Recent Conference Presentations

- **July 2016**
  - Culturally Responsive Schooling, Educational Leadership Program, Education, Culture & Employment, Government of the NWT

- **August 2015**
  - New to the North Educators’ Conference, Education, Culture & Employment, Government of the NWT

- **June 2015**
  - Aboriginal Educators’ Symposium, Council of Ministers of Education Canada (CMEC), Yellowknife, NT

- **January 2011**
  - Minister’s Forum on Aboriginal Student Achievement, Chief Drygeese Centre, Dettah, NT

- **May 2010**
  - Indigenous Women in Community Leadership, Coady Institute, St. Francis Xavier University

- **February 2009**
  - Changes in Aboriginal Culture Based Education in the NWT, Northwest Territories Teachers’ Conference

- **August 2008**
  - Supporting Aboriginal Students’ Success, Grades 7-12 Teachers, Yellowknife Education District No. 1

Leadership Experiences and Awards

- **May 2013** - Queen’s Diamond Jubilee Medal – Service in Northwest Territories Education, Great Hall of the NWT Legislative Assembly

- **June 2012** - Education Hall of Fame, 2012 Inductee, NWT Education, Culture & Employment, Great Hall of the NWT Legislative Assembly

- **May 2009** - Canadian Association of Principals’ Most Distinguished Principal Award, Winnipeg, MB

- **February 2009** - The Learning Partnership’s Canada’s Outstanding Principals Award, Winnipeg, MB

- **November 2003** - NWT Outstanding Volunteer Award, Department of Municipal and Community Affairs, Yellowknife, NT

- **April 1997** - Aboriginal Community Language Leader Award, Department of Education, Culture and Employment, Yellowknife, NT

Institutional Reports and Publications

- **October 2012** - The Exploration of Aboriginal Student Achievement through Reflexive Analysis of a Dialogue Circle: A View of Aboriginal Education Through the Eyes of Community – Pimatisiwin: A Journal of Aboriginal and Indigenous Community Health, Volume 10, #2 Winter 2012

- **1997** - The Big Muskrat Hunt and Other Stories by Chipewyan Dene – Dene Cultural Institute, Hay River, NT

- **1996** - I’m Not Scared of Ghosts and Other Chipewyan Stories – NWT Literacy Council, Yellowknife, NT
The Shaping Influences of ‘A Capable Person:’ A Narrative Research of Elders’ Stories of Raising Children to Inform Aboriginal Education in the Northwest Territories

ABSTRACT

Storytelling, oral traditions, land-based legends, and ancient cultural and spiritual teachings enliven the narratives of many Northwest Territories (NWT) Aboriginal Elders, revealing northern story lights for those who choose to experience them, learn and make meaning from them. I chose to follow eight NWT Elders’ story lights, and took a three-year journey with them to learn about the phenomenon of ‘a capable person’ from their Indigenous perspective. Through a narrative research approach, I articulated my purpose to identify and examine the influences that guided the growth and development of ‘a capable person.’ By drawing from NWT Elders’ personal life-experience narratives of raising children and relationality, four shaping influences emerged that allowed me to develop a re-interpreted lens from which to view contemporary Indigenous pedagogy and practices in order to inform Aboriginal education in the NWT.

Using the theoretical model of the Medicine Wheel (Bopp, Bopp, Brown & Lane, 1984), I structured the data collection questions as a base towards exploring the concept of ‘a capable person.’ Two methodological paradigms using the seven principles of Indigenous Storywork (Archibald, 2008) and a three-dimensional Narrative Inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) space informed the data analysis and findings. Through reflective analysis and “raised consciousness” (Wilson, 2008, p. 42) arose my conceptual framework, which came as a metaphor (Huberman & Miles, 1994) revealing the processes of raising children as similar to raising an Indigenous tipi. The four structures of the tipi made up the framework that sought to bring meaning to the overall shaping influences that guide the growth and development of ‘a capable person’ as follows:

1. The circle shows the grounding influences,
2. The triangle (or tripod) raises the relational influences,
3. The spirals reveals the recurring influences, and
4. The “canvas” illustrates the outside influences.

Findings from this study were based on the narrative accounts of the NWT Aboriginal Elders, which were presented in two parts. First I presented the primary findings through a process of restorying in collaboration with the Elders, creating their stories into coherent chronologies that spoke to raising children and relationality. Through these eight in-depth restorying versions of the Elders’ traditional narratives and the original raw data emerged the themes and teachings, which formed the secondary presentation of the findings. In this next phase of making meaning, I presented the major themes that inspired the shaping influences, which revealed the essence in the growth and development of ‘a capable person’ related to the concepts of self, identity and relationality, along with the spiral guides of the Elders’ ancient cultural teachings, as well as the outside influences of learning and life, all showing a way of looking at things differently in Indigenous education.

Through the Elders’ stories interwoven with my own experiences as an Aboriginal educator and leader, and through the emergent story themes, this re-interpreted lens is presented highlighting the need to reach and engage Aboriginal children, families and communities in contemporary schooling. As such, this study shows that by paying attention to the grounding, relational, recurring and outside influences that guide the growth and development of ‘a capable person,’ these shaping influences can lead to a new approach to pedagogy and practice needed to create the conditions for transformation in this new century of Indigenizing education in the NWT.

Keywords: Aboriginal education, Indigenous education, personal life-experience narratives, ‘a capable person,’ sense of self, relationality, Indigenous storyworking, Narrative inquiry, spiral learning, spiral guides

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2003 - Master’s of Arts in Educational Leadership - San Diego State University
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Professional Experience
2016 - Present Director of Aboriginal Languages and Learning, Education, Culture & Employment, Government of the NWT
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