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Relational Narrative Inquiry Alongside a Young Métis Child and Her Family: Everyday Assessment Making, *Pimatisiwin*, *Pimosayta*, and Teacher Education and Development

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Understandings of diverse children, families, and communities/peoples as holding knowledge of and as practicing assessment is little recognized in research for, or in programs of, teacher education and development. Our paper shows the intergenerational relational living that Suzy, a young Métis child, experienced alongside her family as they imagined forward and remembered backward. This process shaped, and was shaped by, the family and Suzy's continuous assessment of her ongoing making of a healthy life. We see important connections between Suzy's and her family's everyday assessment making practices and our experiences alongside Anishinaabe kwe scholar Mary Isabelle Young (Singing Turtle Woman), who lived with us *Pimatisiwin* (walking in a good way) and *Pimosayta* (learning to walk together). Dominant narratives of accountability in universities and schools most commonly serve the institution or government. Much potential opens in teacher education and development when we shift from these orientations to orientations that lift the particularities of each person and our collective responsibilities to all our relations. In this way we move closer to fulfilling our responsibilities to the people and worlds around us, to all of creation, the animals, plants, Earth, and cosmos, and to the next generations.

Keywords: Métis child and her family, everyday assessment making, *Pimatisiwin* and *Pimosayta*, ethical relationality, teacher education and development

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INTRODUCTION

Figure 1 Suzy, her mom Linda, and Janice, one of the co-authors, made the shadow box image below as they came alongside one another in a narrative inquiry into Suzy's experience as she first entered an urban school context. Suzy's dad, Tom, and her siblings, Billy, and Jane,[1] also participated in the three-year inquiry. Over time,[2] Janice grew to understand that from Suzy's perspective her *I Could Stay at Parks*

[1]Suzy, Linda, Tom, Billy, and Jane are pseudonyms chosen by Linda. We wish to express deep gratitude to Suzy, Tom, and Linda without whom Janice's inquiry and this paper, of which they have each approved, would not have been possible. We also want to express gratitude to two anonymous reviewers. Thank you for making time to offer us profoundly insightful and thoughtful response, which has strengthened our manuscript.

[2]Suzy was 10 months away from entering Kindergarten when the inquiry began; she was almost finished Grade Three when the inquiry closed. Suzy was almost finished Grade Four when we negotiated this paper with her, Tom, and Linda.

FIGURE 1 | I could stay at parks forever.

Forever shadow box image could be a way to begin to show the thread of knowing herself in relation with family, places, and gatherings that had resonated across her stories. This thread in Suzy's life making, which Suzy was consciously braiding into who she is and is becoming, had been strongly visible alongside Tom and Linda's stories of how Suzy's (and her siblings') making of a healthy life, lived at the heart of their family practices. This intergenerational relational living alongside as Suzy and her family imagined forward and remembered backward shaped and was shaped by their collective continuous assessment of her ongoing making of a healthy life, long before, during, and following her transition into Kindergarten.

During inquiry alongside Suzy and her family, Janice shared stories of their everyday assessment making with Trudy and Shaun as we inquired into our experiences alongside pre- and in-service teachers in a new course, *Assessment as Pimosayta*. This course was inspired by our long-time friendship and collaboration with Anishinaabe kwe scholar and teacher educator, Dr. Mary Isabelle Young (Singing Turtle Woman). Key was Mary's living with us *Pimatisiwin* (walking in a good way) and *Pimosayta* (learning to walk together). Following her sudden passing in 2015, through the ways she lived her life and through her teaching and scholarship, Mary has continued to call us, as people of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal ancestry[3] in what is now known as Canada, to try to live *Pimatisiwin* and *Pimosayta* alongside pre- and in-service teachers.

Our study in this paper brings together Suzy's and her family's everyday assessment practices alongside Mary's calling us to live *Pimatisiwin* and *Pimosayta*. In part, we ask ourselves questions of our living in ethically relational ways as we navigate institutions still strongly rooted in colonial narratives. By doing so, we hold ourselves accountable for our complicity, as former teachers and now teacher educators, in assessment practices that can shape life-long harm in the lives of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children, youth, families, communities, and pre- and in-service teachers.

PRACTICAL AND SOCIAL/THEORETICAL GROUNDINGS

Given the layered nature of our inquiry, in each upcoming sub-section, we first describe the practical and social/theoretical justifications that shaped Janice's inquiry alongside Suzy, Linda, Tom, and their family. We then show, using italic font, the practical and social/theoretical justifications that shaped the *Assessment as Pimosayta* course.

Narrative Understandings of Curriculum Making[4]

Connelly and Clandinin's, 1988 view of curriculum as a "person's life course of action" (p. 1) has shown: 1) the interwoven nature of children's and youth's knowledge, contexts, and identities and the curricula they and teachers co-make (Huber et al., 2003; Murphy, 2004; Huber and Clandinin, 2005; Huber et al., 2005; Murray Orr, 2005; Pearce, 2005; Clandinin et al., 2006); 2) discontinuities experienced by children, youth, and families when their cultural and family stories differ from dominant school stories (Huber, 2008; Mitton, 2008; Zhao, 2008); 3) that in their interactions with one another, other people,

[3]Trudy is Cree/Métis from northern Alberta Treaty 8 working in Treaty 6. Shaun is non-Indigenous from northern Alberta Treaty 6 working in Treaty 6 in Saskatchewan. Janice is non-Indigenous from northern Alberta Treaty 8 working in Treaty 6.

[4]Many scholars have questioned how the term "curriculum" is often only understood as government-mandated subject matter outcomes, which has created important understandings of the hidden, null, planned, enacted, lived, and experienced curriculum (Eisner and Vallance, 1974; Giroux and Purpel, 1983; Zumwalt, 1988; Aoki, 1993; Greene, 1993; Pinar, 1995; Miller, 2005).

materials, and beings in home, family, and community places children and families are experiencing tensions as they compose their lives in, and between, these curriculum-making worlds and school curriculum-making worlds (Huber et al., 2011; Swanson, 2013; Swanson, 2014; Saleh, 2019; Swanson, 2019); 4) that children and families have ways of navigating the tensions they experience in these different curriculum-making worlds (Houle, 2012); and, 5) that for Indigenous youth, there are connections between their earliest years of schooling and their subsequent early school leaving (Lessard, 2013; Swanson, 2013; Cardinal, 2014; Lessard et al., 2014; Swanson, 2014).

As we came alongside pre- and in-service teachers in the Assessment as Pimosayta course, we invited them to think with the above narrative understandings of curriculum making. To these, we added Battiste and Youngblood Henderson's, 2000 knowledge of how stories offer "processes of knowing" (p. 77) that move across generations and realms. Added too was Ermine's (1995) exploration of how "experience is knowledge" (p. 104). These added understandings helped us to consider how narrative ways of knowing entail a process (a coming to know) that centers how experience shapes us (our knowing, being, and doing).

Early Childhood Education

Early childhood education has been described in many ways. Historically, early childhood education began as an intervention in the lives of children and families seen as deficit when compared to children and families whose lives were privileged by dominant social, cultural, racial, economic, historical, linguistic, institutional, and political narratives (Derman-Sparks and ABC Task Force, 1989; Polakow, 1994; Fine et al., 2004; Goodwin et al., 2008). In Canada, the historical context of what children, youth, families, and communities of Aboriginal[5] ancestry experienced as "education" in residential schools (Battiste, 2013; Young, 2005a; Young, 2005b) adds important dimensions in understanding early childhood education policies, practices, and programs. While Kitson and Bowes, 2010 expressed that the most effective programs for Indigenous children will "reflect the reality of children's lives and provide continuity of experience between home and the early childhood centre" (p. 84), it is well known that "early childhood services are generally mono-cultural and … practice little outreach to parents and families from diverse backgrounds" (UNESCO, 2010, p. vii).

Aspects of this interventionalist narrative in schooling and other institutional and social contexts, which privileges some people and their ways of knowing, being, doing, and relating, became strongly visible in the Assessment as Pimosayta *course. Through term-long autobiographical narrative inquiry, the pre- and in-service teachers became drawn into reflective thinking as they inwardly travelled from their present field/practicum or current teaching situations to their early lives as children, and then back again to their present professional situations. This recursiveness of autobiographical narrative inquiry, opened our (pre- and in-service teachers and, Janice, Trudy, and Shaun's) collective imaginations about what could be, particularly alongside Lesley Rameka's knowledge of "children's learning … as a dynamic process that require [s] the involvement of the learner, the teacher, and the community" (Rameka, 2007, p. 126).*

Creating a new narrative understanding of assessment meant considering the practical and social/theoretical justifications that shaped the need for assessment in schools alongside lives in the making that are centred in social contexts shaped by intergenerational experiences with assessment. As we show in the upcoming section, in Canada, there is a long history of concern about how Western forms of assessment are harming the experiences and lives of children of Aboriginal ancestry.

Life/Social Contexts of Aboriginal Children and Families in Canada

Canadian census data has long documented that most people of Aboriginal ancestry in Canada are under the age of 25 and reside in urban contexts (Canadian Census, 2006; Canadian Census, 2011; Statistics Canada, 2011; Employment and Social Development Canada, 2013a; Employment and Social Development Canada, 2013b; Employment and Social Development Canada, 2013c; Employment and Social Development Canada, 2013d). In the western Canadian city where Janice came alongside Suzy and her family, children of Aboriginal ancestry were identified as representing 15% of the self-identified total population in public schools. Given these statistics, the need for collaborative inquiry with Aboriginal children and families becomes crucial alongside Friedel's (2010) knowledge about how the schooling experiences of children and families of Aboriginal ancestry are pervasively shaped by marginalization, exclusion, surveillance, and oppression. This knowledge raises questions about how assessment that arises out of colonial understandings[6] impacts Aboriginal children (and potentially *all* children). There are significant social implications for assessment that does not attend to life making and experience outside of schooling contexts. Too, there are significant "intergenerational narrative reverberations" (Young, 2005b) shaped by the silence of these colonial narratives in teacher education and development.

The Assessment as Pimosayta course began with and continuously revisited, Mary's emphasis on:

> *Pimatisiwin, that is what it [life] is all about … Try to learn to walk in a good way … If we achieve that one small step towards all of us walking in a good way, both Anishinabe and non-Anishinabe, then we have accomplished something we didn't see at the beginning of our journey, nor could we have even imagined … Kwa yuk ka kwe pimosayta. Let's*

[5]We intentionally use the term "Aboriginal" here to respect the peoples of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit ancestry in what is now known within dominant narratives as Canada. When we use the term "Indigenous" we are attempting to show respect for the many peoples around the world who are of Indigenous ancestry.

[6]Bouvier and Karlenzig (2006) show how a dominant narrative of "accountability" as measured by "students' academic achievement outcomes" (p. 16) as well as how assessing a narrow band of behaviors, persists in public schools in Canada. They foreground how the "legacy of the colonization of Aboriginal peoples … [includes] provincial curricula [which] have continued to marginalize or be indifferent to First Nations peoples' as well as the educational aspirations of Inuit and Métis societies" (p. 16).

> *walk [together] in a good way. (underlining shows italic emphasis in original, Young, 2005b, p. 179)*

Circulating alongside Mary's teachings were the teachings of Pimatisiwin as a life-long journey from Anishinaabe Elder Stanley Peltier (2019); the teachings of Métis Cree Elder Gloria Laird of the importance of adults' listening to children and of letting children know they are listening (2019); and, Knowledge and Language Keepers: 1) Dr. Patsy Steinhauer's teachings of the significant knowledge, intelligence, and rigour "involved in our [Indigenous] languages," such as "kipkipiw", which opens potential for philosophically grounding "Indigenous evaluation" through understandings of "sitting with the sacred, sitting in a sacred circle" (Steinhauer, 2019); 2) Dr. Sylvia Moore's, 2017 teachings of assessment as protocols; and, 3) Dr. Dwayne Donald and Elder Bob Cardinal's teachings that:

> *Each individual's journey kistikwânihk êsko kitêhk (Cree: from head to heart) maintains its integrity and unique voice as it is intentionally woven into the Cree principles of meskanaw (pathway), miyo waskawewin (to walk in a good way) and the Blackfoot concept of aokakio'siit (being wisely aware)" (underlining shows italic emphasis in original, Latremouille et al., 2016, p. 8).*

Emphasis on how assessment could become educative in the lives of Indigenous children, youth, families, and communities gained visibility through Sharla Peltier's (2017) call for educators to "support the child's autonomy as a learner by appreciating cultural differences and by striving to acquire cultural competence" (p. 8); Claypool and Preston's (2011) call for "student learning and assessment techniques … to parallel Aboriginal worldviews and ways of knowing" (p. 85); and, Bouvier and Karlenzig's, 2006 exploration of how "Indigenous knowledge and ways of teaching and learning offer a wealth of … possibilities and benefits for all individuals—Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal—and communities" (p. 15)[7].

As these ideas were investigated in the course, we had strong conversations that took root in our imaginations and then became lived out in our practices. In these conversations and in the writings composed in the course, these ideas spoke to how we wanted to come alongside Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children and families, and pre- and in-service teachers.

LIVING OUR COMMITMENTS AS RELATIONAL NARRATIVE INQUIRERS

Understandings of experience as stories lived, told, relived, and retold, and of the relational epistemological, ontological, and ethical commitments of coming alongside participants in narrative inquiry (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000; Clandinin, 2013; Clandinin et al., 2016), shaped Janice's inquiry with Suzy and her family as well as the course work with the pre- and in-service teachers. Our centering of each person's experiences in the world as we inquired into the "social, cultural … institutional [historical, colonial, racial, economic, gendered and political] narratives within which individuals' experiences were constituted, shaped, expressed and enacted" (Clandinin and Rosiek, 2007, p. 42), grounded our collective thinking narratively across time and attentive to the interaction of the personal and social and with place(s) (Connelly and Clandinin, 2006). This thinking narratively, which occurred while Janice was alongside Suzy, Tom, and Linda and as we three were alongside one another and pre- and in-service teachers, opened potential to experience the complexity, ongoingness, and multi-dimensionality of experience.

Our desires to live *Pimatisiwin* and *Pimosayta* anchored and shaped responsibilities alongside each person. For example, as earlier described by Janice, Cree Métis Elder Gloria Laird's knowledge and presence was central in deepening her living in ethically relational ways with Suzy as a (young) child co-researcher. As Elder Gloria responded to Janice's uncertainties about creating interim and final research texts *with* Suzy, she turned Janice's attention toward how "children and youth want to know that we, as adults, are listening to them; it is important for us to let them know we are listening" (Huber and Laird, 2019, p. 36). By centering Janice's need to "let Suzy know that Janice was listening to her" Elder Gloria awakened Janice to how:

> With young child co-researchers … there is at least another layer in my relational ethical responsibilities. Awakening to this additional layer alongside Suzy has entailed my attending to *her* everyday practices, *her* everyday ways of knowing, being, doing, and relating (and the materials and processes) through which she chose to share and inquire. (emphasis in original, p. 47)

In the *Assessment as Pimosayta* course at our respective universities, we wanted to centre awareness of the everyday practices that shape and that children/youth enact in their day to day lives. Given the deeply autobiographical and

[7]As we have noted in Cardinal et al., in review, "A thread significant in much of this literature is the damage that Western forms of assessment can shape in the lives of children, youth, adult learners, families, and communities of Indigenous ancestry because assessment is focused exclusively on determining if learners can report or recall content related only to narrowly defined learning outcomes and objectives rather than allowing each child, youth, or adult to *reveal* what they learned. Peltier (2017), focused on the experiences of young children of Indigenous ancestry as they first enter Western-centric school systems, made visible how "mainstream approaches to educational assessment often focus on the learning deficits of Aboriginal people and ignore positive outcomes" (p. 8). Calling educators to shift away from "seeing the Aboriginal child as 'at risk' and in need of educational and specialized child development approaches", she drew attention to the need to "support the child's autonomy as a learner by appreciating cultural differences and by striving to acquire cultural competence" (p. 8). Claypool and Preston (2011), similarly beginning with emphasis on how "the learning and assessment of Aboriginal students remains subjugated by a Western perspective" (p. 84), showed that while there has been some movement in Canada toward "insuring Aboriginal content (including Treaty education), resources and ways of knowing are infused into curriculum" a key overlooked aspect is that in addition to "refining curricula to incorporate Aboriginal voice and identity, student learning and assessment techniques need to parallel Aboriginal worldviews and ways of knowing" (p. 85).

relational aspects of our inquiry with the pre- and in-service teachers in the course we, individually and collectively, experienced Trudy's (Cardinal, 2011) description of a "space for inquiry into our stories" (p. 80) where "more than merely living out research is at work . . . "this more" is the grounding of ourselves in living in relationally ethical ways to all our relations" (Cardinal et al., 2019, p. 126). Trudy's bringing of her and Shawn Wilson's (2008) understandings of "all our relations" to narrative inquiry,[8] not unlike Mary's encouraging us to live *Pimatisiwin* and *Pimosayta*, has continued to widen the dimensionality of experience we now attend to, as well as how we understand the relational ontological and ethical commitments of narrative inquiry. These understandings are central in our living narrative inquiry as pedagogy (Huber et al., 2013; Cardinal and Fenichel, 2017), which we turn toward in the conclusion of this article.

SUZY'S AND HER FAMILY'S EVERYDAY ASSESSMENT MAKING

Imagine a Young Girl. . .

Who Knows Herself In Relation With Family, Places, And Gatherings

In this section, we show Janice's learning through inquiry with Suzy and her family that assessment is interwoven into Suzy's life. It is not an added aspect, but rather, exists as part of the fabric of her life. In the upcoming poetic fragments, Suzy's lived and told stories are on the right-side, Linda's are centered, and Janice's are at the left[9] (Please see insert below I COULD STAY AT PARKS FOREVER).

I COULD STAY AT PARKS FOREVER

We are looking at photographs

That's me going down the slide
When I was little
I could stay at parks forever

~~~

I WAS HAPPY

We are looking at photos
Of pictures showing
Suzy's family
On one of many trips to the west coast of Canada

In an almost singing voice
Suzy says,

There's shells in my bucket
Shells in my bucket

And later:

I was happy
I was happy when I was going there

The west coast of Canada is a special place for Suzy and her family. Before she was born, Tom studied at a university in British Columbia and during her early years, Suzy's Nana and Papa[10] had a cabin on one of the islands in the Salish Sea. Stories of Suzy's experience at this place wove across her, Linda, and Janice's play and visiting. These included Linda's stories of her mom's wisdom about human beings and place:

"My mom says when you're that busy, get back to the woods, get back to nature, 'cause that resets you. It's the only way to reset you". (Please see insert below, GOING TO BED IN THE TENT).

[8]These teachings about *all our relations* and honoring *the more-than-human beings and worlds* we, particularly Trudy (2011) has come to know through her work with Elders, knowledge holders, and scholars, such as Shawn Wilson's (2001) "talking about relational accountability, meaning that the researcher is fulfilling his or her relationship with the world around him or her. It requires researchers to be accountable to "all my relations" (p. 177). Shawn further states that: "Knowledge is shared with all creation. It is not just interpersonal relationships, or just with the research subjects I may be working with, but it is a relationship with all of creation. It is with the cosmos; it is with the animals, with the plants, with the earth that we share this knowledge. It goes beyond the idea of individual knowledge to the concept of relational knowledge . . . [hence] you are answerable to all your relations when you are doing research" (p. 177).

[9]The titles of the poetic fragments are Suzy's words. When Janice created the poetic fragments, she played with differing fonts and sizes to draw Suzy back to her stories of her experiences. To show Suzy the stories she had lived, told, retold, and relived with Janice, Janice highlighted Suzy's spoken stories in italic font.

[10]Nana and Papa are Suzy's maternal grandparents and grandma is her paternal grandparent.
~~~

Gradually, Janice learned that Suzy and her family and her Papa, Nana, aunts, uncles, and cousins also spend time at a cabin at a lake in Saskatchewan. This place has always been in intergenerational history when she reflected on her mom's participation: *"We all . . . [participated] as young girls and Tom's grandma was the camp nurse. I knew her before I met Tom. So, Tom's mom is now the director of that camp."* Suzy and Billy *"go for the weekend with . . . grandma and auntie and they love it. . . . There's archery and a craft cabin and they cook. . . .They never want to leave grandma. Suzy's always asking to go to grandma's; they love it out there."* Part of why Tom and Linda felt Suzy loved this place and time with her grandma was how these experiences connected her with her imagination and wellbeing. As Linda noted:

> *All the stuff that . . . [Suzy does there, it's a] chance to be in nature and to imagine and just be. [We play] basic games like getting lost in the woods and hide-and-seek [and there is] singing at the campfire.*

While Janice realized that Suzy was growing to know herself in relation with each of the above noted people, beings, and places, she also grew in understanding that Suzy was coming to know herself through gatherings with Métis people, as shown through Tom's story:

GOING TO BED IN THE TENT

Just before going camping
In the summer of 2015
Linda bought a play dough cupcake maker
It shaped hours of play while camping

When I asked Suzy
As our hands made with play dough
If she likes to go camping

She nodded
Yes

What is the best part of camping?
I had asked

Going to bed in the tent

Did the rain come while you were camping?
Or was it all very nice?

Good. It was good

Suzy then said
Sometimes
She and her family
Sing songs in the tent

Sometimes
Suzy hears
Night noises
When she and her family
Are sleeping
In the tent

Linda's life as her paternal grandmother grew up there. Linda described this as a *"resting"* place as until recently there was no cell service or power. Linda felt it was a *"privilege [to] not have access."* As Linda shared how Suzy's Nana often commented that when Suzy, her siblings, and cousins are at the cabin they "*never stop. . . . Like we could be swimming for 6 h in the lake and they come back and like, 'OK, let's have some downtime' but no, no one wants to stop,"* Janice learned of Suzy's activeness there, including that *"if the weather is nice, we play outside all day."*

Janice also learned stories of Suzy's grandma, Tom's mom, and her creating *"a good balance"* for Suzy and Billy because she *"gets right down and plays with them. She doesn't direct traffic how we do around the house, and she could care less if there's a mess."* For Tom and Linda, that Suzy was *"happy . . . [is] the most important thing"*, when she was with her grandma. Too, alongside her grandma Suzy had grown to know herself in relation with a rural camp place that had been part of Linda's and Tom's lives since their childhoods. Linda highlighted this

I'M MÉTIS!

We [A doctoral student who is Métis, my daughter, and I]
Are walking toward the area
Where the Celebration is happening
Suddenly,
I realize the child running toward us
Is Suzy

Hhhiiii
Suzy is calling
As she waves her hands

I ask if we can hug

Suzy agrees
And then shows me her sash
While she says,
I'm Métis!

So, we pulled Billy out [of school] for the Riel Commemoration . . . The Surround [a place at the local provincial Legislature Building where the Commemoration was held] was packed. Billy and Suzy and Linda are sitting in the back and I'm watching them cause I'm . . . [part of the Riel Commemoration]. I can see Suzy pop her head up every once in a while and I'd give her a thumbs up or whatever . . .. And [then] at the open house it was all this dancing and jigging [for Suzy]. [S]he's like our little jigging all-star in front of everybody.

Continuing to reflect on this experience Tom had added:

For Suzy and Billy, the sense of community they have, with the . . . [local Métis peoples and communities], 'cause we go to everything, is strong. They dance, they sing . . . and they jig. They've taught themselves through just watching. . . . Because these events are all old people, right? My kids come and there might be a couple of other kids so, they're up there and they're little stars.

The first time Suzy shared with Janice about her Métis ancestry happened at the Daniel's Case Celebration, a gathering to celebrate the supreme court of Canada ruling that Métis and non-Status "Indians" came under federal jurisdiction, a fight for equality of rights that had begun in 1999[11] (Please see insert above, I'M MÉTIS).

Months later, Suzy, Linda, and Janice worked on a shadow box image Suzy named *"I'm Playing Ball Hockey."* As she made the Métis flag, which she put on her jersey, Suzy told Janice, *"It's because I'm a Native"*. That Suzy included this on her jersey showed Janice something of her experience, and pride, in being a person of Métis ancestry.

[11]Additional information about this Celebration and the history of this struggle for justice can be found at: http://albertametis.com/2016/04/join-metis-nation-alberta-daniels-case-celebration-edmonton/ and https://albertametis.com/news/join-metis-nation-alberta-daniels-case-celebration-edmonton/.

Imagine a Family That. . .

Suzy's ongoing coming to know who she is and is becoming through her interactions with family, places, and gatherings were aspects of her life about which Tom and Linda were wide awake. As Janice came to understand something of the dynamic interaction of Tom's, Linda's, and Suzy's stories, she awakened to four threads of experience in the webs of relationship that influenced Suzy's knowing herself through relationship with family, places, and gatherings as she and her family assessed and re-assessed her ongoing making of a healthy life.

. . .Situates Children as Gifts

Early in the inquiry, Linda drew Janice's attention to her and Tom's living by this understanding alongside Suzy and her siblings. As she told Janice about the baby (Jane) they were expecting in the summer of 2016, Linda shared her grandmother's saying that knowing the gender of the baby ahead of time is *"one gift you shouldn't be able to open."* As Tom, Linda, and Janice thought with their seeing Suzy and her siblings as gifts in their lives, particularly alongside tension-filled stories of their identities as parents, Janice understood more of what this understanding meant in their day to day living. Tom, for example, had shared and thought with Linda and Janice about a situation Billy had experienced in hockey, which he described as inwardly drawing him back to his child and youth experience of not *"doing well with bullies."* As Tom thought with this story, he described his knowledge of *"standing up for"* and *"advocating for"* Suzy and her siblings:

I learned that from my grandfather. . . . I stood my ground for Billy. He [Tom's grandfather] was way more extreme. Like the last ball hockey I played, so I was 30, my grandpa got kicked out of the stands. [Laughter]. He was yelling. It was men's division one. It was really intense. Since I was a kid he would advocate, to no end, for me.

Connected with advocating for Suzy and her siblings were Tom and Linda's desires that they continue to grow with confidence, as Tom shared:

> *Suzy . . . is so genuine. She's not afraid to talk to anybody or get up and say whatever she's thinking, even if it's the weirdest thing you've ever heard . . .. She's always got questions to ask . . . and I just hope she doesn't, that she's not afraid to ask questions, that she's not afraid to get up and do whatever it is she needs to do or say. That's the thing I see, like potentially it might even get broader. But it might also narrow with her, especially if the teacher doesn't have the patience for her. [Suzy will be a] 4-year-old . . . [child] when she starts [Kindergarten and I wonder what will happen if she] wants to have some obscure conversation and wants to know why, or wants the personal attention on things. So that's kind of my, I don't know if it's a fear, but it's kind of what I think about with her entering Kindergarten.*

. . .Consciously Values Family and Community

That Suzy and her siblings could grow in knowing the place and neighborhood where they lived, was a strong desire for Tom and Linda. However, early on Janice learned that these desires were conflicting with institutional narratives at Billy's school. These conflicting stories were told and retold, beginning with stories of Linda and Tom's decision, when they began to imagine having children, to return to their current home city *"right back to the neighbourhood where . . . [we] grew up"*. As Suzy's entry into Kindergarten was eminent, families in the neighbourhood were hearing about a new *"enrolment zone"* for the neighbourhood school. While, as a current student, Billy *might* be able to continue to attend the neighbourhood school, the possibility for Suzy to also attend was, for months, filled with uncertainty. As Linda noted:

> *I'm so tired of this overpopulation and this fear of what will happen for Billy and Suzy. . . . We moved here because they were going to build a school, my kids could walk. So, you build on those things.*

Linda deepened Janice's understanding about the significance of this decision when she shared:

> *We had eight kids, including Billy and Suzy, in the backyard yesterday—neighbourhood kids . . .. For 3 h they just played and played. . . . It was very good.*

The neighbourhood where Suzy and her family lived was important; in that place, they had community and understanding of connection. Institutional policies like the newly emerging school enrolment zone interrupted Linda and Tom's familial story of the children being in school together and how valuing family and community was important in their family.

. . .Desires to be Education Partners, and For the Children to Also Be

When Tom first contacted Janice to learn more about the inquiry, he shared numerous stories of the pain he, Linda, and Billy had experienced when Billy was in Kindergarten. Although at the time of his initial conversation with Janice, Billy was in Grade One, this pain was still reverberating in Tom. Billy's experience in Kindergarten also often wove into Suzy's, Linda's, and Janice's play and visiting, including through Linda's continuous expression of her wish for Suzy's *"classroom to not be an overly populated classroom"*, to which she had added, *"There was no relationship between me and Tom and Billy's Kindergarten teacher."* Reflecting further, Linda had shared:

> *It's been going on since I was a kid. Like we had 32 kids. But we were in junior high. But in these early stages . . . I don't understand why there isn't more importance in having a smaller class. Like these are little kids. I think as human beings that's how and where we thrive, it's when it gets personal.*

Earlier, Linda had puzzled about a conversation around *"failing children"* during her volunteering for a field trip with Billy's Grade One class. This conversation had stayed with her, as had her sense of teachers' *"need[ing] to find a way that school learning connects with the students"*. Months later, Linda had reflected:

> *Tom was book smart. In college he never opened up a textbook and did fine. If it was me, I wouldn't [do well]. Like we're all so different in learning. . . . So, it just opened my eyes to the whole thing, like, it isn't just about not failing a student who just doesn't want to do anything, it's finding the way, because they are brilliant kids.*

Linda's sense of the need for relationships between children and teachers also extended to relationships between teachers and families:

> *Turns out yesterday, the Grade Two teachers won't open the door for me. And I want to talk with Billy's teacher. . . . I had this one Grade Two teacher standing at the door looking out at me; she won't let me in. I had to wait for a child to come out, so I could get in. That doesn't feel good.*

While Tom and Linda told and retold stories of not always feeling as though the teachers or school situated them, and Suzy and Billy, as partners in education, in relation with their Métis ancestry and knowledge, Tom reflected that the school *"actually wants me to come in . . . and bring something and talk about it"*. However, Tom and Linda's sense of their, Suzy, and Billy being valued as Métis peoples was always fragile. As Linda had showed:

> *On Friday it was on Billy's agenda, 'wear orange shirt'. There was no background on it. I said, "What's that about?" [Billy said it was] "about being kind to kids." . . . I thought it was affiliated with the anti-bullying . . .. Then, later I'm reading CBC news and the whole background on Orange*

> *Shirt Day*[12] *and I was so upset. . . . So, I asked, "Did your teacher share anything about it?" We even said residential schools. "No, nothing, just about being kind to kids." I know in Grade Five—I heard from a Grade Five teacher that's when it's in the curriculum—that you learn about residential schools. Maybe Grade Two is a little bit too soon, I get that, but I wish I would have known. There was nothing on [the electronic school-parent communication portal] that is supposed to be our form of communication. Nothing. There's a parent council on Tuesday night so Tom's going. If you're gonna make kids wear an orange shirt you need to have a discussion about why. . . . We did Terry Fox*[13] *and a Crazy Hair Day and on that Crazy Hair Day was also Orange Shirt Day. For years I have said that our kids should know our own history.*

Often, Linda and Tom wondered with Janice about possibilities, including when they felt significant disappointment and frustration, about the fragile nature in school situations of their, Billy, and Suzy's identities as Métis peoples. As Linda had highlighted:

> *Tom and I talk about . . . [how] knowledge is power. We should be informed about these things. When I reflect back on my school . . . we did not learn about the history of First Nations or Métis peoples. It's only in these years where I'm going to museums and focusing on Canadian history [that I am learning this history]. . . . I don't remember learning any form of real Canadian history.*

Tom had added:

> *Too, the stuff you're doing [this research focus], is absent. There might be some focus . . . [on Social Studies lesson plans that include Métis content], right? But we're concerned about actually getting the kids to school to learn, not just having the other kids learn* ***about*** *[emphasized] Métis in an appropriate way. It's about getting our kids there, which is totally different than having a, you know, historically correct story on Louis Riel as part of your social studies program, right? What does that mean to Billy? Hopefully he knows the story already. It's about getting to school and staying in school, and passing the classes.*

As Tom and Linda storied and restoried, the role of their family as education partners was not without tension, particularly when aspects of their lives were not recognized in school or when, at other times, their lives could not easily be "presented" about to a classroom.

. . .Is Intentional About Growing Their Métis Roots

Early in their inquiry Janice learned that *"literally the day before Suzy was born . . . [Tom, Linda, and Billy] met . . . [Tom's] dad for the first time. That would have been September, and then . . . [the following May] he passed"*. As Tom told this story of his *"huge family tree over there [in Manitoba] of Métis"* he added:

> *We just visited this huge family we never knew much about, until four years ago. . . . A huge family tree over there of Métis living on Métis land. And we went back there again cause Billy was wondering, he wants to know. I want them to know all the little cousins. My dad, I didn't know him really well but, when he died, we went to the funeral. It was weird to meet everybody who I hadn't seen for probably 15 years, maybe longer.*

As Tom, Linda, and Janice thought with the importance of Suzy and her siblings coming to know their Métis family, ancestors, and place(s) in Manitoba, Tom reflected on his experience growing up. *"There was so much stigma. It's not that I didn't know 'cause my mom always told me, "You're Métis". [But] you see things in your life that happen, and you just don't want to identify"*.

Tom and Linda were adamant that Suzy and her siblings would grow pride as Métis peoples. They saw relationships as key in this process and, together, they were involved in the community to support Suzy's and her siblings' making of relationships. Early on, Tom shared how he was working with a Métis organization to support *"a big hockey tournament"* where *"1000s of Aboriginal kids"* participate. Because of Billy and Suzy, Tom was working to ensure that *"a Métis team"* was included, which Linda later told Janice was an experience where Billy and Suzy *"just had fun"*. The tournament included additional activities for the children to interact with one another, such as having meals together and bowling. Linda felt that Billy and Suzy experienced the tournament like a *"summer camp"* where they wanted *"to be there and [are now] looking forward to reconnecting with friends from earlier camps."*

While Tom and Linda were constantly searching for Michif language and fiddling classes for Suzy and her siblings, when they could not find these, they took every opportunity to participate in Métis gatherings, including the Celebration of the "Daniel's Case" in May of 2016. When Tom later reflected on what this case might mean in Billy's and Suzy's lives, he expressed:

> *It's interesting at a time when Billy and Suzy are learning their culture and Métis identity . . . to have something like that, that's about jurisdiction. . . . Being an Indian hasn't worked out well in general for anybody. . . . [The Daniel's Case] . . . creates jurisdiction and that forces the federal government to sit down and talk about outstanding claims, issues, past injustices and so on.*

Continuing, Tom had added:

> *Is it gonna be something that's gonna benefit my kids in a way that Linda and I aren't working to already benefit them? I don't know. . . . It would be nice to have some respect. To me, the biggest thing for reconciliation is just*

[12]Orange Shirt Day is a day to remember the tragedy of children sent to residential schools in what is now named by dominant narratives as Canada.

[13]Terry Fox was a young man who tried to run across Canada to raise money for cancer research after he had a leg removed due to cancer. Sadly, he did not complete his journey, succumbing to the disease. Since his passing each year there are runs in communities across Canada to raise money for cancer research.

> *. . . acknowledgement of what happened and then the ability to celebrate who you are and your unique identity and spot in Canada, right, with other Canadians.*

Embracing their intergenerational understanding of family and knowing and being as Métis peoples was important to Tom and Linda. It was important to them that their children were raised with opportunities to develop a strong Métis identity.

THINKING WITH SUZY'S AND HER FAMILY'S EVERYDAY ASSESSMENT PRACTICES AND ASSESSMENT AS *PIMOSAYTA* IN TEACHER EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Understandings of diverse children, families, and communities/peoples as holding knowledge of and as practicing assessment is little recognized in research for, or in programs of, teacher education and development (Huber et al., 2011). Suzy's, Linda's, and Tom's stories show how, every day, they are attending to Suzy's growth, to who she is and who she is becoming. This attending is grounded in, draws out, and extends forward their intergenerational experiences, knowledge, contexts, and identities. This attentiveness has and continues to shape Suzy's, Tom's, Linda's, and their ancestors' lives across time and place as they have interacted with broader social, cultural, institutional, historical, colonial, and political narratives. In our (Janice, Trudy, and Shaun's) thinking with these aspects of Suzy, Tom, Linda, and their families' everyday assessment making practices alongside understandings of assessment as *Pimosayta* in teacher education and development, we see numerous possibilities.

As she led talking circles with pre- and in-service teachers through which she encouraged living *Pimatisiwin* and *Pimosayta*, Mary Young shared through story how the legacy of residential schools was still reverberating in her life and in the lives of many residential school survivors and their families and communities. Always, as she shared these stories, Mary made clear the intention of the federal government to "insulate" children of Aboriginal ancestry "from the influences of their own people" by subjecting them "to a program designed to lead them to forget who they were and to adopt the ways and values of their teachers" (2005a, p. 33).

Linda and Tom's influences are deeply visible in the everyday assessment practices they and Suzy live. As Tom was a child alongside his mom, he grew knowledge of himself as a Métis person, which continued to grow as he developed relationships with his dad and family in Manitoba. Suzy and her siblings are now growing knowledge of themselves as Métis people because of Tom's and Linda's commitments that they continue to grow, with deep pride, this aspect of their identities. Amidst the ongoing colonial legacy in Canada, which reverberates into the social, cultural, economic, linguistic, racial, political, institutional, and familial narratives that have and continue to impact the lives of Métis peoples, Tom and Linda are intentional about ensuring that Suzy and her siblings grow relationships with Métis peoples, places, and stories, locally and nationally, and the ways of knowing, doing, being, and relating that live in these people, places, and stories.

As Linda was a child alongside her parents, she grew knowledge of who she could be in relation with a lake and place in Saskatchewan. This growth has continued forward as she now embodies her mom's teaching of the connections between more-than-human worlds[14] and wellbeing. Currently, Suzy and her siblings are growing knowledge of themselves in relation with this and additional places where they can slow down and "reset" themselves. As Suzy and her siblings have continued to grow forward in their lives, Linda and Tom have stayed committed to ensuring they know and feel grounded in place(s), including the neighbourhood where they live and with the children and families next door and down the street. Tom and Linda have made life decisions because of these commitments to Suzy and her siblings—commitments that also shape their desires for relationships in and with the schools and teachers with whom they, Suzy, and her siblings interact.

Visible, too, are Suzy's influences. Suzy was a young child during the years Janice was alongside her. Yet, Tom, Linda, their family, and Janice were all influenced by her, just as she was influenced by them. One of Suzy's influences was made visible by Tom as he reflected on Suzy *"always . . . [having] questions"*, which he foregrounded as he wondered if her curiosity would be valued by teachers who come alongside her. Suzy's experiences remind us of how we learned alongside Mary Young. When Mary shared some of the many experiences and perspectives that threaded her living of *Pimatisiwin* and *Pimosayta*, she (Young, 2005b) often drew on Anderson's (2000) knowledge that:

> Aboriginal children are precious to us because they represent the future. They are not considered possessions of the biological parents; . . .they are understood to be gifts on loan from the Creator. Because of this everyone in the community has a connection to the children and everyone has an obligation to work for their well-being. Each of us has a responsibility. This work is urgent—not only because Aboriginal children have been (and are yet) assaulted, but because the focus on children and the respect that our societies gave to children were so severely damaged with colonization. (p. 162)

Suzy, like all children, are gifts. They influence us, as adults, as much as we influence them. It becomes crucial to us to consider these influences as we consider what influence school-based assessment has on children (and us).

IMAGINING OUR STRIVING FORWARD

Mary's continuous calling of us to live *Pimatisiwin* and *Pimosayta* turned us toward creating the *Assessment as Pimosayta* course. We know from our own life making, teaching, and ongoing inquiry that when the intergenerational and intersectional wholeness, complexity, and layeredness of lives become visible, much about how assessment is practiced in schooling contexts, which includes universities, misses and/or harms the forward-

[14]Please see earlier footnote # 8.

looking stories of children, youth, families, pre- and in-service, teachers, and teacher educators (Murphy, 2004; Clandinin et al., 2006; Cardinal, 2010; Murphy, 2010; Cardinal, 2011; Huber et al., 2011; Young et al., 2012; Swanson, 2013; Cardinal, 2014; Swanson, 2014; Huber et al., 2018; Swanson, 2019; Murphy and Huber, 2020).

they too are deeply desirous of change (Please see insert below).

These four teachers show how their turning their assessment pedagogy toward *Pimatisiwin* and *Pimosayta* threaded into their forward-looking stories, strong desires to live in good ways alongside children (and families and communities)[16].

Course, unlike any other
Challenges [typical] assessment
Focuses on human aspect of child
We as teachers must always consider [this] when reporting their growth.

We all naturally possess a Pimosayta way of knowing
Just aren't allowed to be that way in current system
I loved…feel[ing] permission to behave in a good way

Course re-energized me
Was sure I would never teach
Reminded me of possibilities
Also, the responsibilities I carry
Settler on this land, Turtle Island
No neutral with Indigenous assessment
Be proactive in honouring children…

Learning to walk in good ways
What could be in education
Thinking with our stories
A life changing experience
There is hope in education when we are able to collectively consider pedagogical change
In order to accept other forms of acquisition of knowledge and wisdom!

While the *Calls to Action* from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015) have begun to influence schools and universities, the gap that Claypool and Preston (2011) noted about how "student learning and assessment" in K-12 education in Canada "need [s] to parallel Aboriginal worldviews" (p. 85), is also profoundly evident in teacher education and development. Our complicity in this gap in teacher education and development influenced our desires to create the *Assessment as Pimosayta* course. In its first offerings, at our respective universities, we were uncertain if pre- and in-service teachers would enrol, yet they did, in large numbers. In our conversations with them at the course beginning and throughout, many of the teachers expressed tensions about the highly colonial nature of assessment. From their lives as children and through experiences in field placements or as classroom teachers alongside children, they were wide awake to their complicity in this colonial narrative. As is shown through the poetic fragment below[15],

Imagining our forward-looking stories in teacher education and development as we honour Mary's calls for *Pimatisiwin* and *Pimosayta* alongside the assessment making practices of Suzy, Linda, and Tom, alongside the wisdom lifted in the *Assessment as Pimosayta* course by the Elders, Knowledge and Language Keepers, scholars and teachers, we return to Trudy's (Cardinal, 2011) invitation for us to live in more ethically relational ways with all our relations[17]. While Trudy first raised this way of knowing, being, doing, and relating as a methodological imperative for narrative inquirers, this imperative also holds significance for us as teacher educators. The pedagogy of assessment that Trudy urges us toward, moves far beyond the dominant narratives in teacher education and development. We

[15]These poetic fragments were created from four of the pre- and in-service teachers' course evaluation comments.

[16]We are grateful for one reviewer's response to an earlier draft of this manuscript in which they expressed a desire for more glimpses into our conversations as we imagined, lived out and have continued to reflect upon the *Assessment as Pimosayta* course. We deeply appreciate this reviewer's invitation and wish to note that two earlier co-authored manuscripts offer these deeper glimpses. Please see Cardinal et al., 2019 and Cardinal et al., (in review).

[17]Please see the earlier footnote # 8.

are called to shift away from the dominant story of assessment that requires and teaches via the hidden, null, planned, enacted, lived, and experienced curriculum, that ongoing generations of teachers must/should compete for the highest grade or awards and scholarships and by extension, must/should assimilate ongoing generations of children to believe this is what matters most in schooling, and in life. By inviting us to attend to our long-term responsibilities to all our relations, Trudy plants possibility for us as teacher educators, and for teachers, to live *Pimatisiwin* and *Pimosayta* in which ethical relationality is at the heart of the pedagogy we live by, both within and far beyond contexts of schooling. Trudy keeps us asking ourselves: what future(s) does the pedagogy of assessment we privilege move us, teachers, children, families, strangers, institutions, society, and more-than-human beings toward? Do these futures lift Mary's teachings of *Pimatisiwin* (walking in a good way) and *Pimosayta* (learning to walk together)?

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data sets presented in this article are not readily available due to research ethics the data set is private. Requests to access the data sets should be directed to jhuber@ualberta.ca.

ETHICS STATEMENT

The study involving human participants was reviewed and approved by the Research Ethics Board, University of Alberta. Written informed consent to participate in this study was provided by all the participants, including the child participants' legal guardian/next of kin.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

All authors listed have made a substantial, direct, and intellectual contribution to the work and approved it for publication.

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