FACULTY OF EDUCATION

ORAL EXAMINATION
JANICE BILLY

FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION
EdD

Friday August 7, 2009
SFU Kamloops at 9:00 AM

EXAMINING COMMITTEE

Chair: Dr. Marianne Ignace

Senior Supervisor: Dr. Michael Manley-Casimir
Member: Dr. Geoff Madoc-Jones
Member: Dr. Makere Stewart-Harawira
Internal/External: Dr. Dolores van der Wey
External Examiner: Dr. Celia Haig-Brown
Faculty of Education
Winters College
York University
BACK FROM THE BRINK: DECOLONIZATION THROUGH THE RESTORATION OF SECWEPEMC LANGUAGE, CULTURE, AND IDENTITY

ABSTRACT

This qualitative study reports the development of an education/training model based on Secwepemc language, culture, values, beliefs, and way of life. The model includes a decolonization agenda. A critical theory framework and Indigenous research method is used to examine three basic questions: What was traditional Secwepemc epistemology and pedagogy? What disrupted these processes? And what are the remedies?

To fully understand the context, I present a brief outline of our pre-contact way of life. Historical documents and Elders' voices provide evidence of how this way of life was disrupted and impacted by the arrival of European settlers and ensuing colonization. The Elders describe their lived experiences of colonization, in particular, how their attendance at the Kamloops Indian Residential School contributed to the loss of Secwepemc language, culture, and way of life; this institution contributed to the breakdown of traditional lifestyle, including pedagogy, child rearing, and family structures. The parents in my study describe their personal experiences of colonization and describe how the Secwepemc language, culture, and knowledge were not transmitted to them and their children. The Elders in my study also describe traditional education/training and child-rearing practices.

My analysis of the interview data shows the deep desire and commitment of Elders to maintain our traditional Secwepemc way of life and of the parents desire to learn and practice this way of life. The Elders’ knowledge combined with the parents’ ideas of how they want their children educated provides the framework for a Secwepemc education model. This model is based on family learning to ensure language and knowledge is transmitted to future generations. It is a holistic model based on the land.

The central construct of this dissertation is the relationship between the restoration of language, culture, identity and decolonization. It shows how restoration of traditional ways requires processes of decolonization. I present decolonization theory by Indigenous scholars. The parents provide decolonization strategies. The strategies of restoring Secwepemc language, culture, identity, and land combined with decolonization strategies will lead to the healing of individuals, families, and communities and to our eventual restoration of self-determination.

Academic Record

Bachelor of General Studies, Simon Fraser University
Master of Education, Simon Fraser University

Publications


Accomplishments

Co-founder of the Chief Atahm Secwepemc Immersion Program in Chase, B.C. This program specializes in the revival of the Secwepemc language.