentation encourages risk taking for the sake of deepening relationships:

> That is why documentation, why research, why the risk of assessment are so important. Because if you don't take a risk in evaluation, you don't change. Evaluation is a part of the process by which we challenge ourselves with the children in a kind of solidarity of love. (Rinaldi, 2007, pp. 208-209)

Likewise, I see the directors of Free Humanities programs challenging me and each other through our willingness to work towards collaborative research and a better understanding of ourselves. Likely, 'we' will change because, definitely, 'I' will. Documenting both individual and group learning does not imply static knowledge – quite

the opposite. This collaborative research produces dynamic, contextual and relational knowledge through the conference presentation and the subsequent proceedings and articles; therefore, no participant should be tied to their position indefinitely, but we should all be challenged. Elsewhere, Rinaldi says, "to take responsibility means challenging your choice" (2007, p. 198), which complements, yet again, the PAR cycle of research, action and reflection.

The use of all of these different pronouns ("I," "we," and "you") is part of the community building capacity of PAR, Reggio, and *Creating Spaces for Dialogue*. By engaging the directors in dialogue, I respond (am *able* to respond) ethically if I return to challenge myself in producing this additional document (the dissertation) that expresses my interpretation of the process we have started through creating spaces of dialogue: "It is indispensable for us to combine this dialogue with others with our internal dialogue because they are part of the same research. But at the same time, it's so hard to find enough time. Because we want a real dialogue" (Rinaldi, 2007, p. 198). The time that I take to write this dissertation is significant and purposely restricted to capture a moment in time, the events leading up to and surrounding our first collaborative presentation and documentation of our Free Humanities programs – this is a critical recovery of history, which gives a sense of time and place from my perspective by including some significant dates and time frames for encounters of dialogue. But for this particular mode of production (dissertation), I do not expect or demand the same level of time and energy commitment from my colleagues who are working in challenging positions dedicated to engaging learners and who have already committed to participating in a dialogue over one year. These colleagues do enter into this discussion about collaborative process,

however; embedded throughout this document are many "I," "you," and "we" pronouns because this discussion brings together a new research community made up of "Selves" encountering each other and themselves.

Summary of Process

In the process of writing this dissertation, I re-present ideas, comments, perspectives of my own and others, but I attempt to provide every possible occasion for directors to speak for themselves and their own respective programs, which is why the study was designed around the focal collaborative presentation and document (*Stories of Dialogue: Collaborative Reflections from Directors of Free Humanities Programs*). The "I's" have been influenced by the "we" throughout this process, and in this dissertation I seek to keep the integrity of our concern for an ethic of care. In Chapter two, I examined and reflected through literary research how to *listen*, *love* and *engage*; and in this chapter, I have described how I intuitively and analytically planned to expand those contexts to my *listening*, *loving* and *engaging* research participants. To truly listen, love and engage means that what I planned will necessarily have changed in response to the collaborative process; therefore, Chapter four describes the shift from *what "I" planned* to *what "we" did* to ensure *what "we" are doing* continues beyond this dissertation.

CHAPTER 4: DATA COLLECTION & ANALYSIS THROUGH RESEARCH, ACTION, AND REFLECTION CYCLES

> *Each time you write something and you send it out into the world and it becomes public, obviously everybody is free to do with it what he pleases, and this is as it should be. I do not have any quarrel with this. You should not try to hold your hand now on whatever may happen to what you have been thinking for yourself. You should rather try to learn from what other people do with it.*
>
> (Hannah Arendt, quoted in Margaret Canovan's Introduction to *The Human Condition*, 1998, xx)

The co-publication of "Stories of Dialogue: Collaborative Reflections of Directors of Free Humanities Programs" appears on the St. Thomas University's Liberal Arts online conference proceedings webpage and includes each director's biographical information (http://w3.stu.ca/stu/academic/departments/social_work/lib_arts_conf.aspx). As a public document, it is open for interpretation, dialogue, and "evaluation." It is precisely, as Hannah Arendt says, the possibility for deeper learning that makes it a particularly valuable document to the directors of the Free Humanities programs and to others who share our passion. I did not expect this document to be the final conclusion for this particular study; rather, I wanted to see what we, as a group of learners, would learn from it. For the purpose of posterity and ease of reference, I include the entire document in Appendix 2 but use this chapter to expose some of the data and what we learned from the process of producing it. Interspersed in the narration of these events are some of our comments and reflections leading up to the completed document, as well as our post-document reflections and dialogue. Through the multiple cycles of research,

action and reflection we created a methodology to extend our learning beyond the conference document itself and sustain our ongoing learning.

As outlined in Chapter Three, four of PAR's key principles complement four features of learning groups, which, combined, structure the four main elements of this study's research design. This chapter details how 1) participants are viewed as co-researchers – the directors of Free Humanities programs form a learning group conducting collective research; 2) by individually and collaboratively documenting our histories, comments, insights, program details, etc. we create opportunities for reciprocal learning; 3) creating spaces for critical dialogue develops and strengthens relationships between the organizations and the people; and 4) the production and diffusion of new knowledge creates a collective body of knowledge through the collaborative conference presentation and creation of the co-authored on-line document called, "Stories of Dialogue: Collaborative Reflections of Directors of Free Humanities Programs" (Meredith et al, 2010).

Creating Spaces for Dialogue: The Collaborative Research Process

The first part of this chapter describes a number of research design phases that directors created together through dialogue and how we worked together to research and reflect on our positions, language and programs. In retrospect, I can order these encounters along a timeline, but these should not be viewed as events that had been set out *a priori*. Loosely categorized into *before*, *around*, and *after* the Fredericton Liberal Arts conference, the data collection can be ordered temporally and within an analytic approach to academic research timeframes; but, it is the intuitive modes that led to the

shared process of creating spaces for dialogue. Each category (before, around, and after) describes multiple phases of research, action and reflection that took place through individual and/or group learning processes; so, while this chapter is subdivided with the linear time categories, it is the cyclical phases which propelled the research. Each phase includes the potential for both group and individual learning opportunities, each of which can have more cycles of research, action, and reflection. The following table offers a sample of the opportunities directors created for expanding and sharing group and individual learning. Although I anticipated through my research proposal the overarching research, action, and reflection cycle around the conference, it was through the participatory action of the other directors that a deeper and richer learning process came through in the iterative data collection and analysis.

Table 2: Combined data collection and analysis phases using individual and group learning cycles of research, action, and reflection.

On-going iterative cycles of research, action, and reflection		**Sample Group Learning**	**Sample of my Individual Learning**
RESEARCH **BEFORE** Pre-conference December 10, 2009 – September, 2010	**Research**	Blackboard readings; Shared website research and shared program documents. **Critical recovery of history**	Individual website research; contributions to Blackboard site.
	Action	Visits to program sites; Dialogues with other directors in Edmonton, Victoria, Nanaimo, Vancouver & Calgary	Dialogues with Joanne, Becky, Lela, Mark, Margot, Mary Lu, Paul; hosting Mary Lu in Calgary; Skype conference with Edmonton/Calgary students
	Reflection	Sharing resources and reflections on visits to other programs	Individual postings on Blackboard; Emails; Laurie's candidacy paper

ACTION **AROUND** Conference September 30 – October 2, 2010	**Research**	All nine programs offering information for conference presentation and subsequent organisation of data	Dialogues with Mary Lu, Becky, Margot, Doug; emails with directors not present.
	Action	**Collaborative presentation** of five directors at conference in Fredericton, with representation of other four programs.	Dialogues with Mary Lu, Becky, Margot, Doug; presenting at conference
	Reflection	Debriefing of five directors; Long dialogue with Margot, Mary Lu, Becky & Laurie	Journaling and note-taking
REFLECTION **AFTER** Post-conference October – December 10, 2010	**Research**	Collection of data for conference proceedings document	Co-ordinated collection of data; shared compiled info from proposal stage as well as new data from directors
	Action	Co-authored conference proceedings **Production and Diffusion of New Knowledge**	Compiled documents from all nine program directors and circulated final doc.
	Reflection	Dialogue and development of new methodology for future collaborative research process; framework of People/power/ knowledge/place/ free(dom)	Contributions are first step towards explicit analysis of our year long process; Laurie shared 1st draft of dissertation

This chapter describes the on-going iterative phases of data collection and analysis that flowed from the overall research design around the conference presentation and document write-up. First, I will present the participants as co-researchers, establishing how our backgrounds made for a rich and diverse learning group for *collective research* (the first of the four PAR techniques described in Chapter three). Second, I will turn to what we learned about establishing our research process

collaboratively and our preferred methods of data collection (electronic and face-to-face dialogues). I also use this section as a *critical recovery of history* for not only some of the individual program histories but also for the research design process that forms the basis of our learning groups' continued research practices. It also documents many of the *emotional, aesthetic, and intellectual group learning* moments we experienced as we shared our experiences, knowledge and concerns. This chapter serves as a document for our group to return to reflect on the ethical issues we raised in this collaborative process and an opportunity for us to further analyse our emerging practices through the *production and diffusion of new knowledge* (the fourth PAR technique) that was achieved through the conference presentation and proceedings.

Participants as Co-researchers

For both the e-dialogue forum and the Liberal Arts conference in Fredericton, I planned to invite the directors of all the programs I was aware of from the 2008 Radical Humanities symposium (Halifax, Vancouver, Victoria, Nanaimo, Edmonton, Toronto, Ottawa, Thunder Bay, and Calgary – the last, obviously, representing my contribution). I anticipated that most, if not all, program directors would contribute at least some comments to the directors' forum but that only a few would have the financial supports to travel in person to Fredericton. In the end, directors from all nine Canadian programs participated in the study to varying levels, and a total of 11 directors had at least some level of contribution.

The following table provides an overview of the participants/co-researchers of this study, and the location and name of the program each one directs and/or has directed

(some have the title of "co-ordinator" but I do not emphasize any distinction in this grouping).

Table 3: Participants as Co-researchers: Directors of Free Humanities Programs in Canada		
Director/Co-ordinator	**Location**	**Program**
Mark Blackell	Nanaimo, B.C.	*Nanaimo Clemente Course in the Humanities*
Becky Cory	Victoria, B.C.	*University 101*
Margot Leigh Butler (Director) & Paul Woodhouse (Coordinator)	Vancouver, B.C	*Humanities 101 Community Programme*
Laurie Meredith	Calgary, AB	*Humanities 101: An Odyssey (2009-2010) Community Learning in the Humanities*
Joanne Muzak	Edmonton, AB	*Humanities 101*
Christina Van Barneveld & Doug West	Thunder Bay, ON	*Humanities 101: Lakehead University*
Anne McDonagh	Toronto, ON	*University in the Community*
Marianna Proskos & Jill Zmud	Ottawa, ON	*Discovery University*
Mary Lu Roffey-Redden	Halifax, NS	*Halifax Humanities*

The emphasis on geographical location underscores the distance and time zones we have to overcome to meet in person or to connect in real time, just one of the challenges for this particular learning group that stretches coast to coast. It also calls attention to *place* because our programs are context specific and, therefore, the knowledge collected here is a reflection of our own positions (as directors) as well as our locations; as PAR researchers acknowledge, "furthermore, place influences knowledge and power"

(Stuttaford & Coe, 2007, p. 190). Each participant brings not only situated knowledge of the respective programs but also deep, personal insights from lived experience and diverse educational backgrounds. As Stuttaford and Coe emphasize, "Where there are multiple participants, there are multiple knowledges and multiple interfaces for sharing knowledge" (2007, p. 188). As we discovered together, the reflexive nature of place, knowledge, people and power combine to make this study rich in learning opportunities for the participants.

Participant Profiles

Each director who contributed to the conference proceedings, "Stories of Dialogue: Collaborative Reflections from Directors of Free Humanities Programs," provided their own biographical description for the purpose of the collaborative publication (see Appendix 2). Below, I quote directly from that document all of the directors' auto-biographical information to give the reader an idea of the breadth and depth of experience that make up the learning group for this study. Travelling west to east, I again add the name of the city where each of these directors live and work to give a geographical reference to the programs and the people (who are describing themselves). The reader can imagine these points of reference like a connection of stars forming a constellation of sorts that make up the unofficial network of Canadian Free Humanities programs.

Mark Blackell, *Nanaimo Clemente Course in the Humanities* (Nanaimo, BC):

Mark Blackell was formerly the Academic Coordinator of the *Nanaimo Clemente Course in the Humanities* and is currently the Chair of Liberal Studies at

Vancouver Island University. He holds a PhD in Social and Political Thought from York University, has research interests in democratic civic culture, and finds more vibrant overlapping communities the longer he lives in his home of Nanaimo, British Columbia. (Meredith et al., 2010, p. 3)

Becky Cory, *University 101* (Victoria, BC):

Becky Cory (MA candidate, UVic) has been the program coordinator for *University 101*, at UVic for the past five years. What she most loves about being involved in this program is getting to build relationships with such a wide range of students, teaching assistants and faculty. Becky has also worked as an adult educator, facilitator, youth outreach worker, counselor and diversity educator. She is also a partner in a design and communications company. Becky's undergraduate work was in women's studies and political science, and she is currently completing her MA in Adult Education, studying race and racialization on the internet. (Meredith et al., 2010, p. 2)

Margot Leigh Butler, *Humanities 101 Community Programme* (Vancouver, BC):

Margot Leigh Butler is the Academic Director of UBC's 12 year old *Humanities 101 Community Programme* which offers free education on Vancouver's Downtown Eastside and Downtown South (DTES/South) and 3 free university-level courses on campus for residents who have a lust for learning and who live on very low incomes. Made infamous as a worst-case scenario of contemporary urban life, the DTES also houses, or finds homeless, many residents who counter this pummelling view in countless inspiring ways – Hum students and alumni

amongst them. The courses focus on relevant interdisciplinary creative and critical thinking and practices, and are in robust dialogue with Humanities traditions. Dr. Butler is an installation artist, cultural theorist and activist, and works with art/writing collectives and on alternative education projects. (Meredith et al., 2010, p. 2)

Laurie Meredith, *Community Learning in the Humanities* (Calgary, AB):

Laurie Meredith was the director of *Humanities 101: An Odyssey* (Calgary) from 2009-2010 and is currently participating in establishing *Community Learning in the Humanities* at the Calgary Public Library. Working in the field of community-based education, her interests include critical pedagogy, early childhood education, dialogue and ethics in education, and Participatory Action Research (PAR). Currently a PhD candidate in Education at the University of Calgary, Laurie holds a BA degree in English Literature (University of Alberta) and an MA degree in French Literature (University of Calgary). (Meredith et al., 2010, p. 2)

Joanne Muzak, *Humanities 101* (Edmonton, AB):

Joanne Muzak is the Special Projects Manager with the Community Service-Learning (CSL) Program and an instructor in CSL and Women's Studies at the University of Alberta (Edmonton). As the Special Projects Manager, she coordinates the U of A's *Humanities 101* program. She started in this coordinator position as a postdoctoral fellow with CSL in 2008. Her postdoctoral project involved resuscitating Hum 101 after a four-year hiatus. She has been pleased to

watch the program expand, especially this year with the help of current CSL postdoctoral fellow, Mebbie Bell, who introduced Hum 101 to a second-stage women's shelter. (Meredith et al., 2010, p. 3)

Doug West, *Humanities 101* (Thunder Bay, ON):

Doug West is the Director of *Humanities 101* at Lakehead University in Thunder Bay, ON and an Associate Professor of Political Science. The focal points for his research and teaching activities include northern and native politics, food security, contemporary political ideas, community development, and civic engagement through community service learning. Between 2006 and 2008, Doug served as the founding Co-Director of the Food Security Research and Service Exchange Network located in Thunder Bay. Through this initiative Doug has participated in research on cooperative community gardens, youth gardening and the development of school curricula, and on Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) as a new arena for civic engagement. Doug has also served in various capacities for community organizations in Ottawa, Thunder Bay and Victoria, and was a member of the Board of the Victoria Community Council in 2002-3 and 2009-10. (Meredith et al., 2010, p. 3)

Anne McDonagh, co-director with J. Barbara Rose, *University in the Community* (Toronto, ON):

Anne McDonagh is a retired adult education teacher with an honours degree in English from the University of Toronto. She was head of cooperative education at an adult high school in Toronto when she retired. She also taught adults writing

and business communications at George Brown College, Humber College and Dixon Hall. When she retired Anne became involved with Davenport Perth Neighborhood Centre (DPNC) and The Workers' Educational Association (WEA). The DPNC board and the WEA helped her establish *University in the Community* along with Woodsworth College's J. Barbara Rose. Anne markets and administers University in the Community and recruits students for the program. She is also editor of WEA's Learning Curves, a newspaper geared to adults returning to school for whatever reason, which is published and distributed throughout Toronto and the GTA five times a year. She contributes many feature articles as well. (Meredith et al., 2010, p. 3)

Jill Zmud, *Discovery University* (Ottawa, ON):

Jill Zmud is the program coordinator of *Discovery University* in Ottawa. She started this position at the Ottawa Mission in August 2010 after spending four years as a researcher at the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada. Prior to that, she taught Political and International Studies at the University of Saskatchewan. She is thrilled to be returning to the field of education and looks forward to being a part of the Discovery University team. (Meredith et al., 2010, p. 3)

Mary Lu Roffey-Redden, *Halifax Humanities* (Halifax, NS):

Mary Lu Roffey-Redden is director of *Halifax Humanities 101*. She has an MA and did doctoral studies in Philosophy of Religion at McMaster University. For 12 years, she was a lecturer in Religious Studies at the University of King's

> College, UWO. She has also taught business communications at Fanshawe and Mohawk Community Colleges. Being Director of *Halifax Humanities 101* is her dream job, bringing together her love of studying philosophy and literature, with a concern for social justice. (Meredith et al., 2010, p. 2)

These auto-biographical descriptions reveal important background information that supports our ethical stances to how and why we do what we do. Knowing that we were producing this information for a conference presentation and the proceedings, we all used the positioning power language of our academic credentials and experience; but, the relevance of our collective knowledge (political, religious, philosophical, artistic, historical, linguistic, literary, and pedagogical training) relates to how we combine it with our concern for social justice. Significantly, all of us added personal and professional experience outside of traditional academic credentials, listing some of the forms of activism we take up within and without our roles as directors; writing and editing, creating installation art, initiating community gardens, to name a few. Even from these brief autobiographical descriptions, we learn that these directors are highly engaged members in their communities. PAR, a methodology which demands action from the participants, naturally resonates with this group of learners, who are already researchers and activists in their own communities:

> PAR will be most effective where it is used in response to co-learners' needs, rather than the needs of only one party or the other. Taking responsibility for reflection, action and learning is important for co-constructed knowledge in which power is shared. (Stuttaford & Coe, 2007, p. 189)

This chapter details how the participants individually took responsibility for reflecting on and voicing multiple needs and goals to the learning group so that we could individually and collectively participate in the research and take action collaboratively. After discussing how we established our data collection and analysis process below, I will return to combine findings about researching with these directors in Chapter Five.

On-going & Iterative Data Collection and Analysis: Process towards Methods

> *Analysis serves to propel the participatory cycle forward at each turn in the research process – pushing a research team to ask new questions, to engage the differences between their diverse perspectives, to develop their collective theoretical framework, and make sense of their interpretations. Analysis is thus crucial to each stage of the research process: problem identification, data collection, data analysis and the presentation of research findings.* (Cahill, 2007, p.184)

PAR methods for data collection and analysis include the important component of being flexible to the needs of participants and including the participants in the process of choosing the methods (Cahill, 2007; Stuttaford & Coe, 2007). Since one of the suggestions from the Radical Humanities 2008 symposium was to have an online presence on the web, I pursued the idea of an electronic dialogue forum. I also knew that many of the symposium participants felt that there was a great deal of value in meeting in person because of the intensity of discussion that could be generated together. While I was a graduate student at the symposium, I had the duty of taking notes for the break-out session that focused on "funding issues;" and, of the four break-out session topics, this section attracted the attention of the directors so much that some directors spent more than one session on this topic. Meeting around the table, I heard the directors mention the

need to have opportunities like this to meet in person and have focussed discussions all together at the same time. Also expressed was the interest to visit each others' programs while in operation. During the 2008 symposium, the Calgary program (then called *Storefront 101*) was not running, having taken what they called a "fallow year" to rethink the structure of their program. Tours to the Mustard Seed facility, where classes and tutorials had been held previously, provided a certain degree of insight into the Calgary context. Participants suggested, jokingly, retreats in warmer climates for the next meeting; but, the value of meeting face-to-face was expressed by all. Since finances made this a challenging goal, other options had been discussed about starting web-based connections through blogs, websites or the like. Although no such development happened after the symposium, these conversations influenced how I approached options for creating spaces for dialogue in the fall of 2009.

Data Collection through the Electronic Dialogue Forum

Since obviously none of us lived in the same city, we needed a virtual space because traveling to see each other frequently did not seem practical. I investigated and established a secure online dialogue site through the University of Calgary's Information Technology course frame, called *Blackboard*. I was familiar with it from my graduate studies and from teaching at the university, and found it to be quite user-friendly with some persistence. I suggested this space as the "Radical Humanities Directors' Forum" and structured four general discussion board topics; 1) Introductions; 2) Program Overviews; 3) Fredericton Conference; 4) Topics of Interest. As directors agreed to participate in the dialogue forum, I submitted their names to the IT department for

individual usernames and passwords. I hoped that the added security feature created an added sense of safety – knowing that this space was reserved for only those participating in the forum – so that the directors could engage more openly in dialogue to bring core concerns to each other.

Ultimately, very little activity happened on the Blackboard discussion board. I posted a brief personal introduction and some other directors did, too. While on the phone with one director, I talked her through a general overview of how to add comments to the discussion board. At another time, while meeting in person with another director, I also demonstrated how we could add possible topics for group discussions. At first I made a habit of logging into the site and checking for updates, but I did not want to add anymore to the site unless the other directors were embracing the format – this was not meant to be a personal update board but a group discussion site. As it began to feel artificial and not a space that our group was using, I did not pursue or push this method for data collection. Knowing that this was not the only method proposed for data collection, I was not overly concerned that it was not generating a lot of discussion. Also, knowing most of the directors in advance of the research collection stage, I also knew that the interest and desire to dialogue was there; the lack of activity on the Blackboard site was more an indication of how little time people had to devote to this method of data collection and not an indication of waning or lack of interest.

Authentic participation in the collection of written material did grow simply through email exchanges. Occasionally one of the directors would send out an email to the group of us or just to one or a few of the directors specifically involved in an exchange. I wrote updates about the conference as information became available; such as,

when the proposal for our collaborative panel presentation was officially accepted by the conference organizers (February 23, 2010), and when I received subsequent requests from organizers to register for the conference or when I corresponded with the organizers about changes to our panel presenters. My emails to the group often initiated personal responses back from directors, letting me know where they were at with their programs, lives, and considerations for scheduling in discussions and the conference.

My suspicions were confirmed that the directors were still very interested in sharing ideas with each other but that they were struggling to devote a space in time to log on, navigate and add to the discussion in between day-to-day demands of the job. This is illustrated from a selection of comments in emails from directors:

> PS I'm sorry I've not been on your research website more often - things get so hectic - and am looking forward to doing so in the near future.
>
> I want to apologize for not participating more fully on the Blackboard. I'm teaching 2 new courses this term as well as planning and researching the CSL spring immersion course on "Oil & The Arts" and trying to make sure that Hum101 functions. (And I'm wholly neglecting my own research). ;) Thanks for being so conscientious in following up. I look forward to hearing from you.
>
> Well, I am back in the picture. I have been incredibly busy trying different strategies to put University in the Community on a stable footing.
> What is happening with your project? I went to the website using the user name and password that the university has given me. I got in but I couldn't find any commentary from our colleagues. Am I missing something?

Emails were fast and immediate ways for us to connect in a way that we were already "plugged into," and they also allowed us to schedule times for us to call each other and just catch up in real time over the phone. Even scheduling phone calls highlighted our busy schedules; for example:

> Can we talk briefly around 9am on Monday? Alternatively, I could talk around noon, I think. I have a slew of meetings on Monday now and I'd have to be off the phone by about 9:25 or I could try you sometime after lunch, I'm just not sure when.

These became authentic exchanges that led to developing far more personal connections to each other, hearing each others' voices and responding to questions, concerns and comments without having to write down the details in on the Blackboard site. Most of these phone exchanges were reserved to one-on-one conversations; but, I found that when I had a phone conversation with another director, we talked about updates that we had heard from our colleagues and noted the interest we had to connect our discussions to the larger group. After having a phone conversation and receiving an email from Mary Lu, I responded with the following comment:

> As you could see from the start of the directors' forum, it needs a bit of a "kick start". I don't want to over impose on people's very busy schedules. So far, I find that having a conversation on the phone is much easier in many ways. We'll see what transpires over the next few weeks. (Personal communication, February 15, 2010)

Being open to other suggestions for ways to communicate and being patient to discover what authentic participation transpired were predispositions I had in approaching the data collection. Letting go of the *Radical Humanities Directors Forum* (as a primary location for data collection) was part of the process of developing authentic and lasting research practices as we searched for alternative options together.

Over the course of the year, we came to realize that email was as "a-synchronous" a method as we seemed to embrace. Our preference to schedule a time for a phone call over writing on the discussion board was recognized even before the conference and discussed again while we were in Fredericton. Notes from our face-to-face dialogue in Fredericton indicate some of the issues we had with using Blackboard:

> We found it visually appealing, but confusing to use, and had trouble with the password. ... The features of a blackboard are good so you can add a thread if you want to start talking about something new. Post, ideas, blog and then we just add what we're thinking – don't have to read all that's written when we never have time – and can also have threads. We can see writing for 10 minutes, maybe 3x a day, but never a full half hour – we are always doing urgent and only sometimes important things: we're too busy. We know each other now, and our proclivities, so can just write the point quickly if that's what's possible. (Group notes, October 3, 2010)

Subsequent "group learning" moments (with the directors who had participated in the panel) were scheduled using the real-time web-based conference system, *Skype*. As we were using the conference call feature, we started to use the "chat" feature on the *Skype* program to write notes and make comments to each other while talking on-line – then we would email the compiled notes out to each other after the discussion. This added another layer to our conversation and analysis because as people added their comments for all to read in 'real time,' it was like we could hear each others' thoughts while someone was talking. We eventually incorporated *Google Docs* into these Skype sessions so that we

could all be typing on the same document simultaneously. Again, we could literally and figuratively *read* how each of us was responding to the spoken conversation. Google Docs had the added feature that we could each return individually to view and amend the document later. It was still a "living document" until we all determined otherwise.

The success of this collaborative *Skype, Google Doc, shared notes* solution may have evolved from the level of trust and strength of relationships we had developed through the face-to-face encounters over the year - *we know each other now, and our proclivities*; but, acknowledging the "real-time" preference was an important element to developing our collaborative research methods. Also, sharing our collaborative notes was a sign of how much we trusted each other. The document was for all of us to review, reflect on and go back to in the future – these were implicitly understood as co-authored, co-owned notes that represented thoughts in development. As related further in this chapter, these were sensitive discussions at times – eventually revealing ourselves in vulnerable ways as we shared what we did *not* like about our program set ups or certain difficult situations we found ourselves in. Although the end result was that we were sharing our personal and group notes with each other electronically, the feeling was that they were not left somewhere for just anyone to read, see, and possibly misinterpret away from the conversation context.

In the following section, I expose how we evolved from surface level discussion to deeper, problematic dialogues through our face-to-face dialogues. Ultimately, this is how our group ethic of care developed through creating spaces for dialogue that provided multiple cycles of research, action, and reflection.

Data Collection & Analysis through Face-to-Face Dialogues

In PAR, the on-going, iterative processes of data collection and analysis propel the research; therefore, I combine our collaborative data collection and analysis that produced the Fredericton conference presentation and proceeding and carried us beyond it. This participatory process is subdivided below into the three categories of *before*, *around*, and *after* the conference presentation in Fredericton, each category focussing primarily on one of the overarching design phases of *research*, *action*, and *reflection*. Throughout these sections, I add additional subheadings to point out some of the emerging sites of tension identified by our learning group and to identify the directions we took for further investigation and deeper learning. While some of my colleagues may concur with my account, I do not want to suggest that we always arrived at consensus. The nature of both storytelling and PAR leaves open the possibility for multiple narratives, and I do not wish to speak for the other directors but bring into focus the interests of the learning group by embedding quotes from the other directors. As we passed through multiple phases of research, action, and reflection, we increased our ability to articulate our concerns and find means to discuss them collectively, so some of the directors' direct quotes are not in sequential time order but are drawn from recorded dialogue that occurred on April 9, 2010, in Vancouver or direct quotes from group notes from long face-to-face dialogues before, around, and after the conference. Through reflective analysis of our conference proceedings document we shifted from the intuitive mode to the analytic mode through the process of articulating our thoughts first in spoken dialogue and second in written word to create our research methodology for future studies.

Participatory research before the conference: Identifying our needs

In my proposal to the directors and in the ethics form, I stated three major goals of this research project, which stemmed from my reflections on the 2008 Radical Humanities coast to coast symposium:

> Through an e-dialogue and a panel presentation, we will aim to 1) develop meaningful and sustained organisational relationships, 2) deepen our understanding of ourselves and our programs in relation to our academic communities, and 3) expand our experiences to other academics and community agencies.

I had almost immediate and positive responses from Halifax, Edmonton, Vancouver, Thunder Bay, and Calgary programs to participate in both the directors' forum and the conference. Nanaimo's director was passing on duties to a new co-ordinator but agreed to join the directors' forum even though time constraints prevented attending the conference. One of Toronto's co-directors also confirmed participation in the directors' forum but could not travel to Fredericton for financial, time, and health concerns. The Victoria co-ordinator was able to confirm participation in both the dialogue forum and the conference by the spring of 2010. Ottawa's program had switched location since the 2008 Radical Humanities symposium and the new director was pleased to hear of other programs in the country, quickly agreeing to participate in the dialogue to contribute updates about Ottawa's *Discovery University* and learn from others.

Two participants started the research and passed it on to new directors as shifts occurred at local levels, which demonstrated that the project was of importance to the programs for the value of connecting to and learning from others. Thunder Bay's founding director, Christine Van Barneveld, originally began in the dialogue forum while she was on sabbatical but passed on the duties to the incoming director in July of 2010; their new director, Doug West, had previously been part of the Thunder Bay program as an instructor and had also participated in teaching courses in Victoria's UNI 201 alumni program, so he was new to the position but not to the program. Ottawa's growing program had a shift in directors in the summer of 2010 as well, and their new coordinator, Jill Zmud, was informed of our project and participated in contributing information for the conference and its proceedings but could not attend in person.

Although I had originally only planned for one face-to-face dialogue sometime during the Fredericton conference (September 30 – October 2, 2010), more opportunities arose for some of the directors to meet in person during the one year of data collection. These occasions were initiated by a number of directors – reconfirming a participatory commitment to the collaborative research process. In February of 2010, Mary Lu Redden emailed a number of the directors in the West about setting up program visits. She had been asked by the Halifax program's Board of Directors what kind of "Continuing Education" she would like to engage in, as *Halifax Humanities* had a specific budget line for her professional development. Her answer was to find a way to travel to other sister programs and engage in much needed discussion with the directors. In her email to me, she stated:

> I want to propose something to them. After searching out the fundraising conferences I might attend, and an academic conference in the States that someone proposed, I've come to realize that what I would most benefit from is conversation with other program directors. Therefore I'm going to propose that I take a trip in April to visit you in Calgary, Margot in Vancouver, possibly the program in Victoria and then the one in Nanaimo. This is only possible if I do it inexpensively and while classes for these programs are still running. (February 15, 2010)

Around this time, I also heard from the director in Edmonton, who was responding to the email I had sent out confirming our conference acceptance:

> I'm definitely still interested in contributing to and attending this conference, but I feel like I should qualify my "confirmation of attendance" by saying that I'm not sure I can afford the trip. (February 26, 2010)

Balancing the interest and expressed need to have meaningful and truly collegial conversations with limited funding and time meant that we had to work in concert to create spaces for dialogue. Like *Halifax Humanities*, Calgary's program had a specific budget line for the professional development of the director and executive committee. One of the main interests of the Executive Committee members of *Humanities 101: An Odyssey* was the development of evaluation strategies, so I received support to travel and meet with directors to collect and learn about evaluation methods being practiced at other program sites. Both Mary Lu and I had the opportunity to increase our collective learning

with colleagues by coordinating our professional development resources, and as we soon found out, the other directors were likewise committed to making this happen.

After a series of emails and phone calls, we arranged a schedule of face-to-face meetings for March and April (see Table 4 below), which initiated the first two goals of the research project. Mary Lu Redden was also in touch with an American *Clemente Course* director, Lela Hilton, who was able to ferry over from Washington to join us, although she was not part of the upcoming conference in Fredericton. By sharing the schedule with all of the Canadian directors, not just those traveling, everyone was informed of the upcoming meetings to promote a sense of the collective group. We were still getting to know each other and had new directors joining the developing conversation, so introductions and geographical references helped situate names, programs and places.

Table 4: Participation in face-to-face dialogues before the conference

PLACE & DATES	**PEOPLE**	**DIRECT PROGRAM KNOWLEDGE (opportunity for sharing & learning)**
Edmonton: March 16- 17	Joanne Muzak Laurie Meredith	U of Alberta's *HUM 101* (Edmonton) *Humanities 101: An Odyssey* (Calgary)
Victoria: April 6	Becky Cory Laurie Meredith Lela Hilton	U of Victoria's UNI 101 & UNI 201 *Humanities 101: An Odyssey* (Calgary) *Clemente Course* (Washington State)
Nanaimo: April 7	Mark Blackell Becky Cory Laurie Meredith Lela Hilton Mary Lu Roffey-Redden Margot Leigh Butler & Paul Woodhouse	*Nanaimo Clemente Course in the Humanities* U of Victoria's UNI 101 & UNI 201 *Humanities 101: An Odyssey* (Calgary) *Clemente Course* (Washington) *Halifax Humanities* U of British Columbia's *HUM* (Vancouver)
Vancouver: April 8 & 9	Margot Leigh Butler & Paul Woodhouse Becky Cory Laurie Meredith Mary Lu Roffey-Redden	U of British Columbia's *HUM* (Vancouver) U of Victoria's UNI 101 & UNI 201 *Humanities 101: An Odyssey* (Calgary) *Halifax Humanities*

Calgary: April 12 - 14	Laurie Meredith Mary Lu Roffey-Redden Joanne Muzak (via Skype)	*Humanities 101: An Odyssey* (Calgary) *Halifax Humanities* U of Alberta's *HUM 101*

These occasions to travel, lodge, and commune over meals and discussions added to creating spaces of trust for our learning group to explore issues and concerns. The multiple opportunities for each of these participating directors/coordinators to compare and contrast program details and histories in person and at multiple program sites in such a short period of time increased our knowledge building and sharing early in the data collection and analysis phase, propelling some of the learning group participants through a first cycle of research, action, and reflection. Also, as information was shared and collected in dialogue, subsequent meetings built on the growing body of collective knowledge which centred us on our core concerns. Evidently, this collaborative group learning element was particularly strong for those participants who could attend more than one of the face-to-face dialogues.

Recurring themes, issues and concerns surfaced and resurfaced in more than one dialogue and among different participants. For example, the dialogue among Becky, Margot, Mary Lu, Paul and me that took place on April 9, 2010, was recorded through notes and audio taping, lasting approximately five hours, and came after three consecutive days of visits to multiple program sites, so we found ourselves quoting ourselves from previous conversations to further our understanding and analysis. An excerpt from that dialogue reveals how we set our agenda for our discussion based on the expressed needs of the participants and how, in this way, some participants experienced

more than one cycle of research, action, and reflection within this pre-conference timeframe:

> Becky: So, it seems like two of the most important things are evaluation and reporting, TA training/volunteer coordinating. I think we should start with evaluation because it's something that a lot of people wanted. Also, Margot, do you want to add your priorities?
>
> Margot: One thing that concerns me a lot is just how our programs can influence what's happening in education and in the university. It's about not being isolated; it's about being connected and having an influence on what's being done in educational practices. That's what I want.
>
> Becky: Can I add this to "Social agency/social movement." You wrote down social agency?
>
> Laurie: I did. It can be formal or informal – academic or community-based.
>
> Margot: What I want to talk about specifically is at the university not in the field of education. We are doing all this astonishing stuff but we don't have a way to talk about it. For instance, Greg was at a forum at SFU [Simon Fraser University] and they were talking about us. And Greg was sitting there with Sue who does our Woodward's study group and they knew that we were being described as the ideal and he couldn't find a way to enter Hum into the conversation. We are some kind of idealization that people don't even know we exist. We're what's wanted. But because we're not engaged in these discourses, we're not at their conferences, we're not giving papers, we're not talking about it formally. Laurie's is the first serious academic work. We're at the beginning of the social movement at the university but nobody knows we're here. We don't have a presence. We don't have an influence. I think we have a lot of the answers to the questions that they're just struggling to form.
>
> Laurie: One of the points from that is – you were talking about influence – a lot of it is actually having the vocabulary to describe the philosophy, the pedagogy of what we're doing. And that's where by having this kind of exchange we can actually get to the point, so that we, ourselves, can communicate it better.
>
> Margot: Yes.
>
> Becky: Yes, and I was... sorry, Mary Lu...
>
> Mary Lu: I lay in bed last night thinking about the difference between our curriculum and your curriculum and it's huge. That also plays into the idea of our place within the university. I see our program, in particularly, as a statement about

the incredible inherent value of the humanities. At a time when, particularly in Halifax, when the humanities are regarded as frivolous, as icing, just decorative...

Margot: …disposable…

Mary Lu: and disposable... decorative. We get looked at as … Someone said to me once, "We're elder hostel for the poor." As if we're mere entertainment. I know our curriculum could look like that but I think there is something inherent about humanities education …the inherent worth. We're so humanities based. That we could say something to the universities about the inherent worth of things like literature and philosophy... But I am realizing, Margot, that that doesn't necessarily fit the way that you guys are doing things because you're so much more politically engaged, it seems to me, or politically aware. You know what I'm saying?

Margot: But we do read some of the texts that are within the humanities canon.

Mary Lu: Maybe I'm just not so sure about what you're doing.

Becky: Let's pause this. I've put it under "educational discourse."

Mary Lu: Yes, and we'll see it goes in different directions.

Margot: I think that our unclarity about it is part of what's "hobbling" us. Sorry, Becky...

Becky: No, go ahead.

Margot: If what we're advocating for is a consistent and time honoured tradition of teaching the humanities then we're making a certain kind of argument. And if we're advocating for something else then that will matter because right now, all across the States, the traditional humanities curriculum is under siege. So are we advocating for it and are we a proving ground for it? That could be true. But we're also doing other things as well.

Mary Lu: Can we find a common link then if we've got different versions? ... but are they different versions that at its core is the same?

Laurie: I'm not troubled that it is being offered in different ways. I think that's why we need to have that kind of discussion. You are both getting at the same point, which is engagement. You talked about isolation. I think that isolation is a huge thing – if you are politically isolated as a citizen or you're emotionally isolated... Isolation seems to be this thread that I keep hearing from our students.

Mary Lu: ...or perhaps culturally isolated.

Laurie: You could put so many other adjectives along with isolation.

Margot: Interesting. I sometime say that Hum is many things to many people. As long as we don't articulate what it is in particular terms it will continue to be so. As soon as we start saying that this is critical pedagogy and we are "Freirean" then we won't be in some other ... It's a really interesting political problem, in terms of discourse, 'cause as soon as we start to articulate it and make arguments from a particular perspective with a critical vocabulary then we get stitched into that discourse, so I think we've got a really great problem which is how to remain plural but still be able to engage.

Laurie: Arguably that is the problem of the humanities across Western society. How do they maintain their position? They don't have to stay focused on the text, the canon, and still achieve the same level of intellectually challenging ...

Margot: It was interesting yesterday that our students made the assumption that if they're studying the canon it would be just as receptors. So it was so great, Mary Lu, when you said, "Oh, no! It's all treated critically." That's a holdover of certain ideas of "What counts as education?" That the grades go in and your job is to swallow and not engage and challenge.

Laurie: Institutions are starting to see that – that they have to be adapting to that way of teaching, that way of responding to a very different group of people. The fact that you're looking at media studies, for example, plays into how they are reading their experience as students, who they are, their identity.

Becky: So, I guess I want to check in. Do we want to continue this conversation or do we want to set it aside and come back to it?

Margot: Let's set it aside. It's not going to go away! This topic will come up again, and again!

Mary Lu: We may find a focus into it. I don't feel I have the language. I don't have the critical theory that you guys all have; so, therefore, I don't know how to find my way into talking about this the way I'd actually like to. Maybe these other things will start to shape that a bit.

Becky: Ya. I think we should start with that "evaluation" concrete piece. My sense is that we just start with that and check that off.

Mary Lu: I suspect that all of us would find that what we have in common... the one thing that we don't ever want it to be is "our students under the microscope." That's just a given. To find a way to evaluate that does not do that - That is the problem.

Margot: When you say evaluation planning do you mean evaluation by the students or of the program? Or both? Or more than that? For funding? Why do we need to talk about this now? Is it for funding?

> Becky: I don't know. Mary Lu, I'll put you on the spot for that one.
>
> Mary Lu: Well, for me there is the immediate problem of being funded by [charitable foundations] and having to report outcomes. The second thing, in order to continue to find support for the program I need to be able to say that this is worth doing. It's making a difference in the lives of the students. So I need to find ways that are believable to people who don't sit in the class. It's so obvious to me! So there is that.
>
> Becky: So, how to communicate the value of what's going on in the class.
>
> Mary Lu: Yes. How to communicate the value of what's going on in the class and the lives of the students so that people want to support this. And the ongoing refining and improving what we do. What's creating the best experience for the students in the class? That's always ongoing for me.
>
> (Group dialogue, April 9, 2010)

Further data analysis of the issues we raised during these program visits is raised again in Chapter Five; but, here in this brief excerpt of a five hour long dialogue, many of our recurring issues are present and intertwined; such as,

1. Curriculum design differences in response to program contexts (physical, institutional, and otherwise);
2. Evaluation and reporting as they relate to funding and sustainability; and,
3. Philosophical and pedagogical discourses and practices.

At one point in our April 9 conversation, Becky said, "I'd love to see your PhD help us to name some of the things that we're all circling around in all these different ways." And as Mary Lu pointed out, even for the directors, we needed to also clarify *what it is that we do* at this early stage of data collection. The program visits with multiple directors present at the same time provided many of the participants with firsthand knowledge of program differences and similarities. By engaging in group learning, the individual goals of participants could be shared, often echoed, and then realized together.

Below, I highlight through subheadings and describe in greater detail these specific issues that participants identified as recurring themes through group dialogue during these many Canadian program visits in the spring of 2010. I purposely continue to link the discussion themes, made evident in the dialogue excerpts, as the directors presented many of these issues as interrelated.

Canadian program networking.

When I met up with Joanne for coffee before attending Edmonton's HUM101 class in March, 2010, we picked up conversations from the 2008 symposium, talking about evaluation methods and measures of "success." Her concern about putting Canadian programs side-by-side for comparison had to do with the risk of quantifying "success" by retention numbers: "This particular session only has a few students left in it – now there are only three attending regularly – and, yet, it has been one of the most successful for engaging students in meaningful discussions and contributions" (Personal field notes, March 16, 2010). When I got to class that evening, I could see how their "Community Mapping Project" was indeed a huge personal success for the students, tutors, staff of the Boyle Street Education Centre and teachers alike. People took personal responsibility for the project – from the start of the process to the end. While I was there, they were discussing how they would be making a public presentation of their project and sharing the launch of their web creation on Google Maps. The energy and excitement was infectious, and the genuineness of the project had strong potential to extend to social learning as each student identified an area of Edmonton that had personal significance to them and commented on changes over time, bringing a sense of identity to place. The

principles they were applying from Community Service Learning (CSL) shared some of the participant engagement goals of PAR, so I could see how what these students were doing for their course could be powerful for others to learn about and that the end result – as amazing as it was – was only part of the learning goal.

Joanne and I renewed the topic of establishing a national "umbrella" group for the Canadian programs – a network of sorts, brainstorming ways that we could showcase projects like the one they were working on. Again, we speculated on how the same obstacles of time and money could be overcome as we admitted to having difficulties getting our own websites updated with information from and for our own groups. As Joanne's emails to me in February testified, her schedule was extremely busy as she was also a sessional instructor in addition to carrying the responsibilities of being the Hum 101 director and, at times, the instructor as well. I left Edmonton with Joanne's permission to find ways to share these ideas and projects with the Calgary program and the other directors in April.

This discussion was also in anticipation of meeting with yet another director on Vancouver Island in April. Mary Lu had been in touch with an American director, Lela Hilton, from a *Clemente Course* in Washington State, who ferried over to Victoria where we both met up with Becky Cory to visit a UNI 201 non-credit alumni class. Incidentally, the course Lela and I attended was being taught by the future director of Thunder Bay's program, Dr. Doug West, who would eventually participate in my PhD research and travel with us to Fredericton. He was presenting a course called, "Politics, society and the media: Canadian perspectives," and citing such media thinkers as George Grant, Harold Innis, and Marshal McLuhan and drawing connections with the political and

philosophical work by Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*. Even though this was their first class on the topic, conversation quickly ignited amongst the UNI 101 alumni. Experiencing the classroom in action and feeling the same kind of positive learning vibe intuitively reconfirmed for Lela and me that what we were all doing had strong connections despite logistical differences that we were beginning to tease out.

Over dinner in Victoria, Becky and I had the opportunity to share collegially and honestly with our American colleague, Lela Hilton, why our Canadian programs had not pursued affiliation with Earl Shorris' *Clemente Course in the Humanities* because our local contexts determined the variety of structures and curriculums of our programs. We also expressed some of the concerns we (the Canadian participants) had raised at the 2008 symposium in Calgary, when Earl Shorris had given his lecture. Even then we had already begun to expose some of the differences between our Canadian programs and knew that none of our programs could align to the Bard Course; for example, many of the Canadian programs relied heavily on volunteers to instruct courses, many purposely explored beyond the traditional Humanities canon, and very few programs offered credit for the courses. Many expressed that they had felt reprimanded by Earl for not following the curriculum and paying instructors. Lela frankly shared that the American programs also regularly discuss these same issues and tensions around following Earl Shorris' model, which underscored why she was working collaboratively with *Clemente Course in the Humanities* to establish a worldwide network of Clemente programs (http://clementecourse.org/). She talked about the need to have a place on the web to facilitate sharing of ideas, evaluation forms, events and course materials. This echoed conclusions that the Canadian directors had reached at the 2008 symposium and the

topics Joanne and I had recently covered in Edmonton. I read her gesture to come in person and meet with some of the Canadian directors as a positive step towards building important relationships between the programs – recognizing the strength of solidarity. Becky and I intuitively knew, however, that the defensive sentiment after the Calgary symposium in 2008 may still linger. As we had not yet met with the other directors, we did not know their perceptions, and we wanted Lela to understand the context of our positions. As we exchanged these ideas and concerns, the openness and sincerity of our conversation immediately put us at ease with each other and set the tone for the rest of our visit with the other directors.

Our American colleague joined us for the trip to Nanaimo, where we met with Mark Blackell, the former director of the *Nanaimo Clemente Course* at Vancouver Island University campus. In a corner of the campus cafeteria, we had a brief but intense meeting with directors from Nanaimo, Victoria, Vancouver, Calgary, Halifax and Washington. As we went around the table describing our programs and highlighting differences and similarities, it was extremely difficult to close down the discussion to get over to their end of year celebration. This was a significant discussion for many of us because we had not all been together since the 2008 symposium in Calgary. It was like an intense brainstorming session as we each brought and exchanged updates, pamphlets, fundraising suggestions, evaluation methods, student publications and general encouragement and enthusiasm. None of us were pushing for conformity, but we were clearly admiring the strategies being used to run our respective programs.

Being in the program classrooms and talking with the students, instructors and directors reconfirmed the level of commitment everyone brought to their work. Struggles

were expressed: Some described commuting long distances from home to class; others described balancing additional teaching and workloads with program responsibilities; uncertain financial donations threatened sustainability. But overall, there was an overwhelming sense of passion and creativity infusing the conversation. The welcoming environment, the natural ease of conversation, the constant flow of ideas and experience began to characterize our dialogue. In an email to the group of directors present on Vancouver Island, Lela wrote, "Thanks to all of you for being so welcoming, inspiring, candid and fiercely passionate about your work. I was so sorry to leave you in that cafe in Nanaimo, but left inspired and warmed by our time together" (April 12, 2010).

The other important reason to establish a network stemmed from the growing interest to connect students from one program to another. As we visited program sites, we also had the opportunity to present our respective programs to the students. Becky, Mary Lu and I presented our respective programs to the Vancouver Hum class. Just as I had felt in Victoria and Nanaimo, meeting with the students and getting the same positive learning vibe from the classes generated a sense of familiarity. Students were eager to hear the differences each of our programs offered – some were surprised to hear that the Calgary *Humanities 101: An Odyssey* program had the possibility of credit but questioned the use of it if it was below first year standing, others were impressed with *Halifax Humanities'* core curriculum that provided students with hard copies of well known texts and some commented on Victoria's UNI 101 combination of humanities and social sciences offerings. Students also found out about the similarities of all the programs attempting to address food, transportation and childcare needs. As each of us gave our presentation, the other directors listened and witnessed our particular public speaking

mannerisms. Having spent the day before intensely reflecting on our differences and pushing our personal understanding of our programs, I found myself presenting not only the logistics of the Calgary program to the Vancouver Hum class but also infusing it with quotes from Paulo Freire – one of my influential thinkers. These were prepared but informal presentations, and the ease of dialogue between the directors was also apparent in our discussions with the students. It occurred to me later, in conversation, that we were all very authentic in how we were presenting ourselves to each other and to the students of our programs. Getting to know each other in the context of our different program settings was instrumental in assessing this authenticity.

Mary Lu, in turn, helped Calgary students understand the extended community of programs. She presented information about *Halifax Humanities* to our class and gave a quick overview of the week we had spent together on the West Coast, highlighting how although each program was slightly different, she had experienced the same excitement in each of the classes. She explained the "Great Books" focus of *Halifax Humanities* and also delighted in participating in one of Dr. Paul Papin's classes where we were studying *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, by Douglas Adams. Through our class discussion, the breadth and scope of the different approaches to programming was experienced by not just the directors, but also the students, instructor, tutors and mentors.

Joanne could not travel in person to Calgary in April, but instead made a far more significant appearance by including participants of Edmonton's HUM 101 winter course in a Skype session with our Calgary participants of *Humanities 101: An Odyssey*, Edmonton's program had just finished their "Community Mapping Project" using Google Earth, which I had seen in progress when I had visited with Joanne in March. Their

instructor, director, and a few students explained their final project via our Skype video conference call. Calgary and Edmonton participants asked questions of each others' programs and discussions about similarities and differences continued after the conference call ended. Sharing this moment with students, teachers, staff and directors helped us realize how our localized community of learners were part of something bigger. It also allowed participants to see how we could create products of our learning process and connect our learning to others'.

The series of face-to-face encounters were extremely important moments in the process of establishing research methods for the collection of data and for developing program relations and strengthening relationships between directors. We got to know each other and how we interact together, creating the foundation for trusting relationships. Most of all, it was an opportunity for us to realize that what we were doing together went far beyond the context of one research project and opened up the potential for many more. Investing time and money into these coordinated visits contributed to honouring the relationships in development, strengthening them and extending these relationships to others. Subsequent emails and phone exchanges were opportunities for us to share some of the document resources we used in our respective programs (from evaluation forms, application forms and interview questions to germane articles used in class or for our own research and developmental interests). I emailed some of my unpublished research materials, including my proposal and candidacy paper, and my web research of the programs (which I referenced in Chapter Two). We broadened our knowledge of not only our respective programs but also of our particular academic fields of study and research. The need for a form of network was acknowledged, particularly to

share the program resources more fluidly, but also to strengthen the program relations that we were developing and further investigate the surfacing issues.

Contextualized curriculum.

Through our program visits, we were learning with and from each other, beginning to articulate the *how and why we do what we do*; but, as Mary Lu said, we still needed to clarify *what* we were each doing. Some of the basic logistics of our program details remained unknown or, worse, misunderstood because of our own preconceptions or simply because our program contexts had changed over time, influencing what we were doing. Everything from where classes and offices were located (on a main campus or in the community or both), who taught what curriculum (credit or non-credit), when and how often classes were held for how long, and what funding sources (municipal or provincial, public or private, monetary or in-kind, etc.) influenced our contexts. These continued to be standard first points of entry for our discussions, and our similarities and differences could most easily be understood in these surface level logistics that had considerable impact on the other central issues we were raising and "circling" around. By visiting the program sites, we could experience how our programming choices were linked to our local contexts through the affiliations with particular institutions or departments and through the relationships with community agencies or individual people (directors, instructors, administrators, alumni and committee members). Many of these seemingly innocuous differences were what distinguished us from each other and what significantly contributed to how we were describing the perceived and sometimes elusive notions of program "success."

We knew these to be contentious points from the 2008 symposium as some student participants had expressed how important it was to be on campus because it had been a foreign world to them, a place they dared not go because they did not feel they belonged; by going to class on campus, their self-esteem went up and they could break down some of the perceived barriers about place/space. Even some of the names of our programs suggest ways in which we are aware of the ambiguities of what we are offering and where: *Discovery University*, *University in the Community*, *University 101*, and the many varieties of *Humanities* (101) (See Table 5 below).

Table 5: Program locations and credit options

CITY	PROGRAM and Courses	LOCATION	CREDIT COURSES
Nanaimo, B.C.	*Nanaimo Clemente Course in the Humanities*	Office and classes off-campus	Credits through Vancouver Island University
Victoria, B.C.	*University 101* (UNI 101: Humanities course; UNI 102: Social Sciences course; UNI 201: Alumni month-long courses)	Office and classes on main University of Victoria campus (formerly on U of Vic downtown campus)	
Vancouver, B.C	*Humanities 101: Community Programme* (Hum 101; Hum 201; Writing; Alumni study groups)	Office and classes on University of British Columbia main campus; alumni & study groups off campus (DTES)	
Calgary, AB	*Storefront 101: Discovery University* (2003 – 2008)	Office off campus Classes on (Bow Valley College) and off campus	Credits through St. Mary's University College
	Humanities 101: An Odyssey (2009-2010)	Office and classes on St. Mary's University College campus	
	Community Learning in the Humanities (2010 -	No office; Classes at the Calgary Public Library	

Edmonton, AB	*Humanities 101* (2008 -	Office on University of Alberta campus; Classes off campus (social agency and shelter)	
Thunder Bay, ON	*Humanities 101: Lakehead University*	Office and classes on campus	
Toronto, ON	*University in the Community*	Office off campus (Workers' Educational Association); Classes on and off campus	
Ottawa, ON	*Discovery University*	Office off campus (social agency); Classes on and off campus	
Halifax, NS	*Halifax Humanities 101* (Halifax Humanities; Alumni Seminar)	Office off campus (church); Classes off campus (Public Library)	

Of all the programs, *Halifax Humanities* has the strongest link to the traditional "Classics" and "Great Books" canon of the Humanities, but does not do required writing assignments like other programs do. Although the *Nanaimo Clemente Course in the Humanities* carries the most obvious reference to the Shorris model, their curriculum has not been restricted to the Shorris model; in conversation in Nanaimo April 7, 2010, Mark identified the need to arrange the curriculum around the specializations of professors. Previously, Anne McDonagh had also told me in a phone conversation that the breadth of their *University in the Community* course offerings was the result of who they could find for instructors;"We offer what the instructors can teach" (Personal communication, January 27, 2010). Sometimes the names of our programs are vestiges of early curriculum histories and do not aptly describe the current content of the curriculum. Margot describes Vancouver's *Humanities 101: Community Programme* as now having

more of a Cultural Studies based curriculum and that the program is more commonly called, "Hum," and people affectionately say, "We're not just Humming along!"

While I was in Victoria, Becky and I discussed at length the pros and cons of offering credit courses as well as the symbolic value of holding classes *on* the university campus but still separate from "regular" students. Offering credit courses required a minimum number of hours of instruction to meet "accreditation" standards; but often many of the non-credit programs offered more than the standard "39 hours per three credit course," making this comparison a mute point. Nanaimo was offering credit options, but their program was off campus – as had often been the case for *Storefront 101* in Calgary before *Humanities 101: An Odyssey*. This second Calgary iteration had a campus location for both the office and the classes, but the small liberal arts institution of St. Mary's University College was housed in a historic park like setting – not in the least a foreboding large, maze like campus. Later, in our recorded group dialogue in Vancouver, after we had visited Nanaimo's program, Becky expressed her perspective:

> Becky: Part of my experience is that we've done both. We've had the downtown location. What I heard so strongly – we were so worried about moving on campus – was, "Oh, we're going to lose people! People aren't going to come. It's going to change the program." It did change the program, but I'd say all for the better. I don't see anything that we've lost.
>
> Margot: How long were you downtown?
>
> Becky: Two years.
>
> Margot: In what space?
>
> Becky: In the university space, the U of Vic downtown campus.
>
> Laurie: But it's still U of Vic.
>
> Becky: It was, absolutely. My feelings about it come from hearing students speak so strongly that they value being on campus – that experience of being a student

> on campus. It's so valuable. In the transition, I've had the opportunity to see both. Having this space [on main campus] – it's all our own. When we were downtown we did have space – nobody was down there. Downtown, they felt more marginalized; another place of being marginalized – It's like, "We're putting you out here away from the campus, away from the university." Even hearing some of the people from Nanaimo on Wednesday – "Oh, up there at the university" – there is a sense of not being part of it. Here, they leave the course feeling they're part of it. They're part of U of Vic. They're part of the campus, the student community. They're not being marked out as those weird students that go to that other weird place. They eat in the same cafeteria. There is something about that.
>
> Laurie: Do you think they have been able to rid themselves of the sense of anxiety of being "other"?
>
> Becky: Yeah, I think so, I really think so. They go to the computer help desk the same as any other student. They go to the library reference desk. Over the term they slowly develop the confidence and the sense of entitlement to go to those places.
>
> (Group dialogue, April 9, 2010)

The directors have heard varying preferences from the students about credit/non-credit, on/off campus. It was important for some students of the programs to say to others that they were going to the university – like an identity building capital; for some, it did not matter if it was for credit or not, but others felt that if they were doing the same work as other "regular" students (readings, assignments, etc.), they should get credit. Again, the ambiguity of credit versus non-credit status played more into how our programs were logistically or "academically valued" through the university affiliations; and, yet some directors prefer the freedom of not having to conform or account to institutions on curriculum matters. Significantly, Nanaimo and Calgary's programs were, at the time, the only Canadian programs with university credit options, but neither of these programs was any closer to getting into secure university budget lines, making outside funding essential

for sustainability and our extended community relations as much if not more important than the institutional ones.

Not surprisingly, the context of our geographic locations determine our curriculum to a large degree; but it was how acutely aware we were of these factors which made this a significant point to investigate in terms of our contextualized curriculums. Mary Lu related, for instance, that even though there were six academic institutions affiliated with Halifax Humanities, the program office was housed in a church and the classes were run in the public library on Gottingen Street in the north end of Halifax. Classes were held in the afternoons from 3:30 – 5:30 because people needed to catch buses, which ran infrequently after certain hours. There was also a concern for safety, as Mary Lu said,

> It's something I have to think about. There was a sex-trade worker whose body was dumped 20 metres from our office. There are sometimes shots. I have no benefits, no disability; I don't even qualify for EI. I'm only in the neighbourhood in the daylight. (Group dialogue, April 9, 2010)

Particularly in the winter months, the warmth of the library – in contrast to the weather outside – creates a space where students and professors gather to engage, as Mary Lu often said, "with the beauty of the texts." As Mary Lu related in her first day of class speech that she sent me, the focus on the text is central to their curriculum and takes on four reflective parts:

1. Student alone with the text.
2. Student with the text and the teacher.
3. Student with the teacher, text and other students.
4. And then the student goes back to the text.

Margot commented in dialogue, that is was "very text based;" and Mary Lu clarified it through a kind of geography metaphor: "I use this image of climbing Mount Everest with a guide, but maybe what we're doing is we're setting up base camp. We're not going to be able to make that ascent without some good equipment with us." The "good equipment" that we were brainstorming in our directors' dialogue about curriculum and pedagogical practices took the form of teacher guides and texts, and we discussed how supplementing with note-taking skills and written assignments added more tools for the landscape.

Between our programs, our physical and metaphorical landscapes were different; although we could share the tools we were each using, we had to determine their purpose for our contexts. Wanting us to have a better understanding of the Vancouver context and the life of many of the Hum students, Margot gave Mary Lu and me a walking tour of the Downtown Eastside (DTES). Not being from the city, Mary Lu and I had much to learn about the fast-paced change in the area. We could see instantly why Margot was so passionate about the gentrification process well underway – a process which is displacing Hum's participants, and why she had so many concerns about the practices of Community Service Learning (CSL) projects being conducted in the community. She related how UBC students would be required for course work to come to the DTES to "conduct research" and then leave, without establishing long term relationships with the participants of their study or waiting to see the results and impact; she said,

> It makes it really difficult, really hard to do Hum. They have bad practices. They use them [Downtown Eastsiders] as volunteers and then they don't help them and support them. They use them up and then don't support them. That's where it's a real problem for us. (Group dialogue, April 9, 2010)

Even as we toured Carnegie Library, where many Hum alumni groups meet, a DTES resident stopped us and asked us who we were and what we were doing there. The parallel of Mary Lu and me as visitors to Vancouver and the message Margot had been explaining about UBC students coming in for a day of research was made abundantly clear.

The importance of Hum strategically locating their office and classes on the UBC campus and also maintaining study groups and alumni programs in the DTES community played into Margot's insistence on developing positive relationships between the community and the academic world, using the metaphor of a "hinge."

> Mary Lu: I keep going back to that conversation we had ... I could sense potential logger head material when we were in Calgary because we were so obviously coming at curriculum so differently. You bring this amazing awareness of the political element involved in this that I so deeply appreciate! I emailed my husband and my chairman this morning saying, "Three hours on the Downtown East Side and I'm so gob smacked I hardly know where to begin." Because I see now why...
>
> Margot: Why we're so political?
>
> Mary Lu: I see now why you are so political. That was an amazing experience for me. Gottingen Street, which is my DTES, is three blocks long with maybe 20 people. You know what I mean? It is like a mini version of what you deal with, and so I don't feel the impact of it.
>
> Margot: But we don't have drive by shootings on the DTES!
>
> Mary Lu: The reality of your students' lives obviously pounds down on you in a way that is less likely for me because the students are scattered all over the Halifax Regional municipality. There isn't that concentration, so I don't have a "peering into their lives" that you do. I don't think I ever will because I'm not a very political person in the sense of having been involved in ... But I think because of you, you've made me more aware of the real issues that are involved in our students' lives and the fact that there is an element of that in our work that we cannot be blind to. And I have been rather blind to it. So, I am deeply appreciative of that. I have not thought about things like power relations. They're in me because of my own academic experience of not finishing my PhD. ... I've experienced power relations in my life, but I tend not to be clear and articulate

> about it. They are simmering in an incoherent way. You've helped me be more political.
>
> (Group dialogue, April 9, 2010)

By sharing this reality with us, Margot illuminated Hum's contextualized and very politically based curriculum:

> Margot: I think my teaching on Hum, the way I teach and the way that I design the courses really comes out of Cultural Studies. When I was doing the PhD in the Cultural Studies area, I didn't feel like I belonged a lot of the time; but, now I see it had a huge influence on me. I think if you give people critical languages and these vocabularies, it is so liberating. It acknowledges what people already know is really valuable and important. It doesn't teach people what to think; it's just HOWs. We get lots of assignments and I read some of them and think, "Wow. This seems like it comes from a different planet, Right? I mean, I can't believe one of our students thinks this!" There are racisms; there are deep classisms, deep prejudices. If you're going to ask "how" questions, it's going to come up! It's good. It shows that they don't need to reply in certain ways, lefty ways. (Group dialogue, April 9, 2010)

Margot developed the Hum curriculum around post-structuralist "how" frameworks that created the opportunity for students to explore fundamental human questions that drew from their personal encounters; *Halifax Humanities*'s curriculum used the humanities canon to examine the existential issues that had long captivated the interest of philosophers and poets; both valued the personal search for better understanding ourselves and our contexts.

Participatory projects & alumni programs

Although *Halifax Humanities* and *HUM* had different learning approaches to curriculum design, both programs ran for eight month courses and had many instructors come in to the classroom over that time:

> Margot: With new people coming in all the time, and all the changes, and students dropping off, and new volunteers coming in and a new teacher every week, there is a huge amount of change. That's something that most of the university or most courses don't deal with. Someone calculated that our students have more teachers in one year than average students have in their whole BA. So they're experts at having different teachers.

This was not the structure for other programs; for example, *Humanities 101: An Odyssey* continued to structure courses with one instructor for the full semester, just as *Storefront 101* had done. But unlike *Storefront 101*, course curriculums were intentionally designed with interdisciplinary scopes, demanding well versed instructors. The consistency of having one instructor and maintaining a connection to the whole course curriculum allowed assignments to take on a more holistic learning approach. Our winter 2010 instructor, Dr. Paul Papin, had given us an "iconobiographical" collage assignment, whereby we were creating artistic expressions of our "personal philosophy of the meaning of life" inspired by the artists and forms studied in class (Titian, Munch, Gauguin, Cole and Claesz). The breadth and depth of the course had inspired students to create thoughtful and unique collage presentations; many included critical analysis of personal events and beliefs as well as interpretations through the students' choice of philosophical lenses that we had explored in class (ranging from divinity-centred or soul-centred to absurd and nihilistic approaches). The collage approach allowed for seemingly disparate connections to unite visually, and this assignment provoked students to examine the "what next?" just as much as the "what has been?" kind of questions. Participation was optional, but, regardless of who had chosen to take the course for credit, everyone made the personal choice to present a collage to the class. It made for an intimate celebration of learning in a classroom that was open to exploring opposing views. No one

was asking that students find consensus on the meaning of life, and Paul had purposely presented material to highlight diverse and sometimes controversial ideas. Like the Edmonton students' project, this kind of focused work allowed for personal investigation to be brought to the group for further learning. As we were learning about each other, we were learning about ourselves. This was an image of community development that did not seek to make the Other the same, but it did require a safe environment for people to courageously risk learning and then share what they learned.

Around the time of the spring visits, the Calgary program students had already begun to express a sense of "what next?" because our course was coming to an end and no funding was confirmed for the program for next year, and these concerns were being shared in and out of class – particularly because of the "iconobiographical" assignment. Meeting with directors who had alumni programs was an opportunity for me to explore options for sustaining learning supports beyond the first year and for Mary Lu, Becky, and Margot to compare their approaches. In her second year of being the program co-ordinator, Becky developed the alumni program, UNI 201 – engaging month-long, topic-focused courses, which graduates of the first year program sign up for on a month-to-month basis. Housed at the University of Victoria, the UNI 101 program can recommend a one-year Humanities Certificate at U of Vic for those students who want to pursue a credit program; but for many students who cannot or do not want to incur student loan debt or who simply do not want the pressure of credit courses, the alumni program offers flexible yet sustained free learning opportunities. We speculated on how the alumni groups contributed to solidifying the first year programs, adding layers of contextualized curriculums which benefitted students' confidence:

> Laurie: Do you think that gets reinforced at a far deeper level because you've got the second level course. You've got the 201, which I would think that by having the second year program the confidence level must be higher.
>
> Becky: I think so. Although, what I've really been reflecting on is; I don't think the second year program is more academically rigorous. I was struck by that last night and I was thinking, "How do we up the bar for that second year program?" It's something we're not doing yet. I think the comfort and the confidence of being on campus increases and gets solidified in that process, but I don't know the second year is as academically rigorous.
>
> Mary Lu: I would say we have the same problem with our alumni program. I would say it's a fun social study group for a lot of our students. They love it and they do some tough stuff, but it's got a real looseness to it.
>
> Margot: I say out and out, "It's not a free public lecture you wander in and out of – do the reading!" I'd say I'm getting mean now! In the study groups, if people don't do the reading – especially when I'm cranky, I'm overtired – I say, "This is not a conversation amongst friends. Do your reading! That's what we share! That's what anchors us."
>
> (Group dialogue, April 9, 2010)

But not all programs required the same amount of reading – Halifax Humanities and Nanaimo's course delved into many long, classic texts, whereas Margot and Becky described using academic articles; and then some, like Thunder Bay's *Humanities 101*, did not expect any outside reading done before class.

When I arrived in Victoria in April, Becky and I talked about the "what next?" concern that students express when coming to the end of the Free Humanities courses. Becky had just completed the UNI 102 Celebration, which included a dinner and ceremony where they distributed their class publication. Students' course work had been compiled into a collective journal called *Divergent/Convergent*, which showcased their poems, essays, photo-essays and reflections. Becky started this practice in her second year of being the project co-ordinator of UNI 101, building on her knowledge of the

students' capacities and her own background in media production. The inside jacket of the front page describes the intention of the publication:

> University 102 is an introductory course in the Social Sciences. It is part of the University 101 program that offers free, non-credit, academic courses to students who have faced barriers to post-secondary education. Respect and value for the students' knowledge, experiences, and differences are the foundations of the program. The program strives to be inclusive and to foster collaborative learning. (University 101, 2010)

Through this practice, honouring and recognizing the students' voices goes beyond embedding quotes in a document; rather, this is an entire publication dedicated to student work, acknowledging the year of learning that started in UNI 101 (Humanities) and continued through UNI 102 (Social Sciences) courses. Three words on the title page of their issues powerfully summarize the contributions of the students and the program; "Thoughtful, intentional, expressive." For me, these words echoed the work of the student collages in Calgary and what I had witnessed in Edmonton's Humanities 101 class.

Becky had been inspired by Vancouver's Hum program that publishes an annual *Yearbook* of student work that is published on their website. In dialogue on April 9, 2010, Margot described the publication of students' work as a practice of developing self-representation and an alternative to speaking for and about the students to funders, journalists, researchers and others outside of the program:

> Margot: With our yearbook, a large part of the commitment of doing these yearbooks is to create a form of self-representation by the students, and I feel

> totally comfortable giving the yearbooks out to people because it's already gone through loads of processes. We clear with everyone that they want it to go into a public forum. But also, when you have a yearbook that is filled with a whole year's worth of peoples' work and thoughtfulness and editing and consideration and everything, it's a different thing than inviting somebody in to be told a particular narrative in a particular genre – and if you can throw in a bit of "I was wrong and now I'm corrected…" or whatever it is…
>
> Becky: I've repented!
>
> Mary Lu: I was lost and now I'm saved!
>
> Margot: So the yearbooks are a form of representation that we are really committed to producing. When people ask about the students, we give them the yearbook, or we evade the question when they ask us to describe the students. We know what they want us to say, and it takes everything away from them.
>
> Mary Lu: The big struggle I have is that because I have to fundraise all the time, I'm seriously implicated in what you're calling the poverty industry: if I don't play the game, I don't get any money.

Our collective understanding of the risks of exploitation of students and their work, stemmed from this tension between celebrating student accomplishments authentically and the pressure to connect program evaluation or "outcomes" with fundraising in order to sustain the programs. Applying for funds from certain agencies had implications on "outputs" and the expectations of directors, students, and instructors to mediate terms like "success stories" or, as Joanne had been leery, "success numbers." We had all had experiences of "outsiders" (perhaps journalists, funders, agencies, or researchers) misrepresenting our programs and stereotyping the students.

> Laurie: We had a situation where one of the people was more profiled and was written up by one of the papers. And he was "tracked down." And in the end he's turned it into a good situation, but clearly he had been keeping his identity quiet for a long time.
>
> Margot: He was outed!
>
> Laurie: He was revealed. Because he's further along in his situation, he is able to confront it with more confidence, but it did immediately make me very, very

> careful about why you do not put the last name in a story. Depending on the person involved - I don't want to erase their identity, but at the same time they have to choose if they want their identity revealed - being very explicit about what could happen if the students are involved in that process of telling their stories and be very clear about that. Who might have access to it – if it's on the public domain, it's gone. You can't get back to the point before that moment.

The pressure for funding the programs echoed the lives of the students, as even the students have been trained to misrepresent themselves, or "narrativise themselves," as Margot said. Making a conscious decision not to allow the funders' "required" outcome measures to dictate unethical evaluation methods, directors explored how to use specific language to counter charity model discourses which tend to lean heavily on student stories:

> Becky: One way that I navigate this is that I say that the course provides a context in which people can do …whatever...Sometimes you need to justify why. If all you say is the students are doing it themselves, then it's like, "Why do they need this program?" So I say, "The program is providing a context in which the students are making these changes. It's bringing these things together." That's how I say it to funders.
>
> Margot: You ask for their funding to provide the context …Use the vocabulary of context for the funders. Becky that's great, really great.
>
> Laurie: I use the term "environment."
>
> Mary Lu: What I try to do is use only the voices of the students. When I'm writing a proposal or a grant, I take these comments and say what the students say about this, but I need to work harder on it, by saying we are providing a situation in which this kind of self-discovery and growth can occur and these are what the students say about that.
>
> (Group dialogue, April 9, 2010)

Importantly, we were not only aware of how students were trained to tell stories, but also how we were implicated in storytelling:

> Mary Lu: The story becomes more important than the reality which once lay behind it. The story becomes the thing you do.

> Laurie: Thomas King says, "The truth about stories is that is what we are." We are stories.
>
> Mary Lu: We have to be careful about those stories.
>
> Becky: Ah. And we can tell multiple stories. And I don't find that troubling.
>
> Mary Lu: One professor challenged my Irish Catholic working class story. Why do you talk about this Irish Catholic. The fact is: I am not actually truly gritty, working class. My mother was a fabulous pianist and our house was full with literature and opera. I got used to telling my story particularly when I was going to school with rich Toronto girls. I wonder why it becomes the story that I tell but...
>
> Becky: So many reasons! So many reasons! To differentiate yourself. Stories we could tell about why we tell the stories that we tell.

Drawing parallels between the stories that students tell and our own rehearsed narratives, we discussed how "telling student stories" or having students "tell their stories" could not be the only evaluation tool or funder strategy – and nor could our own "director accounts" be the only source for reporting the value of what goes on in the classroom.

We acknowledged the dynamism of our environments as a rich learning source because everyone has the opportunity to learn from each other – respecting our "situated knowledge" (Haraway, 1991):

> Mary Lu: It comes down to almost a personal quality. Like Becky said, there never will be a perfect language and I think I have a tendency to want to have reached the perfect model but that plays into Earl's franchise model, which is, "Let's get it down right so we can repeat it." Running one of these things involves "how much can I live with uncertainty and ragged edges?" and that's a very personal thing.
>
> Laurie: I keep finding parallels between the lives of the students and the programs. These people are experts at shifting ground, shifting security – the lack thereof – and so are these programs. For people live every day not knowing the next meal or how long this rent will last or job will last – and our own jobs with one year contract – when they'll get the next meal...
>
> Margot: It must do that to us.

> Laurie: Our reactions are likely becoming the same as the students. I think we're saying "we love Jesus" to fundraisers. Like you're saying you're willing to say that to get…
>
> Becky: We're all implicated in this beautiful messiness. We're muddling our way through it and carving out the spaces where for moments we have something else. And that's why the classroom is so nourishing. It doesn't mean that those other things aren't going on. That's what's so exciting and ...
>
> Mary Lu: I'm so taken by what Laurie said; we have these experts in uncertainly. The students are this incredible resource. I've never really thought about that but how different that is from the charity model.
>
> Margot: "Situated authority;" I've heard used in anthropology.
>
> Becky: One thing we had talked about, Margot, in Calgary with Don, is that it's an abundance model. The students aren't empty vessels. They are abundant not empty vessels. You see what the students have. For the instructors, they …if you put them on the DTES, they'll sink rapidly. They aren't experts across the board. They have an abundance in this one thing not everything.
>
> Mary Lu: This image has come into mind. I like to say to my students that you're about to climb Mount Everest and so it's helpful for you to have a guide as you start that climb. And then we think about taking the professors or ourselves and taking them to the DTES…that would be my Mount Everest. I would need one of your students to take me through that particular wilderness.
>
> (Group dialogue, April 9, 2010)

In Calgary, I had such a guide in my first year journey, and I was able to introduce him to Mary Lu when she came to Calgary the following week. One of the mentors, Kevin Brandson, (an alumni student from *Storefront 101* who was now a St. Mary's University College student) gave Mary Lu a tour of downtown Calgary, including a visit to the homeless shelters he had stayed in when he was a student in the *Storefront 101*. His story had been documented in newspapers and on websites a number of times since he began with *Storefront 101* in 2003 ("Lessons help homeless," October 3, 2008; "Academic Foundations," March 3, 2010), and his commitment to the program was an extension of his ongoing learning process by putting into action his core beliefs about the

value of education. From the time I began my position as director in June, Kevin had been one of the most committed and engaged supporters of the program, helping me understand how and why he valued not only the opportunity he had had to be a *Storefront 101* student but also, as he said, "the chance to give back" as a "mentor" in *Humanities 101: An Odyssey*. The opportunity for Mary Lu to meet with Kevin helped her understand the changes and transitions of the Calgary program (from *Storefront 101* to *Humanities 101: An Odyssey*) better than I could have done alone. It also helped me explain to Mary Lu how Kevin and the other volunteer mentors and tutors contributed to the success of the program. While it could be interpreted that Kevin was a 'mentor' to the students, he was also very much a 'mentor' to me because he held some of the critical history of *Storefront 101*. The mentors had also been instrumental in the success of launching *Humanities 101: An Odyssey* because they were involved with some of the decisions on the logistics (time/day/frequency) of the program. They also participated in advertising and speaking at information sessions where we met with potential students and community agencies. During the year, they attended our program dinners before class and participated fully in class readings and discussions. I wanted Mary Lu to meet and talk with as many people in our program as possible, just as I had had the opportunity to meet with instructors, staff and students in Edmonton and on the West Coast. I wanted her to get a sense of why I felt this important work had to continue – respecting the people and their personal agency that had made it happen. As Margot had said in our group dialogue, "I know that everything that happens for somebody in a Humanities course is what they do. Any changes they make is a result of them doing it."

The ethics of community development practices and research was often at the forefront of our minds. In conversation, I kept bringing up the ethical concerns I had about the research process because we all could relate to the sensitivities of participants in our programs and our programs themselves; but, I was not alone with these concerns. As we had seen firsthand the effects on the DTES, Margot had alerted us to the negative experiences she and the Hum students had related about Community Service Learning (CSL) one-off research projects. This echoed my initial concerns about my own research practices and why I had investigated PAR. However, I had also had the positive experience of witnessing the relationships developing in the Edmonton HUM 101 program through CSL and sensed that it had much to do with the people involved – their own ethics. I shared this in our group dialogue:

> Laurie: I saw positive things from Joanne's program in Edmonton. They have the community service connection. But what it comes down to is that they have really good caring students who don't see it as a way to suck information– there is an acknowledgement of give and take … reciprocity in a positive good way. I appreciate your hesitance about having these people come down en masse - how it's happening in Vancouver. It could be a cautionary tale. And it could be something that CSL groups are becoming more aware of, and they aren't aware of the implications.

This opportunity made the principles of our own research practices real and present – not only for the purpose of my PhD research design, but more importantly for the practices we all engaged in for program evaluation. As directors, we related our ethical dilemmas about how to respond to funder evaluations, for example – occasions when the stories of students could be seen as celebratory or dangerously exploitive. How we used our power positions as directors could be viewed negatively or positively depending on interpretation.

> Laurie: What it comes down to is … are you questioning yourself in an ethical way? Are you looking at yourself really honestly? To what degree are you approaching this in an authentic way? And, Mary Lu, I wouldn't be concerned about not having certain vocabulary, because your authenticity comes through.
>
> Becky: And the centrality of the students. Your critical engagement.
>
> (Group dialogue, April 9, 2010)

Evaluation & reporting as they relate to funding & program stability.

Funding issues were a central focus during our Nanaimo meeting, as we described the impact on our varying abilities to offer additional services (hot versus cold food; babysitting service versus child and adult care subsidies; photocopies versus books; part-time directors to office support and social workers). Mary Lu described her successful fundraiser, "Odyssey Live," whereby students, faculty and community members engaged in a 24 hour live reading of Homer's *Odyssey* which was picked up by local media and resulted in $24, 000 in 24 hours. Lela shared her "Philosophy Salons" fundraisers: University lecturers, who regularly instruct in their *Clemente Course*, facilitate an evening of philosophical discussion to philanthropic community members who munched on hors d'oeuvres. The directors' time invested in these fundraisers was weighed against community awareness building and engagement. Suggestions for grants circulated as we discussed questions like, what and how much is sustainable funding? Whose responsibility is it to fundraise? Our program budgets ranged considerably, and although our workloads varied, everyone was exceeding their paid work hours, which made us leery of taking on additional responsibilities.

Concern for our colleagues' workloads and positions stemmed from our personal experience, and later in the week we renewed this topic, offering solutions to instability by securing stronger institutional affiliations:

> Margot: I don't know if we're done on this topic, but I want to raise the fact that Mary Lu's position is really vulnerable because of how she's placed – because of where it is placed, and I'd love to brainstorm ways that your position could be less vulnerable.
>
> Mary Lu: What do you mean?
>
> Margot: Like what we were talking about outside of Carnegie, yesterday. Because your program isn't strongly affiliated in any one [institution], you are not in a payroll system. They're asking a lot of you to do this. They don't know, like we all do, how hugely the work load can increase – and it does! Definitely increases. And how likely burnout is.
>
> Mary Lu: I think my board is very aware of that. I think Becky's point is really good. Because there was a horrible fight with one of the universities the very first year – before I came on board – over whether this would be a credit course. They've been burned on that question of who takes us on. I like this idea of rephrasing that whole question. If we could get the university presidents together and say, "We know you all support us, but we also need a more stable home than we have had."
>
> Margot: You could congratulate them that it's their commitment that has made it wanted – to have good credibility. People know about you and want to take your course. I think institutions go on timelines. You've proven yourself. All of these programs have proven themselves. They work. Now the question is what's the next thing? I was mentioning yesterday, it took 10 years for us to get a proper office. It was partly a reward. We were practically squatting. They decreased the likelihood that this program was going to succeed by not supporting it well enough. So it's nice to have a reward after ten years but that's a hell of a long time. I don't think it was a deliberate technique. It's just what gets done in institutions. And it's not fair. You've already proven that your program works and it's wanted.
>
> Mary Lu: To be fair, every time I think of the possibility of us being taken under the umbrella of a single institution and I'm just an employee… I love my free agency as well. Every time I go up to the universities, and then back down to my "seedy" north end Halifax, I feel I've come home. I'm not part of an institution and I feel, personally, it has an element of the kind of freedom that I've always really valued – of being a free agent.

Margot: Paul and I talk about that all the time: How we feel at home in the DTES – this is home. But then we're here [UBC main campus]; here's where we do the work; this is where we're set up; there is the photocopier, the people we need to have liaisons with, the people we need to have meetings with. Here are the people we need to bump into. We love being on the DTES, it feels way better. It doesn't mean that we can't be there. I feel that about going under the wing of one department – it would be a very, very bad idea BUT now we're stuck with this other problem: We don't really belong anywhere – the freedom is paradoxically isolation.

Becky: And vulnerability. You don't have security in your position. If you don't fundraise, you don't have a job. Is there a way to get more stability?

Mary Lu: There is a part of me that handles that particular insecurity better than belonging and simply being an employee of a bigger institution.

Becky: I don't feel a lack of freedom in the institution. I think there is a way to set up your program and your job. I think it is the same dynamic of being a bit of an anomalous program – so far for us hasn't been too damaging. But I also think, "We don't have a budget line, we don't have that level of institutional support." If we were less anomalous, it might be easier for them to provide us a budget line. I think more than anything it's just the amount of money that usually isn't required in a university. I don't feel a lack of freedom in actually running the program. The program isn't suffering and the benefits for the students – having a student card, having access to the libraries, access to the services on campus outweigh anything I would personally feel…

Laurie: Can I go back to what you were saying? You're saying you don't feel any restrictions in running the program. As the director, you work pretty collaboratively with the steering committee and the academic committee to make those decisions. It sounds like there's a level of personal commitment from those people. It's also more of the individual agency of the people and not so much the institution. Am I not getting it?

Becky: Ya, I think that because I feel so supported by them. Whatever I would suggest – that I have a good reason for – they'd say, "Yes." What I feel more restricted in is around the university politics. I can't go to those meetings. My position is not "director;" I'm a "coordinator". We were supposed to have an academic director, we had it the first term … it was half of a course release, pay for a sessional – a minimal amount. And because I stepped up when she went on maternity leave they didn't replace her. But I like that because I have the space to do what I want; whereas, if I had an academic director, who knows how that would have changed that?

Laurie: You've got people coming back again and again. Commitment...

> Becky: They're not the ones on the admin committee – the ones on the steering committee. The admin committee, we've got 8 staff and faculty members or so.
>
> Margot: So Mary Lu, now you have a repertoire. What Becky and I are saying is there isn't the trade-off that you're frightened of. I'm afraid of a trade-off, too. There's flexibility as long as you can keep control of the things that matter to you. Of course this would be different in every specific situation. People don't know how to do what we're doing. So they don't know how to control it either. It doesn't occur to them. They don't know how to do it. They walk into the classroom and they say, "How did you get these people?" "Oh, well, we do this, this, this, this and this." And then, "Oh, wow." I don't get the feeling... I don't get the sense that they think they could to do these things. Actually, the people – the students – are something that the university ...it's agog. What's the word for it? It's unimaginable to them.
>
> (Group dialogue, April 9, 2010)

We were clearly not running conventional university programs, and yet, our program stability and credibility relied on maintaining and developing strong relationships with post-secondary institutions – many of which were not fully embracing nor fully rejecting these programs and students. There were clear implications for doing or not doing so, and the consequences were being felt by the directors.

We sensed that the greater the ambiguity with the institutions, the greater the instability of the programs; and, we brainstormed ways to solidify relations with academic and community affiliates:

> Margot: This could be a way to make a stronger affiliation with one of these universities. It would be – I don't know what the practicalities would be – say... call a meeting with all of them and say, "We provide a context but we need a location and we need an affiliation. Which of you would like to be a prime context with the rest of you supporting it?" Someone might just step forward and say, "We've got exactly the spot for you." It would need their commitment because as long as they don't give you a physical, planned kind of context, it's hard to think of how your program can get stronger. It's just a suggestion. Everyone doesn't have to be a landlord. They can still support the program.
>
> Laurie: Going back one of the appeals for the institution is to identify it as an academic worthy project. You were saying earlier about having a relation with the

> institution, and showing this is a valuable educational context for this kind of powerful experience for people. It's not the only context where it could happen, but identifying why it's important to have the affiliation. From a funding perspective, they want to know, "What's in it for me?" This could be something that gets talked a lot about in Fredericton. These are institutions that are struggling to prove, like you said, the value of the humanities.
>
> Becky: We struggle on a smaller scale than you do with this because we're interfaculty.
>
> Laurie: I think that's key. I think it's really important that you have more than one.
>
> Becky: It is important, and it also creates tension. I see the similarity with the Halifax program. On the one hand you get multiple sources of funding, but, on the other hand, no one is feeling that invested in it. So that is the trade-off. What's great is that we're under the umbrella of U of Vic. There is some sense of shared investment – although each faculty wants to claim it as its own. I get frustrated with our committee. I feel like they are catering too much. "Oh, we don't want to upset the dean." I want my refusal to believe that to be strong enough… like if we cater to that, you're allowing them to be petty. If you get them together and you say, "We need an institutional home. This is what we need to legitimize or make evident the academic credibility of our program. We want to continue working with all of you. We want to continue to have a partnership with all of you because you all bring so much to it." Who wouldn't be able to understand that?
>
> Laurie: Even for the office, I would say. I think if there is an office space there. I quite like that your program is running out of the library. I actually value that community piece because in my mind there needs to be both in some ways. I hear your point, Becky, that we're not just another social agency. And you said, Margot, that there is a reason why your office is not downtown DTES but, yet, your community relations are all downtown.
>
> (Group dialogue, April 9, 2010)

The ambiguity of whether we were being viewed by institutions as a kind of "social agency" or a legitimate university program played into how we were consciously evaluating our own language and the structures being set up inside the classroom – even the physical location of the programs.

For some, these were inherited relations and contexts that had to be negotiated and re-negotiated, underscoring our programs' instability as well as our own positions as directors:

> Mary Lu: This [would] be a hard conversation for me to have with my board, I think, because it means revisiting so many fundamentals. But [maybe] we need to have this conversation.
>
> Margot: They'll be looking forward to it because they supported you coming out here. Put in the context that "I went there and this is what you found out." Giving a report; if we did …
>
> Mary Lu: The whole focus of the board meeting is dissecting our big fundraiser and my trip.
>
> Laurie: Your fundraiser is brilliant, by the way. That was amazing.
>
> Becky: How much did you make?
>
> Mary Lu: We made almost 24, 000, which is half our budget. It's almost my whole salary. ... That's another issue…
>
> Margot: It's really the same issue. If I could just carry on that theme ... If you say, "I went out and this is what I found. The programs that are the most stable are able to offer the most to their students. That they all went through periods in the early years. Once they had proved themselves," or I don't know how you want to put it, "they needed more permanent affiliation. Staff needed to be paid in more stable ways. Positions need to be created."...
>
> Becky: Margot, being at our committee last year, I don't know if I've told you this, but they've almost completed the process of making my position a salaried position. You came to our meeting and said things more bluntly than I ever could about the instability and what that means for me as a person. Me – giving all my energy to this position. I was feeling so bitter at the university for a while. The university is benefiting; they put us in their annual review. This is my lifeblood and my credit card debt and I'm so overworked and I can't finish my degree, this is coming out of me that this is happening . And that's great but I need to be recognized … not recognized
>
> Margot: Supported! It needs to be acknowledged. They need to pay up.
>
> Becky: Last completion celebration, they thanked me, saying, "You are the centre point." In the summer, ... I just felt …I am broke and I am tired of it. That's where I was…and this year, things are different and the dean was saying, "I've heard

you've got the thumbs up for your position." I hadn't even heard that and here she was telling me this at the completion celebration. It's still not 100%. It was so instrumental that you were there and just spoke so bluntly. I just wanted to really appreciate you for coming to do that. It doesn't necessarily mean a pay increase but more stable and probably with benefits. Those two things…

Margot: One of our Assistant Deans...Remember when I was telling you I was the only person on staff five or six months before Paul came and I was just holding it together. I was on the point of tears. I was overwhelmed. And then I was utterly and completely overwhelmed, underpaid, they hadn't helped. She said, "Margot, we had no idea. Every time we see you look so happy, bouncy. You're always cheerful. We had no idea that this was going on. This is the best thing you could have done. Come to us when you're feeling really, really bad. We didn't offer you help because you seemed so capable." I think that's very gendered. I think we're highly trained to cope and be capable and just hold the ship together.

Becky: I had a meeting like that with the admin committee, just shortly after you'd been there a couple of months later and I'd had the chance to mull it over. I was at the end of my capacity to do this. I need to go to the dentist. How can I go to the dentist? How is it that I'm working more than full time and I can't afford to go to the dentist? Something is really wrong. And it's true. So I was almost in tears. This is really true. Most of the time, I'm really positive and excited.

Margot: This is what we need to be for our students. But the institutions don't acknowledge that it is really difficult to be around people who need you to be that way and not acknowledge and replenish that. It increases the risk of burnout even higher because we're not receiving that from the institution. [They perceive that] there is this endless well of positivity. I'm in a terrible position and the longer I do this the worse off I am. This university makes no plans for a [Humanities 101] director. They [have] burned out a director every three or four years. This is predictable. None of them were able to take steps. This is where I'm at where everybody else quit. If we'd had more difficult students this would have been my last year. I've demanded that they do something about that. It's still not sorted out completely. I'm on a one-year contract. But they want to make me a management position but it has to leave out my teaching in the course, curriculum development, research. I move from faculty to staff, but it would give me a permanent position. I'm a faculty, but I don't have a department. There's only one position that covers that [and] it's an Associate Prof Without Review and can only be held for three years. They don't know what to do with me. They want me to stay and the incentive would be I'd have a permanent job, but I'd have a cap on the wage – only 2% increase per year – and I wouldn't be able to apply for research funds. They want someone with a PhD, which is a research degree. They can't acknowledge the teaching; they can't acknowledge the pedagogy. But that's not what it takes to do the job. I keep having these discussions with the Associate Dean. It's still unresolved. It's made it really difficult for me this year. I have to

> trade-off being [in a] permanent [post] or have what I do be acknowledged and be recognized as a researcher.
>
> Laurie: This is like what Becky was saying; you think in terms of "How will I be replaced later on?" She was saying this can't be marketed as an admin job. That's not what it takes. You can't replace Becky with this really great "words per minute" typing position. You need so many skills.
>
> (Group dialogue, April 9, 2010)

This sensitive topic about our own precarious employment positions underscored the need for stable program funding, regardless of the location of the courses (on or off campus). It also highlighted aspects of surface level institutional affiliations. Essentially, we were describing how the neo-liberal, market driven financial policies at universities were undervaluing and undermining the programs and the people involved. Knowing that the same held true for sessional instructors, post-doctoral students, and the flourishing number of highly qualified, intelligent and caring people being shut out of tenured positions, we knew that at the international liberal arts conference our concerns would find resonance with our greater academic community and that our message would need to communicate the powerful differences of our programs – the reasons why this "work" needs to continue.

This prompted discussion around "what gets in the way of the work?" as we brought up challenges beyond financial and time constraints. Some had connections with social service agencies based on the location of the classes or community affiliations, but we all questioned the extent to which our programs and we, personally, should attempt to address the wide range of systemic barriers. Were we and should we be social agencies? Without attempting consensus or conclusion, our discussion included thoughts on the irony of having to establish boundaries while actively breaking down certain barriers. We

also raised our concerns about how being responsive to the compounding and often disparate needs of students, instructors, staff, and funders was a massive responsibility. None of us had credentials for social work or counselling, and yet we all experienced navigating classroom dynamics that required incredible responsiveness. Classrooms were described as "welcoming" but certainly not a place where "anything goes," and this applied to all people who came into the classroom because it affected the learning environment. If people were not contributing positively to the classroom dynamics, then private discussions were had and sometimes the resolution was for that person to write an agreement that identified the unwanted behaviour or for that person not to return if the problem was ongoing. Importantly, some of us related experiences when instructors were asked not to return to the program, or when researchers or journalists were prevented from coming in. I think Margot summed it up best with their unwritten policy:

> Margot: That's our motto: No assholes allowed!
>
> Becky: Is there a way that we would put that so that we could share that with other people. How would we...
>
> Margot: Laurie, can that be one of our things in Fredericton?
>
> Becky: Is there a way of saying that to the wider audience?
>
> Mary Lu: You will never be exposed to a teacher who will not deeply appreciate the opportunity to engage with you.

We were speaking to authenticity and it reminded me of what alumni and mentor, Kevin Brandson, asked me when I first started, "Do you have a bullshit detector?"

Even the different screening process that we used for admitting students into the programs ranged from referrals from agencies to written applications and for some, like *Humanities 101: An Odyssey*, personal in-take interviews and reading and writing

evaluations. We were not all comfortable with the idea of asking personal information and, yet, our ability to respond to certain students' needs could be compromised without some information. We expressed concerns about being "gate keepers" and how that could be easily construed as yet another kind of artificial barrier and a form of power; but it was one that needed to be used for the preservation of conducive learning environments. Where we went to advertise the programs (community services agencies, libraries, bus stops and book shops) and how (flyers, web pages, electronic list serves, word of mouth) influenced the people who came to the programs, which we speculated factored into levels of attrition but could not be predicted. Mental illnesses contributed to some attrition, but they were not necessarily an indicator of student 'success' or 'failure.' We had all been surprised by some of the students who managed to stay till the end of semesters in spite of incredibly challenging personal circumstances. None of us needed to go into elaborate details about a particular student; we all had someone in mind. We also knew of students who left the program early but who had already demonstrated extremely high aptitudes for academic work, and we raised questions about how and if we should continue to contact and motivate these learners who were adults fully capable of making their own life decisions. These were just some of the tensions we navigated regularly, and we could sense the need for this conversation amongst colleagues to continue.

Later that week, in Vancouver, when Margot, Becky, Mary Lu, Paul and I revisited not only the differences in our programs, but also how we are different from the mainstream university, and how our programs are not understood:

> Margot: This is a funny story, maybe it illustrates it. We had this guy who applied and we thought he was really a good applicant, and Paul kept trying to reach him and couldn't reach him. I kept seeing him on my street corner on Commercial

Drive. One day I was coming into work and I saw him and I called Paul on my cell and said, "Paul, how 'bout that guy? What's his name again? Remember we can't find him but we really would like him?" And Paul said, "Ya Ya Ya his name is so and so." So I BACKED UP and parked illegally and ran into this alley that I'd see him go down and said, "Hi, are you Colin?" "Yeah." "I'm Margot, remember me? Hey, you're applying for Hum! You're in! So glad to see you!" He said, "Yeah, great!" And then I came back out and got back in my car and drove away. I was telling this story to one of my friends, who taught for years at university, and she said, "Wow. Can you imagine how different that is from how a usual university student enters!" We BACK UP to find our students.

Mary Lu: And run down alleys!

Margot: That is something we'd do in a flash. We wouldn't even think about it because we're all the time having to come up with creative ways of doing things because our students are non-traditional. They're so non-traditional that they don't even fit the category non-traditional. They're people walking the other way down the lane. And so that somehow, I think, communicates to the administrators around us and to the faculty around us. They do not have a mindset or any practices for conceptualizing students this way. They're agog at it. That's all to our good. We treat people without judging them and they want to come back!

Laurie: Imagine if even your traditional student was treated that way.

Margot: Oh, God! It would be so different!

Laurie: What kind of things would happen in that person's life?

Mary Lu: That's the message that we have to give to the traditional academic world.

Margot: For sure!

Becky: Absolutely!

Margot: As universities get more and more alienated, and students get more alienated, and classrooms get larger and larger, it gets more mainstreamed. I think that we will be in the future a model that will be looked at from ailing universities. How did we lose contact? And we'll be here to say, "Ok, not only did you lose contact…but for years, we've been doing another kind of practice, we've been conceptualizing students in a different way."

Becky: I see that in instructors and how excited they are to teach.

Mary Lu: I was just going to say…I love it when we get a new instructor who at the end of the class says, "I wish my other students were like that." They came in

> thinking they're giving another class on Emily Dickenson – that's the most recent guy, who was new. And at the end he was like, "I've never had a class like this before! Everyone was talking! Everyone was excited about Emily Dickenson! I've never in 40 years of teaching or 30 years of teaching had a class where 100% of the people were excited about the topic." He was beaming. He emailed me saying, "Thank you for the most enjoyable class I've ever taught." That's a standard for us.
>
> Becky: And that's the stuff you can take to funders as well. I think it balances out the otherwise narrow discourse that they want to hear.
>
> Mary Lu: The charity model.
>
> Becky: Our instructors and our TA's are benefitting, too. I've had a grad student write me and say, "This was the best part of my entire graduate student experience." I was like, "Really? All your classes? Your thesis?" This was it.
>
> Laurie: That's what Stasha [our social worker and student support] said. She's had six years of post-secondary education, and this is the first time she is in a classroom setting that is so diverse that real learning is happening. Since we're also in the classroom… if I didn't get into the classroom, I wouldn't do this job because that for me is also the connecting point. It feeds me.
>
> Margot: Remember when you first started on, Paul, and you were mainly doing office work. And then I thought, "You might as well come to class and see what it's about. Make sense of it." And then you were saying, "Oh, ya, I'm coming! I'm coming to class, give me the readings." It's the battery charger!
>
> Mary Lu: I reached a point last year when I had a lot of fundraising work that was going on and I was so scared, "Are we going to make it?" And I thought I need to stop going to class. But then I thought, "If I stop going to class, I don't want this job anymore."
>
> (Group dialogue, April 9, 2010)

Witnesses to the positive impact that our programs have on students, instructors, assistants, and us, the directors brainstormed ways of communicating the value of what goes on in the classrooms. This dialogic excerpt highlights how we were beginning to work together to communicate the unconventional practices, the language, and the processes of our programs and acknowledging the need to find ways to secure our programs' funding through the voice of the participants, without exploiting them. We

were also finding ways to enter the value of our experiences into the academic discourse, as Mary Lu said, "That's the message that we have to give to the traditional academic world." We also needed to decide how we were going to do just that and if our evaluation practices could achieve this goal.

Discussing evaluation practices pulled us full circle to uncomfortable funding report language that prevented students and directors from experiencing and expressing their own powerful agency:

> Mary Lu: Do you ever worry that in the evaluations that you don't get back you're not hearing some things that you need to hear. That's always a worry to me. The students tend to be quite vulnerable they're often very grateful and those that feel that gratitude is an acceptable response they are eager to say... I keep thinking there must be people who don't like it or … and I want to hear their voices. I suspect that they don't respond because they shouldn't have a negative statement because this is all free.
>
> Becky: That is something I worry about and try to engage with on a day to day basis. Like when I'm introducing myself. This is my role; this is what I'm here for. Come and complain to me tell me you don't like the tea selection.
>
> Laurie: It's an ongoing evaluation.
>
> Becky: I do hear negative things. Mostly about other students… this person is bugging me because they can't stop talking, or whatever. Or the sushi we had had MSG. It may be superficial things but I also hear about other instructors. I feel like I get enough negative comments that I trust a little bit that if there was something that they'd bring it up. I do hear it. But I do worry, but that's my strategy around it.
>
> Mary Lu: … I worry about that gratitude. I want to say to the students, "Don't feel grateful for this. This is just correcting a wrong. You should not feel like this is some beneficent gift that we wealthy are handing down to you. This is addressing a wrong. This is not a beneficent gift." I don't mind that there is gratitude. But I don't think it should be gratitude to me.
>
> Laurie: It's part of the charity model. And what students have been exposed to. They have to say they love Jesus to get ...
>
> Margot: ...to get a cup of tea.

Mary Lu: Exactly, and I don't want them to say they love Plato or Dante…

Becky: Sometimes I get too dismissive. I say "Don't thank me. You're the one doing the work." But then I think I don't give them the space to appreciate me or the program. But then, I've softened a bit to it for people to say thank you. It's in my mind all the time and something I'm talking about all the time. That's how I deal with it, but I'm curious to know, what do you say to students? How to you pre-empt this?

Mary Lu: This year I keep getting, "You're such an angel." Please, I am not an angel. I am a very flawed human being, I am not some kind of saint; I tell them about the beach in Sarnia... It ticks me off that education is so unaffordable. I think it is because they have been handled so roughly that our gentle approach is a balm, or soothing thing.

Margot: What I do is I redirect them. So I say things like, "I absolutely love studying with you." Don't deal with it directly. Or "I could not hope to do something I enjoy more." Take it out of the hierarchy and just be personal. We also acknowledge all the time – especially this year because we have such a high functioning group – that we are taught to operate inside certain – especially narrative – practices. So we know that they are taught how to describe themselves through charity model narratives when they apply for an extra $20 clothing allowance or emergency loan [from welfare]. We know that the reason why they are so willing to tell anybody who asks them their transformation story is because they have been trained to do it, that's why I'm so cautious about transformation and journey stories. Because their ability to transform is what also contains them and makes them highly vulnerable to anyone who feels like they can walk into the Carnegie Centre and ask anybody inside their life story and they'll tell them. They will! And they'll tell them even before they're asked. And the reason why is because every person inside of this poverty industry is entitled to ask them any intimate detail. "Why did you lose your shoes? Where's your wallet? I see here that you lost it last year." The way people have been taught to tell their story, to narrativise themselves… The poverty industry is implicated in that thoroughly. Remember I told you about the [class where we studied the] Little Red Riding Hood story and then looked at it from different characters' points of view? We talked about something to keep in mind: What is the point of view? What practice is this is part of? Misdirection can be an educational moment. To say ah! Have a quick apprehension of which discourse they're in; which is one of a bit of gratitude but very little agency. They call you an angel. One of the donors calls me an angel… oh, I don't think so! Just redirect it. Open it up and recognize everyone is part of these discourses but it doesn't mean…

Mary Lu: I don't have a lot of this language because I've never studied this sort of thing but you've hit on what troubles me about [funder]. ... You've hit on why I'm uncomfortable with my [funder] relationship because they are part of the "let's hear the touching stories of the underprivileged." And I don't like it.

> Margot: Exhibiting others. It's colonialism. It's exhibiting First Nations people to Queen Victoria.
>
> (Group dialogue, April 9, 2010)

Who we went to for funding signalled whose vision mandates we were willing to align ourselves with and whose we were not.

> Mary Lu: For me, it's the question of sustained relationships. ...
>
> Margot: Like sandwiches for the DTES. I can go into any group and discover that they do something for the DTES. How peculiar? It's the trope of "how bad it can get." If you're going to help, help the very worst. Somehow, in some perverse way, you have to go to the very worst. Don't help the people in your neighbourhood!
>
> Becky: In fact, you stop them from coming into your neighbourhood if you can do anything about it. We don't want the needle exchange here; go put it over there! Not here. The extension of generosity does not extend to the neighbourhood precisely. They tried to put in some kind of housing unit in my parents' community. My parents were appalled by their neighbours who didn't want this there. NIMBY [Not in My Back Yard] neighbourhood. But those are the people who also would go to the DTES and bring sandwiches. They want to gain those points, but...
>
> Margot: They don't have credibility in those communities. That's the thing. It's good that it's doing something for them, they're doing these things, but they're not relationships. It's parachuting in and jumping back out again. That's ok. It gets sandwiches into people who are hungry, but it doesn't do much else.
>
> Laurie: This is a huge theme that keeps coming up – the relationships – that has to be explored more. How are we doing in these relationships?
>
> Mary Lu: It relates back to what we started with, which is evaluation and reporting. It's that whole…Who are our students to us? Are they...Is it an experiment model? Let's take this random sample, and let's put a drop of education into these people and track what happens?
>
> Becky: Some kind of social experiment or something.
>
> Mary Lu: I hate that...Obviously there is an element to that. Obviously we are doing something that is maybe not part of the norm of our students' lives because they don't always get some of these opportunities. But that experiment model, I hate it. I don't want to be any one's experiment; I don't want to be used by someone, so why would anyone who is poor welcome it? Get away from the

gratitude model; we've got to get away from the experiment model. It has to be relationship and engagement.

Laurie: But we have community. It's interesting that I'm listening to our vocabulary level – the linguistic level of "us," "our," them." Even in the way that we're talking, we're already creating "they," "us," "our" students.

Becky: It's interesting you say that because when I'm talking with people who aren't "in the know" – whatever that means – I am very careful to say "the UNI 101 students". I never say "our" students; for me, it's something I'm very conscious of when I'm talking to people who don't already have those relationships and for whom it would be really easy to then read it as my possessiveness over the program or something or a way that they attribute the student success to me. It's another piece of that charity model. I try to be really careful about that. It's easy to push away the people who are doing that bad ways of doing stuff. It's bad! It's not me.

Laurie: There's a lot of value...I appreciate, Margot, you saying that. I think there are lot more places where they're looking at ways of improving. Like, I know at U of C they're talking a lot about "engagement" – this is the big thing: Why are students not staying engaged; why the attrition levels? For that discourse to be happening at the institutional level – because they are a business model – that's very, very important; people leave before they finish their degrees and they don't have the "credit."

Becky: It's been a wasted investment.

Laurie: Exactly.

Margot: It's all cost-benefit stuff.

Laurie: It is. And resisting that at so many levels; talking about funding, what terminology we're using in our evaluation, I think is really key. What kind of language do we want to use? Be really careful about what kind of language do we want to use.

Becky: I'm ok in strategic moments. If this is a better investment because "they're more engaged" and "there are better outcomes;" you're speaking their language about what we're doing. You're talking about cost benefit. I'm not troubled in strategic moments taking up that language but I think it is something to do very cautiously and with lots of care because it's so easy to have it slip away from you. As long as the program isn't having to change in response to those things. If once we get the funding, we continue as we are. How we report it in the funding report, I'll say whatever they want to hear. As long as it means not having to change what we're doing in our program.

(Group dialogue, April 9, 2010)

Part of program survival came from our own abilities to manipulate the language, and required us to have knowledge of multiple discourses – ways to translate what we were doing. At the same time, as Becky said, "As long as it means not having to change what we're doing in our program;" or, as Mary Lu said, "Get away from the gratitude model; we've got to get away from the experiment model. It has to be relationship and engagement." This linked us to our philosophical and pedagogical discourses and practices.

Philosophical and pedagogical discourses and practices.

In a Nanaimo café, directors had continued to exchange ideas and began to expose underlying epistemological underpinnings of our ways of *doing what we do*. We talked about our educational backgrounds and explained the influences of religious and philosophical studies, feminist theories, critical pedagogy, cultural studies, First Nations communities and post-colonial literary theories. Some of us had been heavily influenced by post-modern thoughts, while others had not. It was becoming clear how our own personal and educational backgrounds and our political and philosophical beliefs contributed to how we presented our programs to each other as well as to others; for example, Margot, who is an installation artist, said, "I tend to see HUM as a project which brings up a whole bunch of different things. And I see it as installed because I see it as specific in space and time and having material practices as much as imminent practices" (Group dialogue, April 9, 2010). Mary Lu also often spoke in metaphors;

> We're building the boat as we sail it across the ocean. It's part of what makes this so interesting. It's forcing a re-evaluation of what teaching is, of what learning is. How content relates to people's lives. I have a lot of patience, for those are slowly learned lessons. (Group dialogue, April 9, 2010)

By sharing our epistemological lenses, we started to examine how we had been attracted to the programs and to our positions and how we could (to varying degrees of director autonomy) chose to actively influence the dynamics of the programs.

> Margot: We always use this method of thinking about things through three touchstones really; people, power and knowledge, and it's how I did my PhD research which had nine different disciplines in it. So what I did in order to fashion it into a methodology and epistemology was just focus how in all the disciplines, what counts as a person, what counts as power, what counts as knowledge. And then that let me draw in from all sorts of different areas… the basic assumption is that all disciplines have a way of thinking about people, power, and knowledge. So that's what we're doing in our collaborative essay, too, coming from our own disciplines. So, Paul has already written about how Freire conceptualizes people, power, and knowledge.
>
> Becky: I'd love to hear … to get that when you're ready to share.
>
> Margot: So, I introduced interdisciplinarity to the students in an early lecture through that method. And we talked about how the whole culture and societies focus on those three things and then asked them to use those three things to think about lots of different things throughout the course. And that's some way of doing interdisciplinarity with these different cross lines and touchstones through consistent points. It's good at every level. You know more, you're just going to do it in a different kind of way, but it really empowered people. So by the end of the course we'd say, "Ok. We're going to use our usual suspects. How does sociology conceptualize people, power, knowledge? Oh, now we're going to study First Nations; what counts as people? In architecture, what counts as a person?" And it stumps people; so for instance, "How are stairs designed? Is [the design] considered for people who walk?"
>
> Mary Lu: Oh, fascinating!
>
> Margot: It had to be a whole social movement before people could be considered people *and* in a wheelchair. We had to have a sign that shows us that now we have a conceptualization of a person who doesn't walk but is still mobile. It's

really just teardown thinking. You try to tear away all the things that are stopping you from being able to think clearly, really, to "What are the real touchstones that you come back to over and over again?" Even, I would think, just designing assignments for the whole year around something like that. What counts as a person? What counts as power and what counts as knowledge? I'm sure it's wedded to your whole course because I know the canon is obsessed by those questions.

Mary Lu: We've never made these questions explicit, but we're going to have a class in May where we're just going to talk about "why the liberal arts?" And we're going to have the chairman of the board, who has been a university board of governors' chair and a law professor. He's been so many things – he's been a politician – and so, he's thought a lot about the nature of learning. It's why he's our chair because he's just so sick and tired of universities being these little factories for financial success. He's 71 and he says, "When I went to university I went for exactly that reason. We were so uncritical as young people in the '50's. That's all we wanted– security, finance, success.

Margot: They're the post-war generation.

Mary Lu: He's very explicit about that. He's come to love Halifax Humanities. He says, "Finally I see a place where people are learning for the sake of learning and it just makes me feel that somebody's getting it right. And the universities have lost that. So I think in a way, he's asking exactly these questions. We've never used that terminology, but I think we ask these questions all the time.

...

Becky: This year we started the course with a question asking workshop and I was trying to find the document and I'll send it when I find it. The instructor asked students, "What question, or what central problem, do they want to work through each of the disciplines?" It was a way of facilitating. Is it about place? Is it about poverty? Trying to find some kind of problem ...or community? or child care? or children? Or this sort of broader concern that they have about the world or question that they have about the world that can sustain them throughout the course and they can bring each of the disciplines to bear on that question.

Margot: It's like what you were talking about a spiral. I loved the way you described how the courses work.

Laurie: Well, I think that's how learning happens, too, because you see something once and you have this small understanding about it. You have to revisit it, whether that is through another text, or another time, or another place, and then you build on it and you grow in depth and breadth.

Margot: A spiral, that's good.

(Group dialogue, April 9, 2010)

Through sharing our epistemological stances periodically throughout our dialogue, we also pulled in curriculum differences; such as, reading Plato's *Republic* and bringing contemporary examples of social injustices to class discussion. We were determining if or how those choices impacted our pedagogical practices, such as naming practices explicitly or using them implicitly; or, having "tutors" or "teaching assistants" (TA's) in class. We spent considerable time describing and understanding their implicit or explicit roles. Becky shared with us their recent approach to articulate a collaborative learning model in their small group discussions:

> Becky: Just before we go, I want to show you this model for collaborative learning. If we look at it and then we just look at it and take a break and we can mull over it while we're gone.
>
> Mary Lu: So what's it called? Model for collaborative learning?
>
> Becky: Sure. That's what I'll call it today. It doesn't really have a title, but, sure, I think that's a good title. So, the bottom right is the typical teacher who is taking control – if you look at the vertical axis – and giving information. Control is the top axis and information is the side axis. The correlated role that often gets produced or is produced in relation to that is the stereotypical student – which is the centre box – so that stereotypical student is giving up control and taking information. That's the empty vessel student.
>
> Laurie: Is this coming from something, Becky? Or did you create this?
>
> Becky: It's coming from a control matrix that was initially produced by this woman Madori, but it kind of evolved in a variety of ways. There is no academic citation for it. It hasn't been published.
>
> Mary Lu: The question is, "Who gives up and who takes...?"
>
> Becky: Ya, who is giving up control or taking control; and, who is giving up information and taking information. The place on this grid that we're aiming for is sharing control and sharing information; and, that's the collaborative learning moment. What was helpful to me was that...I was struggling in the TA trainings and in all my speaking about the program, I did not want to be dogmatic, this is how we do things. What we were able to do in working through this is see the

impacts of being in each one of these boxes and the impact of being in the collaborative box are more conducive to productive interactions and the kinds of interactions that we want to be having. It feels less dogmatic than just saying, "Thou shalt be collaborative!" It gives some language and some way of starting to articulate the pedagogy that we're using in helpful ways, in useful ways. So what happens when you come in with a plan – you might be asking a lot of questions? This might be the Socratic Method, you know? You have an idea of what you want students to learn in the session, and you just keep asking the questions until they do.

Mary Lu: Ah, ya!

Becky: And what happens in that is that you end up with students who don't necessarily ask their own questions; they don't necessarily take ownership over their own learning. If the TA steps out, the group doesn't continue; it kind of falls apart. So when we have TA groups where the TA goes to the bathroom, and the students just sit there or they immediately start talking about something else unrelated to the course, ...

Margot: Right!

Becky: ...this could be a flag that the TA is taking too much of a plan or they're too directive. This helps me name the other dynamics going on and why they're not exactly collaborative and why they're not working in the way that we want them to. Or where the TA is playing facilitator; it may appear that there is facilitating happening, but they still have in their mind that they ought to be in control and if somebody gets too rowdy or too much off topic, then it's their job to bring them back in. It may be related to co-dependency. If the TA is constantly seeing themself in that role it means that the students are never having to step up to take on that role. If the TA doesn't start out that way, then there is more space for the students to say, "Hey, I notice you're speaking a lot. I'm curious to hear what Paul has to say; he hasn't spoken today much." Then that becomes a shared responsibility among the whole group instead of getting frustrated because... Margot can't stop talking. Then I can feel empowered to do this instead of waiting and saying, "Mary Lu, why aren't you doing something about this? You're the facilitator." It creates a different dynamic where everyone feels responsibility for the group going well.

Laurie: Do you share it with your TA's and students? Imagine what would happen if you did it with students, too.

Margot: Ya!

Becky: Ya, so this year we used it for the first time in the fall TA training, and then we built it into our curriculum for the next course for students. So in January we actually did this with students and with TAs. It was really helpful...

> Laurie: Really explicit.
>
> Becky: Ya, really explicit because we noticed that it's fine if the TA has this analysis, but if the students don't also feel empowered to have that responsibility for the group then it's not actually doing all we want it to do.
>
> Laurie: The tutors we had in our class were very hesitant to speak up and put in their two bits because they felt that this wasn't their role that it was the students' class. And then I said, "But we're all students. Aren't we all learning? Aren't we all reading? Aren't we all sharing?" So that was amazing! Then we had tutors getting into the conversation. And then that's what created the relationships between the tutors and the students. Again, trying to compress the hierarchy – just obliterate it. The students – we're all recognized as "students." It got us into the language... do we say "tutor" or "TA" – and yet we also recognize that there are different skill sets that people are bringing. The tutors are bringing a very important skill set; sharing how to write a sentence better, or "You've got loads of great ideas, let's pick one."
>
> Becky: And I was struck that Alison said that in the class the volunteers are expected to support the classroom dynamic during the lecture. That really hit on something that I've been struggling to name: What is the role of TA's during the lecture? And, especially if we don't get into small groups, I feel a sense of responsibility to the TA's for having committed them to come to class...
>
> Laurie: And you're not "making use" of them!
>
> Becky: And I feel that. I really, really feel that. I've even said that in our debriefing meetings on Thursday nights. And they've said, "Becky, it's ok. I totally enjoyed the lecture. I got lots out of it. I enjoyed being here." I guess I just feel so stretched in my own time that I feel that if I was giving up my whole evening and then not feeling like I was actually contributing... In talking with one of the volunteers last night; she said, "It's harder to know how to contribute in the larger group to know how to contribute." It's something that I want to spend more time thinking about; that is, how do we name that contribution or facilitate that TA role?
>
> (Group dialogue, April 9, 2010)

Our attentiveness to the dynamics in the classroom demonstrated our desire to create spaces of dialogue that were respectful to all the people in the environment – respect of people included time to speak and time to listen, and encouragement for both practices.

> Becky: The thing I'm still really curious about is to get your feedback on this collaborative model. And use it as a potential launching point to enter into the

discussion of educational discourse and pedagogy. It may or may not get us closer to that but it feels related to me – how we have attempted to articulate this. ...

Laurie: There's a lot of overlap with what you've been sharing with us. In terms of your model, it's on the discourse side but it's also how you're creating the environment, so there are two pieces to that. I'm drawing a lot of my understanding of how to do this through the early childhood education philosophy that I had which I see parallels a lot of this. Creating the environment in the Reggio Emilia philosophy is so rich. I will load all kinds of information to you about that. They call the environment "the third teacher."

Margot: Call which?

Laurie: The environment – the third teacher.

Margot: Oh, wow.

Mary Lu: That's really interesting.

Becky: Oh, very interesting. It's like the third space – or "third body". There are the five people in the room and the energy that we create between us – this intangible energy that we create when we're all together - it's like a "third body".

Laurie: In North American terms we'd call it emergent curriculum, but Reggio calls it progettazione. So they have a projection of where they want to go – this is sort of the theme –and they just see how long it will take to carry it. And their concept of time is not in the "30 minute period" or the "50 minute period" or "the child has to grasp this by the end of October." They allow for it to develop and come back to it.

Margot: And what's that called?

Laurie: The philosophy is from a region in Italy called, Reggio Emilia. They call it "inspired" here; which is why I've always used "Clemente-inspired" because it comes from the use of the term "Reggio-inspired." Reggio says very specifically, "We are not a program; we are not a manual; we are not a curriculum." It is a philosophy. It's like what we're doing. There is no model to explain, it's a philosophy.

Margot: Right.

Laurie: And so space – the environment – is really key. They'll have sort of like a catalyst, a prop of some kind, something that's going to get students engaged, or children engaged. This is why I have no issue with whatever text or subject matter is used as the catalyst for moving it forward. You can change the location, just like you can change the Reggio school; it's going to be the environment, the

> location, the people involved that's going to explain why it is what it is. It's more about how teachers and parents and children are responding to the unfolding situation. That's where I think this is echoed in that approach.
>
> (Group dialogue, April 9, 2010)

Becky's theorizing about collaborative learning environments gave, as she said, "some language and some way of starting to articulate the pedagogy that we're using in helpful ways, in useful ways." Not only was it helping the U of Vic UNI classes, it was illustrating just how useful the space of dialogue was that the directors were – in that moment – creating. We could each contribute to the dialogue not only our positive experiences but also our difficult and trying experiences; times when we felt we had not succeeded at preserving or protecting the desired environment.

It was important to be able to observe ourselves, share our weaknesses, and learn from each other how we could better address them in the same respectful way that we tried to create in our respective programs. We were able to critically analyse ourselves, find support from the other directors, and name when we were not being supported elsewhere:

> Margot: One thing is modeling.
>
> Becky: That's like what you're saying. It helps me to name it a bit more. Sort of reaffirms what you're saying, to empower the TAs to be students but being attentive to not bring their own agenda or to co-opt the whole class. How to support them to see their role in the large group, so they can feel useful and feel that they're contributing in the large group as well.
>
> Margot: It could be that we don't name them TA's, but it just doesn't come up.
>
> Becky: It did because the one person said that last night.
>
> Margot: She's new. That was her second class. Amongst the more experienced people, it just doesn't come up. Everyone asks questions. Everyone sits together. We all wear name tags. Students want to wear the nametags. The students want to wear nametags – partly for the book draw at the end of class, but we all wear

nametags. ... In a way, it's kind of wrong to say that the students are modeling it because I personally feel that most things we bring into the class, there is a good chance that they will re-enact a bad relation. I feel like a hypocrite saying that our volunteers – as experienced university students – come in modeling, when they say that these are the best classes they've been in all year. So, I'm wrong. They're not modeling. They're learning from our students, but we're creating this environment in which everyone is learning. We tell our facilitators point blank that you're not responsible for the course content. So we say, "You're there because you want to be there."

Laurie: Can we go back to that? It seems like a really big theme: This space, this community, this relation. What is this environment? How are we creating this environment? I feel like I didn't do this properly in the first semester, so that the tutors could be part of the environment in a more equal way. But I learned from the comments from the tutors and the students that that needed to be addressed. So in the second semester, I was really attentive to, "How are the students and the tutors and the mentors, how are we all contributing to this environment?"

Becky: That's a nice way to do that as a question, saying, "How are we all contributing to this environment?"

Laurie: Basically, the question becomes: This is very unique environment for what reason? For the people who are in it. And who are we allowing into this environment? Because of ...you were really vocal yesterday about having big nostrils and sniffing out those people who do not fit. It's true, though. I have an experience right now where I know that there is someone in our group that does not fit because of the power issues, because of the ways of undermining the rich environment.

Margot: We stack the deck. We totally stack the deck because we are responsible for it being a really great environment for everybody. We have students who we ask to leave – We had an over talker; he was a compulsive talker. And we made agreements with him and he broke them. And I said, "What do you think should be the consequences? You broke the agreement." He said, "I get myself kicked out of every group because I can't control my talking." But he could control his talking, that was just the thing. That's what he was doing. So after a while he just had to leave. And he made one final slam against me before he left the room. Which was fair enough; he was angry. But, he had to go. If it's not a good environment, on a personal side, I really learned that the buck absolutely stops with me.

Laurie: I haven't done that. The red flags were earlier in the semester. I thought that it would just take time to learn this; it'll take time. And then it just occurred to me part way through March that it just wasn't going to happen – the learning wasn't going to happen for this person. It was absolutely my responsibility to get

> rid of that negative prickle, but I didn't address it because of …well, there is time and how do you…
>
> Margot: I have a hard time doing it in my personal life, but at work I do. I actually get energy from it. [Problems are] going to take loads of our energy. So Paul and I talk it through, talk it through. I know if I don't fix the problem, it's going to take a ton of energy. And partly from teaching university for so long [I know that] that there is almost always one person in the room who will take up a ton of time and energy. Someone who will roll their eyes...or some problem behaviour. It will suck you dry. When you're teaching credit courses you don't have the opportunity to say, "You have to deal with this or leave." But, the other students expect this of us. They are all the time stuck with people behaving badly. Because of their situation they can't get out of it, they have to be around us.
>
> Laurie: I took a stand with one student who was not behaving well – he wasn't coming consistently to class and he had a history of this at other agencies. I took the stand to say this can't continue into next semester, we can't have this student come back. It was the one student I said should not come back for the next semester. The repercussions of that were – being very savvy on how organizations work – he went around me and went to the people above me...
>
> Margot: Oh, ya, we've had that.
>
> Laurie: and I got slammed for it. It was really hard. That was another cut. When do we get to decide these things? When we are in the environment, we need to have the ability – the authority – to make that kind of decision.
>
> Becky: It speaks to tensions and not being supported.
>
> (Group dialogue, April 9, 2010)

We were articulating together that to develop supportive learning environments in our classrooms, directors also required a supportive organizational environment as well. This was an occasion for us to name supports beyond financial recognition; and, these supports came most often in the form of people who critically engaged in increasing collective knowledge and shared fundamental ethical stances about valuing the dignity of people:

> Margot said of Paul: You have many strengths, and you're so solid. You are always aware of the other things that need doing but when it comes to the main things you are absolutely solid. You've got all the values that are so needed. You

> never judge people. You just go along with where people are. All of us now, we all rely on your stability; you do things methodically and are ready to take on the next thing. I was sick for two weeks and I didn't have any doubt. I wasn't worried at all. And this is the main thing that I do in my life! I really trust you.
>
> Laurie: I'm so lucky in what I've got – the kind of team work you've got going now (Paul and Margot) – is what I have with Stasha; she is just a godsend to me. She has a whole toolbox of skills that I just totally don't have because it's not my area of expertise at all.
>
> Becky: The person who I've been doing this with, Serena, teaches our critical thinking piece. She talks about students wanting their fix of knowledge; how satisfying it is to get that knowledge fix. What she says – and why we've integrated this in a purposeful way – is, "What we want is a deeper sustenance that comes from asking critical questions, getting challenged on our views and having that change be possible. If we are just the passive recipients of knowledge, it can feel good for the moment but it's like you leave and you haven't integrated what you are or who you are and how you are.
>
> Laurie: And I think that the ways that you're doing this collaborative research with your staff, and having collaborative dialogue, I'm doing as well with Stasha. She's coming at it from Social Work, and she's really critical, and criticizes certain practices of social work that she doesn't like, like the charity model. So she's taught me a lot of that, and then I can teach her about the adult education stuff. It's been a really good team. I think your approach of "find someone that is doing something that I like," and incorporate them into the team, I think, ideally, that is what we can get out of collaborating. In terms of the workshop that we'll be presenting in Fredericton, if you name the things that you really feel good about presenting – and that is your strength – that is what you're bringing to the group.
>
> (Group dialogue, April 9, 2010)

Re-reading notes and listening to the audio-recording from that April 9, 2010, conversation, I can see now how we came to know each other really quite well even in those few days because of the purposeful and intense face-to-face discussions that we all valued. We were really starting to get to know each other at a deeper level; and before we

ended our discussion, we listed the strengths we could see in each other and the areas we each wanted to explore further as contributing members to this research team:

> Margot:
> - politicized analysis of issues in students' lives
> - people power knowledge framework
>
> Paul
> - critical pedagogy, Freire
> - very pragmatic, solid – including values, lack of judgement
>
> Laurie
> - ethical practices, PAR, dialogical relations
> - working with social worker
>
> Mary Lu
> - value of texts, what each of these texts has to bare on major themes
> - not feel the need to defend curriculum
>
> Becky
> - how to translate this work/project
> - how TAs/instructors, etc. translate their situated experiences
> - exposing the tensions
>
> (Group notes, April 9, 2010)

As we ended our April 9 conversation, we knew we had so much more to reflect on but that we had moved beyond the process of detailing program logistics into the deeper analysis of our pedagogical practices and fundamental values:

> Margot: So you'd like to see if this learning model is a way to engage in university discourses.
>
> Becky: What I take from the Reggio Emilia thing... the learning for us: Do we want to put forth a philosophy or pedagogy that brings us together as a program and what differentiates us from the Humanities Certificate? Aside from the "free," is there something that is special about what we are doing? If there are differences what are they? Especially in terms of the Service Learning model. There is some need to differentiate from some models or some approaches. The second piece is, "How do we communicate internally to people who are new to the program?" Volunteers, TA, tutors, instructors and students…
>
> Laurie: and to the institution you are dealing with and the broader community around you.
>
> Margot: Is it about describing ourselves?

Laurie: It has to be something more than describing.

Margot: What is it?

Laurie: Because I see the environment as very reflexive, it's more than a description, it's a way ... it's a way of doing.

Margot: Communicating our way of doing.

Becky: It's more than describing because it's about communicating with other people. In order to do that, we need to know what language they're speaking and what we're speaking and what kind of language is needed to translate.

Mary Lu: A lot of this discussion is naming these practices that we all have a kind of gut level commitment to; which is a learning environment where people's dignity is respected; where no one is spoken down to; where an engagement with an idea or a text is paramount, where there is a shared experience of learning. We're all saying similar things. I don't have certain kinds of language for saying that, the way you guys do. But I suspect that we are all circling around and finding different ways of saying things that are fairly core things.

(Group dialogue, April 9, 2010)

Ethical tensions around program instability.

I left Vancouver after a week of intense and needed dialogue, I felt exhausted and exhilarated at the same time. It was my first year of directing the program, and as we were approaching the end of the year I had the final details of the celebration to attend to, interviews to conduct with students, tutors and staff, reports and program manuals to write, and an uncertain future for the program as no funding had come through for the next year. Having spent the week with people who had been doing this job for four and five years already, I had been relieved to hear how their learning had been incremental but saddened at the thought that this could be the end of *Humanities 101: An Odyssey*. Everyone had related their "first-year" stories and the intensity of the learning curve: No

one had had an easy first year, and yet the passion and commitment to the position was still strong. As we had been discussing, the nature of these programs seemed to parallel the unpredictable and trying conditions of the participants of the programs. When we considered the lives of the students and the sense of community developing in our programs, we had every reason to continue working to sustain them. I had also started to grasp that all the directors were also under incredible duress to sustain the high quality of these programs with such limited funding. A resounding message from the directors was that none of us perceived ourselves as being alone in our commitment as most of us worked alongside supportive staff and volunteers; however, there were sentiments of isolation that were overcome by our discussions. All of the directors acknowledged the support of others, but recognized that some of the concerns we had were most comfortably discussed with each other because of our common understandings to the tensions of our positions.

Mary Lu visit in Calgary coincided with exit-interview evaluations with students and staff reflections on our year, so she got to meet and speak face-to-face with many of our participants. Having just visited the other programs and familiarizing ourselves with their terms and titles, this was an occasion for Mary Lu and me to reflect deeper on our program language and supports. Becky had talked about U of Vic students who received nominal stipends as "TAs" (Teaching Assistants) and a paid part-time program assistant. Margot had a paid part-time program coordinator and a volunteer coordinator, plus many volunteer teachers, mentors and tutors. Mary Lu worked most often alone, only occasionally getting some office support and only some years having Calgary's program paid one instructor ("sessional" pay) to teach the full semester, had a paid part-time

director (27 hours per week) and a paid part-time "student support person," Stasha Huntingford, who was also a registered social worker (approximately 10 hours per week). We also had "mentors;" this was the title we chose for the *Storefront 101* alumni that came back not as registered program "students" but as participant learners in the classroom that could relate to the students' journeys. We chose that title to distinguish from "tutors," which was a term used in *Storefront 101* and which held a lot of meaning to the mentors who expressed fond memories and gratitude for the volunteers who had helped them in their learning journey. Some of the *Humanities 101: An Odyssey* "tutors," the volunteers who attended and participated in class twice a week and helped students with academic writing assignments, had commented that they would have preferred to be called "mentors" rather than "tutors," as we had had discussions about the positive and negative associations with those terms. Even our "Student Support Person" was a title that was never used (Stasha was "Stasha"); while we were reflecting on our language, we thought the title was somewhat confusing when we considered that mentors, tutors and instructors also "supported" students. And as our community strengthened, we witnessed students supporting students in ways that came naturally to them. Mary Lu identified supportive board members and professors in her program and related that they had tried "tutors" in previous years, but had not continued the practice. She was reconsidering this in light of what she had seen on the West Coast and in Calgary. She also, jokingly said, she would love to have a "Kevin" and a "Stasha" and a "Paul." Sincerely, what she was acknowledging was that this was a lot of community effort, and we all needed supportive relationships. Having Mary Lu visit us and witness our community added value to what

we were doing; she recognized the success of our collaborative efforts and acknowledged us.

Significantly, when my contract ended with *Humanities 101: An Odyssey* and no funding was in place for the next year, I was well positioned to draw from my colleagues support and suggestions for how our learning community could navigate a new path. Many students, instructors and staff demonstrated a high interest in finding ways to stay connected to learning and to each other. There were many positive things that had coalesced in *Humanities 101: An Odyssey* to create a space for dialogue, for individual and group learning. But clearly, as our program was closing down (and now not even the *Humanities 101: An Odyssey* website exists for posterity), we had to critically reflect on the essence of our community learning group. Could we consider our program a success if it was not sustainable? What would it take to make it sustainable? As we looked at the reality of not having financial resources to pay for instructors or staff, for food or bus tickets, for books or childcare, we had to clearly articulate the focus of our learning group and assess the resources we could each realistically bring. This unanticipated event made us all – student alumni, former staff and instructors – carefully consider *how and why we do what we do*. Individually, we had to re-examine how we could participate in, yet again, a new iteration of a marginalized program, so susceptible to the crushing forces of poverty economics. Yet, here again, was this crazy hope to make it happen.

The creation of *Community Learning in the Humanities* (CLH) at the Calgary Public Library (CPL) was not a smooth process, but from it there have been both individual and group learning moments through the ethical tensions we have encountered. Like any group of human beings, we each had our own understanding of what could or

should transpire. The “I”s of our group were all encouraged to say what they wanted to do next. It took time, and at the end of six weeks of Wednesday meetings, not everyone wanted the same thing – “we” did not all agree. It was not possible to model CLH on any of the funded programs, but we could be inspired by elements of them all. Chapter five of this dissertation expands on the ongoing process of creating CLH, but by the time I was attending the Fredericton conference in the fall (at this stage of my narrative), we already had the germinal form of our modules. We had piloted one module in July, learned from many mistakes and had advertised in the CPL adult program guide our four fall modules (September, October, November and December).

The Fredericton conference punctuated the “middle” of the data collection of my PhD research, but it became a far more significant meeting because of the opportunity for me to yet again convene with my colleagues, share updates in person, and critically reflect on this new and unexpected learning process. I was becoming increasingly comfortable in a frame of mind which was demanding intense personal reflection about who and how I wanted to be in the world. This underlying personal learning process was contributing to how I was interpreting my role as a director in a Free Humanities program. The work I was doing as a director had made me carefully re-considering the ethical tensions of simultaneously being a graduate student, which was a research role. The more long term and deeper significance of the work I was engaging in had much to do with the person I was becoming. This was the coalescence of individual and group learning journeys – sparking the emerging themes and concerns we were raising; all of which we were connected to an ethic of care in creating spaces for dialogue.

Participatory action around the conference

Right up until September, we were establishing who would present at the international conference in Fredericton (September 30 – October 2, 2010). Some directors had hoped to attend the conference but ultimately could not because of issues of time and money; others did find the resources to travel to Fredericton with short notice. In the end, five directors presented at St. Thomas' University International Liberal Arts Conference; Calgary, Halifax, Vancouver, Victoria, and Thunder Bay directors presented in person, and I presented information from the Ottawa, Toronto, Nanaimo and Edmonton programs based on correspondence given to me by their directors. I was in contact via email with all those who could not make the conference, receiving updates even as I was in Fredericton – adding to the feeling of collaboration even in their absence.

The five directors who travelled to the conference participated in a number of face-to-face dialogues while in Fredericton from September 30 to October 3. Because of the active cycle of face-to-face dialogues we had had in the spring, we had already begun to collaboratively analyse our collective knowledge. We began identifying the recurring issues of concern and the people who could best address each of our collective issues during the presentation, drawing on the strengths we had identifying of each other in the April 9, 2010, group dialogue. We also wanted to express the differences as much as the similarities of our programs, which is consistent with PAR methodology:

> Founded upon an 'epistemology that assumes knowledge is rooted in social relations and most powerful when produced collaboratively through action' (Fine et al. 2003: 173), participatory analysis embraces knowledge production as a contested, fraught process. It assumes there is no one singular or universal truth,

> and instead emphasises the power of an intersectional analysis that takes difference into account. (Cahill, 2007, p.181)

Table 6 lists a number of significant dialogues we had during the days in Fredericton. Along with the names of the participants involved, the table provides general information on the topics discussed – which renewed many previous issues.

Table 6: Participation in face-to-face dialogues around the conference

DATES/ Dialogues	**PEOPLE**	**ISSUES/THEMES RAISED**
September 30 Dinner	Becky Cory Doug West Mary Lu Roffey-Redden Laurie Meredith	Roles of directors/co-ordinators Need for dialogue Sharing program knowledge/updates and reflections since our last group meetings.
October 1 Breakfast meeting	Becky Cory Doug West Mary Lu Roffey-Redden Laurie Meredith Margot Leigh Butler	Final organisation of presentation order and division of main issues to address.
October 1 Conference presentation/ Debriefing	Laurie Meredith Mary Lu Roffey-Redden Becky Cory Doug West Margot Leigh Butler	Program origins & Canadian contextualized differences; Curriculum choices & institutional relations; Critical thinking & strategies for small group discussions; Teaching, directing & community engagement; Students & practices
October 1 Conference banquet	Mary Lu Roffey-Redden Becky Cory Margot Leigh Butler Laurie Meredith Doug West Jean Wilson	An opportunity to expand our experiences to other academics and community agencies beyond the conference presentation.
October 2 Dinner	Margot Leigh Butler Mary Lu Roffey-Redden Becky Cory Laurie Meredith	People Power Knowledge Place
October 3 Focussed dialogue	Mary Lu Roffey-Redden Becky Cory Margot Leigh Butler Laurie Meredith	Creativity and time constraints How do we continue our collaborative work without getting stuck on surface level differences; “Starting at R”

Staying at the same hotel, we were able to have many meals together, yet again increasing and deepening our relationships and knowledge of each other and our programs. As we attended the conference over two and a half days, we found ourselves meeting up for coffee breaks and meals, sharing what we were learning and continuing our conversations. We often expressed how much we craved this opportunity to have time to exchange ideas and experiences with people who had such intimate understandings of the challenges of our programs. This sentiment was expressed by all of us, but for Doug West, who was new to his role as director, this occasion to meet and exchange ideas was particularly important. Even though he came with years of experience in teaching and researching in participatory ways, he acknowledged his learning curve in this new role. Although he entered into our group learning space closer to the "middle" of my PhD research collection phase, in many ways he was entering at another "beginning" phase of our collaborative process – a "new" cycle of group research, action, and reflection.

Over dinner the first night before the conference started, Doug joined Becky, Mary Lu and I as we caught each other up on latest program news. Although he had taught at both UNI 101 (Victoria) and in HUM101 (Thunder Bay), he expressed how different it was to be in the role of director. He had received a thin package of materials about the program in Thunder Bay, and although he knew Becky and the UNI 101 program, he had not known much about the other programs across Canada until he had read the documents I had sent out over the summer; he said, "I've read everything you sent me." Like me, he had relied on the experiential knowledge of one of the program

alumni, Nadine Seeton (who he acknowledged in the presentation and in the conference proceedings). In Fredericton he was gaining a much deeper and broader understanding of the dynamics in other Canadian Free Humanities programs. Over dinner, we were informally rehearsing our conference presentation that we decided would be divided into the following order:

1. Intro (Laurie):
    - The Clemente Course origins
    - programmes across Canada, who is here and who could not attend
    - Similar but different: ethical reasons for us to connect and stay connected
    - Laurie will present the next speaker

2. Halifax: Halifax Humanities (Mary Lu)
    - the collaboration we do with community agencies like the Library and the United Way
    - our unique situation of dealing with 6 post-secondary institutions
    - Classics curriculum
    - Mary Lu will present the next speaker

3. Victoria: UVic UNI101 (Becky)
    - critical thinking
    - small group discussion
    - roles and training of TA's
    - Becky will present the next speaker

4. Thunder Bay: Lakehead University's HUM101 (Doug)
    - Teaching in the programmes (Lakehead and UNI 101)
    - Directing
    - Community engagement/praxis
    - Doug will present the next speaker

5. Vancouver: UBC's HUM101 (Margot)
    - Students living in poverty
    - Downtown Eastside
    - Practices
    - Margot will lead us in discussion with the audience

We each presented program specific details, making it – as we would describe later – not so much a collaborative piece as a collective one; and, in our presentation format, we intentionally introduced each other, which demonstrated that we were getting to know each other through this process. We also found ways to highlight the emerging learning foci we felt was our individual strength and which represented our collective interests.

My section of our presentation included summaries of the programs not represented in person that day, based on email correspondence I had received from their directors. It also gave me the opportunity to talk about our spring meetings and the information we had collected together, strengthening our group of five presenters as part of a larger informal network of nine programs:

6. Nanaimo: Clemente Course
    - Mark Blackell, former director and Andrew Scott, new co-ordinator
    - Credit course through Vancouver Island University
    - Students have had the chance to continue on to regular stream classes
    - In April 2010 we were able to hear one alumni student give a presentation at their campus conference.

7. Toronto: University in the Community
    - Anne McDonaugh
    - Senior College, retired professors giving a lecture series
    - Financial difficulties are constant
    - WEA – historical presence

8. Edmonton: HUM101
    - Joanne Muzak
    - Community Service Learning
    - Community mapping project
    - Skyped to our HUM101 class in Calgary last April

9. Ottawa: Discovery University
    - Jill Zmud, new director
    - Ottawa Mission
    - Partnership with University of Ottawa

With only about seven minutes each to present, we found we had so much more to say then we could have possibly presented; again, we felt the constraints of time to describe complex elements and issues. When we reflected on our presentation over the next couple of days together, we commented that we felt we had only just been able to "skim the surface" of our programs and what we do, and we had not conveyed the richness of our programs the way we had in our directors' dialogue in April.

With a great number of concurrent conference sessions scheduled during our presentation time, we were pleased to have more attendees than panellists, but disappointed that more conference participants were not present. We had been attending other conference presentations (sometimes alone or with others of our learning group) and had been talking about the mood of the conference as one of grave concern for the future of the liberal arts. There was an overwhelming sense that the value of the liberal arts and humanities struggled to compete for the attention of students lured into the professional degrees that promised greater job security, and as a result, faculty faced insecurity as many liberal arts departments reduced in size. References had been made to Martha Nussbaum's recent publication, *Not for profit: Why democracy needs the humanities* (2010), and I shared with my colleagues that our CLH group was studying chapters from it in our September module, making the relevance of what we were doing and why we were discussing these ideas timely and germane. Conference keynote speakers included Dorothy E. Smith, Phil McShane and Ronald Wright, who all spoke to the importance of reviewing the history of liberal arts education and the need to keep talking through the current tensions (see St. Thomas University conference website, http://stualumni.isetevents.com/eventDetail.aspx?id=14046); unfortunately, Henry

Giroux, who was scheduled as a keynote, could not attend the conference. I often wondered how the mood of the conference would have been influenced by his presence, particularly because of his emphasis on collective action (see Giroux, 2010, for discussion), and intentionally infused a significant number of his quotes in this document because I perceived that what our Free Humanities programs offer is very much what he describes as "A Free University in a Free Society" (p. 190).

As the Free Humanities directors reflected on the instability of our even further marginalized humanities programs (compared with those fully instituted in colleges and universities), we began a much deeper reflection on what it was that our programs offered as an answer to the question of where liberal arts education was headed. We wondered why more people had not come to our session, speculating on whether my choice of title ("stories") had perhaps deterred some from the seriousness of our work. Where people were raising grievances, we were celebrating sincere, passionate, enthusiastic learning under challenging conditions. In some ways, the emotional, aesthetic and intellectual learning we had started in Vancouver was being echoed in Fredericton; but by then, we were not focusing on our grievances but solidifying our strengths.

During the conference, we were also able to extend our program knowledge to other academics at the conference beyond the presentation itself, which was one of the main goals of my PhD research design. Dr. Jean Wilson from McMaster's University in Hamilton, Ontario, joined us in a number of conversations, voicing her interest and pleasure at finding a group of educators so passionate about what we were doing. During the banquet dinner and speech, Jean sat at our table along with two board members of *Halifax Humanities*, establishing a personal connection that eventually led her to organize

a visit to McMaster campus. Eventually, we sent Jean our conference proceedings document, "Stories of Dialogue;" and, ultimately, two of the Canadian program directors (Mary Lu Redden and Jill Zmud) travelled to Hamilton in March 2011 to explain more of the organisational details of running Free Humanities programs. This kind of networking outcome originated because of the inclusive space for dialogue that we created at the conference in Fredericton. This was an occasion for us to expand others' interest in the programs, which eventually led to McMaster's University establishing their own *Discovery Program* (set to debut in the fall of 2011).

While the conference allowed for us to extend our learning group, it also was an important time for us to re-create spaces for our discussions on sensitive topics. This was the safe space we had already begun to create in the spring and that we were anticipating in Fredericton. It was also a space that we had been testing out for more direct and personal comments. In the spring we had had many discussions about the terminology we used (TAs, instructors, mentors, tutors, etc.) but had also begun a more critical analysis of our language. I related how our Community Learning in the Humanities group had started using terms like "participants," "facilitators," and "learners" instead of the more hierarchical language of "student," "teacher," "tutor," etc., particularly because our program was now running out of the Calgary Public Library and not a university campus. Others commented on the value attached to being called a "student," particularly for the students who could benefit from the power of gaining access to additional resources because of this terminology (some programs provided access to campus facilities, for example). We also recognized our common tendency to present the positive side of our programs in a kind of public relations bid since one of our roles was to recruit students,

instructors, and other volunteers as well as appeal to funders. This had its purposes, but we knew that we came up against many challenges to how people in our programs get represented (students and ourselves, for that matter), so our sensitivity to language was heightened by an analysis of how we talked about students and how we heard students talked about.

One significant discussion for Mary Lu, Becky, Margot and I was during dinner at a restaurant. While in the midst of an intense discussion, an opportunity presented itself for us to carefully examine how we attend to language used to describe us. Very quickly we found ourselves in a defining moment of tension, which I later felt helped us to clarify our relationships to each other and, importantly, to ourselves because of the way we worked through it. What came out of the discussion were our personal perspectives of how we experienced the combination of Margot's framework of *people, power, knowledge*, and *place* (the fourth being a category she had recently started to examine more thoroughly). Suddenly, we started to dig below the comfort level of our surface analysis of our programs toward how we live out our awareness of language and position. We are different people, with different degrees of power and different knowledge in different places. In April we highlighted some of our differences by pointing out our strengths during our long conversation in Vancouver: By October, we were able to confront and critically analyse our weaknesses. We all acknowledged that this was a hard step and just how important it was for us to work through the emotional and intellectual process of learning about ourselves with each other. Essentially, this conversation to date was the greatest demonstration that we could all risk learning together because of the relationships of trust we had developed. It was uncomfortable. It immediately reminded

me of the kinds of critical dialogues Carlina Rinaldi described in *In dialogue with Reggio Emilia: Listening, researching and learning* (2007) and Myles Horton and Paulo Freire described in *We make the road by walking: Conversations on education and social change* (1990). With our increasing self-understanding, we were truly creating spaces for dialogue that extended the possibility of deep personal learning.

We started examining the power of our positions and how we used it differently depending on the setting and the people involved. Sometimes we would position ourselves with the students of our program, creating a "we" that excluded regular academic learning streams; for example, at the conference, the "we" of our learning group became representatives of the programs we directed (in contrast to regular institutionalized departments and faculties). At times, we found ourselves talking about how we felt uncomfortable enjoying some of the privileges of our positions in relation to the students (able to afford a restaurant meal or occasionally buy new clothes versus used). We knew that we were not in exactly the same kind of tenuous circumstances of many of the students, but most of us were not in the economic stability of most professionals, either, even though we were all well educated. This brought up, again, a discussion on our own ethic of Self care, as we raised concerns about our abilities and responsibilities of caring for each other and ourselves as we were attending to the needs of others.

Four of the five directors (Becky, Mary Lu, Margot and I - the same four who had had a long conversation together in April of 2010) were able to stay a day after the conference ended to carry on a much longer and uninterrupted dialogue. It started during the intensity of the dinner discussion on October 2 and continued more earnestly with

note-taking and tape-recording the next day. Again, this focussed conversation lasted over six hours and occurred after we had been together for three consecutive days. Margot typed extensive notes on our comments and later shared them with us all; in them she wrote:

> Our Director's discourse is so fabulous, we're really talking ABOUT things that we're passionate about, we are doing such interesting work so thoroughly – it's what I want to be part of, an intellectual, political community. (Margot's Group Notes, October 3, 2010)

The "we" who had attended the conference and, therefore, had been privy to the many discussions while in Fredericton recognized that our experience together created an "inside" moment of the project's process.

> Becky wants to cry when she thinks about the four of us having a retreat, a release of weight she doesn't even know she's carrying until she sees us. We've been gaining this for years and are so into it. The four of us are so voluble and deeply into it. (Margot's Group Notes, April 3, 2010)

There was no *a priori* intention of excluding the other directors, but a certain natural occurrence of smaller group learning had occurred and was continuing to occur as we recognized the need to keep our dialogue going after the conference because it was not a "completed" thought. We discussed how we could continue it without starting from the beginning again. Margot noted that she "describes working with people with different kinds of knowledge and experience, that with some people you start at A in the alphabet, and with others you get to start at the letter R!" (Margot's Group Notes, October 3, 2010). We had concerns that we would lose the depth of our conversation if we tried to catch people up, and we had concerns that we would leave people out by not finding ways to include them in the developing process. I felt that this ethical dilemma acknowledged the depth of relationships we had developed through our process:

> PAR requires researchers to negotiate changing and fluid understandings of being inside or outside throughout a project's life. It may also require a movement beyond the bounds of 'normal' research relationships into the less clear-cut realms of friendship and kinship. (Pain et al., 2007, p.30)

Conscious of our personal and program financial constraints, we shared as many of our resources as possible. With *Halifax Humanities'* funds, Mary Lu had rented a car to get to the conference, which was then used for our group to get around Fredericton, to and from the university campus. As a graduate student, I had received a $500 travel grant from the University of Calgary, and Margot had professional development funds from HUM; so Becky, Mary Lu, Margot and I shared hotel costs. Becky and I used our own resources for plane tickets, which in real terms meant we had to ask our families for funds. There was, undoubtedly, personal investment into coming together: We were there because we wanted to be there.

Active Listening Context.

Many of the same concerns and issues from the April 2010 meeting resurfaced in our October meeting; but since then, we had sent information to each other about our theoretical frameworks and we had more ways of entering them into our reflective-analysis; Margot noted: "This is the value of the diversity of our backgrounds – interdisciplinarity in practice: We can inform each other" (Margot's Group Notes, October 3, 2010). I had sent my candidacy paper, which described more of the Reggio

Emilia pedagogy and philosophy, and we discussed the value of the "Listening Context" (see Chapter 2):

> Regarding Laurie's Listening Context, Becky likes it. It sounds like a theoretical term that needs to be unpacked. Margot suggests that it would be good if we could find terms – i.e. LC – which come from our different discourses but can be thrown into the middle (of the fishbowl?) so that we can see what it is from our different disciplinary discourses, what is the pin that will hold our hinges together? Drop it in. Becky likes "Creating space for meaningful discussion." Margot uses "critical and creative thinking and practices"; Becky has as the title of their first section "critical and creative thinking." Laurie: discussion tends to mean 'talking,' dialogue is talking, and the "LC" emphasizes LISTENING and an intention to take what someone's saying and considering it deeply, and how it can transform your own practice and or you. (Margot's Group Notes, October 3, 2010)

Our immediate context of actively listening to each other had us considering the practice of *how to listen*:

> How to work with this: is it about ATTENTION, BEING WIDE AWAKE (Schutz in Laurie's candidacy paper), ACTIVE LISTENING, Life Long Learning (ha –L3), ELEMENTS OF INDIV AND COLLECTIVE AND CO-CONSTRUCTION (knowledge and experience are so subjective, everything's done together in our programmes; so if you take away a part of the context of LC it immediately shifts and mutates it, for better and worse). Space of listening, listening space; listening gets at the active engagement, important because it responds to the over emphasis on talking; Becky says it's listening talking and learning and engaging and challenging and questioning being open to transformation all at once (spoken without commas!). Laurie: an ethic of self care, listening and love and acting, activism. All of those words. Trust. Are you listening if you don't relate, trust? Becky is often worried about the words safety and trust, as if all we have to do is talk about it and then it's so; we create the conditions for safety and trust, and work hard to actualize it. Laurie: What are the conditions for listening? In this role that Margot's taken on as note taker here, she's felt comfortable stopping each other from interrupting or finishing each other's sentences IN ORDER TO let the full thought proceed and be noted down. And not having to fight into it – to keep the floor when others want to jump in, to understand the lull and how to get started when there are people in the conversation who are so quick to enter and so skilled at it. And making the connexion between the thoughts more explicit; we are listening and building on each other. This happens when written. (Margot's Group Notes, October 3, 2010)

Our data collection and analysis methods incorporated an intentional pedagogical practice of listening that was brought to the surface through our collective abilities to "pay attention" and question ourselves critically. My theoretical background gave us one starting point for naming this listening practice; and we were preparing to search in other theories as well as our classroom practices to "unpack" this praxis. We explicitly identified the need to combine "listening talking" in both spoken and written dialogue.

By sharing our resources, we had included as many of the directors as possible; and, although not all of the directors could be there in person, having had previous face-to-face encounters with the others made me feel that through our conversations we were able to find ways of extending knowledge and information about our sister programs. Nonetheless, the intensity of conversation over the short few days created a space of dialogue that included some and not all of the directors. The people who were present at the conference had the opportunity to extend our relationship in ways not fully possible for those not present. This became a moment of ethical tension, determining how and how much we could include those who were not present. "We" five who were able to travel in person to the conference wanted to honour the "we" of all nine programs by making sure that each program contributed to the collaborative on-line conference proceeding (to be submitted by November 4, 2010). For this reason, insisting on having each contributing director's name appear on the conference documents was one way of honouring the people and relationships of our learning group. This was a way to ensure that we could document the beginnings of our collaborative work, recognizing a sense of solidarity while respecting the uniqueness of each program.

Participatory reflection after the conference

Our reflections after the conference were channelled into two possible modes of publications, which were offered to conference presenters; one, a submission of online conference proceedings; and the second, the submission of a journal article to one of two journals. As an extended representation of our panel presentation, the online conference proceeding would provide us a space to reflect and describe all nine programs and had been envisioned from the start of my PhD proposal as a pedagogical documentation strategy to extend our group learning through further reflection:

> Having e-text to refer to, my discourse analysis [later revised to Participatory Action Research analysis] would be applied following the last series of e-dialogue. This will be the moment for me to compile both the e-text and the in-person reflections for my thesis. Our dialogue will provide not only an opportunity for us to share our experiences in a workshop and paper presentation model at the conference, but also contribute to my PhD research and thesis. In turn, linking the conference with my PhD further embeds the humanities programs deeper into the academic dialogue. (Meredith, 2009 Ethics Application)

Although we had not generated extensive e-text on the Blackboard site by this point in time, we had used email to generate and exchange program information. Now, the opportunity to collectively write conference proceedings provided another source of documentation for individual and group learning. Having already debriefed our presentation in Fredericton, the group of directors who had presented in person were already preparing for the next cycle of research, action, and reflection. We decided that we could honour all the programs through the conference proceeding document and honour the extended learning of the presenters, who had been privileged to more "face-to-face" dialogue and reflection, through the journal article writing process.

Table 7: Participation in e-dialogue and "face-to-face" sessions after the conference		
CYCLE PHASE	**PEOPLE & PROGRAMS**	**DOCUMENTATION**
RESEARCH (October, 2010) **ACTION (November, 2010)** **REFLECTION (November, 2010)**	Laurie Meredith (Calgary, AB) Mark Blackell (Nanaimo, BC) Joanne Muzak (Edmonton, AB) Anne McDonagh (Toronto, ON) Jill Zmud (Ottawa, ON) Mary Lu Roffey-Redden (Halifax, NS) Becky Cory (Victoria, BC) Doug West (Thunder Bay, ON) Margot Leigh Butler (Vancouver, BC)	Conference Proceeding compilation: "Stories of Dialogue: Collaborative Reflections from Directors of Free Humanities Programs"; group email responses
Further REFLECTION (December 6 & 10, 2010)	Mary Lu Roffey-Redden (Halifax, NS) Margot Leigh Butler (Vancouver, BC) Becky Cory (Victoria, BC) Doug West (Thunder Bay, ON) Laurie Meredith (Calgary, AB)	Skype conversation; group "chat notes"; Google group document reflections and creation of new research methodology for journal article
Further RESEARCH (December)	Mary Lu Roffey-Redden (Halifax, NS) Margot Leigh Butler (Vancouver, BC) Becky Cory (Victoria, BC) Doug West (Thunder Bay, ON) Laurie Meredith (Calgary, AB)	Individual contributions to collaborative research document (in Google Docs)
Further ACTION (December 17 – 28, 2010)	Mary Lu Roffey-Redden (Halifax, NS) Margot Leigh Butler (Vancouver, BC) Becky Cory (Victoria, BC) Doug West (Thunder Bay, ON) Laurie Meredith (Calgary, AB)	Dialogues and note-taking in collaborative research document

Following the conference, I co-ordinated the production of the collaborative online conference proceeding document by compiling the directors' written work sent to me by email, which we then reviewed and struggled to condense. Each program director had only a few pages to describe his or her respective program, and our earlier concern for staying too close to the surface was raised again. Mary Lu, Becky, Doug, Margot and I had previously discussed and presented some of our particular areas of concern for focus; for example, curriculum, critical thinking, community engagement, politicised

students, and sustainability. No one was limited in what to write but our constraints on space factored into how much we could explore in this first collaborative document. Another factor that affected this document was, again, the time that people could commit to this writing process. Some were required to work from portions of previously written documents and many acknowledged they wished they had more time to polish their piece. In a phone conversation with Anne McDonagh (of Toronto's *University in the Community*), I learned that she was already planning to use the document to present to an upcoming funding board meeting. In another phone conversation with Becky, who co-edited the document, we acknowledged that we had already accomplished a considerable collection of Canadian program information that was already generating more reflection from the directors. An email response from Joanne stated:

> Thanks for this. I've only had time to skim it, but it's an intriguing (and, for me, useful) document. It strikes me that the diversity of our approaches to summarizing our programs reflects our commitment to understanding and working with our specific communities and considering our contexts. (November 2, 2010)

Because all of the directors were sent a copy of the submitted conference proceeding, a series of emails to the group carried our conversation further. One of the directors suggested we send the document to Earl Shorris, which was met with approving comments from others. The desire to share what we were learning with others was as exciting to me as the enthusiasm we expressed to continue researching together. The five directors who had presented at the conference panel identified that the conference

proceeding document did not adequately represent the depth of our programs, particularly after so many "face-to-face" dialogues that had exposed core concerns and strong pedagogical practices.

Our "face-to-face" conversations continued after the conference via the electronic medium of Skype. Although we could not see each others' faces, hearing each other at the same time and typing our commentary into the "chat box" was important for the collaborative process as well as the documentation of ideas. Through our Skype conversations in the fall, we were able to solidify the directions we wanted to take for future research projects. Two particular conference Skype calls (December 6 & 10, 2010) included the presenters from the Fredericton panel who had already begun to expand our learning beyond the conference proceedings document. Our goal for the journal article was to go beyond the surface level, logistical representation of our programs to define the practices we were articulating. By creating a collective theoretical framework (described later in this chapter), we fully completed the research, action, and reflection cycle of this first collaborative project amongst directors of Free Humanities programs in Canada and positioned ourselves for future collaborative projects.

This section highlighted the many ways we worked at developing relationships between the programs through participation *before*, *around* and *after* the Fredericton conference. Ultimately, the data collection phase for my PhD research included the collective participation of directors from all nine operating Free Humanities programs in Canada. But the collaborative participation of a core group of directors, who were able to participate in multiple face-to-face dialogues, ensured a deeper analysis of our concerns. The following section reveals compiled data collected during all three phases of the

project's research design and how our on-going analysis led us to not only articulate our most important issues, but also to create new methods for future research.

Reflective-analysis renews research cycles.

On December 6, 2010, Margot, Becky, Doug, Mary Lu and I talked and typed our comments into the Skype "chat box" recording our conversation in a collaborative note taking format. This was an exciting discussion as we could literally read each others' thoughts as someone else was talking, making a visual scaffold of our collaborative learning. Someone commented that we were revisiting some of the same topics we had discussed during our visits in April as well as at the conference in the fall, and someone else responded that that was revealing our focus practices, many of which had not made it into the conference proceeding document. Margot started to copy sections of our group notes from October into the chat box so we could re-read our previous conversation and identify recurring themes. With four and half hours time difference from the Atlantic coast to Pacific Coast, we had to end our conversation but arranged to continue it on Friday. Becky saved the "chat" notes and sent them around for us to review, again providing us all with access to our growing collaborative knowledge.

December 10, 2010, marked the day that my PhD research collection had been "scheduled" to stop according to the one year of research timeline I had listed on my ethics form. I happened to be in Vancouver at the time, and Margot arranged to meet up with me, give me an updated tour of the rapid changes in the gentrification of the Downtown Eastside (DTES), and invite me to her home where we could each connect to Skype for our conference call with Doug, Becky, and Mary Lu. We marvelled at how

many places had been closed down on the DTES since Mary Lu and I had been there in April. We also talked about how much our relationships had deepened since then and shared updates about our programs. Margot asked how my PhD work was coming along, and I confided that although I was excited about our continued research, I wondered how long I might need to extend research collection to adequately capture our collaborative learning process. Margot and I talked about PAR process, the importance of creating collective knowledge, and my efforts throughout our process not to "own" the material or the process. As she prepared us tea for our conference call, I could not help but feel like the success of our deepening relationships was made abundantly clear by the very physical space I was in as we prepared for another coast to coast dialogue. And as we were setting up computers (one in her kitchen and one in her living room) we laughed at how the two of us could be literally face-to-face for this call, but that we each wanted access to a computer to type in our thoughts for others to read. She said one of her colleagues who uses PAR always says, "Trust in the process." And we commented that that is what we do in our programs; we trust in the learning process for the students and ourselves, too. That is what I did as we began our conference call.

Doug, Margot, Mary Lu, Becky and I quickly got into our new found preferred method of data collection, "skyping" and writing "chat" notes. We typed in our ideas as we spoke, sometimes typing in what others were saying. In the midst of conversation, Becky started a Google Document so that we could all type into the same document as we had begun to identify the framework we wanted to use for our analysis. She also created a shared folder in Google Docs so that we could all access our collaborative documents which included group notes, the Fredericton conference proceedings and a

"wordle" image based I had created based on the proceedings document (Wordle is an online program that creatively displays the most frequently used words of a document, see http://www.wordle.net/). By making the Fredericton conference proceedings document into a wordle, the directors could visually translate how in our discussions, the *how and why we do what we do* centres around the students:

Figure 1: "Stories of dialogue" Wordle

We repeated this wordle exercise with our group notes and, yet again, "students" was the most frequent word written/spoken. Intuitively, we could have all said that, but now we had *emotional, aesthetic, and intellectual* sources of pedagogical documentation to

analytically examine this assertion and to further investigate the dynamics around this assertion. Most significantly, we talked about how we needed a methodology that would increase collaborative writing to avoid the piecemeal approach of a "collection" of thoughts. Our critical reflections on the "Stories of Dialogue" document moved us to a deeper level of analysis, closer to the level we had experienced in our face-to-face dialogues.

We were inventing the process as we talked through our ideas and concerns. We drew from all of our interests and backgrounds, adding Doug and Mary Lu's growing interest in "freedom" to Margot's framework of "people," "power," "knowledge" and "place" (Butler, 2000, 2001, 2011) We talked about how all of us had touched on these concepts in varying language in either the conference proceeding document and/or in discussions, so we decided we would each contribute our thoughts on each of these topics. Then two people would discuss in a separate dialogue what we had all written down on the specific topic and write up a collaborative piece. Each of these five categories was divided up between us so that we would have a dialogue with two different people, drawing on our strengths and further deepening our collective knowledge:

People (Doug and Laurie)

Place (Laurie and Becky)

Knowledge (Margot and Mary Lu)

Free(dom) (Mary Lu and Doug)

Power (Becky and Margot)

I volunteered to write up the methodology, our newly invented data collection process. In our collaborative Google Doc, we set a tentative schedule for writing our thoughts and arranging dialogues with our "interlocutors." We recognized that our schedules were busy, the holidays were fast approaching and we all needed a break. Again, the seminal concerns about time, workload and our recognized need for Self care made us carefully consider how realistic we needed to be about getting this work in on time for the journal deadline. Asking for an extension would only give us a few more days, but we decided we would move forward on our plan and reassess when we got a response from the organizers about a possible extension. We scheduled our next Skype conference call for December 22 and ended our conversation – trusting in the process.

Margot and I, still in real "face-to-face" dialogue, convened for a debriefing over lunch. Having just raised my concerns about how long to extend my PhD data collection process prior to the conference call, I realized after that conference call that the goals that I had initially set out with had been achieved. We had experienced authentic participation and collaborative meaning making processes, and what was most important was that this work was continuing. What was developing now was for our next stage of research – one that we jointly participated in developing for our next PAR project. As the deadline for the publication loomed, we arranged another conference call for December 22, 2010; this time Becky was visiting Calgary and came over to my house, where we connected by phone with Margot and Mary Lu. We struggled to see how we would get it to the polished stage we wanted; but as Mary Lu said, "What is important is that we continue to connect and share what we do. It's not as important that we get a publication" (December 22, 2010). After the directors read the first draft of my dissertation, a group decision was

eventually made on May 16, 2011, that the information from our December group writings should be added to my PhD data collection and analysis chapter to further support the richness of our collaborative experience. Eventually, my PhD dissertation could be another document we could refer to for further reflection, research, and action in the future. It had been designed to demonstrate the importance of PAR in these programs because of the ethical stance it takes to honouring diversity and personal agency. And this production of our collaborative knowledge would open up dialogue space for more people to join – other directors, teachers, volunteers, and students. It could be debated and we could talk through tensions once again – and as Hannah Arendt says, *not to hold our hands on it, but to learn from it*. We were no longer stuck at surface level descriptions; we were "Starting at 'R'."

Starting at "R."

> *This cyclical analytic-reflective process does not move in only one direction, rather it shifts back and forth between the 'stages' of the research process, spiralling out for a wide-angle view on the theoretical and political implications of the interpretations, and then zooming up close to understand how an interpretation may, or may not, resonate with one's own personal experience.* (Cahill, 2007, p.184)

As we had identified together in dialogue, the raw data inserted in the *participatory research before the conference* section of the dissertation circulated around the issues we were collaboratively raising; whereas, the data from the December, 2010, document incorporates those same issues in more solid and analytical form as we posted reflections into the five main themes of people, place, knowledge, power, and freedom.

Even sections of our collaborative conference proceedings were entered into the document, demonstrating that participants had used that document for further reflection to advance the next stage of research. At the top of our new collaborative document (which I refer to as "PPKFP Living Document"), we posted "notes to each other" that testify to how we were using all of our collected knowledge from the year of dialogue. Our "notes" make evident our individual learning from our encounters as well as our group tensions:

> Becky: I made sure everything from the Dec. 6th conference call was incorporated into the sections on this document. I also took quite a lot of the content from the Fredericton discussion notes (Margot I'm so glad you took those notes!) and tried to find places for the pieces in our five sections. I'm not especially attached to where I've put things, and I'm excited to see if people think that some pieces should be in other sections.
> B: I took some of the writing from my contribution to the Fredericton conference proceedings and added it to the sections. It may be too much, but I thought since I was at it, that I might as well just add it and then people can choose to get rid of it if it doesn't fit the final writing.
> B: I also added some of the content from Margot's presentation - since she's going away and may not get to this before she leaves …
>
> Margot (aka MLB): I've written up the sections and posted them in blue at the end of each section - they're longer than I'd planned, but still I hope useful!
>
> Doug: I have posted in red
>
> Laurie: I am inserting a common thread into all of the sections, which is one that comments on sustainability. I think my focus on this is the result of having been a "paid" director for one year and now being a "volunteer" director as "we" (a group of Calgary learners - former staff, tutors, mentors, students from both Storefront 101 and Humanities 101: An Odyssey) strive to sustain a program (one of our current key people at the Calgary Public Library aptly calls us a "project" rather than a "program"). Much has had to change because of the loss/lack of funding and yet we are certainly attempting to sustain core practices. This is also causing us to reflect on what are the most important practices we cannot do without as we explore ways and why we need funding.

("PPKFP Living Document," December, 2010)

Below, I do not include all of our notes and reflections (that one document exceeds 50 pages) but provide a sample of the depth and expanse we have begun to explore in our new methodology that brings individual written reflections into purposeful spoken dialogue and returns them into collaborative written form. This document did not reach a final "article" written form, so I expose some of the individual participants' posts as well as sections of our notes taken during our "interlocutions." I purposely expose our tensions because that was an important element that the directors wished to express. In fact, we had intentionally positioned ourselves in interlocutions with individuals who had the greatest differences of opinion on the thematic point so that we could name the tensions and begin to unpack them (the names of the interlocuteurs are in parenthesis after the topic subheadings). The selection of citations embedded into the dissertation is my choice, but I sought to represent tensions and differences as well as the rich level of analysis individuals had come to. I also include not only the commentary from the interlocuteurs but also written reflections from other directors who reflected on the theme (which is invariably interrelated to the other reflexive themes). I refrain from interrupting the citations with my analysis, instead, allowing the participants' voices to be prioritized, which is an ethical value of PAR. I return to analyse our process and our collective knowledge production in Chapter Five.

PEOPLE: (Doug and Laurie; interlocuteurs)

> Becky: Many of the students who enter the University 101 classroom have survived poverty, violence, unstable housing or homelessness, mental illness, and

negative experiences of education. We believe that these lived experiences are produced by social, political and economic structures. However, these experiences are often attributed to the personal failings or incapacities of the people living them. In University 101, we work to name and recognize the social, political and economic structures that shape people's lives through the course material as well as in the small group discussions. Every term we have a full class of students who come into the classroom with astute analyses of the ways their own experiences have been shaped by these structures, but who have not always had those analyses taken seriously or shared by others. In University 101, we create the conditions where students are able to express their ideas and deepen their analysis of the world around them.

MLB: In Hum there are people from around the world with diverse backgrounds and knowledge, aged 20 to 80+, who live, volunteer and work on the Downtown Eastside and Downtown South (DTES/South). Hum is open to low income residents who love learning, regardless of their educational backgrounds; it's responsive and encouraging to students, alumni, volunteers and staff; and it's part of the DTES activist community which is fighting for the rights of its residents. Students arrive in Hum courses with lots of knowledge – based in formal and informal education and life experience - and a thirst for more; they do the readings and go to a Homework Club before class and are super engaged; and they create an experience for teachers which is unusual – generally older than most undergraduate students, Hum students raise informed, insightful and often unconventional questions and points which lead to meaningful, and sometimes life changing, conversations. Many Hum alumni stay involved in the Programme for years, especially through our Steering Committee and Public Programmes held on the DTES/South.

Mary Lu: As I have described elsewhere, HH101 tends to attract students who live in fairly stable situations. (Not in all cases). The students (many of whom gladly take that label for themselves) really form the core of the program. The classroom becomes their home, and the teachers their guests. I can quite literally see that welcoming in that takes place when each new teacher arrives. I have been told repeatedly by students that they feel a warmth and safety in our class because they feel welcomed and respected. As director, I am always a sort of intermediate figure: not really one of the teachers, but with some of their education and history; not really one of the students, but with their eagerness to explore, learn, and discuss.

Doug: People...we attract all sorts of people, all ages, genders, identities, ethnicities, language-speakers, cultures. Our people include students, administrators, professors, community activists, funders, who for the short time of our program, contribute to our program by "being there" - in the program. My impression is that everyone wants to be there, they choose this program because it "feels" right and it has no expectations and no judgements inside or outside.

Sometimes it is hard to get administrators at the university to understand the program (our program has been funded exclusively with university dollars and volunteer free time and transit vouchers) We have a brand new President, and he and his wife came to the last class, ate dinner with us (which was a community pot-luck like we did in University 201 in Victoria) and they stayed for the entire 3 hours. People are the reason this program exists, and keeping the right-minded people on board to support it is difficult. We refuse to allow this program to be used as a recruitment tool and we refuse to allow this program to become an "object" of study. We have been approached by two researchers from Calgary who wish to study the learning arcs of our students. We have countered their proposal with an offer: if they involve the students in the research, and help them to learn how to do self-advocacy research, then we will talk about a relationship. Nothing touches this program without leaving it in a better state. The only things that are "taken away" from the program are good will, engagement and empowerment for the students, the professors, the administrators, the community activists and the funders.

("PPKFP Living Document," December, 2010)

PLACE: (Laurie and Becky; interlocuteurs)

MLB: We used this quote in our Community Mapping project last year, and I really like it!
"To be at all – to exist in any way – is to be somewhere, and to be somewhere is to be in some kind of place. Place is as requisite as the air we breathe, the ground on which we stand, the bodies we have. We are surrounded by places. We walk over them and through them. We live in places, relate to others in them, die in them. Nothing we do is unplaced. How could it be otherwise?" Edward S. Casey, The Fate of Place, University of California Press, 1997, p ix.
Hum hinges UBC and the Downtown Eastside/South, two very different places, and is part of cultures of learning in both. We move between and connect the privileged westernmost tip of Vancouver and the Downtown South and Eastside - a place that is 'marked' and stereotyped locally, nationally and internationally, as a 'worst case scenario' and is hot with hope, community activism, change, displacement and gentrification. With 70% of DTES residents living on very low incomes (less than $1000 per month), and the many resources/assets which the strong activist community has created, Hum is differently placed than its other sister programmes.

Becky: University 101 is a program located at the University of Victoria. We offer two non-credit introductory university classes in the humanities and social sciences. We also offer a series of month long courses - 11 months of the year - for graduates of the introductory courses. Working in a non-credit classroom

where there are no grades means that we have a kind of freedom to create our own learning environment and students have the space to set their own learning goals. University 101 is a learning environment where everyone brings what they have in abundance. The instructors bring their expertise about their area of teaching, the teaching assistants bring their listening and facilitation skills; and the students bring their passion for learning and life experiences.

Laurie: Place - campus vs community (library, agency, etc). social implications - who/where do we have and/or develop a sense of belonging - Importance of having a "home" for our programs - how does this affect the "institutionalization" of our programs?

Mary Lu here: Place is obviously a crucial factor in all of our programs. In Halifax, because we are by 6 universities, we don't have a "home" in any one of them. We meet at a public library in a historically impoverished neighbourhood, which is a place for numerous outreach agencies, a low-income public housing project that was built to house the African-Canadian community displaced by the destruction of their previous community, and also up and coming gentrification projects.
We bring the university into the community, but also bring students to the university on occasion when we hold classes or have events at the University of King's College.
Halifax is an old city and a small city and there is a strong but subtle sense of community and of people feeling linked to each other. These facts do have an impact on our programs. For instance, many of our students, even while living on very low incomes as individuals, also have fairly strong extended family structures and so do not experience the extremes of loneliness and displacement that often accompany material poverty. However, it could also be the case that we don't deal with those with very unstable and transient lives because of the lengthy commitment required by our program.

Doug: Place is really "places" for us. We "tour" our students around the university - the library, coffee houses, etc. and then we "tour" them around their community. This year we spent an evening at the Thunder Bay Art Gallery, the Thunder Bay Symphony, a theatrical production and a hockey game. These were extra-curricular events that we believe gave our students an opportunity to "get out" of their day-to-day world and to experience their community in different places. The places that people come from is also important to us. Many in the north are transient, following work, family and educational paths that tend to meander because of the seasons and the boom and bust resource economies in the north. Our students live on fixed and low incomes and they are very aware of the need for a private place of their own. They express frustration at being "studied" and "coded" as part of a welfare industry that treats them like "failed units of production" instead of as real people. Their displacement is often not of their own making and they often express their desire to "get out" of the circumstances of

that displacement, to find a new place for themselves in the community, among their family and with other students. We like to think that our program is a gift of place for them - a place to start change or to continue exploring what change could mean.

("PPKFP Living Document," December, 2010)

KNOWLEDGE: (Mary Lu and Margot; interlocuteurs)

- each of us describes our knowledge practices:
Mary Lu: (I'm not really familiar with terms like "knowledge practices" so what I have to say will be simpler and less theoretical)
1: we work from a "core text" approach. We take the students directly into texts in chronological order. There is no reading of secondary, scholarly material. Our hope is that the teacher will act as a guide who knows the text better because of long familiarity. However, most of our over 40 teachers are open to and in fact keen to hear the insights of HH101 [Halifax Humanities] students into the texts. We do, of course, have a few teachers who insist that there is only one "right" interpretation of a given text. But for the most part, our teachers are genuinely interested in exploring the text at hand with the students and hearing what they have to say.
2: unlike our sister programs we accept the idea that there are "core" texts that have shaped Western culture and are an important part of understanding the modern world as it has risen from the traditions of the past. We assume that to not know the cultural heritage of your civilization is to live in a limited "presentism."

MLB: In terms of what we study, Hum courses and Public Programmes are based in relevant, interdisciplinary critical and creative thinking practices, and the curriculum is growing closer to British Cultural Studies each year; the Humanities are included, and taught as implicated in Western knowledge and political practices which have traditionally excluded or marginalized people like our students, and have not sought or trusted their situated authority. So Hum course content and Public Programmes (such as Study Groups that are led by students, alumni and volunteers) work from there, at times working with vocabularies which may increase students' capacities to participate in discourses they're knowledgeable in through their lived experiences and more. For instance, when we study gentrification, we learn the specialized language of developers and City planners so that we can follow and participate in their plans and make our plans intelligible and persuasive to them; and in our law classes, we learn the language of the courts through studying decisions about the rights of people living homeless, etc. These days, Hum is becoming part of more conversations through publishing in journals, in the campus newspaper, and participating in an

exhibition at the Vancouver Art Gallery, as well as being more involved with our sister Canadian programmes through meetings, conferences, academic research and publications which will create further academic interest. I believe that what we're doing – with each programme different and mindfully situated in relation to its circumstances – makes an important contribution to current knowledge practices across the university and beyond.

Laurie on Knowledge: Shared knowledge, "ownership", curriculum, knowledge practices - interdisciplinary. When I ask myself, "what counts as knowledge in our program?" I realize that we have many layers of knowledge practices. We are acknowledging that there is body of knowledge found in texts (novels, journals, articles, history books, philosophy streams, etc) that we find relevant to better understanding ourselves, our times (past, present, future), and how we want to be in the world. Through the transition from one program to another (Calgary is now in its third iteration), we have kept up a practice of acknowledging the existence of "institutionalized knowledge" - I put this in quotations because there has always been a "professor/instructor" (ie. "expert guide") leading the courses, an individual that is titled by degrees from universities (minimum Master's level). But although there is a practice of using university experienced facilitators, acknowledging "experiential learning" (life experiences outside of academia) is complementing and making relevant the learning process. This has taken the form of bringing in guest lecturers (artists, "non-titled" historians - read highly knowledgeable but not "Doctors of Philosophy", librarians, authors, etc.) or experiencing music, plays or movies relevant to our discussions/themes/topics. There is an explicit attempt to reveal the interdisciplinarity of knowledge and this could be our post-modern response and reaction to institutionalized knowledge practices that departmentalise knowledge. As Canadian universities and colleges are undergoing major reorganization to sustain longstanding humanities and liberal arts programs, how knowledge is being reordered is significant. To what "degree" are we generalists and experts on knowledge? I have met incredibly "well-read" students that have great depth and breadth to their knowledge base that has never been given accreditation by an institution. I have also met professors that, through their research and teaching practices, have blurred and increased their areas of "expertise" without having to buy another degree. By valuing both credit and non-credit knowledge, we call into question the practice of knowledge "currency." This is a long-standing concern (credit vs non-credit) because of how our program relates to the rest of the world (how others view the "value" of the program or university in general). If degree granting institutions are struggling to demonstrate their value and importance in economic/capitalistic terms, we are committed to demonstrating the value and importance of knowledge in NON-economic terms. This is not vocational training. The "take-away" message that the knowledge of humanities underscores is how we can "give-back" and create more meaning and knowledge through a better sense of ourselves.

Doug: Our approach to knowledge acquisition is left to the relationships that develop in each lecture between the professor and the students (they would prefer to be addressed as students). We feel that each professor creates their own knowledge environment with the students. The knowledge exchange occurs in an immediate fashion, there are no prescribed readings for each class and no assignments. Our idea is to open up a free space for learning and let it happen in an open conversation. Our classes tend to have a "Socratic" feel to them, with professors introducing a topic for discussion and interacting with students and allowing a flow for each class to develop and grow. This free-flow of ideas tends to help students open up to new ideas and to participate in discussions without too much prompting. The professor, therefore, becomes more of a facilitator. We have only one semester with the students and so we try to encourage them to participate by offering them the chance to make their own presentations, create their own home work assignments (although some ask for more structured assignments and we leave that to the professor to negotiate with them individually)

Becky: In University 101 we view knowledge as created relationally rather than being owned or possessed. We also believe that there is no single truth, and that knowledge is multiple, not singular or authoritarian. We put these ideas into practice in a variety of ways in the course so that the structure of the course reflects our approach to knowledge.

Critical thinking is a central part of post-secondary education. It is also a central part of University 101. In the course, students learn with each other and the TAs how to more clearly analyze and articulate their experiences and name the knowledge that they already have. We work to create the conditions where students can engage in meaningful discussion and creative thinking. Students engage with the material in many ways, sometimes taking a more analytical approach and other times bringing their experience to bear on the material that is studied in class.

It can sometimes be challenging to find language to describe the learning environment of University 101. It is not a book club, a philosopher's café or a place to get your 'knowledge fix.' In each of these spaces, critical thinking may be possible, but it is not necessarily at the centre of the learning.

We try to make these ideas part of both the explicit and implicit curriculum. As a class (students, TAs and coordinator), we discuss what kind of learning environment we want to create, making that conversation an explicit and negotiated part of each course. Less visibly, TAs and instructors are coached to recognize the value in the different ways that students contribute to the class. TAs and instructors are encouraged to see themselves as learners in the classroom.

We strive to achieve a multiple view of truth through an interdisciplinary approach to the course content. There is a different instructor each week, teaching

about a different topic. This diversity challenges traditional ideas about truth and knowledge by showing that there are many kinds of knowledge. Critical thinking provides the link through the different content that is covered each week.

In each class of University 101, the first half of the class is a lecture by that week's instructor and the second half of each class is small group discussion, facilitated by volunteer teaching assistants. In these discussions, the goal is for students to create knowledge through analysis and synthesis of their ideas and experiences. In this context, knowledge is created through dialogue.

A common question that we get asked about the program is "why would people bother to take a course that isn't for credit?" In an increasingly corporate university environment, where learning is becoming an economic investment with the hope of economic returns, it is surprising to many that the students in University 101 attend the course because they are interested in learning. The program does not have a set of specific outcomes for students. We know that each student is there because they want to be and because they see some way that they will benefit. We hear from the students about the many benefits that they experience, some of which even they did not foresee. Students tell us about the increased confidence they feel after taking the course, that they feel more connected to their communities.

("PPKFP Living Document," December, 2010)

FREEDOM: (Doug and Mary Lu; interlocuteurs)

Doug and Mary Lu's December 16 conversation:

Top points about free(dom) [from fee(dom) – added by Laurie]

- cost of program is born by the program not by the students
- free space of learning - academic freedom
- creating "good dependency" - for students and teachers to grow community
- sustainable funding - free from bias and prejudice
- freedom - inside the university - outside the university
- TENSIONS (we pay attention to these)- spaces where freedom is tested

- freedom needs guidance - we need to maintain contact with students and teachers
- authority can be tied to freedom - in the right measure
- consumer model of education - versus free and shared curriculum
- independence - learning is never a matter of complete independence
- Free-dom has a "spatial" dimension to it. We have a free space, we have a free price
- Free equals what?
- Difference between "free courses" and "freedom"

Becky: I think the free part of our programs really is central. It is one of the few things that we all have in common, and I think that says something about how important it is. In a capitalist world, it is a rare thing for something to be totally free (and in a sense it isn't, economists would talk about the opportunity costs, how much money could a student be making if they were working instead of coming to class). But there is something sticky for me around the idea of freedom. I'm not exactly sure how to name it, but it's something around how our choices/actions/practices are constrained by our context, which includes the socio-economics of the students and the programs, the relationships we have and have to maintain to keep our programs running (between us and students, TAs/facilitators, instructors, donors, university admin, etc.), among other things. This isn't to say that we don't also have space to create and challenge and move and think, but that I don't know if I would call this freedom. Maybe that's because I think of freedom as being unconstrained.

Mary Lu here: I've been thinking about this point since I departed our conversation earlier. I was very struck, in Fredericton, from the air of desperation amongst some of the presenters who seemed desperate to save Humanities studies from the pressures of the increasingly job oriented university by making Humanities studies "relevant" "practical" "attractive to potential employers". It seems to me that what we do in our programs is free the Humanities themselves from these external pressures and help both teachers and students rediscover the joy of learning and studying wonderful books for the sheer delight and human connection of it all.

MLB: Our practices hope to bring out the best in people and situations so that we can have a great time while doing what we love to do, together. For me, the word 'free' refers to the supports and resources that Hum is able to offer students and alumni without which they would not be able to attend university at all. Our funding comes from private donors and from UBC which also gives Hum students

free access to all campus amenities. So 'free' has to do with overcoming the deep constraints of material poverty in capitalism. For me, 'freedom' has more to do with the feelings of 'liberation' experienced when you get to do what you love with people you respect, have fun with, and want to be with – students, alum, staff, volunteers and colleagues. Because of the disparaging way the DTES is represented and its residents demonized, another kind of freedom is the freedom from stereotypes: Hum student Kimble Mortimer: "Changing stereotypes is easy - just stop saying and reproducing them."

Laurie: I thought that "Freeing the Humanities" could be a good title for this piece because of many reasons. Yes, the courses/resources are offered to students for "Free" and yet at a cost - this is the sustainability concern I am fixated on. I am also acutely aware that our program is running without funding and we have had to adapt our practices accordingly. It also has meant that we needed to reflect on what core elements we could continue - without the perks (and essentially, what is the breaking point?). We can't offer students free books or full meals or paid childcare at the moment, but the Calgary Public Library (CPL) is covering our photocopying and loaning us material (so we are essential tapping into civic resources), and sometimes people bring in a snack and share, and everyone is volunteering.

Not having funding to operate has consequences on how and what we can deliver to whom. For one, the students do not get free full course meals or books or childcare from the "program" (does this make in non-Clemente?) and so if someone has to chose food over class or cannot find help with childcare and so cannot attend class (or wouldn't attempt to come to class with children) then we are not able to directly meet those needs and it affects the sustainability for the participant. This troubles me and reminds me of the pressing need for funding. (Sidenote - I also relate to these needs personally. Even I found myself a number of times without childcare and brought my daughter to the CPL, which was good in the sense that she saw what "Mommy" was up to but not ideal because this was not a child-focused activity, and so unfair to her. I had to take a break in the summer because I could not participate without these supports and had to attend to other pressing needs. Even now, I can do this work only because of the strong supports I have in place; however, if my personal financial difficulties (hello! student!) continue, I cannot sustain this level of involvement. And I've shared this with other participants, too, because we know that we all have varying pressing needs.)

We also don't have a paid director or staff and so this compromises the level of response we can offer to students - responding to emails, questions, concerns outside of classtime (and this kind of programming requires full time work even if it is not "paid" full time work and whoever can do this for "free" has to have other "paying jobs" or supports to do so). Again, this becomes a sustainability concern because we need to reflect on what keeps people connected to the learning

environment and/or what keeps them away. By this, I mean, are people coming because they get "free food" and/or "free books" and/or "free childcare" or because they love learning? Or are people NOT coming because they need food first or need to care for their children or have to work many hours at underpaid jobs to meet basic needs first?

Which of these systemic needs/problems do our programs need to be addressing? We had lengthy discussions about these issues when we were developing Community Learning in the Humanities because there was a deep desire to keep learning together. Some of us differed in our ethical stances on these issues because some voiced concerns about the ethics of continuing while NOT being able to offer food, books, supplies etc. Others felt that, ethically, we should offer what we could; our variety of educational backgrounds, our various experiences, our love for learning and (thanks to the support of the CPL) we could offer a "free space" and access to the library resources. This discussion also included ways to be flexible in program delivery because we couldn't respond to all the basic needs and became another reason why we chose to have a more flexible participation schedule. We opted for one-month modules that would meet once a week for four consecutive weeks so that people could accommodate their personal schedules one month at a time. Ironically, because we were now "free" from the constraints of a credit course mandating 39 hours of instruction for 3 university credits, we could be more flexible and free to respond to the new context without losing the opportunity to continue learning. Now as our discussion turns to finding funding, we are aware that WHO we get funding from will potentially impact HOW we run the program - some only fund non-credit programs, others have conditions on their funds that would limit the freedom and autonomy of how we are learning (for example, some need to see vocational skills training with direct job correlation).

One significant response to the need to be "free and autonomous" is to create our own society (which is not an individual endeavour, but a collective application and commitment) so that we are an entity that can create our own policies, mandates, vision and partnerships. I think one of the most important points to clarify in the discussion of "freedom" is to bring in the point that we are a collective response but we cannot be all things to all people all of the time; in assessing what we can offer "for free" we have to work with a high level of commitment to create that space and sustain it. "Free" isn't easy!

("PPKFP Living Document," December, 2010)

POWER: (Becky and Margot; interlocuteurs)

MLB: Because they all live very low incomes, some with disabilities and serious health concerns, recovering from addictions, in compromised and/or insecure

housing or without housing, Hum students and alumni are very knowledgeable about power relations, especially regarding institutions of poverty in Canada today, as well as academic researchers/projects whose methods aren't respectful of residents; Hum is committed to practices which are non-institutional and non-hierarchical, and to being responsive to what the students and alumni want and need with the Programme. Hum's Steering Committee is an ongoing mechanism for ensuring responsiveness: comprised of students and alumni (everyone who's ever taken a Hum course is invited to each meeting), it meets regularly on the DTES and guides all aspects of the Programme. I would like DTES/South residents' expertise and situated authority sought and received in respectful ways which alter debilitating hierarchical power relations. For instance, for our last yearbook, Hum alumna Pat Haram wrote a visionary essay on homelessness, based in her own experiences. She concluded: "I do not have the answers to all the homeless situations, but I do believe that solutions are out there if only government policy is put into place that does not distrust the individual in need."

Mary Lu: Any relationship between human beings can have a power dynamic within it. Therefore to assume that the potential power relationship between teacher (possessor of knowledge) and student (recipient of knowledge) is a unique and inherently hierarchical example of power structure seems to me naive. When I want to learn something, I am delighted to find someone with greater knowledge who is willing to share his/her expertise with me. I don't feel that, for instance, my choral conductor has "power" over me because he knows the music more intimately. A good teacher is someone who willingly invites the student into a shared appreciation of the subject at hand, with the full realization that the student may eventually surpass him/her in insight.
HH101, without even articulating this, has operated for 5 years on the above understanding of the teacher/student interaction. On occasion, we have had teachers who behaved condescendingly towards students. They have not been asked back. The ethos of sharing texts, art, and music that we love and believe to be profound and insightful is a constant in our program. Such sharing is a dismantling of potential power dynamics.
Without some basic respect for the reality of being a student, a learner and what that implies in relation to teaching, why would anyone be involved in education? The word itself, comes from the Latin, "to lead" which is what teaching is all about. To acknowledge that you need a guide when venturing into unfamiliar territory is not to say that you are weak and powerless but, rather, sensible.

Doug: All of our students are referred to us from agencies that are dealing with addiction, recovery, violence, criminality, poverty, disability and health issues. Therefore, our students often begin with a sense of dis-empowerment and exclusion from the mainstream of society. They often express guilt at "never having been able to get their act together to go back to school". This "going back" is an interesting term for me, it represents a re-visioning of personal and familial historical circumstances as much as it represents a new beginning. Power comes

> from the recognition of "others" in the same position - there is always power in numbers. It slowly comes to pass in our program that students realize a sense of empowerment as individuals but also as sharing experiential beings. They start to "treat" each other as friends, equals, mothers, fathers, sisters and brothers and sometimes bring food to share, stories to share, etc. They have also created a Book Club that exchanges books before and after each class and they are in the process of building an Alumni organization that will continue to meet. We see ourselves only as door openers, holding a door open in respect for people to choose to walk through. We do not "provide," we "offer" and "serve" all the people in our program. Our "graduation" is a great affair; we "hood" our students with warm scarves (we live in Thunder Bay, after all!) for the coming long winter, and as a reminder that they were a part of something larger than themselves.
>
> ("PPKFP Living Document," December, 2010)

Review of our Data Collection & Analysis Process

As an overarching design, the data collection for this research study viewed the *research, action and reflection* phases as both individual and group work. Each participating director would necessarily have to engage with their own thoughts before writing them down for others to view on the Blackboard site (or in an email, etc), and my hope was that by reading/ hearing the comments of other directors, we would each return to our own thoughts to challenge our positions, language and programs. Again, after the presentation and production of the online conference proceeding, we would have another document to read and reflect on before completing this phase of data collection. Even the potential for submitting an article after the conference provided yet another possible document to look for individual and group learning opportunities.

I related some of this data collection process in a narrative mode, like an unfolding story that describes how the "we" got to know the "I"s of the learning group. I intentionally used our first names to emphasize the developing relationships amongst the directors. We also agreed after this process that included building trusting relationships

that we did not need to be anonymous and subsequent changes were made to my ethics file at the University of Calgary. Jody Koenig Kellas says, “Narrative inquiry in interpersonal communication and related fields currently operates form a positivity bias” (2008, p. 252); and, I know that in my narrative account of meeting with the many directors, I risked relating only positive outcomes. The alternative could lead to individual isolation, angering colleagues. But Kellas also encourages us to relate the tensions, which I did in describing our differences of positions, language, and programs. I knew from my studies that examples of “cultures of research” (like that of Reggio Emilia or those of Paulo Freire and Myles Horton) develop over time and that group and individual learning occurs in the spaces we create to talk through the difficult tensions. Only showing the “up side” of our programs was a concern that all of the directors raised throughout our encounters, and in our collaborative conference proceeding document we touch on some of the difficulties we encounter but not in the way we could in our “face-to-face” dialogues, in the space of trust we created and tested together. No one wanted to present our programs as a “good service for the poor” because it risks demeaning everyone engaged in these serious, marginalized humanities programs that hold to an inherent belief in the strength of people; but, nor did we want to focus solely on how incredibly difficult these programs can be to sustain. These are not “pious, sentimental, and individualistic gestures,” but “acts of love” (Freire, 2009, p. 50). The commitment that these directors share comes through in the how and why we do what we do.

We continue to research collaboratively as we take into deep consideration the ethic of care we need to live with our Selves and our communities. As I implied in narrating not only the positive but also the tensions of our practice, this does not imply

that the process is always smooth; rather, our ethic of care starts with the image of learners (students, directors, participants) as strong, capable and filled with the potential to participate with their own agency. We have intuitively exposed our ethic of care throughout our discussions and writings, and we can all revisit the collaborative documents to analyse and extend our learning. The process of our data collection and analysis phase included *research, action, and reflection*, and it has not stopped here. Opportunities for all of us to extend the meaning making process are built in to our growing "culture of research" as we engage in creating spaces for dialogue with participants of our programs as well as with each other and other passionate educators. Because of the ethic of care I extend to my co-researchers, the next PAR project the directors are engaging in remains for us to talk through and then decide what to do with this knowledge making practice. We have reached another cycle of *research, action, and reflection*, and we are including new people in the process. Our learning continues in creating spaces for dialogue.

CHAPTER 5: EXTENDING OUR LEARNING BEYOND THE PROJECT: EMERGING THEMES & RESEARCH

> *The creation of a productive, innovative environment – whether sculptor's studio, rehearsal hall, fourth-grade classroom, or preschool – is no small achievement. It requires an extraordinary union of efforts and qualities combining vision, craftsmanship, political savvy, logistical wizardry, passion, patience, humility, arrogance, aesthetic sense, a community that values one's efforts, and enough time and money to experiment.*
>
> (Seidel, 2001, p. 321)

Creating spaces for dialogue research study was designed with the intention of extending the directors' learning beyond a singular collaborative event (the Fredericton Conference panel presentation) to produce a document that would not only raise awareness of our programs but also serve as our own pedagogical and professional development. We each contributed through reading, writing, reflecting and discussing our similarities and differences, ultimately creating our own methodology for future collaborative research. As Seidel's quote attests, this is *no small achievement*. When I read down the list of requirements he identifies for these kinds of *productive, innovative environments*, I am reminded of the members of my learning group who have demonstrated extraordinary commitment to this project because of our shared values and passion for learning that extend beyond our "job" to the way we want to be in the world. The above quote from Seidel comes from an article he titles, "To be Part of Something Bigger than Oneself," and aptly speaks to *how and why* directors approach their roles in

the Free Humanities programs. But at the end of his quote, I am also reminded of our greatest barriers to continuing this important work: time and money. The purpose of this chapter is to clearly identify what emerging themes and concerns directors of Free Humanities programs raised through this first collaborative research project so that we can more efficiently move our research forward.

This chapter will analyse the data collection and analysis process of this research project through the four elements of the research design described in Chapter Three. First, I will expose findings about the *co-researcher participants* of this study, as they relate to the importance of an ethic of Self care and the sustainability of the programs. Second, I underscore that the development of our Canadian network of Free Humanities programs has created a space for dialogue that is based in ethical research practices which value difference and confrontation. Through this first collaborative project, the directors of Free Humanities programs contributed individual and collaborative documentation to better highlight the logistics of our *contextualized programs* as a *critical recovery of history*, and most importantly, to analyse *the ethical issues and concerns* we raised through *the emotional, aesthetic, and intellectual dimensions of learning*. By participating in the unfolding research process, directors identified three broad recurring themes:

1. philosophical and pedagogical discourses and practices;
2. evaluation and reporting as they relate to funding and sustainability; and,
3. contextualized curriculum.

These continue to engage us in extensive dialogue because they factor into 'how and why we do what we do' in reflexive ways. Here, I limit my discussion to how this research

project has accomplished the important process of identifying these main themes, so that we can continue to examine them through the multiple knowledges and epistemological frameworks that participants bring to the learning group. The opportunity to explore these themes together through the Participatory Action Research methodology has opened up our research process to extend beyond this project. Lastly, I will offer my analysis of our collaborative learning process to suggest possible next steps for the *production and diffusion of new knowledge* by the growing Canadian network, rich in its unique culture of participatory research.

Findings about the co-researcher participants: How we are positioned to extend our participatory work.

> *Laurie: This is something I realized when we were talking in Nanaimo. We're coming at it from our own backgrounds and perspectives. Rather than trying to change the backgrounds that we've got, it creates a richness to how we're doing this. (Group dialogue, April 9, 2010)*

Obviously, not everything the directors discussed in face-to-face dialogues came through in our first collaborative document; but, for those directors who continue to reflect and research on the emerging themes through our developing methodology, we continue to explore tensions and create spaces for dialogue. We have more work to do as we enter into more cycles of *research, action, and reflection*. Through this process, however, the directors raised concerns for our own "Self" care because this will ultimately determine how sustainable these programs will be.

As a director of a Free Humanities program, I have had a unique vantage point of understanding the "daily life" of this role and the possible points of stress experienced by

the participants in the study. Sharing our coping mechanisms for this kind of role has been a natural topic of conversation. The role of director is multifaceted, taking on the optics but not necessarily the formal training of "social worker", "professional fundraiser," "tutor," "mentor," "instructor," "counselor," "crisis worker," "secretary," "marketing director," "bookkeeper," "student," etc. From this understanding, "burnout" or "distress" was a concern for the participants in this study, many of us self-identified these factors, both during face-to-face dialogues and in written documents; Anne McDonagh, who was not part of our face-to-face group dialogues, voiced this very concern:

> University in the Community faces a problem that most of the Clemente programs in Canada face and that is funding. If it is to continue it must find a source of stable funding. So far it has been run by volunteers, who are getting old and tired. (Meredith et al., 2010, p.17)

The research in itself was the very vehicle to unpack the known yet unspoken stresses of these positions. It has also been an added benefit for the directors to have participated in this research – a form of therapeutic dialogue without the direct assumption that it is about therapy. This is the ethic of care we extend to each other by listening to (an narrating) our concerns together.

We are engaged in "tough, loving, critical work."

These directors engage in what Noddings calls "tough, loving, critical work" (2007, p. 230). A deep sense of passion is felt in reading the transcribed dialogues, the

collaborative documents and the self-written biographies. Each of the directors clearly live out their core values through the work they do. The risk of exploitation or burnout (or possibly both) increases because of this personal engagement to the "tough, loving, critical work" that we do. In a society that tends to devalue caring roles, leaders who possess and put into practice the skills of caring risk being exploited:

> Caring is associated with subservience. It is thought, mistakenly, to be synonymous with caregiving. The concept of caring in an ethics of care is applicable to every aspect of human interaction, not just to caregiving. *It addresses, at the most basic level, how we should meet and treat others and ourselves.* But the word caring is part of everyday language, and it is easy to slide from the technical concept involving attention and response to one that emphasizes tender, hands-on, sympathetic caregiving. The difficulty is aggravated by the obvious fact that caring in the technical sense is ethically necessary in the practical activities of caregiving. Thus because caregiving has long been the domain of women, and because the ethics of care seems to have its origin in female experience, some astute critics fear that an emphasis on caring in ethics will contribute to the continued exploitation of women. (Noddings, 2007, pp. 228-229) (Emphasis mine)

To counter the risk of exploitation while preserving the ethic of care for the participants in our programs as well as for ourselves, we need to work collaboratively to demonstrate that the programs are not part-time charity projects or one-off pilot projects. Mary Lu underscored "how valuable it is to have a supported and continuous director because you

need to be able to see patterns emerge" (Group dialogue, April 9, 2010). The sustainability of the programs needs to take into account the self-care of the directors or burnout is predictable.

We are aware of the risks of exploitation.

Not described adequately or at all in some of the biographies is the stability, or lack thereof, of these positions; some are tenured professors who get nominal lesson reduction to their teaching load, others have part-time contracts to do the workload of a full-time job, and still others are basically doing this "tough, loving, critical work" for free. So while these highly capable and deeply caring leaders are engaging in passionate and quality adult education, there is indeed a great risk for exploitation – further summoning a focus and concern for developing our ethic of Self care, as one director said:

> But can I say that, please, don't forget that as long as we look totally competent and A-okay and capable and happy, no one will know that they need to give us more. I think that is a bitter pill, but it's true. It goes against my pride. If you want to take my case in point, I never would have got help if I hadn't lost my pride for little awhile. I would have quit for sure. I wouldn't have been able to keep doing it... (Group dialogue, April 9, 2010)

Some directors were highly sensitive to the word "exploitation" – questioning if such a term should be used, particularly considering the extreme poverty many students in the programs face; however, others argues that if we do not attend to ourselves and self-advocate, we risk being oppressed by the conditions we unintentionally help create for ourselves. Ironically, this is while we are attempting to counter the oppressive conditions

experienced by participants of our programs and while we are engaging with texts (classics or otherwise) that explore longstanding power relations.

In effect, while bridging or hinging between the world of academia and the marginalized world of poverty, we have to create a strong solidarity to participate in addressing the larger systemic concerns of exploitation, such as the academic conditions vehemently addressed by Henry Giroux:

> There is little interest in higher education for understanding pedagogy as a deeply civic, political, and moral practice – that is, pedagogy as a practice for freedom. As schooling is largely subordinated to a corporate order, any vestige of critical education is replaced by training and the promise of economic security. Similarly, as pedagogy is now subordinated to the corporate and military interests, academic labor is frequently removed from the power of governance, removed from tenure track lines, and treated as a disposable body of temporary workers. What this usually means is that academics are increasingly reduced to the status of technicians and deskilled as they are removed from having any control over their classrooms or school governance structures. Overworked and politically underrepresented, an increasing number of higher education faculty are reduced to part-time positions, constituting the new subaltern class of academic labor. (2010, p. 191)

Reading about the exploitive contexts of established higher education institutions and the level of concern for the future of liberal arts and humanities programs (which prompted the theme for St. Thomas University's International Liberal Arts Conference), it is easy

to see how the directors of these marginalized Free Humanities programs have valuable insights into the field of critical pedagogy – from their personal experiences as well as the program contexts. We put into practice the principles of democratic rights through access to critical thinking, reflective learning, and opportunities for highly personal engagement; but, as directors, we understand the risk of finding ourselves too much in the same *subaltern* conditions:

> Margot: I realized a little while ago that I understand capitalism from living on the DTES when I was young, when I was in my late teens and early twenties. That's how I understand capitalism. I didn't realize that that was a basic fact in my whole existence until maybe three years ago or so. But I've never really gotten very far away from that. That's so basic. That's my constant base bottom note. It's amazing for me to do this work. That's where my criticism of capitalism comes from. I think that it's nice that some people have nice things and it's nice for them. But that's not what capitalism is all about; it's about the production of absolute dire, predictable controlling poverty. I don't care about the wealthy. I don't want to emulate them; I don't want to string them up. But I care a lot that this is not simply a side effect but a direct product of capitalism in human terms. (Group dialogue, April 9, 2010)

This makes it all the more "tough, loving, and critical work," and the reason we are concerned about the ethical treatment of participants. We identified that the programs cannot be complicit in charity model or experiment model evaluation reporting and research; as Doug West said,

> Nothing touches this program without leaving it in a better state. The only things that are "taken away" from the program are good will, engagement and empowerment for the students, the professors, the administrators, the community activists and the funders. ("PPKPF Living Document," December 2010)

These are critical training grounds for us as much as for the all the participants in our programs (students, teachers, staff), which require directors to be fully attentive to the risks of participant exploitation and actively work against disrespectful practices.

We are critical educators and critical learners.

As leaders, we have the capacity and also the responsibility to engage others in this important work in ethically minded ways. This should not occur without turning a critical eye on ourselves and what we are doing because we also have to be very attentive to the potential of exploiting others. In our positions as directors of marginalized programs, we have the potential to abuse our position of power, which is why some of us have been cautioned and warned against researching while directing. But power does not have to be viewed solely in negative terms. As Freire has done, we find ourselves making conscious decisions about how to personally and politically activate our students through our pedagogical choices:

> Education is that terrain where power and politics are given a fundamental expression, where the production of meaning, desire, language, and values engage and respond to the deeper beliefs about what it means to be human, to dream, and to name and struggle for a particular future and form of social life. Education becomes a form of action that joins the languages of critique and possibility. It represents, finally, the need for a passionate commitment by educators to make the political more pedagogical, that is, to make critical reflection and action fundamental parts of a social project that not only engages forms of oppression but develops a deep and abiding faith in the struggle to humanize life itself. (Giroux, 1988, p.110)

To varying degrees, the directors can influence and determine the content of the program courses. Many directors can create the curriculum or embed participatory assignments

and projects that cultivate contexts for personal understanding and self-agency; for example, Joanne Muzak describes how both of Edmonton's program locations in the community directly relate to the situatedness of students' lives and that the project-based content connects the students to both scholarly and personal perspectives:

> Courses at The Learning Centre focus on the city of Edmonton, how we move through the city, how we experience the city's history and negotiate changes in the city, who lives here and why. Increasingly, we are taking up these kinds of questions through explorations of new media and mobile technologies. Courses at The Learning Centre are largely project-based and encourage students to explore collaborative technologies and methodologies, such as community mapping, digital storytelling, and geocaching.
>
> In Spring 2010, we began a new partnership with Wings of Providence, a second stage women's shelter to offer Hum101 courses designed specifically for women recovering from interpersonal violence. These courses focus on themes of home and community from diverse scholarly perspectives. Students' work includes guided writing, photography and 'life books' projects. (Meredith et al., 2010, pp. 13-14)

Whether we are debating the death of Socrates or the conditions of Brazilian peasants or feminist theory, all of us convey our passion for education as a means to critically evaluate our humanness – our struggles and capacities to learn, question, investigate, challenge, and change. Through our active presence in the classrooms, we extend our own Selves and our pedagogical practices – which develop through praxis – so that

students can explore their own self-representation. Likewise, directors also explore their own self-representation, and through our collaborative research and presentations we deepen this practice.

Even the directors' dialogues have had a reflexive influence on the program projects and students; for example, Margot Leigh Butler further investigated the importance of "listening" through a Hum participatory art installation project called, "Take the cotton out of your ears and LISTEN, LISTEN, LISTEN!" (http://humanities101.arts.ubc.ca/). This research has identified that the same openness and genuine learning that the directors bring to our collaborative research is present in the classrooms in ways that respect people's capacities to participate in contributing to the learning environment in meaningful ways.

We are researchers.

Into the context of this learning group, each director brings an impressive wealth of education, and our credentials identify us as previously tested and capable learners in the traditional sense. As directors of adult education programs, this is not and should not simply be viewed as an administrative job– even though there are many clerical duties attached to this position. It has been important to recognize us throughout this process as co-researchers because this kind of professional language is an important element of this research study.

> PAR demands that academics bridge the worlds within and beyond the academy, and they often engage with the policies and publics who are important to resolving the problems and issues which PAR raises. (Pain et al., 2007, p. 31)

As a learning group, we have a variety of educational backgrounds and approaches to collaboratively research and extend our research skills into our communities, where we are already engaged in resolving social inequities. Margot Leigh Butler identifies this bridge by using the metaphor of a hinge:

> Hum hinges the DTES [Downtown Eastside] and UBC [the University of British Columbia], two very different places, and is an active hinge – for instance, our students' first writing assignment involves noticing the many 'cultures of learning' both in their home neighbourhoods and at UBC. ... As an educational and activist project, Hum hinges significantly different places, and is uneasy about being positioned as just an 'anomaly' which doesn't get at the importance of specificity and difference, or worse, positions it as a kind of living contradiction. Hum is instead committed to being aware and creative with 'how we do what we do': these are our practices, and they are responsive to what's happening in all aspects of the Programme and peoples' situations, they are flexible and changeable. (Meredith et al., 2010, p. 38)

Establishing the process together creates stronger solidarity in how and why we do what we do. Therefore, our community of researchers (directors, students, instructors) is now well situated to combine our efforts to critically evaluate and choose ethical evaluation, reporting and research practices. Just as I have opened up my academic research journey to include the participants of my research study as co-researchers, the directors of Free Humanities programs are and have been finding ways to include students in the production of knowledge through dialogic learning contexts.

We are privileged.

This is revolutionary ground, and an examination of Freire's pedagogy of the oppressed can be unpacked along with the "pedagogy for the privileged" (Curry-Stevens, 2007); this is a process of understanding how being in a position of privilege is inextricably linked to oppression. I discovered Curry-Stevens' article after completing the data collection stage of this research and marveled at how it related to the process the directors experienced and/or described through our dialogic encounters. Curry-Stevens proposes a 10-step model for the "Transformation of Privileged Learners" which includes a "confidence-shaking process" (Steps 1 through 6) followed by a "confidence-building process" (Steps 7 through 10) (2007, p. 51). Her model was not one which I "applied" to the participants in this study; rather, it is through my reflections on the process and my serendipitous discovery of her article after the research that I draw comparisons between the two. Table 8 is based on Curry-Steven's model table, and I have added a fourth column to describe the learning stages that the directors of Free Humanities programs have related to each other throughout the research data collection and analysis process:

Table 8: Curry-Steven's Proposed Model for the Transformation of Privileged Learners in Relation to the Positions of the Directors of Free Humanities Programs

	Stage	*Examples of Learning in Each Stage*	*What directors have expressed in the "Creating Spaces for Dialogue" research process*
Confidence-shaking	Step 1: Awareness of oppression	I understand how inequality exists and that I can name it oppression.	Our work is aimed at increasing access to quality education for people who are marginalized.

process	Step 2: Oppression as structural and thus enduring and pervasive	I understand how power is at work to create this oppression.	We know that there are many barriers that prevent our program participants from accessing traditional higher education that we have personally been privileged to access.
	Step 3: Locating oneself as oppressed	I have been a victim of discrimination and I have felt heard and supported in my pain about this.	We, as directors, have experienced varying degrees of marginalization ourselves and have shared our concerns for our "Selves" with each other.
	Step 4: Locating oneself as privileged	I also have a privileged identity. I have been on the beneficiary end of power inequities.	We are well-educated and sometimes feel uncomfortable with the privileges we can enjoy that many of our program students do not.
	Step 5: Understanding the benefits that flow from privilege	My privileged identity has allowed me to benefit from these unjust structures and to succeed in my life in the following ways…. This means I might not have been as responsible for my achievements as I have understood in the past.	Because of our education, we have many options in life. We choose to do this "tough, loving, critical work." We have learned to use our privilege to share our knowledge with others.
	Step 6: Understanding oneself as implicated in the oppression of others and understanding oneself as an oppressor	I am responsible for the continued oppression of others either through what I do or what I fail to do.	We feel a deep sense of personal responsibility to carry on the work that we do and recognize that we must also attend to our own ethic of Self care. This includes not being complicit in exploiting students or ourselves.
Confidence-building process	Step 7: Building confidence to take action – knowing how to intervene	I can step forward with ideas about what to do to create change.	We are creating a new methodology and a new language to describe ourselves and our program practices to convey this knowledge to others.

	Step 8: Planning actions for departure	I will do this when I leave.	We have finished this stage of research, action, and reflection, and have started the next stage.
	Step 9: Finding supportive connections to sustain commitments	I have some connections to others who will support me in this work. I know where to go to connect to others who are working on this topic.	We now know the other directors and find support through our connections.
	Step 10: Declaring intentions for future actions	I announce to others what I plan to do when I leave. Making this commitment to others raises expectations that I will do it.	We have committed to continue our collaborative research projects.

Curry-Stevens' model reconfirms what the directors do as they draw from their positions of privilege to create spaces for dialogue. This is not something the other directors now need to be "taught;" rather, I am suggesting that, intuitively, this is what we do. As directors, we are aware of our positions of privilege through our educational status; but, through our understanding of power, we are also aware that we suffer other forms of oppression (depending on our contexts, we experience varying degrees of economic and academic marginalization – nowhere near the levels of other participants in our programs, but a degree of oppression nonetheless). We have experience and knowledge from both "inside" and "outside" the space of privilege, and we have shared our experiences with each other, finding support from each other through the process.

The collaborative document that the directors wrote was an active step in using our positions of academic privilege along with our empathy and awareness of oppression to make a call for action to other academics. It is one of many ways that we take responsibility for social injustices even though we do not all do it in exactly the same way

– each program is unique. Rinaldi says, "to take responsibility means challenging your choice. You need to do research and to have confrontation" (2007, p.198). In the language of PAR, this is the cycle of research, action, and reflection that purposely includes the oppressed in the process of creating new knowledge. In this study, as directors who have experienced oppression and who witness it daily in our work, we have benefitted from finding support through other directors who engage in this "tough, loving, critical work." We have also challenged each other to examine *how and why we do what we do* in comparison to how and why other directors do what they do, without feeling like we have to change. This was an important message I wanted to communicate with other directors, especially in-coming directors, via the conference proceedings document:

> Before I began my position as director, I had been part of the 2008 Radical Humanities Coast to Coast to Symposium as a graduate student. Fortunately for me, as soon as I started as director I was able to connect immediately to the directors who had been part of the symposium. They were instant mentors and colleagues. With a very short window to start up the *Humanities101* program, I benefited from their honest discussions of what worked for them and what had not. Weighing in the local differences meant I had a range of options to choose to implement into the myriad of programming logistics – everything from if and how to offer childcare, when to schedule classes and how that impacts students ability to attend and remain in class to the end of the session. Our email exchanges and phone calls were incredibly supportive, and as I learned more about the position, I, too, could offer support and suggestions. (Meredith et al., 2010, p. 8)

There has been a discovery of a "we" made up of many "I's," and we value the diversity we bring to our learning group. In our practices, we have intuitively been applying participatory practices that, likewise, value individual and group learning through emotional, aesthetic, and intellectual dimensions. We have committed ourselves to continuing our collaborative research and acknowledge that the common barriers of time and money require us to be sensitive to each others' need for Self care.

Developing Research through Valuing Difference and Confrontation

> We believe that the concept of research, or indeed, a new concept of research that is more contemporary and alive, might emerge if we legitimize the use of this term to refer to the capacity to describe the cognitive tension that is experienced whenever real processes of learning and knowledge acquisition occur.
>
> Research, in this sense, is used to describe the paths of individuals and groups in the direction of new universes of possibility.
>
> Research as the disclosure and the revelation of an event.
>
> Research as art: research exists, as it does in art, within the search for the being, the essence, and the sense of things.
>
> (Rinaldi, 2001, p.150)

Rinaldi's critical observations of how to reframe "research" beyond traditional academic forms echo my analysis of the highly contextualized Free Humanities programs and what others can learn by participating in our developing culture of research. Much like the situation for early childhood educators who continue to face economic and social barriers to carrying out their important but undervalued work, directors of Free Humanities programs face similar social stereotyping by being underpaid (or not at all

paid) and not recognized for the quality of education and care being practiced in these marginalized settings. For this reason, I believe these Free Humanities adult education programs benefit from the more than sixty years of research development of early childhood pedagogues in Reggio Emilia, where "Jerome Bruner, visiting the infant-toddler centers and pre-primary schools of Reggio Emilia, remarked that they were a true university" (Rinaldi, 1999, p. 121). We have also heard numerous comments that our free university programs are "what learning is all about;" and from the many accounts of directors, support staff, teachers, university-student volunteers, and tutors, these free courses are better than regular "fee" classes in the accredited institutions. It has taken decades of pedagogical documentation and enormous effort on behalf of Reggio pedagogues to articulate their practices and philosophies, but now its presence in academic discourses and in classrooms around the world is having profound influence on early childhood pedagogical practices, and in turn on the children, parents and teachers who make up these rich environments. This is the reality for our Free Humanities programs and why we are well positioned to continue to find more ways to influence academic discourses.

The richness of the Reggio Emilia pedagogical environment – and its relevance to the Free Humanities developing research context – is the parallel and overlapping learning contexts of the children's contextualized classrooms and the meaningful, focused documentation that teachers co-produce with children and the pedagogical team. Similarly, the Free Humanities' developing research group experience and work hard to create nourishing classroom environments in their respective programs, and we find parallel and overlapping dialogic learning contexts in the spaces of dialogue with other

directors. This study has identified the parallel spaces as nourishing and reflexive spaces (see Table 9).

Table 9: Parallel and overlapping dialogic learning contexts of Free Humanities classrooms and the Directors' Dialogues	
Free Humanities Program Classrooms	**Directors' Dialogues with PAR**
Respect for students as full Subjects/Selves capable of participating in dialogic learning	Respect for directors as researchers, teachers, learners – as people.
Nourishing classroom environments • Listening contexts • Engaging texts, articles, projects, etc. • Loving, supportive, non-judgmental yet critical relationships for learning	Nourishing 'face-to-face' dialogues • Listening contexts • Engaging issues, presentations, research, etc. • Loving, supportive, non-judgmental yet critical relationships for learning

These are listening contexts that start with a conceptualization of participants as co-researchers capable of individual and group agency. Through engaging in texts, articles, topics, concerns and projects that are relevant to participants' lives, meaningful learning takes place. These environments are loving, supportive, non-judgmental listening spaces, where an enormous respect for people is the foundation of the ethic of Self care so that confrontation and difference can be experienced without threat.

In a field of education often overlooked for its professional integrity and care, Reggio educators have developed pedagogical documentation tools that make learning

visible to not only those within the learning group but also those outside of the practice. Reframing childhood education with a strong image of the child has strengthened the practice of appreciating the *hundred languages of children* by opening up contexts that value difference and dialogic confrontation for many individuals and groups of learners:

> I see more and more the school really as a forum, a place of encounter and dialogue where the culture is challenged. And where also university teachers can go and learn and teach, as well as the pre-school teachers, the university students and the children. Teaching then can be developed in a system that is open, challenging, and accepting of crisis. (Rinaldi, 2007, p. 194)

In this study, I have extensively quoted from Reggio pedagogues to extend their pedagogical documentation practice to the context of adult education, specifically the Free Humanities programs within which crisis is a familiar term.

This study has revealed that all nine of the Canadian Free Humanities programs have experienced periods of crisis and transition as funding has been gained and lost, community partnerships have been renegotiated, and the people who have invested enormous time and energy have had to question their abilities to continue this work under mounting pressures (social, economic, academic, personal, systemic, etc.). The directors involved in this study are not only familiar with operating programs under and through risks of crisis, they are well positioned to engage student-participants (whose lives are also under duress) and academic-participants (many of whom also experience the oppression of current neoliberal stress) in powerful collaborative action. The very fact that these marginalized programs are in operation through extraordinary local efforts is

no small achievement. For the directors to have collectively begun the critical analysis of *how and why we do what we do* on a localized level and in growing awareness of similarities and differences of the nine programs is a significant step towards 1) developing meaningful and sustained organisational relationships, 2) deepening our understanding of ourselves and our programs in relation to our academic communities, and 3) expanding our experiences to other academics and community agencies. The sustainability of these programs relies on these three on-going goals for our Canadian network.

Our ability to "prove their worth" is a tangible reality through our participatory practices. By connecting on a national level, the possibility to create spaces for dialogue could have profound impact on these social and educational contexts. At the onset of this study, I knew that what we were starting was a process – not a definitive study – which is why I chose PAR for the research design, a methodology that purposefully involves participants in the entire research process, including the reflective-analysis that propels the research forward.

Part of the process of sharing information about these programs includes logistical fact-generating data about *what we are doing* – a kind of surface level "A, B, C" starting point into the discussion, which requires occasional updating as program details shift to local circumstances. Information about program names, locations, affiliations, curriculum choices, support services (bus fare, meals, books, etc) can be conveyed in charts and tables (like the ones I have included in this dissertation) and updated periodically. These details, while important, often get in the way of delving into deeper, critical analysis of *how we are doing* what we are doing. For directors to engage in sustained and meaningful

dialogue, we have to be "starting at R (rather than beginning at A)," as Margot Leigh Butler coined. This does not suggest that we are all at the same place and perspective (we can disagree), but rather than getting caught up in long logistic differences, "starting at R" is a metaphor that moves us closer to focusing on the core concerns we need to further investigate: philosophical and pedagogical discourses and practices; contextualized curriculum; and, evaluation and reporting as they relate to funding and sustainability. As programs evolve, making sense of the changes is a shared phenomenon for those who enter into the dialogue, but it does not suggest to negate differences: "The fundamental tension underlying a dialogical relation is that participants need to be similar enough to share in genuine communication, but different enough to make it worthwhile (Burbules & Rice, 1991)" (Jenlink & Banathy, 2007, p. 6).

The success of our Canadian network of free humanities programs has created a space for dialogue that is based in ethical research practices which value difference and confrontation. Through this first collaborative project, the directors contributed individual and collaborative documentation to better highlight the logistics of our contextualized programs as a critical recovery of history, and most importantly, to analyse the ethical issues and concerns we raised. These themes continue to engage us in extensive dialogue because they factor into 'how and why we do what we do' in reflexive ways. This research project has accomplished the important process of identifying these main themes so that we can continue to examine them through the multiple knowledges and epistemological frameworks that participants bring to the learning group. The opportunity to explore these themes through the Participatory Action Research methodology has opened up our research process to extend beyond this one project.

The long term possibilities of this methodology will serve to engage not only the directors, but other participants in our programs who have much to contribute to academic discourse and social change. The document we produced by focusing our research around an action project was a significant first step for our new community of co-researchers. "Stories of Dialogue: Collaborative Reflections from Directors of Free Humanities Programs" has successfully served the purpose of 1) developing meaningful and sustained organisational relationships, 2) deepening our understanding of ourselves and our programs in relation to our academic communities, and 3) expanding our experiences to other academics and community agencies. We sent this document to Dr. Jean Wilson in January 2011 so that she could give it to the in-coming coordinator of their upcoming program set to start in September 2011. Our presence at the Fredericton conference resulted in expanding our organizational relationships to other academics and this continues into more institutions. Doug West is moving to Lakehead University's new campus in Orillia, Ontario, where he will begin yet another Free Humanities program.

Through this dissertation, we are exposing our local cultures of research for the imminent onset of more collaborative research, which makes our ethic of care an extremely important priority to make explicit to ourselves and to in-coming directors, administrators, teachers, funders, researchers and students. An ethic of care starts with the fundamental respect and dignity for people – as subjects, as Selves. All learning and research projects that enter these spaces of dialogic learning have to be examined for this fundamental philosophical and pedagogical principle that unites our programs. Our tensions (individual and group) are sites for important learning that can be extended to others through our developing pedagogical documentation. In our positions of privilege,

we do not pretend to do this "tough, loving, critical work" alone. We are relational Selves engaged in creating spaces for dialogue alongside "students," "teachers," "mentors," "tutors," and a myriad of people who make up our learning communities – other relational "Selves." As we extend our localized knowledge to others engaged in similar work, we strengthen ourselves and each other so that we can talk and work through inevitable moments of crisis – that is where learning takes place and when we risk, as Freire says, *an act of love*.

How we self-advocate helps others understand what we are doing as well as the depth of insight we bring to our positions. It also drives at the heart of our ethic of care because we participate in creating spaces for dialogue within our respective programs, and if we do not attend to how we describe ourselves, we risk being defined by others and potentially harmed by misrepresentation – this is a message of concern that we share with many of the participants in our programs who have been far more unfairly represented and marginalized in their daily lives. Valuing our own experience through the way we describe ourselves extends to how we increase the value of lived experience for all the participants in our programs. It is also a message we extend to the broader academic community struggling with "proving the relevance" of the liberal arts and the humanities. We are creating nourishing learning environments – spaces for dialogue – that start with a strong image of learners; where listening contexts are practiced through reciprocity and a clear articulation of privilege (abuse and use). We are using our privilege and engaging others in participatory research for active social change. And, we are all relational "Selves" that need to attend to an ethic of Self care: Listen, Love, and Engage.

Metaphor of constellations

Returning to the metaphor of constellations, I imagine how each city referenced through these programs creates an image of one constellation stretching across Canada. Then I image each of these directors like guides, pointing out new connections to each other and expanding our collective knowledge through our own diverse experiences. From our respective vantage points, the sky we share looks slightly different. We are affected by time and space, our local geography. We are also very much affected by the experiences that have led us to these positions and programs, and the history of their respective contexts. In the case of this particular learning group, the educational experiences which have formed us also affect how we inform our local programs. And then the reflexive nature of our learning environments affects us such that the participants in the programs simultaneously influence us. There are many more guides with us.

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APPENDIX 1

Ethics Letter of Consent

APPENDIX 2

"Stories of dialogue: Collaborative reflections from directors of Free Humanities programs"

Online conference proceedings from St. Thomas University's International Conference on the future of Liberal Arts (September 30 – October 1, 2010)

http://w3.stu.ca/stu/academic/departments/social_work/pdfs/Reddenetal.pdf

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Running Head: HUMANITIES PROGRAMS

Stories of Dialogue: Collaborative Reflections from Directors of Free Humanities Programs

Laurie Meredith, Mary Lu Roffey-Redden, Becky Cory, Margot Butler, Doug West, Anne McDonagh, Mark Blackell, Joanne Muzak, and Jill Zmud

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Presented at the **International Conference on the Liberal Arts** September 30th – October 1st, 2010 at St. Thomas University, Fredericton, New Brunswick.

Abstract:

Through a collaborative reflection, Canadian program directors of Clemente-inspired Humanities courses will share with colleagues, academics and community agencies the unique and varied approaches to offering free humanities courses to people facing material and non-material barriers to education. Identifying common critical issues they experience, – from finding sustained funding to responding to academic and other pressing student needs – directors will share a year of dialogue and reflections.

Biographies:

Laurie Meredith was the director of *Humanities 101: An Odyssey* (Calgary) from 2009-2010 and is currently participating in establishing *Community Learning in the Humanities* at the Calgary Public Library. Working in the field of community-based education, her interests include critical pedagogy, early childhood education, dialogue and ethics in education, and Participatory Action Research (PAR). Currently a PhD candidate in Education at the University of Calgary, Laurie holds a BA degree in English Literature (University of Alberta) and an MA degree in French Literature (University of Calgary).

Mary Lu Roffey-Redden is director of Halifax Humanities 101. She has an MA and did doctoral studies in Philosophy of Religion at McMaster University. For 12 years, she was a lecturer in Religious Studies at the University of King's College, UWO. She has also taught business communications at Fanshawe and Mohawk Community Colleges. Being Director of Halifax Humanities 101 is her dream job, bringing together her love of studying philosophy and literature, with a concern for social justice.

Becky Cory (MA candidate, UVic) has been the program coordinator for University 101, at UVic for the past five years. What she most loves about being involved in this program is getting to build relationships with such a wide range of students, teaching assistants and faculty. Becky has also worked as an adult educator, facilitator, youth outreach worker, counselor and diversity educator. She is also a partner in a design and communications company. Becky's undergraduate work was in women's studies and political science, and she is currently completing her MA in Adult Education, studying race and racialization on the internet.

Margot Leigh Butler is the Academic Director of UBC's 12 year old Humanities 101 Community Programme which offers free education on Vancouver's Downtown Eastside and Downtown South (DTES/South) and 3 free university-level courses on campus for residents who have a lust for learning and who live on very low incomes. Made infamous as a worst-case scenario of contemporary urban life, the DTES also houses, or finds homeless, many residents who counter this pummeling view in countless inspiring ways – Hum students and alumni amongst them. The courses focus on relevant interdisciplinary creative and critical thinking and practices, and are in robust dialogue with Humanities traditions. Dr. Butler is an installation artist, cultural theorist and activist, and works with art/writing collectives and on alternative education projects.

Doug West is the Director of Humanities 101 at Lakehead University in Thunder Bay, ON and an Associate Professor of Political Science. The focal points for his research and teaching activities include northern and native politics, food security, contemporary political ideas, community development, and civic engagement through community service learning. Between 2006 and 2008, Doug served as the founding Co-Director of the Food Security Research and Service Exchange Network located in Thunder Bay. Through this initiative Doug has participated in research on cooperative community gardens, youth gardening and the development of school curricula, and on Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) as a new arena for civic engagement. Doug has also served in various capacities for community organizations in Ottawa, Thunder Bay and Victoria, and was a member of the Board of the Victoria Community Council in 2002-3 and 2009-10.

Anne McDonagh is a retired adult education teacher with an honours degree in English from the University of Toronto. She was head of cooperative education at an adult high school in Toronto when she retired. She also taught adults writing and business communications at George Brown College, Humber College and Dixon Hall. When she retired Anne became involved with Davenport Perth Neighborhood Centre (DPNC) and The Workers' Educational Association (WEA). The DPNC board and the WEA helped her establish University in the Community along with Woodsworth College's J. Barbara Rose. Anne markets and administers University in the Community and recruits students for the program. She is also editor of WEA's Learning Curves, a newspaper geared to adults returning to school for whatever reason, which is published and distributed throughout Toronto and the GTA five times a year. She contributes many feature articles as well.

Mark Blackell was formerly the Academic Coordinator of the Nanaimo Clemente Course in the Humanities and is currently the Chair of Liberal Studies at Vancouver Island University. He holds a PhD in Social and Political Thought from York University, has research interests in democratic civic culture, and finds more vibrant overlapping communities the longer he lives in his home of Nanaimo, British Columbia.

Joanne Muzak is the Special Projects Manager with the Community Service-Learning (CSL) Program and an instructor in CSL and Women's Studies at the University of Alberta (Edmonton). As the Special Projects Manager, she coordinates the U of A's Humanities 101 program. She started in this coordinator position as a postdoctoral fellow with CSL in 2008. Her postdoctoral project involved resuscitating Hum 101 after a four-year hiatus. She has been pleased to watch the program expand, especially this year with the help of current CSL postdoctoral fellow, Mebbie Bell, who introduced Hum 101 to a second-stage women's shelter.

Jill Zmud is the program coordinator of Discovery University in Ottawa. She started this position at the Ottawa Mission in August 2010 after spending four years as a researcher at the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada. Prior to that, she taught Political and International Studies at the University of Saskatchewan. She is thrilled to be returning to the field of education and looks forward to being a part of the Discovery University team.

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Stories of Dialogue: Collaborative Reflections from Directors of Free Humanities Programs

Conference Proceedings

Why offer free humanities courses to people living in poverty? What is it about the humanities that can draw people of varied, often non-traditional backgrounds into sustained and meaningful dialogue through humanities texts? What are people bringing to this dialogue, and what are they getting out of it? How do we define success under these circumstances? Directors, instructors, and students of Clemente-inspired humanities programs entertain these integral questions from the Canadian Pacific coast to the Atlantic coast.

In Calgary, at the *Radical Humanities: Coast to Coast Symposium* in the fall of 2008, participants recognized the Canadian trend to remain inspired by Earl Shorris' *Clemente Course in the Humanities* (www.clemente.bard.edu) while modifying program delivery to the unique needs and offerings of the local populations and environments. Yet, as varied as they may be, at the core of these programs remains a desire to communicate the liberating richness of the humanities in stark contrast to the forces of poverty.

Two years later, using a Participatory Action Research (PAR) model, directors and friends of free humanities programs collaborate to research, act and reflect on the challenges and rewards of Clemente-inspired programs in Canada. Through their own sustained dialogue, they offer stories of their experience to gain deeper understanding of dialogue, relationships, community, and the stories of the humanities.

Some information about the Canadian Clemente-inspired programs began to be revealed and shared at the 2008 national symposium as program directors, student alumni, instructors and academic supporters connected. Participants at the symposium expressed the need to continue dialogue; however, once people returned to their locations and busy lives, follow-up and

sustained dialogue fell away. Contending with time restraints, funding problems, and student and organizational crises, it should come as no surprise that, even on a superficial level, much of the details of the Canadian programs – histories, current offerings, governance structures, collaborations, etc. – are unknown to the general public and to each other.

This collaborative presentation responds to the expressed need of directors to share program information and experience with one another as well as the broader academic and national community. Each subsection below reads as the individual contributions of all nine current directors of Canadian "Clemente-inspired" programs, although not all directors were able to travel in person to St. Thomas University's *International Conference on the Liberal Arts*. Directors from Calgary, Halifax, Victoria, Thunder Bay and Vancouver presented in person and shared information on behalf of sister programs in Nanaimo, Edmonton, Toronto, and Ottawa.

This is the first time all nine Canadian directors have participated together in a Participatory Action Research (PAR) project. Our aim was to 1) develop meaningful and sustained organisational relationships, 2) deepen our understanding of ourselves and our programs in relation to our academic communities, and 3) expand our experiences to other academics and community agencies.

PAR methodology lends an orientation towards creative and collaborative meaning making, employing such research methods as "dialogue, storytelling and collective action […] to explore issues and relationships" (Kindon, Pain & Kesby, 2007, p.16), and our participation in the conference panel and these written proceedings successfully moves us towards increased dialogue, storytelling and collective action.

PAR requires the core epistemological and ethical position of treating a person as a Subject capable of expressing him or herself; for this reason, each director has written personally

of their experience in their respective program. Of salient importance is that we have identified how, in our work with marginalized people, we must actively resist a tendency for our programs to be marginalized. This is yet another reason for the directors to speak to the broader community in their own voices:

> In work with marginalized or vulnerable people, one of the most important features of these types of method is their 'hand-on' nature, and their ability to enable people to generate information and share knowledge on their own terms using their own symbols, language or art forms (Kindon, Pain & Kesby, 2007, p.17).

As the directors have engaged in dialogue, through electronic and face-to-face encounters, we have been respectful of our different approaches to program delivery. We have also increased our understanding of the ethical concerns we bring to our positions because of the social injustices so clearly evident in our communities. Through this process we have renewed our desire to act collectively in bringing awareness to these programs that address the relevance of liberal arts and the humanities in our society.

City: Calgary, Alberta

Program: Community Learning in the Humanities: 3rd iteration
Director: Laurie Meredith, PhD Candidate in Education at the University of Calgary
Contact: CLHprogram@gmail.com

Calgary's program was in its second iteration when I became the director of *Humanities 101: An Odyssey* (2009-2010). The first version, Storefront 101, was initially a community-based partnership that drew support from the City of Calgary, local universities and colleges, and a number of agencies dealing directly with marginalized people. Storefront 101 offered a total of 10 humanities courses between 2003 and 2008, ranging from history, philosophy, English literature, and Eastern religions. Students had the option of earning three 100-level credits from St. Mary's University College, a small liberal arts institution in Calgary.

The second iteration of the Calgary program, *Humanities 101: An Odyssey*, was made possible from an Alberta provincial government *Innovation Fund: Access to the Future Fund*. Executive Committee members from St. Mary's University College, Ambrose University College, and the University of Calgary formed a three-way university collaboration for the program. Two interdisciplinary courses in the humanities, HUM103 and HUM105, offered students an opportunity to get three 100-level credits through St. Mary's University College (STMU) per course. Classes were held on the STMU campus twice a week, and students got books, tuition, transportation, hot meals and childcare subsidies when needed (www.humanities101.stmu.ab.ca). As many programs have experienced, the one-time funding grants created program instability and *Humanities 101: An Odyssey* lacked funding to operate in the fall of 2010.

Before I began my position as director, I had been part of the 2008 Radical Humanities Coast to Coast to Symposium as a graduate student. Fortunately for me, as soon as I started as director I was able to connect immediately to the directors who had been part of the symposium. They were instant mentors and colleagues. With a very short window to start up the *Humanities 101* program, I benefited from their honest discussions of what worked for them and what had not. Weighing in the local differences meant I had a range of options to choose to implement into the myriad of programming logistics – everything from if and how to offer childcare, when to schedule classes and how that impacts students ability to attend and remain in class to the end of the session. Our email exchanges and phone calls were incredibly supportive, and as I learned more about the position, I, too, could offer support and suggestions.

Sharing information and experiences with the other directors has underscored that this kind of programming is not a formulaic model, but it needs to include an extremely responsive

ethic of care because of the nature of community education. Many participants in the program (students, tutors, instructors, staff) do not simply "go away" at the end of the course. Formal and informal connections are often sought at the end of the course. Knowing through the other Canadian programs that study groups and alumni classes become a common second stage to program development, I knew that the lack of financial backing at the end of the 2009-2010 year of *Humanities 101: An Odyssey* did not necessarily spell the end for the participants.

A grassroots initiative immediately formed in the spring of 2010 in response to the Calgary community members' desire to continue learning opportunities. *Community Learning in the Humanities* (CLH) was established through volunteer efforts and a welcoming partnership with the Calgary Public Library (CPL). Four-week long inter-disciplinary modules are facilitated by university-experienced lecturers on Wednesday evenings from 5:30- 8. Participants register through the CPL programming department and receive free library cards (if necessary), course materials, computer access and coffee/tea.

CLH is testament to the powerful impact that this kind of programming has on all participants involved. Former students, tutors, instructors and staff collaborated to create CLH's program goals:

- Provide free and open access to a challenging learning environment
- Promote an inclusive community, based on collaborative learning
- Enhance critical thinking and communication skills
- Raise awareness and deepen understanding of social justice through dialogue
- Encourage informed engagement in the larger community
- Promote sense of well being

Understanding the needs of our community members, we know that financial supports are critical to sustain and grow our CLH program. We are working together to find financial means to counter the physical hunger that compromises concentration and some of the

conditional realities of the participants (funding transportation and childcare costs, for example); but, in the meantime, CLH is strengthening our commitments to each other as well as to our community.

City: Nanaimo, British Columbia

Program: Nanaimo Clemente Course in the Humanities
Directors: Dr. Mark Blackell and Andrew Scott, MA (Clemente Coordinator)
Contact: ascott17@me.com

The Nanaimo Clemente Course in the Humanities was first conceived around 2000. It took many committed people, both at Vancouver Island University and in the wider Nanaimo community to offer a course in 2008.

Partners and Funding

Faculty and administrator from VIU worked closely with the Social Development Strategy Group (SDSG) to secure and demonstrate widespread community interest and endorsement. This group is made up of representatives from various social and government organisations interested in coordinating many of their services and in supporting projects of mutual strategic interest. By April 2007, the SDSG had the supports in place needed to launch the course. Its representative agencies would also provide students. Malaspina University funded an Academic Coordinator, an administrative coordination and faculty honoraria.

The Vancouver Island Health Authority committed itself to providing classroom space close to downtown Nanaimo in a converted school functioning as a family centre, a facility with a well-equipped daycare with qualified staff. The Ministry of Families and Children committed bus-passes for their clients. Nanaimo Youth Services committed some funds and aided in fund-raising from other sources, as did the United Way and the Canadian Federation of University Women (which promised a scholarship for a female graduate to pursue further studies.) Another

agency agreed to provide lunches. Faculty unions at VIU contributed money for books. The list could go on.

And, in March 2008, Nanaimo Youth Services, in partnership with Malaspina, was successful in its application to the Vancouver Foundation for funding. The Foundation has provided almost $62,000 over three years to support the program. In January 2008, the efforts of the SDSG and Malaspina were recognised with an "Excellence in Social Development Award" for the best collaborative project that year by the City of Nanaimo.

Structure and Logistics

The course, which follows the regulations for university credit-courses at VIU, meets twice per week for a 1.5 hour class preceded by a half hour light lunch. Books, bus tickets and child daycare are provided.

The curriculum varies somewhat depending on the availability, interest, and expertise of the instructors – all fully-appointed professors in various university departments at VIU. The course is primarily focussed on the Western intellectual tradition, with a few exceptions, and material is chosen with an eye to its ability to stimulate thought and discussion rather than with a view to be comprehensive in any of the given disciplines, a task which is impossible in the time we have. The class has attended and will continue to attend plays, dances and other cultural events in large measure thanks to ticket donations from the Port Theatre of Nanaimo.

Students may receive credit for two three-credit first year university courses at VIU with a grade of "pass" or, if they cannot or choose not to do so, may still take the course and receive a grade of "audit" on their transcripts. As VIU students, they have access to the full range of student services from the Writing Centre, counsellors, and disability services including a scribe,

as well as library and athletic facilities. Tuition is free, and student activity and union fees are waived, by agreement of VIU and the Student Union.

Students and Course Context

The intent of the Social Development Strategy Group (SDSG)was primarily to have students referred from various social agencies in Nanaimo, rather than to advertise to the public. So far we have primarily had referrals from mental health agencies and those that aid people on recovery from addictions, although their have been other agencies also providing referrals. This has meant that the make-up of our learner-community has tended to be people with a history of mental health or with a history of mental health and addiction. Most of our students tend to be in the 30-55 age range and about 70% are female. While most are Caucasian we have had a number of First Nations students in our first two classes. The make-up of the class is not surprising given Nanaimo's demographics and socio-economic history. The Snuneymuxw First Nation is very close to the centre where we hold our class. Nanaimo has a greatly weakened resource-based economy and yet the city has become a retirement destination for many from elsewhere in Canada. At the same time it has long-standing intergenerational poverty coupled with a significant organized crime presence that leads to a ready availability of drugs.

Of the seven students who completed the pilot course with credit in 2008, five have gone on to further study at VIU (formerly Malaspina). Others who took part in the course but did not receive credit, for various reasons, are still working towards taking courses. Some are completing high school up-grading courses, others have begun first-year university courses with the help of some bridge-funding to cover tuition from the VIU Foundation. The latest publication about our

recent graduates is found on page 8 of the Fall 2010 Vancouver Island University alumni magazine (http://www.mala.ca/alumni/documents/Fall10_Web.pdf).

City: Edmonton, Alberta

Program: Humanities 101
Director: Dr. Joanne Muzak
Contact: www.csl.ualberta.ca/en/Humanities%20101.aspx

Humanities 101 is a community-based outreach program designed to ensure that community members with a love of learning have access to educational experiences. The program offers free non-credit university-level courses for people living in Edmonton's downtown and surrounding areas who are passionate about learning and knowledge, especially those whose economic situation, academic experience, financial and social well-being are compromised. Humanities 101 provides non-vocational training that aims to empower students to use critical thinking in everyday life and inspire a passion for lifelong learning.

Partnering with The Learning Centre Literacy Association at Boyle Street Community Services Centre, Hum101 currently offers courses each semester at The Learning Centre's downtown location. Past courses include: Community Mapping, Native Studies, An Introduction to the Humanities, Stories & Communities, Digital Storytelling, and Education & Society. Courses at The Learning Centre focus on the city of Edmonton, how we move through the city, how we experience the city's history and negotiate changes in the city, who lives here and why. Increasingly, we are taking up these kinds of questions through explorations of new media and mobile technologies. Courses at The Learning Centre are largely project-based and encourage students to explore collaborative technologies and methodologies, such as community mapping, digital storytelling, and geocaching.

In Spring 2010, we began a new partnership with Wings of Providence, a second stage women's shelter to offer Hum101 courses designed specifically for women recovering from interpersonal violence. These courses focus on themes of home and community from diverse scholarly perspectives. Students' work includes guided writing, photography and 'life books' projects.

City: Toronto, Ontario

Program: University in the Community
Co-Directors: Anne McDonagh and J. Barbara Rose
Contact: www.weacanada.ca/university.asp

What are the Humanities? The Humanities try to answer the big questions of life. What is the meaning of life? How should we live our lives? What is a moral life? What is the best route to a happy life? What do I owe myself? What do I owe others? In studying the Humanities, we learn how philosophers, poets, artists and historians through the centuries have tried to answer these questions and we try to discover what we ourselves think the answers are. (www.weacanada.ca/university.asp)

With the support of Mariel O'Neil-Karch, principal of Woodsworth College and Keith McNair, Executive Director of Davenport Perth Neighbourhood Centre, Senior Lecturer J. Barbara Rose, an English professor at Woodsworth College and Anne McDonagh, Vice President of the Workers' Educational Association started University in the Community (UiC) in the summer of 2003 as a pilot project in a disadvantaged neighbourhood in west Toronto. The project was very successful and soon was granted funding for three years by the Trillium Foundation. In 2008 the Foundation granted funding for another two years.

University in the Community is based upon the Clemente Course in the Humanities, a program begun in 1995 in the United States. Its founder Earl Shorris regards the study of the humanities as a 'practical' education. He argues that providing training without an education in the humanities is like putting up a building without a foundation. The Clemente course and

University in the Community attempt to attack the 'culture of poverty' by giving students a chance to step back from the desperate world they inhabit, to develop critical thinking skills and ultimately to become actively engaged in changing their lives and their society.

The students who attend University in the Community are a microcosm of multicultural Toronto. They come from Canada, Latin America, the West Indies, Africa, Pakistan, Eastern Europe, the Middle East and so on. The dynamic interaction among students and between teachers and students comes partly from the variety of experience everyone brings to the courses.

Given the current circumstances of their lives, none of the students would be taking courses in the humanities at a university. If they considered taking a course at all, the broader society would encourage them to improve their job skills. They also know that they do not get credits for the classes they take. They are learning for the sake of learning.

Until 2008 University in the Community in Toronto was run through a partnership between U of T's Woodsworth College, the Workers' Educational Association of Canada (WEA), and the Davenport Perth Neighbourhood Centre, a social service agency in west Toronto. In 2008 St. Stephen's Community House, another social service agency in downtown Toronto, joined the partnership, and in 2010 Senior College made up of retired professors at U of T, who do not want to put their feet up yet, joined us.

Given the history and values of Woodsworth College and the Workers' Educational Association, University in the Community is an appropriate project for these organizations to collaborate on. Woodsworth College, originally set up to deal with part time and non-traditional students, who were mostly adults, was named after J.S. Woodsworth who was an advocate for social justice, a Member of Parliament and a founder of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF), the forerunner of the NDP.

The WEA's espousal of liberal arts education in the community dates back to 1918 when a Canadian soldier, Drummond Wren, returned from the war determined to find a way to help ordinary workers get a liberal arts education. As a result of Wren's vision, the WEA delivered liberal arts courses to thousands of people across Canada from 1918 until the community college system began in the 1960s.

The WEA constitution shares many of the basic elements of Earl Shorris's vision focusing as it does on the humanities, and while greatly influenced by Shorris, UiC is also the grandchild of the WEA.

Finances and Logistics

For the first four years, funding from Trillium, Woodsworth College and the Morrow Foundation enabled UiC to pay instructors. Although Trillium gave UiC a second grant, in 2008 the Woodsworth money to pay instructors was withdrawn because of budget cuts across the board at the University. The money from Trillium was not enough to pay instructors, but there was enough to continue until August of 2011 if our instructors were not paid. We have enough money to provide healthy snacks every week and bus fare if the students need it. We also pay for any supplies the students need for the courses and for field trips. Woodsworth and Davenport Perth Neighbourhood Centre provide classroom space, reception, supplies and equipment at no cost to us. Woodsworth also pays for a year end party.

Through the School of Graduate Studies, we now participate in a program for senior PhD students to gain teaching experience. They teach a four-week course for a credit but no money. Students register for eight weeks, and most of the time they get two four-week courses. So at this time, two volunteer instructors each teach four weeks of an eight-week program. The students meet once a week for two hours. We run two eight-week programs per semester, twelve a year.

Anne McDonagh markets and recruits the students for the courses. She interviews and registers about 25 students per class per semester; about 18 – 20 actually finish the program.

J. Barbara Rose works with the senior graduate students to make sure the courses are appropriate for our student group. Because the graduate students teach a four-week course, Rose's work load coordinating the academic side of UiC has doubled since 2008. Up to 2008, one instructor taught one ten-week course.

These are the some of the courses we have offered in the last seven years:

- Dickens' World: Exploring "Great Expectations"
- Poetry of the World
- The Human Condition Expressed Through Art
- Women and Gender in Religion
- Medicine in Early Modern Europe
- Religion in North America
- An introduction to Philosophy
- Travel, Migrations, Encounters: Interactions across Cultures
- The Power of Personal Narrative
- The Cultural Study of Music: An Introduction
- Introduction to Canadian History
- Greek and Roman Mythology
- Introduction to Drama
- Culture and Film
- Memoir Writing - Finding your voice
- Art and Creativity in our Lives
- Journeys of the Self: The Pilgrimage
- The History of the Book

Challenges

University in the Community faces a problem that most of the Clemente programs in Canada face and that is funding. If it is to continue it must find a source of stable funding. So far it has been run by volunteers, who are getting old and tired. UiC is also looking for a new model as well as funding. We plan to hold a focus group this fall to find out what programming our students would like in the future. In the new year we will have our first advisory committee meeting to discuss these issues, especially fundraising.

Student Comments

"I gained in self-esteem, confidence and respect for my life experiences."

"I feel that in a way, I have grown intellectually because now I have another vision of art and I can appreciate literature better."

"I learned how to read a story or a poem and analyze its contents."

"The course made me more conscious when I am reading. It made me look for different things when I am reading. …It helped me to have more insight into what I read."

"I learned to see every work as a product of a human being and as a product of a time."

"I learned to appreciate art as the result of the necessity to express oneself and as a way to share and communicate."

City: Ottawa, Ontario

Program: Discovery University
Program Coordinator: Jill Zmud
Contact: http://www.ottawamission.com/index.php?q=discuni.html

Discovery University (DU) was first suggested by the Reverend Deborah Dempsey of First Baptist Church in Ottawa, after she had read the work of Earl Shorris. In 2005, led by First Baptist Church, DU was organized through a planning committee of community volunteers from community agencies, including: The Ottawa Mission, Cornerstone/Le Pilier Women's Shelter, St. Joe's Women's Centre, Centre 454 – Anglican Social Services, University of Ottawa, Saint Paul University and the City of Ottawa. In 2010, DU continues to operate as a collaborative community organization but is now housed at the Ottawa Mission.

The goal of DU is to provide university education to persons in Ottawa experiencing homelessness and/or living on a low-income, in order to foster a new sense of citizenship and a commitment to learning and critical thinking that could ultimately lead to personal growth and student participation in social change. With respect to course delivery, DU offers a 10-week non-credit Humanities course in both the fall and winter terms. This includes a two-hour lecture each

Friday and a Wednesday night tutorial session with a hot meal. As with the Clemente Course, DU is offered at no cost. All supplies, including bus tickets, are provided.

Examples of DU courses that have been offered are: Discovering Fiction; Critical Thinking Skills; Shakespeare to Steinbeck: Western Literature in Times of Change; Ethics in a Global World; and Art, Portraiture and Subjectivities. Professors from the University of Ottawa and Saint Paul University are provided at no charge to DU by their respective institutions.

At the time of this writing, DU partner agencies are primed for reflection on the program's first five years as well as its future growth. Current goals include strengthening the DU planning committee, investigating fundraising opportunities, raising the program's profile in the Ottawa community and looking at ways to offer more courses. Both the University of Ottawa and Saint Paul University have offered one more professor each per term. As a result, DU is poised to grow.

City: Halifax, Nova Scotia

Program: Halifax Humanities 101
Director: Mary Lu Roffey-Redden, MA
Contact: learn@halifaxhumanities101.ca; www.halifaxhumanities101.ca

Our community collaborations:

Halifax Humanities 101 is governed differently from other free Humanities programs. We are a non-profit registered charity, with a board of directors. Our budget comes entirely from fund-raising efforts such as applying for Foundation grants, appeals to interested individuals and holding fund-raising events. We also receive in-kind donations from universities and are funded to some extent by the United Way.

We must of necessity partner with other community organizations and so one of our best relationships is with the Public Library system which gives us meeting space free of charge (now

at two different libraries as we are running both our initial program and a graduate program). This has great benefits both for us and for the libraries. Many of our students are regular library patrons and so are coming to class in a familiar and comfortable environment. The libraries themselves are delighted to host a program of such intense intellectual engagement and the staff feel that our presence is a quiet message to other patrons about the reality and joy of life long learning.

Unlike some of our sister programs, we don't hold classes at a university site, nor do we provide a meal before class. Our classes are held from 3:30 - 5:30 twice a week. One reason for this is that Halifax has a limited public transit system and for students to be taking buses late at night after evening classes would be quite difficult.

We don't have tutors, unlike some other programs. We have attempted to incorporate tutoring into the program, but it has not worked out.

Our relations with 6 post-secondary institutions in Halifax:

Halifax is obviously very university rich and so we have collaborations with all of them. None of the universities has taken us on as their particular project, because of cost, but while this makes for complications it is also a good thing. We are not beholden to one institution; hence we have a wonderful independence. We have teachers from all the universities and the university presidents are on record as talking about us as a wonderful example of how they can come together for a project while maintaining their separate identities. (this is crucial right now in light of the resurrection of a long-standing government recommendation to amalgamate some of them). This relation with the city universities has borne fruit in that we can now offer qualified graduates of HH101 the possibility of taking university credits with the tuition fees covered by the Presidents' Offices.

Curriculum:

We are committed to a "core text" approach, modelling our curriculum on the King's College "Foundation Year Program" approach. This means that we are studying texts that would be considered as "culture shaping" material in Western civilization. Our curriculum is chronological, focused on Philosophy and Literature and very challenging. However, it is the very fact of that challenge that is most spoken of by students who graduate and feel a tremendous sense of accomplishment. The students generally speak very happily of "finally" reading the books they've been hearing about all their lives such as Homer's *Odyssey*, Dante's *Divine Comedy* and *The Communist Manifesto*.

Non-credit courses:

Halifax Humanities does not offer a credit and has no tests or assignments. We do offer opportunities for those students who so desire, to take writing classes, but these are and "add-on" to our basic curriculum. What we are finding is that our program, because it is non-credit and also because it deals with "classic" texts, succeeds best at creating a sense of freedom for both our teachers and students. Let me explain what I mean by this:

(1) for the students: at one of our introductory sessions a few years ago, I told the students what Halifax Humanities is NOT: a support group, a therapy session, a Bible study, political indoctrination, or a book club. When I finished that introduction, one of the students came up a hugged me and said how happy she was with what I had said. When I asked why, she said: "I'm schizophrenic and everything I belong to is about being schizophrenic. I'm tired of talking about mental illness. I just want to be normal!"

I think that she hit on the nature of our freedom. Because we have no agenda of "improving" our students, as is the case with so many groups they belong to, they feel a sense of

freedom to do something, ostensibly useless and impractical, purely for themselves. Many of our students, especially those who have raised children on inadequate incomes, tell me that this is the first thing they have ever done solely for their own sense of well-being. Our program, in spite of being intellectually challenging is a form of "leisure" for students who have little true pleasurable leisure in their lives.

(2) Our curriculum, being focused on what might be understood as "culture-shaping" texts in the Western European and North American tradition, allows our students to step out of their current conditions and enter into other worlds, other lives, other places and other ways of thinking. We rarely discuss the current conditions of our students' lives, and they themselves tend to focus their class discussion on the text at hand. However, what we find is that the texts and classroom discussion become part of students' own reflection on their lives. As director, I come to know this when, in private conversations, students tell me how deeply they connect with a theme, character, or insight in a text. However, there is never any pressure placed on the students to reveal aspects of their lives in the public setting of the class. This respect for NOT having to tell their stories is unusual for many of the students who have spent too much time dealing with social welfare systems that demand they account for themselves in demeaning ways.

(3) Halifax Humanities offers a sense of freedom to the many university professors who teach for us. Because we offer no credit, we have no "disengaged" students who are taking the program for reasons other than clear personal desire to be there. To be able to offer teachers a class of 100% engagement is a real gift in the current university environments. As well, the lack of tests and assignments means that the professors will never hear the "teacher-deflating" question: "Is this going to be on the test?"

We don't pay our teachers and their commitment is very short term, usually only 2 or 3 classes on a particular text. Therefore, teaching in Halifax Humanities is for them, also a freely chosen activity done for the sheer pleasure of engaging with an interesting and diverse group of adult learners.

Many of our teachers have told me that they experience freedom in teaching for us. The lack of credit requirements allows for a great deal of freedom in what happens in the classroom. For instance, we had an interesting occasion with a class on Jane Austen's Sense and Sensibility. Having just studied both Kant and Nietzsche, one of the students was deeply offended at the thought of reading a novel she considered to be "Fluffy chick lit". This comment was made right at the start of class and so the teacher just put aside all of his prepared notes and the class began with the question: Is Jane Austen "fluff and romance"? What developed, interestingly, is that all of the main ideas the professor had hoped would emerge did from that unexpected starting point. We have had many such moments in class. The students, not worrying about credit issues, are very honest in their opinions about texts, characters and themes. And many of our teachers come to love this very lively exchange and I have been told by a number, that they now teach in their regular classes differently, because of our classes.

We have a core of deeply committed teachers who very willingly teach in both our basic Halifax Humanities program and now in our follow up program.

City: Victoria, British Columbia

Program: University 101 **at the University of Victoria**
Program Coordinator: Becky Cory, MA
Contact: http://web.uvic.ca/uni101/ ; uni101@uvic.ca

Context matters

University 101 is a program located at the University of Victoria. We offer two non-credit introductory university classes in the humanities and social sciences. We also offer a series of month long courses - 11 months of the year - for graduates of the introductory courses. Working in a non-credit classroom where there are no grades means that we have a kind of freedom to create our own learning environment and students have the space to set their own learning goals.

University 101 is a learning environment where everyone brings what they have in abundance. The instructors bring their expertise about their area of teaching, the teaching assistants bring their listening and facilitation skills, and the students bring their passion for learning and life experiences.

Critical thinking

Critical thinking is a central part of post-secondary education. It is also a central part of University 101. In the course, students learn with each other and the TAs how to more clearly analyze and articulate their experiences and name the knowledge that they already have.

It can sometimes be challenging to find language to describe the learning environment of University 101. It is not a book club, a philosopher's café or a place to get your 'knowledge fix.' In each of these spaces, critical thinking may be possible, but it is not necessarily at the centre of the learning. In University 101, critical thinking is at the centre of our approach to learning, and we work to create the conditions where students can engage in meaningful discussion and creative thinking. Students engage with the material in many ways, sometimes taking a more

analytical approach and other times bringing their experience to bear on the material that is studied in class.

Our approach to knowledge

In University 101 we view knowledge as created relationally rather than being owned or possessed. We also believe that there is no single truth, and that knowledge is multiple, not singular or authoritarian. We put these ideas into practice in a variety of ways in the course so that the structure of the course reflects our approach to knowledge.

We try to make these ideas part of both the explicit and implicit curriculum. As a class (students, TAs and coordinator), we discuss what kind of learning environment we want to create, making that conversation an explicit and negotiated part of each course. Less visibly, TAs and instructors are coached to recognize the value in the different ways that students contribute to the class. TAs and instructors are encouraged to see themselves as learners in the classroom.

We strive to achieve a multiple view of truth through an interdisciplinary approach to the course content. There is a different instructor each week, teaching about a different topic. This diversity challenges traditional ideas about truth and knowledge by showing that there are many kinds of knowledge. Critical thinking provides the link through the different content that is covered each week.

In each class of University 101, the first half of the class is a lecture by that week's instructor and the second half of each class is small group discussion, facilitated by volunteer teaching assistants. In these discussions, the goal is for students to create knowledge through analysis and synthesis of their ideas and experiences. In this context, knowledge is created through dialogue.

Conceptual traps

The goal of University 101 is to provide courses for people who have faced barriers to post-secondary education. This means that the students in University 101 have been marginalized in many ways in relation to the dominant culture. In our attempt to avoid reproducing the dominant power relations that have created the barriers students have faced, there are a number of conceptual frameworks or beliefs that we avoid.

1. Students do not already think or think critically when they enter the classroom
2. Students are empty vessels
3. People who live in poverty cannot think critically and will not benefit from being able to think more critically

Many of the students who enter the University 101 classroom have survived poverty, violence, unstable housing or homelessness, mental illness, and negative experiences of education. We believe that these lived experiences are produced by social, political and economic structures. However, these experiences are often attributed to the personal failings or incapacities of the people living them. In University 101, we work to name and recognize the social, political and economic structures that shape people's lives through the course material as well as in the small group discussions. Every term we have a full class of students who come into the classroom with astute analyses of the ways their own experiences have been shaped by these structures, but who have not always had those analyses taken seriously or shared by others. In University 101, we create the conditions where students are able to express their ideas and deepen their analysis of the world around them.

4. There is no point in learning if it isn’t for credit or moving people towards a degree

A common question that we get asked about the program is "why would people bother to take a course that isn't for credit?" In an increasingly corporate university environment, where

learning is becoming an economic investment with the hope of economic returns, it is surprising to many that the students in University 101 attend the course because they are interested in learning. The program does not have a set of specific outcomes for students. We know that each student is there because they want to be and because they see some way that they will benefit. We hear from the students about the many benefits that they experience, some of which even they did not foresee. Students tell us about the increased confidence they feel after taking the course, that they feel more connected to their communities.

5. That ‘we’ in the program are helping ‘them’
6. That students in the program need 'our' charity

At University 101 we see ourselves as creating the conditions where it is possible for people to make changes in their lives. If students make changes in their lives or the ways that they think about the world, it is because they are making those changes. University 101 is often an important part of the context wherein students are able to make changes. However, it is not because 'we' at the program are helping 'them'. This would imply that University 101 and its organizers were taking credit for the hard work that students are doing to help themselves, in all of the various ways that they do so. Rather, the organizers of University 101 work hard to create a context where it is possible for people to make connections with others, learn from each other and learn from the course material.

We base our program on the belief that students are entitled to education. We work to challenge the oversimplification of the dichotomy between 'us', the service providers, and 'them', the students. We think it is an oversimplification because everyone in the program, including students, TAs, instructors and organizers, are learning and benefitting from each other. This is

not to disregard the real differences in the lives of students, TAs, instructors and organizers, nor the different roles that everyone plays in the classroom.

Classroom dynamics that cultivate critical thinking

Community is built into the centre of the course in many ways. The program fosters a communal environment through tactics like: eating together, taking care of the material costs (i.e. childcare) that enables students to attend class, and working with each student to get their needs met in class. We also provide tutorials, space for students to meet with the teaching assistants to discuss readings and assignments. Finally, small group discussions are an integral part of the development of community in the classroom for both students and teaching assistants.

We strive to create space for critical thinking by challenging assumptions and exploring implications. TAs and students spend time discussing how to avoid more traditional teacher/student roles (i.e. teacher as 'knower' and student as 'learner') and move towards a more collaborative approach to learning where control and knowledge are shared. TAs spend additional time outside of class in training that we facilitate to deepen their understanding and practices of sharing control and knowledge.

City: Thunder Bay, Ontario

Program: Humanities 101 **at Lakehead University**
Director: Dr. Doug West
Contact: http://humanities101.lakeheadu.ca/

My introduction to Humanities 101 at Lakehead University in Thunder Bay, Ontario came in the form of being a last minute replacement lecturer for the programme in 2004. I remember coming to the class prepared to lecture, armed with my powerpoint slides safely stored on a memory stick. When I arrived, I suddenly realized that the classroom was equipped "only" with chalk and a real blackboard. I panicked at first, but soon the class itself helped me to

understand the intention of their programme. “Just share what you know” I was advised, and my journey in Humanities 101 began. Our classroom is a place for sharing what you know, life experiences and challenges. It is also a public space for learning how to be a community.

For the past 6 years I have had the challenge and pleasure of teaching in Humanities 101 at Lakehead University and in University 101 at the University of Victoria. Both programs offer students an opportunity to share a meal, participate in a lecture and then engage in group discussion. In both cases I decided to offer more than a participatory lecture – my wife and I prepared food for the students, and in the last class of each session we had a pot-luck. As a lecturer, I connected with the students through my ideas, and as a citizen I connected with them by sharing my food.

I would say the most rewarding experience of all is the sense of belonging to a community of life-long learners. By this I mean that the students in the class are as much teachers as they are learners, and it reminds me of why university life was so appealing to me. I, too, am a life-long learner and I am presented with challenges and opportunities to participate in learning every day. As a lecturer in both the Lakehead and UVIC programmes I was encouraged to engage as much as possible to challenge the students to explore their own sense of community, their biases and to use their voices to express their sense of community space and place.

At Lakehead we offer a session called Pathways where we invite students to meet with representatives from the Registrar’s office, Student Advising, Financial Aid, the Adult Education Learning Centre, the Thunder Bay Indian Friendship Centre, and Confederation College – the idea is to offer students an idea of how to make a transition to part-time or full-time educational opportunities. I quote here a testimonial from one of our graduates:

> What I found most helpful was the Pathways Workshop. This workshop was set up to assist graduates in identifying educational pathways.....I was introduced to an academic counsellor who showed me what I needed to do to gain entry into Lakehead University, and she made it sound so easy! I was helped every step of the way to fulfill my dreams, and it all began with Humanities 101.
>
> Serena Dykstra 2007

The goal of our program, however, is not really to provide access to students to seek full or part-time educational opportunities. This we consider a side-effect of the programme. The real goal and vision for Humanities 101 is to provide a safe and empowering environment for life-long learning.

This year I have taken on the responsibility for directing the Humanities 101 program at Lakehead – I am the third director in 6 years – all of us have been full-time, tenured Faculty members. We run our program for one semester and we have developed new features every year. The Pathways session was added four years ago, a Book Club was added last year, along with a guided tour of the Thunder Bay Art Gallery. This year, we have added an urban farm tour, attendance at a play- The Laramie Project (a play about the homophobic murder of Matthew Shepherd in Colorado), a concert performed by the Thunder Bay Symphony and a Lakehead University Thunderwolves hockey game - all tickets for all participants were donated. We are also helping our current students to start an Alumni Association.

As a newly minted Director I have been able to more appreciate the planning that is a necessary part of Humanities 101. Without the help and institutional memory of Nadine Seeton, a graduate of the first year of the programme who now works for us, I would be lost. Also, the administrative support of various administrative assistants, food workers, technicians and faculty has been invaluable – it really takes a community effort to make things run. We have plans to

expand to a full year with the help of our Development Office and the enthusiastic support of a new university President.

We run our programme through the direction of an Advisory Council, made up of former students, community partners and Faculty, which meets twice during the semester to discuss issues and plans. We have plans to begin talking with the local Speakers School, an initiative from the Thunder Bay Injured Workers group to help people living on low-income to become better public speakers, about working together as we believe our programmes are complimentary. We also have plans for a spring community conference focused on where to take Humanities 101 in the future.

Humanities 101is about community engagement – it is about providing a safe place that encourages connections between people and between people and public spaces. It is essential to learning that people understand their sense of public participation and ownership of public spaces and that their voices matter in the development of these spaces. Humanities 101 is also about working hard to learn about hard facts and hard fought policy change for the betterment of our community.

The liberal arts are under attack from the increasingly corporatized university "crowding out" their role as the essential centre of post-secondary education. Writing is being replaced by statistics, reading is being replaced by media, and the whole university is underfunded; something has to go. Why not the impractically focussed liberal arts? It is argued that the calculation of grades and the setting of scheduled courses and the demand for learner outcomes has caused the liberal arts to look more and more like a commodified product. Also, Faculty are less likely to see themselves as scholars than as employees of an increasingly corporatized institution.

The university has drifted away from it purpose as a place for free-thinking. It has been re-placed by an ethic of bottom-line accounting and "usable" education. As Dorothy Smith advised, by "thinking it through" we can recover the university's commitment to acting as a social conscience and we can teach our students to become visible and vocal members of their society. The defence of the liberal arts is not new; people have decried their disappearance from the post-secondary landscape for the past 100 years. Why is there in our time a sense of urgency about their future when they have easily survived the onslaught of commerce, engineering and professional programming? Is it because they lie at the periphery of the institution rather than at the center? Does the lack of focus on the liberal arts belie a capitulation to the corporate mind-set of profit and loss? Session after session of the conference was devoted to formulating answers to these and other questions. It is a funding issue, it is the fault of the illiterate social media, it is the fault of Faculty themselves, unable or unwilling to defend the liberal arts through their Senates. In the end, do the liberal arts really matter anymore?

The session that I participated in was a panel discussion among five Directors of "Clemente-style" programs in Victoria, Vancouver, Calgary, Halifax and here in Thunder Bay. Each programme offers students who have been living somewhat compromised lives outside the institutions of higher learning a glimpse at what University and College has to offer as a way into being engaged in society. That way is focussed on the Liberal arts, on having students read and write, discuss and debate, and share a sense of community through dining together prior to each session. The "Clemente-Style" Humanities and Liberal Arts programs have been in existence in North America since 1995, when Earl Shorris published Riches for the Poor in 1997. His idea was to bring the disenfranchised to liberal arts, to offer a free place within the public space of the University. There are many ways to do this, and here at Lakehead we offer Humanities 101

(http://humanities101.lakeheadu.ca/). Our program consists of different Faculty volunteering three hours once a week for twelve weeks and engaging our students in debates and discussions about academic and community issues. All the panellists agreed that our programs privilege the centrality of the Liberal Arts at the university and answer the question – do the Liberal arts still matter?

City: Vancouver, British Columbia

Program: Humanities 101 **Community Programme at the University of British Columbia and on the Downtown Eastside/South**
Academic Director: Dr. Margot Leigh Butler
Contact: http://humanities101.arts.ubc.ca/ ; hum101(at)interchange.ubc.ca

Currently, the Liberal Arts and Humanities are being asked to prove their relevance. Our Programmes do so, with a difference: with a different student body whose lives, experiences and knowledge inform what's studied, and who approach the Liberal Arts and Humanities from specific perspectives in capitalisms' deep end. As has already been discussed, each of the Canadian Programmes differ, and agree to differ – how Canadian! - despite the American-based founder of the Clemente Course hoping that we'll join his franchised model. The Canadian Programmes succeed by being responsive to the situations of our students, alumni, universities, locations and 'climates' – not from following a model. Each is specific, and this matters.

Unlike the home cities of our other Canadian sister Programmes, in Vancouver there is a core area where lots of people live on very low incomes. It's called the Downtown Eastside, and many of our students live there, and in a neighbouring area called Downtown South (around the area of Granville and Helmcken Streets). Twice a year, in August and November, Humanities 101 posters these areas widely and does information and application sessions for our courses at local community centres, agencies and services (Carnegie Centre, the Downtown Eastside

Women's Centre, Sheway/Crabtree Corner Daycare, Aboriginal Front Door, The Gathering Place, Dr. Peter AIDS Centre, Directions Youth Resources Centre, Vancouver Recovery Club….). We go to so many places because residents support and love and use them; our alumni who volunteer at these centres help at intake – they bring people who might be interested, speak about their own experiences with Hum, and encourage applicants. Another reason why we go to so many places is so that we'll meet people who are being displaced from the community they want to live in by gentrification, but still come here to volunteer and do activist work, access the many often hard-won community supports, get free food and clothing, see friends and family, stay involved with education.

Vancouver's Humanities 101 Community Programme – we call it 'Hum' – runs three free university-level courses at the UBC campus for people who live on Vancouver's Downtown Eastside and Downtown South (DTES/South) who have a lust for learning and who live with material poverty - 70% of DTES residents live on low, and often extremely low, incomes; welfare is a bare $610 per month, including rent. On the DTES/South, Hum offers free education programmes - study groups, documentary film series, workshops – which are open to everyone.

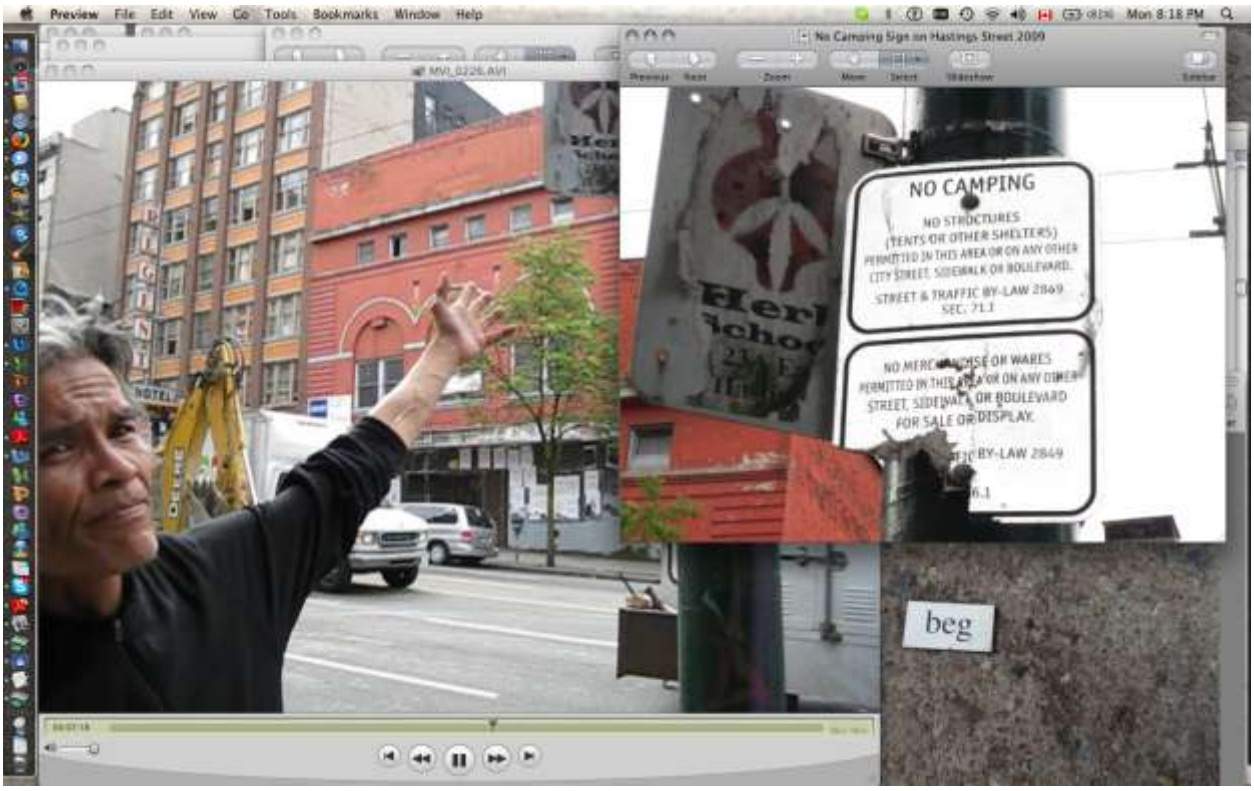
I'd like to start this presentation of Hum on the DTES, where the majority of our students and alumni live, and then focus on three of our practices. In this written form of my presentation, I've included many references that may be useful if readers would like to learn more about the DTES/South and Humanities 101, and also about the structures and practices of Canadian poverty today (http://ccapvancouver.files.wordpress.com/2010/02/poverty-facts-web.pdf).

The Downtown Eastside

The Downtown Eastside is a dynamic, resilient neighbourhood known affectionately as "the Heart of the City." It is part of unceded Coast Salish territory, and has a history and

presence as a hub of cultural life for Aboriginal, Chinese, Japanese, Latin American, Black, queer, working class and low-income peoples. The parameters of the neighbourhood are roughly from Burrard Inlet to Cambie Street to Clark Street to Terminal Avenue, including Victory Square, Gastown, Chinatown, Thornton Park, Oppenheimer District, Strathcona and the industrial area near the water (Lemay, 2010).

Though this is a large and diverse area, Vancouver's Downtown Eastside is most often represented a worst-case scenario for contemporary western urbanized life (see The Province newspaper's recent year-long series "Operation Phoenix" http://www.theprovince.com/news/operation-phoenix/index.html; Butler, 2004). About 700 people live homeless in this area, 5000 live in Social Housing (and another 5000 units are needed), many others live in SROs – single room occupancy hotels - which are of 'abandonment quality' (Quigley & Raphael, 2001). The City of Vancouver elects not to uphold its own health and safety bylaws on the DTES and landlords are not held responsible (for more info, see http://ccapvancouver.files.wordpress.com/2010/01/dtes-fact-sheet-nt.pdf); this is supporting gentrification which is causing displacement of residents: gentrification is the transformation of working class and poor spaces in the city to serve the needs of the middle and upper classes (Lees, Slater & Wyly, 2007; Lees, 2008) and new university campuses are implicated along with developers and the City (Pell, 2008). The Vancouver Police are known to aggressively ticket residents who sell bits and bobs – shoes, books, CDs, clothes - on the street or commit minor offences such as riding bikes on the sidewalk or jaywalking; I've heard that there are 9 ways to be ticketed for jaywalking, and they're practiced on the DTES. Without the money to pay the tickets, residents 'choose' to leave the area rather than be jailed. This is a practice of displacement (Bula, 2009).



This photo is from a video interview with DTES resident Clyde Wright about his experience being ticketed for jaywalking on Hastings Street – a segment from this interview was shown at my St. Thomas University conference presentation. He also talks about losing his room in an SRO when he allowed a journalist from The Province newspaper's series "Operation Phoenix" into his room (http://www.theprovince.com/news/operation-phoenix/index.html) and is, in this photo, pointing toward No Camping and No Vending by-law signs on Hastings Street. He is active with CCAP (Carnegie Community Action Project), VANDU (Vancouver Area Network of Drug Users) and lots of other community groups and projects, including "Hope in the Shadows," a book and yearly photo calendar by Downtown Eastsiders. I made this video in the summer of 2009, just down the street from Carnegie Community Centre at the corner of

Hastings and Main, and about a block from the future Olympic Tent Village which was held for the 2 weeks of the Olympics, largely by local people living without homes.

The effects of poverty and of colonization are visible on the DTES where there are many survivors of personal and systemic violence, exclusion and alienation, residential schools; people living with mental and physical health challenges, people who use substances, women who do 'survival sex' to pay for substances they need – women living on the DTES were murdered by Robert Pickton – and despite efforts, there are too few detox beds and recovery facilities, and too much violence against women (Skelton, 2010)

At the same time, the sense of community, support and awareness of each other is very high – this is a strong and activist community that has fought hard for everything it has and is continuing to fight to stay home. People are accepted without judgment in this area which is a sanctuary for people who aren't welcome in other places, there is a strong commitment to justice and human rights, and there are plans for an enduring future on the DTES. Many residents spend lots of their time volunteering and working for much needed community services like the INSITE supervised safe injection site (http://supervisedinjection.vch.ca/) and groups that work for rights and justice for this community. A few months ago, the Carnegie Community Action Project - a group which is part of the Carnegie Community Centre, the area's 'living room' which is used by about 2000 people daily - released a report after two years of input from 1200 residents. In it, residents have said clearly what they want and now this needs to be implemented. This report "Assets to Action: Community Vision for Change" lists 12 key needed actions: 1) Build social housing for low-income people 2) Tackle systemic poverty 3) Stop gentrification 4) Improve safety 5) Improve health services 6) Support and fund DTES arts and culture 7) Develop an economy that serves and employs local residents 8) Ensure public spaces are public,

not gated, sufficient, safe, and welcoming 9) Keep towers out and retain heritage buildings 10) Involve DTES residents in neighbourhood decisions 11) Attract more children 12) Create a DTES image that honours and respects low-income residents (Pederson & Swanson, 2010).

Amongst these DTES residents are Hum students and alumni, people who are passionate about learning and knowledge and wouldn't otherwise have a chance to go to university. Hum hinges the DTES and UBC, two very different places, and is an active hinge – for instance, our students' first writing assignment involves noticing the many 'cultures of learning' both in their home neighbourhoods and at UBC.

Three Hum Practices

As an educational and activist project, Hum hinges significantly different places, and is uneasy about being positioned as just an 'anomaly' which doesn't get at the importance of specificity and difference, or worse, positions it as a kind of living contradiction. Hum is instead committed to being aware and creative with 'how we do what we do': these are our practices, and they are responsive to what's happening in all aspects of the Programme and peoples' situations, they are flexible and changeable. I'll now talk about three Hum practices concerning 'students,' 'pedagogy and curriculum,' and 'responsiveness' which complement other practices discussed by my colleagues in their presentations.

1) Students

To live on a very low income in Canada today means dealing with institutions that may be disrespectful. At Hum, we're always listening for and creating practices which don't take up the methods of the institutions and hierarchies which people living on very low incomes have loads of knowledge and expertise in, yet can overpower them, which are so often indifferent and unaccountable, to put it mildly. For our last yearbook, Hum alumna Pat Haram wrote a visionary

essay on homelessness, based in her own experiences, and her understanding of government and institutions. She concluded: "I do not have the answers to all the homeless situations, but I do believe that solutions are out there if only government policy is put into place that does not distrust the individual in need." (Hum 101 Yearbook, 2010, p. 39).

Hum students and alumni have lots of practices for making strong communities which work together. Their knowledge and perspectives from their positions in neo-liberalism are very important – like many people around the world, they know how to survive in the deep end of globalization. This is 'situated authority' and their knowledge matters – and it's wonderful when it's recognized. A few years ago, one of our teachers, Peter Seixas in Education, brought his "Social Studies Methods" students to our class so that they could ask for feedback from Hum students on their DTES 'field trip' plans for their own students. It was a wonderful and memorable experience, and exemplified what can happen.

2) Pedagogy and Course Content

Over the years, we've developed some pedagogical practices which support students' enjoyment, participation and contributions to Hum courses, and have moved toward a curriculum which focuses on relevant, critical and creative, interdisciplinary studies; it has a Cultural Studies/Post-Structuralist methodology which approaches the Humanities as implicated, works from there, and values students' situated knowledges (Haraway, 1991).

Our core courses are 8 months long, meeting twice a week for two and a half hours, and each week we study a different discipline and subject with a different teacher, starting with studenting skills refreshers, learning and discussion styles, and thinking practices. I teach two classes in the first month: one which establishes that "Culture is Ordinary" based in Raymond Williams' germinal essay from 1958 (Williams, 1989), and introduce the disciplines and

interdisciplines through the nodes of People, Knowledge and Power (asking in turn 'What counts as people, power and knowledge in First Nations' Studies, geography, sociology, anthropology, law, architecture, art, music, Women's and Gender Studies, economics, etc.); and the other class is on periodization – we take an evening stroll through the Enlightenment and right up to globalization. In this way we have a shared 'platform' of understanding to start our year-long interdisciplinary conversations. These are not intro or survey courses, but jump into relevant critical and creative studies - relevant – which to me, in this context, means that studying what will help us to be further informed and articulate, to access education – as Raymond Williams says 'we have the world to draw on' – and to be more powerful: we build agency together.

Our students become accomplished at reading the teachers – in one year they may have as many teachers as in an undergraduate degree – and at making connections between diverse content (more hinges!). They arrive with lots of knowledge and a thirst for more; they do the readings and go to a Homework Club before class and are super engaged (many students and alumni also initiate and attend Hum Study Groups on the DTES/South on week-ends on subjects including Shakespeare, rhetoric, freedom, gentrification, cyberculture, and nature, society and science). Hum students create an experience for teachers which is unusual – they are generally older than most undergraduate students, and raise informed, insightful and often unconventional questions and points - they're not 'trained' into disciplinary thinking practices, and are enjoyed as candid, independent thinkers.

In the classroom, everyone wears a name tag, and everyone sits together – students, returning alumni mentors, volunteer discussion facilitators (university students from UBC and neighbouring Simon Fraser University), staff and faculty – and takes notes and asks questions

and mops spills and helps out. In the classroom, we can become more like a collective. Our students and alumni keep remaking Hum by hand, as do the staff and faculty.

Lately I've been thinking a lot about the structures and supports which I've used for years, reluctantly, in my other classrooms – those itemized in Foucault's "Means of Correct Training" (Foucault, 1977): hierarchical observation, normalizing judgment, the examination – and what it feels like to be part of this 'no carrots, no sticks' intrinsic education. University students volunteer to help with the classes, and often say that these are some of the best lectures they've been to. I wonder if this might be a radical future for the Liberal Arts and Humanities?

3) Responsiveness: on Hum's Steering Committee, and being responsible and responsive to students, alumni and situations on the DTES/South and at UBC

There is an international movement called 'Community Service Learning' which is gaining strength. Up to 2000 UBC students each year offered the chance to broaden their experiences and are placed in 'their community,' which often means the DTES whether or not they're residents. This is about 'othering,' and it's fascinating and problematic. One of the ways that Hum distinguishes itself from this practice is through our Steering Committee.

Every 6-8 weeks at Carnegie Centre, we have a meeting of our Steering Committee which is made up of students and alumni and guides all aspects of the Programme – this keeps the Programme responsive to what matters to residents about what's happening on the DTES/South. Everyone who has ever taken a Hum course, for whom we have a current email address, is invited to each meeting. Everyone there experiences the difficulties of living on extremely low incomes, and knows that it is not all we are.

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