

Braiding Values and Voice in Teacher Research Through Literary *Métissage*

The Narrative Inquiry Group

The Narrative Inquiry Group

Sabine Charette
Lynda Giguère
Norma Hubbard
Martin Labrie
Laurie MacLeod
Diane Mallet
Judith McBride
Sebastien Porco
Denise Schellhase
Kristen Witczak

(see note p.37)

Canada

Copyright: © 2018 The Narrative Inquiry Group.

This is an open access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial License, which permits unrestricted non-commercial use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.

Abstract

In this article, the authors share their experience of teacher-research within a writing collective representing various education sectors, engaged in self-directed professional development. Our purpose is to explain, trace the evolution, and provide an example of an inquiry method, a process blending professional conversation, narrative inquiry and literary *métissage*. Our productions are representative of our individual and collective Selves (Firman & Gila, 2002), our desires and dilemmas, frustrations and fears, and our learning. Our unique voices are offered in individual, *verbatim* reflections and braided representations of our learning. We would suggest that this inquiry cycle – from problem to solution to problem – illustrates the merit of taking the risk of being publically self-critical within the safety of a learning community, while individual values and experiences merge into a confluence of values and knowledge. In addition, we hope to inform others, those in classrooms and community spaces, as well as those working in the academy, and at policy and management levels of schools with an interest in teacher professional development of the importance of understanding and supporting the experience of educators engaging in intentional, voluntary inquiry, and of challenges faced in such undertakings.

Keywords: Teacher-research; Methodology; Literary *métissage*; Values; Constraints

Braiding Values And Voice In Teacher Research Through Literary *Métissage*



We teachers need less practicality not more. We need to have our lives informed by Tolstoy, Jane Addams, Langer, and their ilk – not by folks who promise the keys to classroom control and creative bulletin boards, along with one hundred steps to reading success.

Susan Ohanian *Who's in Charge? A Teacher Speaks Her Mind*¹

We are a collective of educators, meeting to talk, write, analyze, illustrate, and braid lived experience in self-directed learning. Our group began in the Centre for Inquiry into Professional Practice, in one of our schools, where educators embraced practical approaches to problems of practice – identify an issue, look for solutions, try one, draw conclusions, move on. In 2008, we began storying concerns about that tough-to-reach kid, implementing reforms, uninspiring curriculum, time (not enough), school politics. Our work is spontaneous, not mandated. We share a desire to create and honor knowledge. Basing our actions on the democratic principle of consensus, no voice is louder, no influence stronger, no idea worth more than any other.

Not satisfied with top-down workshops, we invest in reflective, experimental, experiential exploration through teacher-research (Arhar Holly & Kasten, 2001); professional conversation (Earl & Timperley, 2009); arts-based (Leavey, 2015) and narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Lyons & Kubler LaBoskey, 2002); life-writing and literary *métissage* (Hasebe-Ludt, Chambers & Leggo 2009; Chambers et al., 2012); and Living Theory research (McDonagh et al., 2012; Whitehead & McNiff, 2006). See Figure 1 for a link to further explanation of our origins.



Figure 1. LEARNING Landscapes, 2015 (see pages 25-27).

<http://www.learninglandscapes.ca/index.php/learnland/article/view/Commentary-Living-Your-Values-in-Your-Practice>

¹ Section heading quotations from influential voices open spaces for learning, subsequently braided with our own. Icons indicating the voices of contributors include:



Practitioner Voice



Influential Other's Voice



Braided Voices



A Vignette

It is a glorious Saturday afternoon of sunshine, crisp air, colored trees, pumpkins for sale at the roadside. Amanda welcomes us into her home in a village not far from the city. Not far, but far enough to feel like an escape. We greet each other with smiles, hugs, genuine care. Ours is a diverse group in terms of age, culture, experience, gender, orientation, and identity, but common care and commitment form the core of our work.

A few of our members are absent today. A massive public sector rally is taking place in the city. Contract negotiations are not going well. Strike mandates have been secured throughout the province, and the rally will demonstrate the teachers' determination and solidarity. Those who choose to meet and chat and write and share today, do so, sharing a desire to "write and braid, and generally be with good people" (N. Hubbard, personal communication, October 2015). At Amanda's we meet, and there too is a demonstration of determination and solidarity.

We seek the power of voice in our drive to become better at what we do, share what we know. This is our goal, and we stand up to challenges to our words from powerful Others, making our concerns and actions public. It is neither impractical, nor irrelevant. Nor is it within easy reach. Yet, we meet, look back in order to see again, across to see another perspective, outward to see ourselves in relationship, and within, where we renegotiate conceptualizations of Self.

Amanda offers tea. Journals are open, pens poised. We talk. We listen to stories about dump-trucks, and hockey helmets, and potty-training; floods and fathers-in-law; taking trips and moving house; about holding on and letting go; about finding and losing time. It's early in the semester and, oddly, not much is said about school. Rather, we exchange thoughts on driving and slow-down moments; on moving back and forth, and moving forward; about having no path, no resolution. We write. We share.

Amanda brews more tea, offers scones, cream, raspberry jam. Three of her small children awaken from their naps, and sleepily join us, their presence tacitly reiterating what's been known and lived again today about relationship. The need to generally be with good people has been met, empathically, emphatically.



Figure 2. Knowing in relationship

Denise remarks that, as she writes, she is "... working the clay, ... hearing, or seeing, a shape coming through" (D. Schellhase, personal communication, October 2015). On the way home, I am working the clay, thinking about recreating understandings, renegotiating perceptions of Self – starkly alone, in relationship, in contexts. The sun is sliding westward,

and in the bright light, I see the shape coming through. It is the knowledge that the spirit of our work resides in the enactment of care (J. McBride, personal communication, October 2015).

Braiding a Framework



Action research is less linear, less tidy, and messier than what we normally think of as research. It doesn't have to have a neat beginning, middle, and end ... The research cycle includes acting and finding the consequences intriguing, observing something that begs attention, and reflecting on teaching ... The process itself is educational. (Arhar, et al, 2001)

Particular assumptions frame our inquiries:

- Experience is a valuable resource
- Curiosity, creativity and need compel us to seek, construct, apply knowledge
- We are supported within an inquiry community
- We expect to bring about change (Murray, 1992).

We have reached consensus about these ideas through conversation (Earl & Timperley, 2009), usually beginning with the immediate, mundane, day-to-day life in school and out. What we bring to the conversation is evidence of care for the enterprise of education. While searching for understanding of events, policies, children, powerful others, personal circumstance, we make ideas, feelings, values, explicit. Everyone hears. No one judges. We have taken the following headings from Arhar et al, 2001.

Encountering a problem

The question *How can we improve what we are doing?* (McNiff, 1995; Whitehead & McNiff, 2006; Whitehead, 2008) patterns the braid of our conversation. We encountered a problem when we realized we were learning more intuitively than systematically, and we lacked evidence of that learning. While sharing stories was comforting and possibly constructive, we needed methods to move us from conversation to inquiry. Acting to find a solution, narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Lyons & Kubler LaBoskey, 2002) offered a solution.

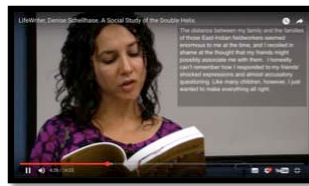
Imagining a solution

With experience and imagination, we brought observation, action, and reflection to our conversation as we began to frame our learning in life-writing narratives (Chambers et al., 2012), auto-biographical, empathetic representations, a “(w)ay of knowing and being” (Chambers et al., 2012, p.xx), where we interrogated and documented experience.

We studied, our Selves,² events, places and people, illuminating what we care about. Lists, poems, doodles and story bytes heightened awareness, provided insights. Thus, we began building an inquiry framework, and as members brought in unique perspectives – dance, visual-arts, spoken-word – moving in an arts-based (Leavy, 2015) direction.

Acting in the direction of a solution

Participating in creative non-fiction workshops at the *Center for Oral History and Digital Storytelling* (COHDS) led by Anita Sinner at Concordia University, Montréal, moved us forward. Life-writing and light-writing (Chambers et al., 2012) introduced us to methods for evidencing concerns, and experiencing change. Denise offers an example of her life-writing below.



Video 1: Denise offers her life-writing at COHDS https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sC0veXU_pzw (Concordia University, 2013)

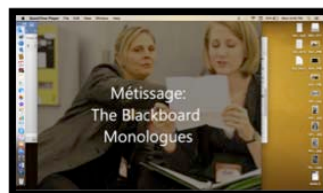
Evaluating the Imagined Solution

We began to evaluate our actions, making public the process and outcomes of one cycle of our research, presenting at the annual conference of the Québec Provincial Association of Teachers (QPAT), and in print in *LEARNING Landscapes*, an open access, peer-reviewed, online education journal.



Figure 3. *LEARNING Landscapes*, 2014

<http://www.learninglandscapes.ca/index.php/learnland/article/view/To-Where-Teachers-Learn-Following-the-Yellow-Brick-Road/689>



Video 2. An excerpt of a *métissage* production:

² We capitalise *Self* (Firman & Gila, 2002) as an act of identity, to emphasize the union of I and Self. We understand this as an unbreakable union, allowing the empathic I to flow from the evolving Self. As self-awareness, freedom and spiritual energies emerge we experience a deeper sense of values, community, and possibility.

The Blackboard Monologues presented at QPAT https://youtu.be/1v4afFH_BmQ (Witczak, 2016)

We consider the issue of validation using ideas from Elliot Eisner, who asks “(H)ow do we know when we can trust a subjective account?” (Eisner, 1998, p.53), and he suggests listening for a ring-of-truth sustained by:

- Coherence
- Consensus
- Instrumental utility

We test our knowledge claims eliciting and incorporating critical feedback from others.



Figure 4. Presenting *the Blackboard Monologues* for public validation

1. Does the narrative make sense? What leads you to accept the interpretation offered?
2. How do you understand the motives and interests of the various characters? How does it relate to what you already know?
3. In what way might the account be useful to you?
4. Have you recognised theory in our practice? If so, in what way?
5. Does our work move you to greater insight into your work and/or practice? If so, how?
6. What have you learned?

Table 1. Feedback Frame for Public Validation, developed 01/19/11, revised 11/11/13

- I found the presentations moving and inspiring. I was very surprised by the depth of each piece and struck by the bravery of each presenter. I feel a bigger connection to teachers/teaching from watching these presentations. I learned that each story told was my story. I saw myself in all of you. The moments that each of you shared were my moments.
- I recognised socio-constructivist theory. Our perceptions translated into our narratives, phenomenology, idea/notion, of lived experience, narrative inquiry, storytelling and interpretation of stories. *Métissage* – melting of ideas. I enjoy the notion of *métissage*, getting insight through stories and narrative. It ties in well to notions of storytelling from critical race theory. And I may use it for my own data collection purpose.
- As mentioned in the discussion, I recognized the constructivist and collaborative approach that gets so much lip service in teacher education. Also, the importance of having time and space for professional self-reflection as a teacher, and allowing students to link classroom activity to their own experience, and to reflect themselves. In short, this work reminded me that I need to incorporate more of the above into my practice!

- I think this is interestingly connected to ideas of identity, especially of individual vs collective communal identity. It was interesting to see this method of synthesizing writing together. It was delightful to see our individual thoughts come together into something cohesive and collective.
- I recognize theory in the braiding of multiple perspectives to construct a common vision. I gain insight into the possibility of constructing meaningful knowledge by weaving together the multiple strands of our varied experiences, realities.
- Sometimes as teachers we spend so much time on teaching our students the importance of writing but we forget about how important it can be in our own lives. *Métissage* is a good idea to use with students in our classrooms. It's been nice to see the community you guys have created.
- It has opened my understanding of how writing can be a very positive tool in the classroom, or even the staff room! I am always in search of new ways to bring creative writing to the classroom. I learned that I can diversify my writing workshops with something as simple as a few photographs!
- I think the performance really helped to set the scene. I cannot imagine such rich writing coming from a session that wasn't foregrounded by a creative session. I am not sure what I have learned. It is so soon after the experience. Clearly these groups ... are worthwhile in helping teachers bond, understand themselves individually and collectively and perhaps discover other ways of being. It is important and necessary work.

Table 2. Sample Validation Data, collected 2011-2016

Modifying Practice

Life-writing and light-writing provided us with opportunities for expression. However, we knew there was more to be done before claiming to having learned. Where was the evidence of our learning located? At a second COHDS workshop we were introduced to literary *métissage* (Hasebe-Ludt, Chambers & Leggo 2009; Chambers, et al, 2012), an autobiographical and pedagogical inquiry approach. Simultaneously, each of us understood Self, Other, and unanticipated possibilities for learning at intersections in our writing. *Métissage* is:

... an arts-based research practice that draws upon both written and oral traditions. Four or five individuals write an autobiographical text on an agreed upon theme/topic; they do not discuss what they will write, but leave it to the individual author to interpret the theme... The writing takes the form of narrative, poetry, memoir, story-telling, and other genres or can be a mix of these. Then the authors meet and purposefully braid/weave the segments together, using points of affinity and difference in a way that retains the integrity of the individual voices/texts and creates a new shared text. (Simpkins, 2012, p. 19).

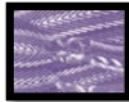
The video clip links below provides an explanation of our understanding of literary *métissage*.



Video 3: Explaining our understanding of literary *métissage* <https://youtu.be/gvpf-kJMJeA>
(Huxtable, 2017)



The Narrative Inquiry Group: A *Ceinture Fléchée*³



... always live in the fecund places of the ampersand!
Carl Leggo, personal communication, 2013



Sabine

I hope I can be a teacher who helps students reach their potential, work through challenges, and grow to appreciate learning. Students feel both valued as individuals and as members of our learning community:

My students are not a number. My students' worth is not the number on a report card. We build relationships based on trust and respect. My classroom is a safe space for differing views, cultures, and backgrounds. We can challenge each other knowing that judging is not tolerated. Time is precious and fleeting. My lessons are inspiring, engaging, interesting, and innovative. My actions speak louder than words. I model respect for my students and my environment.

I work most days towards these ideals. I think, at times, I get bogged down by the daily routine, parent meetings, phone calls, numerous preps, corrections, and secretarial work. I know that time is fleeting. Most days it is not all these things that I have listed that are in the way – but really, it's me. Being a good teacher – a confident teacher – takes time. I'll get there, even though sometimes, I am impatient.



Lynda⁴

I care about transfer. This includes various facets. First and foremost, I value the

³ A woven sash, an article of *Métis* and French-Canadian clothing of the 19th century.

⁴ We are a multicultural and multilingual group, working in diverse educational contexts reflecting the plurality of life in Québec, Canada. Translations of *français-québécois* are appended.

transfer from one generation to the next. To better the system, so to speak, to take wisdom from the past and the present, and to nourish the future. And yet, I understand that no one can predict the future, especially with the speed at which technology is bringing about change. However, change has always happened and virtues such as engagement, patience, resilience, open-mindedness and understanding have always been.

On another note, for learning to happen, there has to be some transfer of prior knowledge in order to make sense and to assimilate a new one. I care about creating a connection with students. With who they are, with what they know so that I can aid or facilitate that transfer. I care so profoundly about it that I feel it's my duty to do so, especially with those who struggle. Hmm, with my class size increasing and the fact that I see them only 45 hours in a 15-week period, I may be on to a reason for my present-day struggle!

Un autre élément qui me tient à cœur est la relation qu'on peut avoir envers l'erreur. Surtout quand on peut avoir le sentiment qu'elle signifie que nous ne sommes pas à la hauteur des attentes. De qui? De quoi? Hmm, Dieu le sait? On a tendance à associer l'erreur à une faiblesse. Je tiens à l'image que les apprenants ont d'eux-mêmes. Je me préoccupe à ce qu'ils/elles comprennent que l'erreur fait partie du parcours et qu'elle fait partie de l'apprentissage. Que c'est elle qui nous rode! Sans des chutes et sans de défis, l'apprentissage n'est pas au rendez-vous. Par les moments difficiles, on se questionne. On se doute. On réfléchit. On revisite nos schèmes. On s'outille. Et, on se réinvente. Certes, l'erreur, est une question de perspective. Est-ce un verre à moitié vide ou à moitié plein?

Je tiens et je crois qu'il y a plusieurs façons de faire pour en venir à un apprentissage. Chacun et chacune ont sa façon de penser et d'apprendre, une unicité, quoi. Peu importe, pour ce faire, il y a une question de maturité. Il faut être mure et (je m'arrête, car mes doigts délaissent le clavier et ne s'empêchent de se froter et j'ai un sourire. J'ai un plaisir fou, d'ailleurs ...) la réponse y est, je la ressens intuitivement, mais elle me paraît éphémère. J'avoue que j'aime ce moment... j'ai confiance et je célèbre qui je suis. C'est OK de ne pas savoir. Je me fais un clin d'œil. Ce que je sais, c'est que pour apprendre, l'interface du connu et de l'inconnu soit assez mince pour que la nouveauté puisse faire sa percée. C'est par le relationnel que ça se passe. C'est à moi, comme enseignante, à comprendre l'âme qui est devant moi, et de célébrer sa beauté. Ce geste honore l'Égo d'autrui et le dissout, et ceci permet un moment qui est tout à fait magique. Je valorise l'inconnu ... je cherche à comprendre. Je suis bien dans l'alternatif et dans la divergence. D'ailleurs, je crois avec toute humilité que je peux aider à dévoiler la beauté qui existe devant mes yeux. Quel cadeau!

I care about being a conduit. A conductor. A transmitter. I take – I give. I learn – I transmit. Here's the idea of transfer yet again. I care about the glue that binds and the various realms a school may have, whether it be school-family, school-community, society-school. I, as an educator, am part of these interfaces. I am part of that bridge.

Je tiens à la langue de Molière. Pour ses jeux de mots. Pour sa diplomatie. Pour sa sonorité. Pour sa complexité. Ah, et comment! Elle exige tellement d'engagement et ce, à plusieurs niveaux. Si par adons, nous lisons un texte et nous nous attardons à priori seulement qu'à l'exactitude grammaticale, nous pouvons perdre le fil du message. Câline ... Comment faire pour convaincre les apprenants de français langue seconde que cette langue vaut la peine d'apprendre, peu importe qu'ils soient anglophones ou immigrants? Et pour

moi, qui est à l'université, à la veille de ma retraite, et qui forme la relève professorale, comment faire pour que mes stagiaires prennent le risque, malgré eux et tout ce qu'ils savent, de croire qu'ils doivent délaissier la grammaire de leur langue afin de dévoiler la beauté et l'essence de leur langue première? C'est par le plaisir qu'on apprend! Câlina ... c'est un défi colossale pour toutes et tous, autant pour eux que pour moi.

Je suis un conduit. A conduit am I. (See Appendix A for translation)



Norma

My values versus reality dilemma

While I was studying at McGill University, I was asked to write a statement on what kind of teacher I wanted to be; to write a statement that would guide my teaching career. I wrote: "I want to be a teacher that students can depend on both inside and outside of the classroom." I claimed to value the connection between student and teacher. I valued my students as people, not just names on my class lists. I valued my role as teacher. When I started teaching, I did indeed let this ideal guide me.

Connecting with my students has served me well over the years. I valued the trust my students gave to me (and continue to give me). Teens who were less than desirable as students, often became quite likeable people outside of the confines of an 'only in the classroom' approach and became good students. I lived by my values; I taught by values.

Fast forward to now, and I find myself in a dilemma. A dilemma of my values against the reality of the teaching world. This year I find myself, not questioning my values *per se* – but rather questioning if can I continue to maintain my values. I still believe in my values. What has changed if I haven't?

The recent session of questioning occurred this year when I was given a group of secondary 4 students, students whom I can't reach the individual within. I know I am not alone in trying to connect to this class. Sadly, other teachers are experiencing the same frustrations as I. I've tried to reach them, these teens, but they have remained 'students only' to me. There is no connection between us, no caring. There are too many behavior issues, too many who lack manners, and too many who don't care to learn. They do not wish to connect to me, despite all of my attempts to reach them. These students have forced me to rethink my values within this new educational reality.

So, while I was rethinking about who I am as a teacher and who I am to my students, I began to realize how much I truly value my colleagues, even beyond previous years. I valued the comfort my colleagues, who have become my friends, had to offer. I value the time they give to me, the conversations we share, and the advice they offer. Yet, this is a double-edged sword; like my students, my colleagues (like me) need more, too. Burnout is real. How can I not be there for a teacher, a friend, in crisis? We are all part of the same value system, we care. The camaraderie we share has become extra important in this time of questioning.

However, another reality has caused me to rethink my values which has been less abrupt than facing a tough classroom of students; this educational reality has slowly crept up on me. Over the years, more and more students have needed more – more support, more caring, more time. If I truly value being a caring teacher for my students, how can I care for so many students who need so very much? And, this is perhaps the greatest dilemma of values versus reality. The reality is, as a valued colleague recently reminded me, our curriculum does not require us to be all things to all students. We have guidance and support staff for our students' emotional needs, yet this conflicts with my values. Do I have enough in me to be there for the girl with an eating disorder, or the girl with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, or the boy who is abused by his mother, or the girl who is on suicide watch? And, those students are only a few of the many who are struggling and need a teacher on whom they can depend. How can I teach my students to value themselves if I can't value them? How can I preserve my values within such a reality?

At the moment, I don't have answers to my own questions, so where does this leave me? I can only continue to value the trust that my students give to me, as I continue to care and connect with them. I will also continue to value the friendships I share with my colleagues, as we continue to teach in this new reality. I will continue to value my Narrative Inquiry Group that allows me to write and to think and to grow in our safe environment – then perhaps, just perhaps, I can find a way to preserve my values and my sanity within my teaching reality.



Martin

Mes Valeurs or My Grocery List of Values

What do I teach to be who I am

To encourage you to be who you are?

The ingredients of my teaching life:

Liberté: To be my Self

To be your Self

To find out who you are,

What you like,

Your style.

Créativité: How to be creative

Différence: Each project is personal

Imagination: Develop it, use it

Innovation: Learn new things

Capacité de communication

Unicité: Show me who you are

Curiosité: Try new things

Think outside of the box.

(See Appendix B for translation)

**Laurie**

What do I care about in education? Change your thoughts; change your mind. Retirement is a journey I have not yet embraced. When I retired, I felt lost and empty, the world of caring too full and too heavy for me to fill it with light. I am ready to begin again. A door opens; letting light in and filling the space with possibilities. A new job, a new place. Really, the same job, a new space. Suddenly I know what I care about in education and what I have always cared about in education. Words flow into my head and my mind awakens! What a wonderful feeling! Thank you all for your patience, without this I might still be in a state of slumber.

I care that all of my students become aware of the power of their thoughts. I care that every student I teach learns that he/she is important and has the capacity within, to learn and to value their place in this world, no matter their race, creed or circumstance. I care that my students learn to love themselves and value the feeling of success so much that they push themselves further, and yearn for more. I hope that they will take the time to travel, to meet people so different from themselves and yet find common ground; that they will want to read for pleasure as well as purpose; that they will dream big and want to be more than they ever thought they could.

I care that children develop their minds, their bodies and their spirits in order to be of service to their communities, using their education to better their situation and that of the world they live in. I care that my students learn patience with themselves and others, learn to be kind and respectful of all living things, and to value humility rather than arrogance. I care that they learn to be honest and that they are valued for their honesty. I care that if I teach about justice I also teach them to find ways to make life just for the people around them. I care that we as educators try to do no harm, and learn to value the individual and their ways of knowing, making sure they are not left behind, but rather that they lead the way.

**Diane**

Silently, waiting patiently for their lights to turn on
Eyes opening, as new ideas take form
Their realization that they understood.

After all these years education continues to excite me.

Determination, curiosity, imagination, patience, and good listening
Are some of the practices I have shared with my students over the years,
Demonstrating to them tactics that can assist them in finding their way out of an abyss,
After years of climbing out of my own abyss. I came out like a flower blooming,
Wanting to share with those in my charge, so they, too, can be successful.

Learning and teaching have been my life's ambition.
Instilling my work ethic into young minds is my objective.
Strength of mind and compassion for those like me have guided me to where I am today,
A strong, compassionate, determined educator.

**Judy**

In my original value claim, written twenty years ago, I articulated values I had lived implicitly, somewhat consistently, since beginning to teach in 1969. There were confrontations and contradictions and times when I was overwhelmed. Nevertheless, I wrote that I claimed to value my students above all else. I believed that. Still in the classroom today, this would remain unchanged. I continue to care about learners and their learning, and do so actively and vicariously through the inquiry endeavors of colleagues.

Within this sphere, I claim to value:

- The possibility of creating new understandings that may inform teaching and learning, as I ask *What does it mean to know-in-relation?*
- Multiple approaches to inquiry including written, visual and performance methods of creating and sharing texts representing and extending learning
- Collaborative inquiry as a reflective, emotive, relational, recursive process in which I/we engage for the purpose of the betterment of my/our Selves, and those in our care.

**Figure 5.** Learning in relation**Sebastien**

As incoming education students at McGill University, we were instructed to write about our teaching philosophy and values, about what we care about in education. Very few of us had any real teaching experience beyond coaching or being camp counsellors. I didn't even have that. I felt like a fraud writing my reflection; how could I truly answer this if I'd only been a student? We were never asked, following our *stages* (practicum), to write another of these.

Heavy institutions with ancient buildings and large ideas can suck you in, have you

believe that their apparent everlastingness is more important than the groups of students inside them – that the apogee of education is to be found only here. And I suppose I did believe this.

My beliefs and practices have changed a lot since my McGill days, but my key concern hasn't since I first entered a high school classroom as an educator and quickly realized my chief value: I value students above everything.

I value student inquiry, curiosity, reflection, and betterment; to understand themselves and the world around them – or at the very least, to attempt to. To question whether true empathy and understanding are even possible, and eagerly pursue them regardless.

I'm writing this after nearly a decade of teaching. But what did I write the first time at McGill? I don't remember.



Denise

Here is my value statement.

First is the linear version, and second I have done a diagram below. In my head, I see it as very non-linear!

I believe that education is about inquiry, curiosity, and trying to understand oneself within the context of one's community and world.

I believe that education builds community. It involves co-operation and connections.

I believe that education is about opening oneself to the world and appreciating and respecting diverse experiences.

I believe that education is about validating our experiences and developing our passions.

I believe that education is about developing a critical mind.

I believe that education can lead to empowerment and agency.

I believe that education involves listening to the stories of others and locating ourselves within those stories as we write our own.

I believe that education involves listening to the stories of others and locating ourselves within those stories as we write our own.

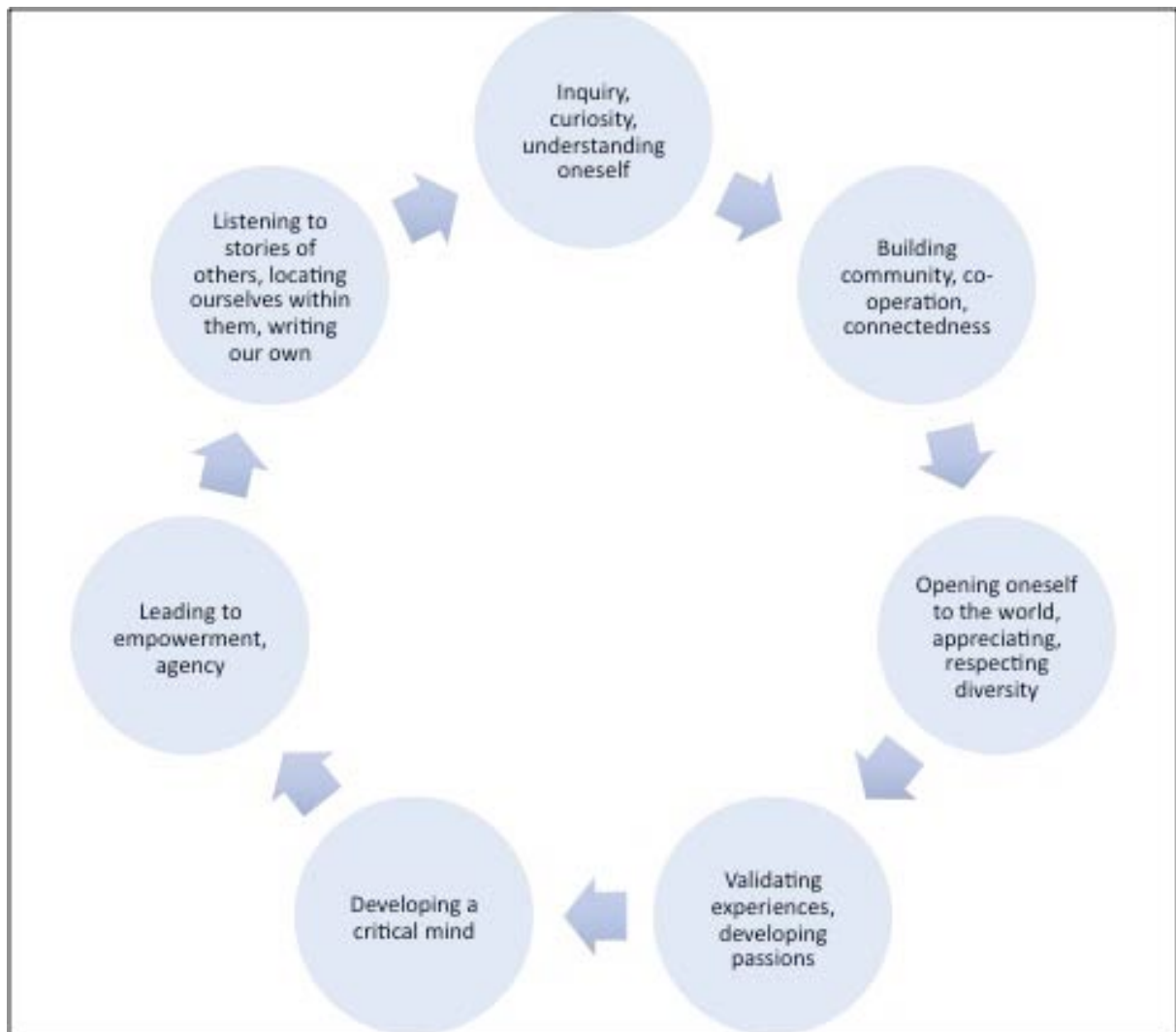


Figure 6: Denise's value statement



Kristen

I care about my students – past, present and future – and the adults they will become. I care about reaching, educating, and helping my students, teaching them in the academic and affective domains to the best of my ability. I care about growing as an educator and person, all with the goal to be a better teacher for them to learn with and from, and a better example to them as a human being.

I care about building strong communities, both within and outside of schools. I care about the dynamics of schools and the diverse populations who share that space every day. I care about the empowerment of children and adults. I care about the potential and possibility of strong teams, and I care about being a positive, pro-active worker bee, or leader within them. I believe that I can make a difference in my school community by

applying my values to my work.

I care about words and their power: to enlighten, to empower, to shape, to share, to question, to create universes. I care about the words that come from the mouths, pens and keystrokes of my students. I care about their questions and I care about their answers.

I care about the values of passion and enthusiasm, and sharing these within school communities. I care about finding and promoting joy in learning, as individuals and as a collective. I care about outside-the-box experiences in education. I care about positive risk-taking and the growth that can come from trying new things. I care about creativity inside and outside of the classroom. I care about challenging and being challenged. I care about the overall health of the education system and fighting for its improvement in whatever capacity I am able.

I care about building a better world together. I care about the myriad of possibilities of how that world could look.



***Métissages* That Bind**

Our value claims were shared and braided, opening new learning spaces, and revealing a contradiction.



Video 4: Braiding value claims

<https://youtu.be/Ccu6AKN54BA> (McBride, 2017)



Braid I

Self

My beliefs and practices have changed a lot since my university days,
But my key concerns haven't.

Perhaps, just perhaps,

I can find a way to preserve my values and my sanity within my teaching reality.

J'ai confiance et je célèbre qui je suis.

Je valorise l'inconnu,

Je cherche à comprendre,

Comprendre l'âme qui est devant moi et de célébrer sa beauté.

I care about being a conduit, a conductor, a transmitter.

Taking wisdom from the past and the present, to nourish the future.
The reality is the curriculum does not require us to be all things to all students,
An educational reality that has slowly crept up on me.
Ingredients of my teaching life: What do I teach to become who I am?
Read and take classes, go to workshops... *la formation continue*.
I care about growing as an educator and a person,
Challenging and being challenged.
After all these years, education continues to excite me.
Words flow into my head and my mind awakens!
I see it as very non-linear, listening to the stories of others,
Locating my Self within those stories as I write my own.

Braid II

Student

I value students above everything.
I work for my students,
To understand themselves and the world around them.
I want to be a teacher students can depend upon, inside and outside of the classroom.
Students have forced me to rethink my values.
I care about their questions and I care about their answers,
Words and power.
My students are not a number.
Opening eyes, strength of mind, compassion,
Representing, sharing, blending, and extending world-views.
I care that my students develop their minds, their bodies and their spirits
In order to be of service to their communities.
My students become aware of the power of their thoughts, value their place in this world,
Learn to love themselves, value the feeling of success, push further, yearn for more,
Value humility rather than arrogance, lead the way,
Question whether understanding and empathy are possible, and eagerly pursue them
regardless.
Education can lead to empowerment and agency, liberty to be oneself
Créativité, différence, imagination, innovation, communication, unicité,
Thinking outside the box, and growing to appreciate learning.
Education will lead them to the adults they will become.

Braid III

Teaching and Learning

I am part of that bridge.
I care about learners and learning,
Letting the light in and filling the space with possibilities,
Doing no harm.
I value student inquiry, curiosity, reflection and betterment,
Developing a critical mind,
Learning with and from,

Promoting joy in learning.
Words come from the mouths, pens and keystrokes
Of my students.
Creativity lives both inside and outside the classroom,
Silently, I am waiting, patiently, for their lights to go on.
After years climbing out of my abyss,
I come out like a flower, blooming,
Wanting to share with those in my charge
So, they, too, can be successful.

Braid IV

Community

Education builds community.
Involves cooperation, connections,
Opening ourselves to the world, appreciating, respecting diverse experiences,
Validating our own.
The camaraderie we share becomes more important in this time of questioning.
We are all part of this same value system – we care.
We care about the dynamics of school, the diverse populations sharing that space every day.
We care that all members learn to be honest, and are valued for their honesty.
Building strong communities both within and outside of schools is
The positive, pro-active worker bee!
We care about building a better world together,
About the myriad of possibilities as to how that world could look.
We value our Narrative Inquiry Group which allows us to write, to think, to grow
In a safe environment – a space for differing views, cultures and backgrounds.
Within our sphere, we value collaborative, reflective, emotive, relational, recursive inquiry
We do so actively, vicariously, challenging each other, knowing judgment is not tolerated.



Figure 7. Building community

Braid V

Unravelling

My Values Versus Reality

Dilemma

This is a double-edged sword

I'd only been a student

Felt like a fraud

How can I teach my students to value

Themselves

If I can't value them?

I care

So profoundly

About transfer

I feel it is

My duty

To facilitate

Being a good teacher

A confident teacher

Takes time

I'll get there

Even though

Sometimes

I am

Impatient

I know time is fleeting

At times

I get bogged down

Burnout

Is real

What has changed if I haven't?

Technology brings change

Confrontations

Contradictions

At times

I am

Overwhelmed

Heavy institutions

Ancient buildings

Large ideas

Suck me in to

Apparent

Everlastingness

Or

Questioning

Whether

I

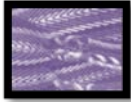
Can maintain

My values.

No one can predict our future.



Tangles And Knots: Voices Muted, Values Denied



Beyond critique and resistance, autobiographical writing, particularly experimental memoir and life-writing, has been a fertile cultural site for the potent mix of the critical and the creative, the political and the personal.

Hasebe-Ludt, et al (2009)

An opportunity to share our progress arose with a call for papers from the Action Research Network of the Americas (ARNA) 2016. Martin, Judy, Sebastien, and Kristen submitted a proposal, prepared a paper and *Pecha Kucha* 20X20⁶ with a braided voice-over.



Video 5: *Pecha Kucha* Images

<https://youtu.be/FNcK5VYvku4> (McBride, 2016)



Braid I

What We Do

We hold each other's hopeful hearts together

We sit and choose a topic based on what happened in the school, our environment and our lives

We identify, discuss, and interpret shared issues and values, all in a safe space

The actualities are sometimes linked to our values, without limiting ourselves to self-censorship

We are at once individuals within a collective

We braid our souls into colorful fabric of possibility

⁶ *Pecha Kucha* 20x20 is a simple presentation format where you show 20 images, each for 20 seconds. The images advance automatically and you talk along to the images <http://www.pechakucha.org/faq>

We share to complete the community we are building.

Braid II

Why We Do It

We do it to combat isolation

To push back against oppressive discourses about what it means to work in education

We do this to fill the space that houses fear

To reconnect to a community of teachers

Our braids secure the intricacies and the power of our hope

Allow us to be more self-critical

To have a feeling that this profession can make sense.

Braid III

What We Share

We share a vocational passion for professional development

We share equally, without hierarchy or judgment

We share multiple avenues for honesty and reflection

We share pieces of our lives, pieces of our souls, pieces of humanity

A thread that connects the human spirit

We share time out together from the crazy, fast, unstoppable train ride we travel through life

We share our differences and the safety we need to realize we are the same

We share the serendipity of the bright, hopeful colors of the braid.

Braid IV

What We Learn

We have learned the value of community, creative conversation and story

We have learned that we can think and write, connect to concepts, feel enlightened

That navigating shifts and challenges in education is felt by all

That merging practice and values is difficult

That our experiences and stories mean something

That we can make a meaningful contribution to research

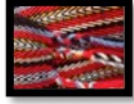
That we are driven by a need to teach and learn

We have learned that through connectedness, a breath of fresh air can be born.



Figure 8. Narrative Inquiry and Literary *Métissage* as Media for Educational Change, paper presented to ARNA, 2016

<https://sites.google.com/site/arnaproceedings/home/2016-proceedings/labrie-mcbride-porco-and-witczak> (Labrie, McBride, Porco, & Witczak, 2016)



Black Yarn

Three teachers missed the conference.

Action research is not supported by the school board

Action research is a hobby.

Justification for the request. Unheeded

Letters of support. Unheeded

Martin, Sebastien, Kristen were kept in the dark.

Decision. Awaited from March until June

Decision. Made one week before ARNA

Decision. Political

Decision. Deny

Denied an opportunity.

Denied release time.

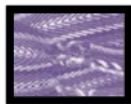
Denied funding.

Denied on the basis of an unrelated clause in a collective agreement.

We understand that caring teachers are harder to harness

We understand that empowered teachers are dangerous

We are angry.



Bringing New Voices Into The Braid

At ARNA participants were invited to record thoughts, reactions. These have been brought into our braid.



Video 6: Strands from ARNA

<https://youtu.be/qhMa5a2ztqU> (Jagger & McBride, 2016)



Braided Voices

But we are NOT the same

To think so fails to honor difference.

The threads within a braid are both separate and connected

Strong ropes are braided from individual, weaker threads.

Powerful metaphor

Powerful messages from the heart

Learning is more about heart than brain.

We stand in solidarity with your struggle

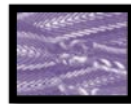
Don't give up

True passion will continue regardless.

We are monsters! (C. Bruce; E. Gray; Janis; M. McAteer; L. Moreto; J. Shosh; Sweeney; R. Watson; L. Wood, personal communication, June 18, 2016).



Loose ends



Strong ropes are braided from individual, weaker threads.

(Mary McAteer, personal communication, June 18, 2016)

After the ARNA 2016 conference, the four would-be presenters reflected, wrote, and later shared.



Video 7: Reflections after ARNA

<https://youtu.be/n73h30cv8pU> (McBride, 2016)



Working at the Knots

On a Friday evening after a long day in a long week, a messy winter rush-hour drive, Martin, Kristen, and Judy met to work on the problem of how to move beyond a perceived hobby. It was, as ever, a hopeful conversation.



Video 8: Building on the ARNA experience (See Appendix C for translation).

<https://youtu.be/7oQoqqJCJeA> (McBride, 2017)



Braid I

Learning

How many problems would disappear
 If teachers learned in the same way our kids learn?
 Teaching is passive, learning is active
 Teachers behave traditionally
 Top-down
 Directed to teach and learn in a contradictory style
 Not inquirers
 Not questioners.

Braid II

Experiencing denial
 A request for professional improvement
 An opportunity to present
 Limited by barriers
 Constrained by policy

Braid III

Imagine
 Imagine a school culture in which inquiry is practiced
 All members of one community
 Like our Narrative Inquiry Group
 Teaching, learning, inquiry
 Woven into the fabric of school life.
 Imagine extending our influence

Modeling, promoting, championing
Self-directed teacher inquiry
For the school
The board
And beyond.
Imagine a broader vision of teacher learning
Career-long, autonomous, collegial, effective, empathetic, research-based,
Where needs are defined by
Teacher interest, knowledge, values and contexts.

Braid IV

Belief

We believe that teachers can be creators
Not merely consumers
Of knowledge.
We believe in a culture of knowledge equity
Knowing from various perspectives
Valued equally.
We believe professional conversation is fertile ground for teacher learning
An opportunity
For all members of the education community
To find and share voices
To share stories fundamental to teacher learning
Where the plots of the stories are constructed from values lived in practice.

Braid V

A Goal

Our goal is to
Continue our inquiries
Extend our influence
Seek opportunities
To begin a conversation
With academics, policy-makers, administrators, managers, union leaders positioned to
influence change.
Individually
We are the red, yellow, blue and green threads.
Collectively
We have the strength to create the braid
The bright, colorful sash
Woven of strong strands.



Knots and Fringe



How do we open up larger spaces in universities and school districts for more rigorous forms of practitioner research? How do we get academics and school district bureaucrats to take this new scholarship more seriously?

Gary Anderson and Kathryn Herr (1999)

The new paradigm wars: Is there room for rigorous practitioner knowledge in schools and universities?

We use the metaphor of the *Métis* sash in our inquiry. Originally finger-woven in colonial Québec, the color variations of the sash take on particular significance, and as the various strands are woven together, the appearance of the sash evolves, in much the same way as the fabric of our lives as teachers.

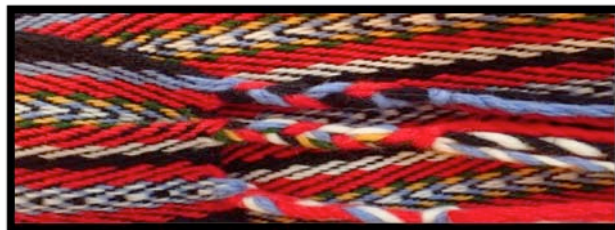


Figure 9. A *Métis* sash

After ARNA our task became to extend the conversation to include others in the braid. In the fall, after ARNA, we approached a commissioner at the school board who offered her assistance in this task. An invitation to meet with school board directors was offered. The meeting is still pending. Months later, we responded to an invitation to submit a workshop proposal to the Québec Association of School Administrators. It has not been acknowledged. Nevertheless, we are encouraged by policies promoted by the Canadian Teachers' Federation, to believe that change is possible:

Professional development requires an on-going commitment and must be supported with time and resources by school districts ... Each teacher has a unique set of learning needs, goals, and styles...Innovative approaches to teachers' professional growth should be encouraged and supported ... (T)he nature of the participation must be voluntary and determined by the teacher... Professional development is the key to building effective learning communities and to enhancing leadership capacity ... Effective Professional Development Programs are reflective, interactive, continuous and embedded in teachers' work, they encourage teachers to explore, to take risks and think actively about their professional practice; build on teachers' established knowledge and skills; engage teachers in a collegial and collaborative dialog; use a diversity of approaches, processes and technologies, including ... undertaking an action research project, reflecting on one's own practice and recording it in a journal ... attending a professional conference or workshop ... reflect(ing) current research in teaching and learning, school improvement and

leadership; enabl(ing) teachers to transform their teaching practice and the school environment (Canadian Teachers' Federation, 2013).

We recognize our values here, and we braid them into our sash.

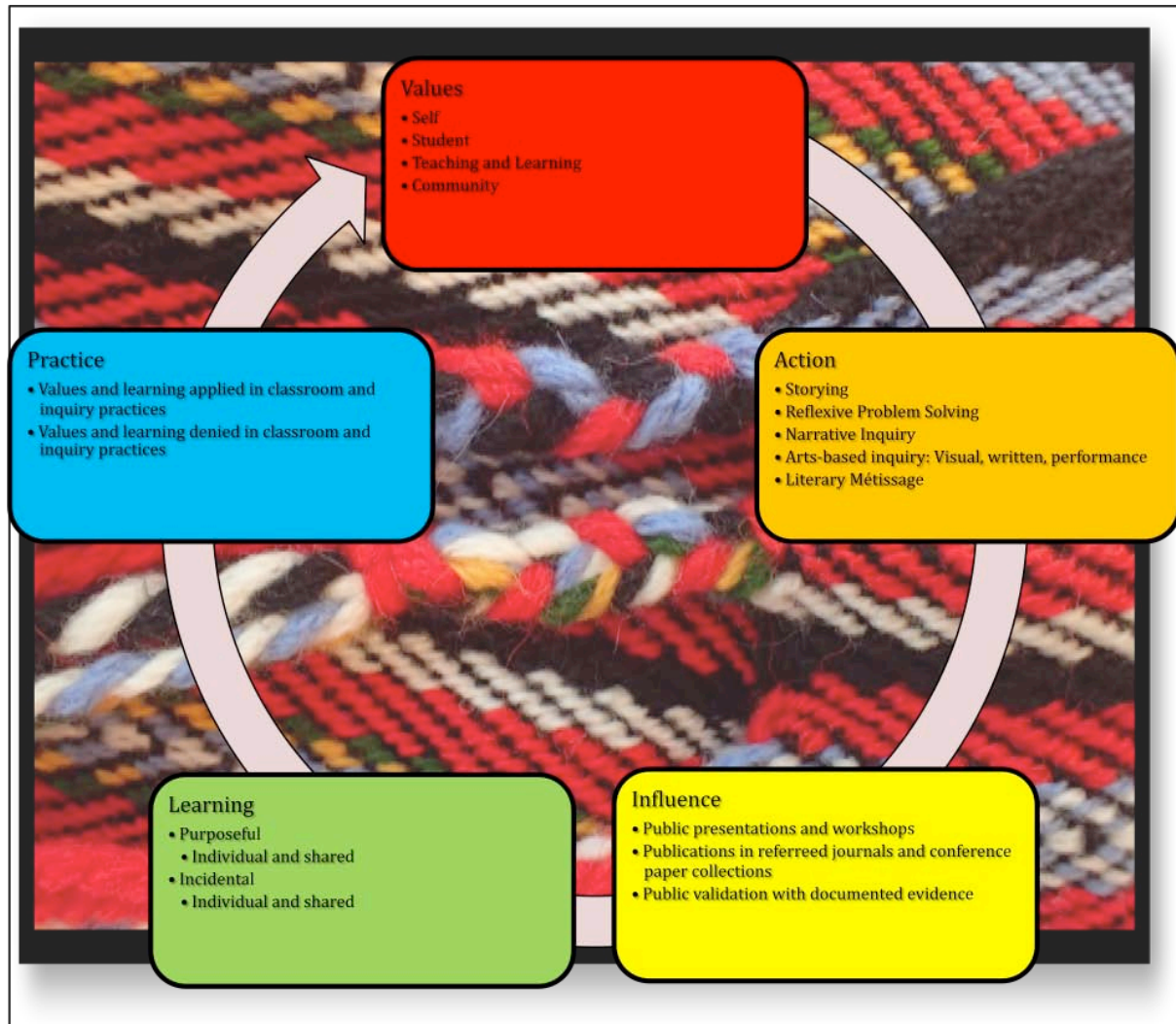


Figure 10. The Narrative Inquiry Group Sash

Our intention in this article has been to explain and exemplify the evolution of our inquiry framework. We have shared aspects of our work, catalysts, and constraints. In conversation, lines and phrases, words and images are isolated and braided together as a representation of our learning. It is within the intersections of the strands of the braid that our values, hope, knowledge, and learning live.

Experience, curiosity, creativity and need within our inquiry community encourage us to seek, construct, and apply knowledge. We find support within the group, and feel compelled to attempt to bring about change (Murray, 1992). We are intrigued by the non-linear, untidy, mess of action research (Arhar, Holly & Kasten, 2001). We are guided by the principle of consensus, by care for the enterprise of education, and by respect for our students and for one another. Our ideas, feelings, and values have become braided in a *métissage* of hope, determination and love.

In seeking to answer the question *How can we improve what we are doing as teacher-researchers?* (McNiff, 1995; Whitehead et al., 2006; Whitehead, 2008), we have explored the possibilities offered by various takes on narrative inquiry that moved us beyond mere storying.

In studying our Selves, events, places and people systematically, evidence of what we care about in education came to light. Benefitting from the expertise and inspiration of others we learned new ways of knowing and being (Chambers et al., 2012; Leavy, 2015) as teachers, researchers, as human beings. Our method became a braid of the influences of others and within that we were able to locate evidence of our learning. Finally, we have sought validation (Eisner, 1991) of our inquiries, making public the process and outcomes, and eliciting and incorporating critical feedback.

How do we open up spaces for rigorous practitioner research? How do we get academic and bureaucratic gatekeepers to take us seriously? (Anderson & Herr, 1999). The short answer – we don't know. In our paper published following the ARNA conference 2016 we wrote:

The task of The Narrative Inquiry Group is to extend our conversation to include powerful others. Local policy... reads as follows: The goal of in-service activities is the improvement of classroom instruction. Consequently, activities that enable teachers to improve their classroom skills are included in the in-service plan. These activities may involve attending workshops, conferences and seminars as well as visiting schools in the Riverside School Board or elsewhere (Riverside Teacher's Union, 2016). We must demonstrate the contribution of our inquiries to the improvement of classroom practice. We will engage with the administrator in conversation about the impact of teacher-driven, collaborative, contextualized, relevant, sustained professional development. As inquiring teachers, we are reflective, analytical and critical in our thinking and in our teaching, committed to the profession and to career-long knowledge creation. We have confidence in our methods, the outcomes of our inquiries, and the impact on practice... and it is our hope that we will see action research in a central place in the culture of our schools. Finally, we will continue to braid this endless, empathetic, exquisite sash. (Labrie, et al., 2016)

We had intended that the next phase of our research would be to begin a conversation with the local administration on the value of this work and possibly, to open research opportunities to others in the board. However, our actions have been ignored. As Norma explains:

Our group is small, but constant. Our members provide vital support to one another, and that support is not limited to just the educator, we are there for the whole person. Often there is no external support, such as support from our administration(s) or school board(s); this makes our group even more necessary. Our grassroots approach is part of the power of our narrative group. We are our own PD (professional development) and this is immeasurable within our stressful lives. We are not ignoring our school boards, rather we continue to progress regardless of them. (N. Hubbard, personal communication, February, 2018)

As Sebastien wrote in his value claim:

Heavy institutions with ancient buildings and large ideas can suck you in, have you believe that their apparent everlastingness is more important than the group of students inside them – that the apogee of education is to be found only here. (S. Porco, personal communication, 2016).

Our alternative perspective encourages us to take our project forward by moving outside of the influence of the bureaucracy. We are looking for new possibilities to explore methodological options, as in this EJOLTS article where we have experimented with the use of digital data. We will continue to seek critical commentary and validation of our braided methods, opportunities to present, publish and circulate our efforts in developing a more rigorous framework, continued conversation, and to live in the fecund places of the ampersand.



Biographical Note

Members of the Narrative Inquiry Group live, work and inquire in various cultural and geographical contexts which we wish to honor as distinct and yet integrated within our *métissages*. We accept the idea of *métissage* as put forward by Hasebe-Ludt, Chambers and Leggo (2009), as "... practical tool or strategy ...a site for writing and surviving in the interval between different cultures and languages ..." (pp. 8-9). We live and work in English language, French and second language secondary schools and universities, in Montréal, Québec, Canada, and in Recife, Brazil. Each of us strives to respect the history, identity and values of the other while negotiating a way forward using *métissage* as a personal, embedded pedagogical professional development strategy. We are anxious to reflect the diversity of the members of the group. We use post-colonial English and *français* in our representations, adhering to accepted conventions of Canadian English (Dolinger & Fee, 2017; Messenger, de Bruyn, Brown, & Montagnes, 2012), and *français du Québec* (Office québécois de la langue française, 2017; Lepicq & Bourhis, 1995). Lines selected may be offered by an author or suggested by a listener, the braids – the *métissages* – representing newly found voices in varying degrees of influence, possibility and direction. The guidelines for our work are founded in our valuing of the individual utterance, of community, and of consensus.

The Narrative Inquiry Group: Steven Bourke, William Chan, Sabine Charette, Mary Eva, Lynda Giguère, Heather Hancheruk, Norma Hubbard, Amanda Jagger, Martin Labrie, Laurie MacLeod, Diane Mallet, Judith McBride, Patricia Paul, Sebastien Porco, Sujata Saha, Denise Schellhase, Kristen Witczak, Heather White-McGregor, Carmen Woolgar.

References

- Anderson, G.L., & Herr, K. (1999). The new paradigm wars: Is there room for practitioner knowledge in schools and universities? *Educational Researcher*, 28(5), 12-21, 40.
- Arhar, J.M., Holly, M.L., & Kasten, W.C. (2001). *Action Research for teachers: Traveling the Yellow Brick Road*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill Prentice Hall.

- Canadian Teachers' Federation (2013). *Policy on Professional Development*. Retrieved May 20, 2018, from <http://www.ctf-fce.ca/Documents/PDPolicy-English.pdf>
- Chambers, C.M., Hasebe-Ludt, E., Leggo, C., & Sinner, A. (2012). *A heart of wisdom: Life writing as empathetic inquiry*. New York, NY: Peter Lang.
- Clandinin, D.J., & Connelly, F.M. (2000). *Narrative inquiry: Experience and story in qualitative research*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Concordia University (2013). Denise offers her life-writing at COHDS [Video file]. Video posted to https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sC0veXU_pzw
- Dollinger, S., & Fee, M. (2017). *DCHP-2: The Dictionary of Canadianisms on Historical Principles*. Vancouver, BC: University of British Columbia, www.dchp.ca/dchp2.
- Earl, L.M., & Timperley, H. (2009). *Professional learning conversations: Challenges in using evidence for improvement*. New York, NY: Springer.
- Eisner, E. (1998). *The enlightened eye: Qualitative inquiry and the enhancement of educational practice*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Firman, J., & Gila, A. (2002). *Psychosynthesis: A psychology of the spirit*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Hasebe-Ludt, E., Chambers, C., & Leggo, C. (2009). *Life writing and literary métissage as an ethos for our time*. New York, NY: Peter Lang.
- Jagger, A., & McBride, J. (2016). Strands from ARNA [Video file]. Video posted to <https://youtu.be/ghMa5a2ztqU>
- Huxtable, M. (2017). Explaining our understanding of literary *métissage* [Video file]. Video posted to <https://youtu.be/gvvpf-kJMJeA>
- Labrie, M., McBride, J., Porco, S., & Witczak, K. (2016). *Narrative inquiry and literary métissage as media for educational change*. Retrieved from <https://sites.google.com/site/arnaproceedings/home/2016-proceedings/labrie-mcbride-porco-and-witczak>
- Leavy, P. (2015). *Method meets art: Arts-based research practice*. New York, NY: Guilford.
- Lepicq, D., & Bourhis, R. (1995). Aménagement linguistique et norme langagière au Québec. *Linx*, 33(2), 109-128. Retrieved May 20, 2018, from [Aménagement linguistique et norme langagière au Québec http://www.persee.fr/doc/linx_0246-8743_1995_num_33_2_1396](http://www.persee.fr/doc/linx_0246-8743_1995_num_33_2_1396) - [linx_0246-8743_1995_num_33_2_T1_0117_0000](http://www.persee.fr/doc/linx_0246-8743_1995_num_33_2_T1_0117_0000)
- Lyons, N., & Kubler LaBoskey, V. (2002). *Narrative inquiry in practice: Advancing knowledge of teaching*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- McBride, J. (2016). *Pecha Kucha* Images [Video file]. Video posted to <https://youtu.be/FNcK5VYvku4>
- McBride, J. (2016a). Reflections after ARNA [Video file]. Video posted to <https://youtu.be/n73h30cv8pU>
- McBride, J. (2017). Braiding value claims [Video file]. Video posted to <https://youtu.be/Ccu6AKN54BA>

- McBride, J. (2017a). Building on the ARNA experience [Video file]. Video posted to <https://youtu.be/7oQoqqJCJeA>
- McDonagh, C., Roche, M., Sullivan, B., & Glenn, M. (2012). *Enhancing classroom practice through Classroom research: A teacher's guide to professional development*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- McNiff, J. (1995). *Teaching as learning: An action research approach*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Messenger, W.E., de Bruyn, J., Brown, J., & Montagnes, R. (2012). *Writing English: The Canadian handbook*. Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press.
- Murray, L. (1992). What is practitioner based enquiry? *British Journal of In-Service Education*, 18(3), 191-196.
- Office québécois de la langue française (2017). Retrieved May 20, 2018, from <https://www.oqlf.gouv.qc.ca/accueil.aspx>
- Ohanian, S. (1998). *Who's in Charge? A Teacher Speaks Her Mind*. Cited in G.L. Anderson & K. Herr. The new paradigm wars: Is there room for rigorous practitioner knowledge in schools and universities? *Educational Researcher*, 26(5), 1-21, 40.
- Riverside Teacher's Union, (2015). *Professional improvement committee: Guidelines for teachers*. Retrieved May 20, 2018, from http://www.rtu-ser.ca/Documents/PIC_Eng/PIC_Guidelines_2014-2015.pdf
- Schellhase, D., (2012). A social study of the double helix. In C.M. Chambers, E.Hasebe-Ludt, C. Leggo, & A. Sinner (Eds.), *A heart of wisdom: Life writing as empathetic inquiry*. New York, NY: Peter Lang.
- Simpkins, S. (2012). *Narrative métissage: Crafting empathy and understanding of self/other*. Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, University of Victoria, BC.
- Whitehead, J. (2008). Using a living theory methodology in improving practice and generating educational knowledge in living theories. *Educational Journal of Living Theories* 1(1), 103-126. Retrieved May 20, 2018, from [https://ejolts.net/files/journal/1/1/Whitehead1\(1\).pdf](https://ejolts.net/files/journal/1/1/Whitehead1(1).pdf)
- Whitehead, J., & McNiff, J. (2006). *Action research living theory*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Witczak, K. (2016). An excerpt of a *métissage* production: *The Blackboard Monologues* presented at QPAT [Video file]. Video posted to https://youtu.be/1v4afFH_BmQ

Appendix A:

Translation of *français-québécois*, Lynda's value claim

I care about transfer. This includes various facets. First and foremost, I value the transfer from one generation to the next. To better the system, so to speak, to take wisdom from the past and the present, and to nourish the future. And yet, I understand that no one can predict the future, especially with the speed at which technology is bringing about change. However, change has always happened and virtues such as engagement, patience, resilience, open-mindedness and understanding have always been.

On another note, for learning to happen, there has to be some transfer of prior knowledge in order to make sense and to assimilate a new one. I care about creating a connection with students. With who they are, with what they know so that I can aid or facilitate that transfer. I care so profoundly about it that I feel it's my duty to do so, especially with those who struggle. Hmm, with my class size increasing and the fact that I see them only 45 hours in a 15-week period, I may be on to a reason for my present-day struggle!

Another element that I hold on to dearly is the relationship one can have with error, the outlook towards error. Especially when one feels that it means one is not up to par, meeting standards. Of whom? Of what? According to whom? To what? Hmm, God knows. We have a tendency of associating error to a weakness. I am concerned with the image that my students have of themselves. I am preoccupied by the idea of having them understand that error is part of their journey and that it is an integral part of learning. It is error that defines us. Without pitfalls and challenges, there is no *rendez-vous* with learning, learning is not at the *rendez-vous*. Through difficult moments, we question. We doubt ourselves. We ponder and reflect. We revisit our schema. We avail ourselves with tools. And, we reinvent ourselves. Truth be told, our relationship with error is a question of perspective. Is it a glass half full or half empty? I believe that there are many ways to think and to learn, a uniqueness of sorts. Regardless, learning requires a ripeness. We need to be ripe and my train of thought is stumped here, and my fingers remove themselves from the keyboard and rub one another and I grin. I relish this moment ... the answer is within me, I feel it intuitively, but it is ephemeral. I embrace this moment and I celebrate who I am. It is okay not to know. I wink at myself. I know that for learning to take place, the interface between the what is known and the unknown must be thin enough so as to allow the newness to pierce through. And it's through interpersonal relationships that it happens. It is up to me as the teacher to try to understand the soul that is in front of me and to take in and celebrate its beauty. This gesture dissolves the ego of the other and it allows a magical moment to happen. I value the unknown ... and I seek to understand. I am comfortable in the alternative and with divergence. In fact, I dare say with humility that I can facilitate unveiling beauty that is before my eyes. What gift!

I care about being a conduit. A conductor. A transmitter. I take – I give. I learn – I transmit. Here's the idea of transfer yet again. I care about the glue that binds and the various realms a school may have, whether it be school-family, school-community, society-school. I, as an educator, am part of these interfaces. I am part of that bridge.

I care for Molière's language. For its play on words. For its diplomacy. For its intonation. For its complexity. Oh, and then some! It requires such an engagement, and on many levels to boot! If by chance, we read a text and chose to focus on its grammatical exactitude, we could fail to understand its message ... Darn, how can one convince French as a second language learners that this language is worthwhile, regardless if they are English speaking or immigrants? And for me, who is teaching at the university level, and who has few years left before retiring, and who is having an impact on the future generation of teachers, how do I get my student-teachers to take risks, despite themselves and of what they know, and of letting go of grammar to allow the beauty and the essence of their

mother tongue to be released, to be unveiled? It is through pleasure that one learns. Darn, the challenge is colossal, as much for them as it is for me.

I am a conduit. A conduit am I.

Appendix B:

Translation of *français-québécois*, Martin's value claim

My values or My Grocery List of Values

What do I teach to be who I am?

To encourage you to be who you are?

The ingredients of my teaching life:

Freedom: To be my Self

To be your Self

To find out who you are,

What you like,

Your style.

Creativity: How to be creative

Difference: Each project is personal

Imagination: Develop it, use it

Innovation: Learn new things

Capacity to communicate

Uniqueness: Show me who you are

Curiosity: Try new things

Think outside of the box.

Appendix C:

Building on the ARNA experience, translated transcription

Martin: Okay, we need to prove to Judy that we are there behind her, we want to be there with her and we want to make sure that the rest of the group gives us the support from under. And then after that, the people there (at ARNA) reacted to the non-presence of you, Sebas and me. And we got ... we received some...

Kristen: Something like... there's a richness resulting from the struggle. Like there's something that came out of this that's bigger than what we would have gotten had we not hit the snarl. Almost like the knot happened, and then we had to undo it. And because we had to undo it, it came together really tight. Not better, but –

Martin: Stronger.

Kristen: Stronger, or ...

Martin: More solid.

Kristen: Something, yeah.

Martin: More. Closer. You know what they say, it's in a struggle that you see how you are going to react and how you are going to grow from this experience. And I tell myself: imagine if you were there, to have really been there, and it would have been like "Oh! We're

in the hotel, we are doing all these workshops, we share our workshop, we get some credit, people stop by at the end and tell us it was great,” and then we would move on to other things. We would have come back, shared with the group and said it was a great experience. It would have been that we’d have represented the group, and that’s it. But because of this we need to have a kind of ... a major experience that changed the perspective of the group and the motivation we have for real. We had passed through a test. We were put to a task.

Kristen: Forged through fire.

Martin: Exactly. And there are always three: water, wind ... Like in Mozart, in “The Enchanted Flute” you need to pass through all three elements to show that you are worthy. And I’m asking myself: What will be the next one? Will it be to go to the board and present evidence? Or try to go to New York in three years? But for sure now we need to really build upon this experience to show what the benefit of this group is and why is it so important that we’re ready to sacrifice a Saturday to meet, and write, and Skype with people. I was thinking about this before. You know, Laurie is in Brazil and she wants to Skype with us. That’s not because this is unimportant to us. It’s because we connect and we get closer so it’s harder now to say: Okay, we’re not going to do this anymore.