Recent Conference Presentations


Publications


Leadership Experiences and Awards

2012, Honorary Witness. Truth and Reconciliation Commission Canada
2012, Honorary Doctorate, University of Victoria
2007, Ambassador Award, Aboriginal Tourism, British Columbia
2006, Gwen Point Bursaries, Chilliwack School District
2005, Recognition for work in First Nation Language & Culture: Seattle Art Museum’s Day of Honouring
2003, The Betty Urquhart Community Service Award, University of the Fraser Valley

ORAL EXAMINATION
Gwendolyn Point
FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION
EdD

Wednesday, April 22, 2015
SFU Surrey, Room SUR 5060 at 10:00 AM

EXAMINING COMMITTEE

Chair: Dr. Robin Brayne
Senior Supervisor: Dr. Dan Laitsch
Member: Dr. Michelle Pidgeon
Member: Dr. Keith Carlson
Internal/External: Dr. Michelle Nilson
External Examiner: Dr. Tina Fraser
School of Education
The University Northern British Columbia
Intergenerational Experiences in Aboriginal Education: My Family

ABSTRACT

Education is highly valued among the Stó:lō people, and has been for as far back as oral traditions record. Historically education functioned primarily within the family with Elders, parents, uncles and aunts teaching the youth. These traditions continue today, but they have been challenged and disrupted by a system of government imposed education that was directed at assimilating Aboriginal people into mainstream Canadian society and dislocating them from their Indigenous culture and traditions. Expressed most glaringly and oppressively through the Church-run federally-funded residential schools which operated in Stó:lō territory from 1860 through to 1986, an assimilative curriculum anchored in racist assumptions was also a central feature of the provincial public schools which many Stó:lō children also attended. Recent studies have documented the abusive and oppressive expressions of the residential school system and the ongoing racist and assimilative features of the provincial schools and their curriculum. What is less well documented and less well understood is the complex strategies that Aboriginal families used to not only defend and sustain their traditional Indigenous education processes within their homes and communities, but also the tactics (both formal and informal, institutional and personal) that they developed and deployed to challenge the overarching assimilative curricular goals of the government’s education system as well as the day-to-day classroom application of those goals.

This research project examines the intergenerational impact of government Aboriginal education policies from the 1930s to the mid 2000s on one family – the author’s. An exploration of the connections between the federal government’s education policies and the personal education stories of the family spanning three generations reveals not only the challenges Aboriginal students faced in general, but the way Indigenous philosophies informed larger strategic and smaller tactical strategies of resistance. Through story work this family not only found strength to resist, but opportunities to try and transform the education system itself. As the intergenerational narratives reveal, the family’s objectives ranged from protecting the traditional and the sacred to developing strategies to improve their chances of succeeding within the government system. Many of actions the family members took were aimed in large part in helping to transform and Indigenize an education system that had been designed to assimilate them – that is, they sought to contribute to a process of what Homi Bhabha might refer to as educational hybridity.

Key recommendations emerging from this research project include ensuring that the history of the colonial federal government’s assimilative and abusive education policies be communicated to, and ultimately understood by, all Canadians. Awareness of this is important for Aboriginal students as well as for non-Native Canadians. Finally, recommended here is the meaningful involvement of Indigenous people in all levels of education decision-making associated with the education system.

Academic Record

1998 - Master of Education, University of Portland, Oregon
1993 - Post Baccalaureate Diploma Program, Simon Fraser University
1987 - Bachelor of Education, University of British Columbia

Professional Experience

2015 - Present  Chancellor, University of the Fraser Valley
2005 - 2014  Faculty Associate, University of the Fraser Valley
2001 - 2005  Education Manager, Stó:lō Nation Education Department
2002 - 2004  Sessional Faculty, University of the Fraser Valley
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1993 - 1999  Program Manager, Stó:lō Nation Education Department