



# Becoming, Being and Believing A Child is 'a Capable Person'

**15<sup>th</sup> Annual Summer Institute on Early Childhood  
Development – OISE's George Brown College**

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# Situating Myself - Personally



- Manitoba Métis
- Chipewyan Dene family
- Husband an Indigenous storyteller
- Three children (one's a son-in-law)
- Twin grandsons born in March
- 40 sled dogs
- Canadian Championship Dog Derby timekeeper



- Ejerk'adurelddër
- Living 'the good life'



# Shaping Influences of 'A Capable Person'

- Simon Fraser University's EdD Transformational Change Program
- Cohort based – 2011 to 2013
- Oral Comps – April 2013
- Dissertation research and writing – 2014 to 2016
- Dissertation defence – July 29, 2016



# Travelling in the NWT

Travelled to 7 NWT Communities: Fort Smith, Fort Resolution Hay River, Jean Marie River, Behchoko, Ndilo, and Fort McPherson

Approximately 25,000 kilometres

On roads, ferries, bridges, and airways

Stories from 12 NWT Elders

On three different data collection visits: 2013, 2014 then 2015

Created 8 restoried narratives

Inspiring 4 shaping influences of 'a capable person'





Shaping Influences of  
'A Capable Person'



# Grounding Influences

## *Holism*

- Circle of self: growth and development of the body, mind, heart and spirit
- Circle methodology outlining the approaches, protocols – Medicine Wheel philosophy
- Identity, voice, space
- Interconnectedness of physical, cognitive, emotional and spiritual aspects of learning



# Relational Influences

## *All Our Relations*

- Tripod of relationships
- Relationality – time, people and place
- Time: history; past, present and future; seasons
- People: family, community, school, Elders, culture and heritage
- Place: the Land, the Bush, the Environment – an extension of spiritual beliefs



# Recurring Influences

## *Spiral Learning*

- Ancient, cultural and spiritual teachings
- Many spheres of learning and living
- Create the conditions for exposure to spiral learning
- I began to call them spiral guides ...
- Over time and with much analysis, I identified ten major spiral guides from the Elders' stories





# Recurring Influences – SPIRAL GUIDES

1. Belonging, nurturing, trust
2. Sharing, helping, kindness
3. Laughter, fun, play
4. Responsibility and hard work
5. Respect and honesty
6. Language and culture
6. Passing on knowledge
7. Storytelling
8. Foods and medicines
9. Prayer and ceremony



# Outside Influences

## *Experiential Learning*

- The 'canvas' surrounding the learners
- From the centre of learning looking outward ...
- A wide variety of outside influences that differ according to learning styles, circumstances, context
- Negative and positive



# Negative and Positive influences

- Negative influences: racism, residential schooling, intergenerational trauma, drugs and alcohol, communication gap, passive parenting, lack of traditional knowledge, loss of values and beliefs, overuse of electronics
- Positive influences: including parents in education, parental responsibilities, change starts at home, significance of sobriety, spirituality of the heart, local stories and resources, culture based education, technology as a tool for learning





“Among the Dene, it is said that the child is born with a drum in its hand ... The child is born with integrity. The child has worth. It is the birthright of the Dene child to be acknowledged and respected for this. The child who is not respected cannot become what it is meant to be” (Dene Kede Curriculum, Government of the NWT, 1993).



# Indigenizing ECD Policy, Curriculum, Legislation

- Indigenizing approaches embedded into early childhood centres, schools, community, workplace
- Honouring place, people and history
- Welcoming early learning environments for children, family, community, Elders – intergenerational learning
- Building home-childcare / school relationships
- Indigenous educational theories translated into policy development
- Children growing and developing into the capable people that they are meant to be



# Indigenizing Practices

- Prayer and protocols
- Ceremonies and feasts
- Elders and community
- Reciprocity and gifting
- Key cultural activities (Dene Kede, 1993)
- Cultural catalyst activities (Kovach, 2006)



# Indigenizing Early Childhood Centres and Schools



- Warm, welcoming, kind
- Each and every student knows and feels that he belongs, she matters, he is important!!
- Cultural displays, photos, artifacts, traditional arts
- Whole school approach to Indigenous language learning
- “KDS is not just a school it is my family”



# Indigenous Educators

- Students need to see themselves reflected in the early childhood centre and school staff (workplace)
- Mentor / master apprenticeship
- Community as teachers
- Elders in schools





# Indigenist Educators



- Indigenist teachers reflect “an Indigenous view of reality, knowledge and the gaining of wisdom to share the future of our communities” ( Wilson, 2013)
- Non-Indigenous teachers as allies (i.e.] men as feminists)



# Indigenizing the Curriculum

- Mandated NWT curricula – Dene, Métis and Inuvialuit perspectives
- *Dene Kede* (1993) and *Inuuqatigiit* (1996)
- *NWT Junior Kindergarten / Kindergarten Curriculum – A Holistic Approach to Children’s Early Learning* (2017)
- Our Languages Curriculum
- Our People, Our Ways, Our Land Handbook



# Indigenizing the Pedagogy



- Embrace the culture, language, community
- Learning styles: observation, visual, hands-on, kinesthetic
- Pace of learning, “permission” to take the time to learn
- Differentiated instruction – abilities, interests, talents
- Teaching children to their potential
- Classroom learning along with on-the-Land learning / key cultural activities





# Marsi chogh, Mahsi, Quyanainni, Quana Thá húna

