

BRAIDING A LIV(ED)ING CURRICULUM

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FORMING THE BRAID

Reflecting on Chambers's (2004) critical questions, "What keeps you awake at night? What do you think about when you cannot fall asleep? What wakes you up in the middle of the night?" I reach towards an understanding of liv(ed)ing curriculum in life writing and *métissage*. How can I emphasize the critical need for stories in curricula? Whose stories matter? Whose voice is highlighted? How do I advocate for a curriculum grounded in place?

Curricula are rooted in the stories of the spaces we inhabit—from salty sea towns spackling the edges of eastern Canada, to bustling cities in Southern Ontario, to Arctic communities where the sun hangs sleepless in the sky in the depths of summer, and to the rainy, densely wooded mountains of British Columbia. How do we create meaningful and authentic curricula in diverse Canadian landscapes? I make attempts to respond to these questions each morning. After a restless sleep, at the break of dawn when the sun is just peeking over the edges of the eastern sky, I contemplate these questions as I make my way to the tiny office on the second floor.

Sunlight splays through the second-floor window. Rays dance on the peach-coloured wall, kissing the edge of a well-loved, dog-eared, coffee-ringed, and, if I'm honest, tear-stained article. Each morning this scene greets me with the aroma of Columbian blend coffee as I pad quietly to the desk in the corner, careful not to wake anyone. Thirty little words highlighted in a luminous yellow jump from the page, "If you find yourself on a path then you must stay on it only if it has heart, and it is only your heart that can tell if it's so" (Chambers, 2004, p. 6). Each morning, those words remind me to choose the path with heart and reflect on the stories that have brought me to this space.

A *mélange* of narratives, mine, others, human, non-human, reveals paths. I am determined to maneuver through this entanglement, drawing upon life writing, storytelling, and historical artifacts. *Métissage* authors guide my journey, laying a path before me, opening space to weave a tapestry, a *currere*. In this space, through *métissage*, I break the tethered restraints that, as a child and early career practitioner, grounded me in colonial education.

I vaguely remember early school days. We spent most of our time sitting in rows, writing multiplication tables, copying messages written in chalk to lined paper, and regurgitating meaningless facts. I vividly remember my grade one teacher lining us up, like little ducklings, to practice walking in the school halls. *Put your finger on your hip, and one on your lip* was her motto, followed by *don't let it slip*. This practice seems bizarre to me now. Put your finger on your lip, and don't let it slip. An homage to Eurocentric values, children should be seen and not heard, I suspect. Even in my early years, this struck me as odd. I found the factory model of schooling tiresome, intended to produce good workers and citizens who knew how to operate within the industrial model. Where was the action? The excitement?

Although my educators were lovely, they were products of their experiences as practitioners and graduates of a Eurocentric Canadian curriculum. One that hid(es) the ugly truths of Canada. Asking provocative questions, deconstructing hegemonic pillars upholding educational systems, and advocating for curricular change are at the forefront of my investigative quest (S. Wiebe, personal communication, February 12, 2022).

In scholarly efforts to deepen my understanding of curriculum theory, I turn to Pinar (1994). He describes curriculum theory as interdisciplinary, examining the educational experiences woven in studies and stories. Weaving *our* micro-stories, stimulated by questions—Where do *we* come from? Where are *we* right now? Where do *we* hope things will go?—that need first to be addressed in terms of personal circumstances. As a hopeful curriculum theorist, I must begin with a braid, a *métissage* of Where do *I* come from? Where is *my* place? Where am *I* going? In unearthing these questions, I often ask, “What is the best way to go about constructing a curriculum?” In response, I look to *métissage*.

Used by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers, *métissage* stems from the lens of the individual theorist (Donald, 2009). Braiding micro-stories is a critical reflection and challenge to positivistic lenses permeating academic research. *Métissage* celebrates ways of knowing through story and the liv(ed)ing curriculum, moving away from curricula grounded in Eurocentrism (Donald, 2012; Kelly, 2020; Lowan-Trudeau, 2012).

I invite readers to contemplate emergent ideas and meanings embedded in the text, their relation to curriculum theory, and the possibility of educational transformation in life writing and *métissage*. Engaging with the text draws readers into a liv(ed)ing curriculum, represented by three braids; being, (be)coming, and (be)longing—each braid encompassing three strands forming my epistemological, ontological, and axiological stance. Braid one, hand-me-downs, addresses the question, where do I come from. Followed by braid two, death (be)comes, where I question how the past persists, contaminating my daily life in subtle and not so subtle ways (Pinar, 1994). Finally, I turn to braid three, (be)longing, homerun or run/home, where I look back on the chapters of my life as I engage in authoring the future.

BRAID ONE BEING: HAND-ME-DOWNS

From the clothes on your back, to the colour of your eyes, ain’t no shame in some hand-me-downs.

— Arkells, *Hand Me Downs*

Ted Aoki conceptualized a landscape of live(d) curricula. A rhizomatic, textured web of experiences past, present, and yet-to-come (Aoki, 1993). When describing my liv(ed)ing curriculum, I am drawn to the concept of hand-me-downs. Hand-me-downs from my parents and ancestors before me. Biological hand-me-downs, a double helix of DNA and stories woven together, placing me in this space and place in time. Hand-me-downs to nieces and nephews, to the little people who enter my kindergarten class. Each child brimming with their hand-me-downs. And hand-me-downs from experiences yet-to-be.

Through a liv(ed)ing curriculum of hand-me-downs and accompanying entanglements, I find myself, as an educator, in juxtaposition with planned curricula, at odds with the fabricated language and experiences entrenched within. A planned curriculum dictated by those far removed from the liv(ed)ing experiences and hand-me-downs flowing in school classrooms. It is between two farmhouses where my *métissage*, my hand-me-down story, begins.

BETWEEN TWO FARMHOUSES

A frigid November wind rattles the windows of my great grandparents’ farmhouse, now occupied by my mother and father. Outside a tiny hamlet in Southern Ontario,

Marlene and Ronald welcomed their first child in this house. Arriving early, on his birthday, we celebrated 38 years together.

Across the road lived my paternal grandparents. Here, between two farmhouses, two barns, and two-hundred acres of land, 17 years of my life were spent. I learned to grow food to nourish my body and felt the freedom of the land to feed my soul.

We spent hours in the “long grass,” my sister and I, burrowing and constructing grass huts on the back acre of land. The smell of fresh-cut grass, its sweet fragrance evokes a memory that has slept in the back of my mind. Each spring, more memories awake from slumber as if renewed with the budding of trees and births of a new season. It is as if flood gates have opened.

We snuck into the old barn at the back of my grandparents’ farm, jumping from the rafters to the hay beds below, between two farmhouses. Squealing with laughter, hay tangled in our hair, we were left to our own devices. Exploring apple orchards, climbing trees, eating red currents, blackberries, and collecting walnuts.

Surrounded by barn cats, dogs, wild animals, and each other. Between two farmhouses, we learned the circle of life. We watched mama cat birth four kittens. Rescued and nurtured bunnies abandoned after their mother satisfied the hunger of a fox. And witnessed the death of Bullet, the family dog. We gathered apples for cider, chopped wood for the stove, prepared for winter, canned relish and chilli sauce, a favourite of my mother’s.

These were my early years, a curriculum of place, my stories derived from and inextricably linked with the land. Chambers (2006) cautions that living off the land and with the land can be fatal if you do not know its stories. Stories address the importance of protocols in honouring and acknowledging the relationship between self, family, the community, and non-human relations. Without stories, we risk violating the boundaries, fatal errors, in relation with the land (Blood et al., 2012). Stories of the land between two farmhouses grounded me in the relationship to my place. My liv(ed)ing curriculum.

I married my husband on the back acre of land, between two farmhouses, under the gazebo crafted by my father. We added our story to the place, the land, and the relationships within. The house still stands but is no longer ours, our stories held within—our stories forever connected to the land, embedded in farmhouses, barns, and etched in our memories—a place of hand-me-down joys, heartaches, and love.

ROOTS

Genealogy has always interested me. My paternal grandmother, and her mother before, kept meticulous records and stories from generations past. Fleeing Scotland, my great-great-grandmother arrived at the port of Quebec in 1912. With five children in tow, she reunited with her husband. They settled on a small farm near London, Ontario. My great-grandmother, a small child at the time, had long waited to be reunited with her father. A year separated by the Atlantic Ocean seemed like an eternity.

Grandma told stories of their pilgrimage while she quilted. I listened and watched—the needle so precise. Hand-me-down stories from my fathers’ big family book, from memory, and a place held dear in his heart. Stories shared between two farmhouses.

My maternal grandparents’ told stories as we collected sap at the family sugar bush. We trounced through the snow and mud, through thickets and brush, trying to keep up as Grandpy told stories of his mother’s favourite dish, squirrel pie and life on the farm in the early 1900s. His story is in sharp contrast with my Grandmy’s upbringing. While stirring the sticky sap in hopes of creating a delicious syrup, Grandmy told stories of her father, a semi-professional baseball player and his wife, a school teacher. These hand-me-down

stories ended here; preceding generations remained a mystery. As an adult, I felt a yearning to know more. What I unearthed was accompanied by pangs of guilt and a heavy heart.

THE BURNING OF BEAUBASSIN

In 2020 when the COVID19 pandemic swept across nations, my husband and I began his ancestral quest. Although we had infrequently picked at his genealogy throughout the years, we immersed ourselves in unearthing his family history this year. Provincial records and historical artifacts offered little information.

His ancestry is complex, grounded in Mi'kmaq, Métis, and French roots. Documents, when available, branded his ancestors as *sauvage* or *savage*. Stories of native ancestry, hidden identities, war, and royal lineage swirled from cousins to aunts, uncles, grandparents, and grandchildren—no one knowing the truth and *official* documentation hidden away.

We had an insatiable taste to extract the truth through the hodgepodge of stories. What we did(n't) uncover left us infuriated, frustrated, and dumbfounded. Numerous records displaying *unknown* child, parent, husband or wife, and multiple name changes left our search in a stalemate—finally, a break, an ancestor rooted in Beaubassin, New Brunswick. I had a vague memory of Beaubassin from my family history located somewhere in the entanglement of ancestors.

It was a Sunday, football Sunday in our house. My husband reclined in his favourite chair, snacks at hand, while I half-heartedly watched, more intently perusing my maternal heritage. Mindlessly clicking and expanding the digital tree, I came across, quite by accident and partly by frustration, Benjamin Church. His brief biography indicated he had sailed to Beaubassin in autumn 1696 and again in 1704. My husbands' unsuspecting ancestors would soon see their community burnt to the ground in the name of the Puritan God at the hands of Benjamin Church, not once but twice. I gazed up at my partner, guilty and apologetic. All I could muster was, "I'm sorry."

Mark Wolynn (2017) reminds us through the entanglement with our family systems, we unconsciously carry our ancestors' feelings, symptoms, behaviours, or hardships as if they were our own. Through literary *métissage*, stories are entangled, ours, others, human and non-human. It is peculiar to think my ancestors and my partners' ancestors faced each other in battle hundreds of years ago. As New England and New Brunswick colonies fought for sovereignty against the harsh environment and threats of war, a liv(ed)ing curriculum began to bind their descendants to the land. A hand-me-down history, situated in stories, land, and pedigree, left me feeling conflicted.

BRAID TWO (BE)COMING: DEATH (BE)COMES

If you look deeply into the palm of your hand, you will see your parents and all generations of your ancestors. All of them are alive in this moment. Each is present in your body. You are the continuation of each of these people.

— Thich Nhat Hanh, *A Lifetime of Peace*

We never lose our loved ones. They accompany us; they don't disappear from our lives. We are merely in different rooms.

— Paulo Coelho, *Aleph*

Different rooms hold different memories, painful, joyous, indifferent. Or perhaps they hold parallel memories. After all, a room is just four walls and a roof. If you are

lucky, a window and door. If not, a cell, a cage, a pen, a place where freedom is lost or gained. Rooms in our homes, institutions, and rooms in our minds. Walls erected and demolished, changing with the zeitgeist.

Each of these rooms (be)coming, not unlike the human experience. As my grandmother would say, coming into your own, building foundations, walls, and pillars to establish your future. However, there are times when our liv(ed)ing experiences shake our foundations. Walls tumble and are (re)framed, (re)purposed, (re)arranged, and (re)conditioned.

Loss and grief play out in different rooms in our minds, hearts, and topographies of our liv(ed)ing spaces. The terrain difficult, at best, to navigate. The room that once held hope for a new life now covered in peach-coloured paint, journal articles, and sticky notes. A desk cowering in the corner with coffee-stained rings, awaiting the next late-night writing session. The room that held uniforms, bats, cleats, and the smell of the baseball diamond after weekend tournaments, now overpowered by moving boxes and the smell of cardboard. The room that once smelled of cinnamon and flowery perfume, now flooded with bouquets of dust and sorrow; unused weights lying haphazardly on the floor.

These rooms had future intentions, accompanied by the humans residing within. Those loved ones now in different rooms, in different spaces, in different times. Leggo (2017), in his timeless poetry, writes,

As one who is left behind, my calling is to remember my brother and to share stories about him, but my calling is also to explore connections between life and loss, and the possibilities that extend beyond loss. Ultimately the curriculum of loss is a curriculum of hope. (p. 76)

I turn to his work for inspiration and a glimmer of hope amidst the loss in times of unbearable grief.

CANCER

But I am only 24—barely two decades on this planet. So much more to experience. I would rather not spend what may be the last years of my life smelling death in this tiny, sterile hospital room—so harsh and uninviting, cold and bare, save a few steel instruments glistening on a surgical tray.

Traumatic experiences stay with us for a lifetime (Balsawer, 2017). The vulnerability experienced through my cancer curriculum replays in my mind often, poking through the cracks, forcing its way to the surface of my consciousness. When it reaches the surface, vulnerability washes over me again, a feeling of grief, loss, pain, and an invisible ache.

When the memory bubbles through the cracks, it parallels the memory of my grade 10 biology class. The same sterile environment mirrors the tiny hospital room. I empathize with the frogs prepared for dissection. Arranged, pinned, and outstretched on a miniature silver tray, organs exposed. With steel instruments at hand, a pair of clumsy 14-year-old high school students poked and prodded at the most internal of spaces. Lab partners, hormones raging, much more interested in each other than a deceased frog on a tacky tray. In this room, I feel like that frog, being poked at and prodded by a team of specialists. I wonder if they feel like those clumsy teenagers. Are there unspoken tensions, an office affair, perhaps? Funny how the grade 10 biology curriculum is playing out in real life, me as the specimen.

No longer a specimen, I reflect on what was supposed to be. I was supposed to (be)come a mother, a giver of life. Cancer took that from me, my (be)coming. This nefarious disease infiltrated and ravaged my cells, as depression stole my spiritual and psychological (well)being.

My liv(ed)ing cancer curriculum reveals nuances embedded within my positionality as an educator, researcher, scholar, and student. I (be)come more than a medical file by illuminating my voice as a cancer patient and survivor. In education, as in medicine, we tend to rely heavily on paper trails attached to students. I am empowered through my cancer curriculum to look beyond the paper trail tethered to each student; I reach for their story, the human behind the paperwork. We are much more than the documentation and labels others attach to us.

I TRIED AND FAILED

My mother-in-law had come to stay with us for a few weeks after a nasty fall. I had always admired her determination. The oldest of eight, she raised her siblings, tended to children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. No formal schooling beyond the third grade, her tenacity created a life full of experiences sewn together with an unbreakable thread of love. Do what you do with love, a motto she practiced as religiously as she did her Catholic faith. She extended her teachings to me. Her curriculum taught me to tend with care and humility.

On bed rest, we waited on her, bringing breakfast each morning, changing bandages, listening to stories, and spoiling her with sweet treats. Her spirits brightened as the pain subsided, appearing to be on the mend. However, late one Sunday evening, a scream, my name, howled down the hall, bypassing the stairs, my ears rang. Heart beating fiercely, I exploded from the recliner and shot up the stairs, two at a time. I burst into her room. On autopilot, I hollered to my husband, “Call 911!”

I began compressions and rescue breathing in an attempt to resuscitate her—finally, a gasp followed by laboured breathing. I gently rocked her in my arms, reassuring her, “I’ve got you; help is coming,” on repeat for what seemed like an eternity. Paramedics arrived, assessed the situation, then her breathing stopped again. I shoved my partner downstairs while responding to the insatiable questions from medical staff. Chaos.

Void of sirens and lights, the ambulance departed, making its journey to the local hospital. Deep in my heart, I knew she had taken her last breaths in my arms. The incredible guilt weigh(s)ed on me. I failed her, my husband, and all those who h(o)eld her dear. Hot tears escaped the corners of my eyes. I wiped them away, compartmentalized my emotions, and internalized my grief.

Months later, I came across the works of Carl Leggo through my doctoral studies. His writing, a comfort on days filled with grief. Reflecting on the lessons from my mother-in-law and Leggo’s writing, I linger in the moments that provide a sliver of hope, hope that one day will emerge from loss.

A FATHER’S LAST THURSDAY

As hope began to poke its fingers through the darkness, I received a text. The loss of my mother-in-law was not to be our only loss that summer. One month later, after her passing, I would receive a text. Two days after, he would be declared *legally deceased*.

“*I think dad has had a stroke,*” was all the text read. My husband and I quickly piled into our old Ford Explorer to make the hour and a half drive to the small-town hospital.

Navigating hospital protocols during a pandemic was not an easy task. However, I negotiated the entanglement of hospital policy, earning entry into the ICU for my sister, mother, and me. A troop of nurses, doctors, respiratory therapists, and numerous other

medical staff met us in the corridor. Surrounding the gurney, I desperately tried to usher my way past the nurse. Her attempts to reroute my path towards my father to the family waiting room were successful.

I sulked into the tiny room lined with putrid green plastic-covered chairs. Void of windows, we named the room the jail cell, although I am sure even prisoners have a window in their cells. Detained, we sat in that cell for hours while doctors and nurses settled dad, repeated tests, and ensured he was stable.

Sitting in silence, I began to think about dad's last visit to watch my husband and I play softball. Sitting on the bleachers, my mother by his side, he looked just like I remembered, watching me play baseball some 30 years earlier. He taught me how to hit a ball and practiced, between two farmhouses, with my sister and me. He even drew us a target on the side of the old barn to hone our pitching skills. He carefully curated a baseball curriculum to provide his daughters with opportunities to thrive.

Through sport, he cheered us on, questioned umpires' decisions, and even coached a team of adolescent girls. Interrupting the memory, a young, pregnant doctor entered the waiting room accompanied by a nurse who had been with dad when he arrived at the hospital. The nurse told us how dad was bragging about his kids and grandkids and how proud he was.

Assuming hormones wreak havoc on emotions, I glanced at the young, pregnant doctor, wondering how she was so calm. Here she was in the process of creating life contrasted by delivering devastating news to a family facing the loss of a life. Small tears had begun to form in her eyes as she described dad's current state. The prognosis was not good.

Saturday morning, we received the final news. After completing all tests on the brain, the doctor declared him *legally deceased*. I received a crash course in brain functioning, scans, hemorrhaging, and the impact on the brain's structure. I dug deep and quickly compartmentalized my emotions. I listened intently. I needed to keep my composure as I again had to deliver unimaginable news and respond to insatiable questions.

I listened to the guilt my sister felt, I sat in silence comforting my mother, and I returned home to support my husband, still grieving the loss of his mother. However, despite the pain and despair, I found glimmers of hope in each of their confessions. In loss, there is hope (Leggo, 2017; Wiebe, 2020). My dad gave hope to families through the gift of life and sight. In our loss, another family found hope, and in that, I find hope.

We planned a celebration of life where family and friends gathered to share stories, memories, and laughter. Food was plentiful. Laughs and hugs were free. We saw hope gleaming in the eyes of nieces and nephews, children and grandchildren, sisters and brothers. He had created a space of hope despite the dark times ahead.

Loss is difficult to navigate. Grief sits with us all differently. The wills, funerals and cremations, documentation, signatures, death certificates, insurance, bills, and after-care are seemingly never-ending responsibilities permeating the loss curriculum. However, in grief, I am reminded of those who came before me, planted the seeds, where my roots dive into the soil, strengthening connections to my liv(ed)ing curriculum. I am standing here in this place, connected to the land and its stories through the roots of my ancestors and the grief we endure through familial loss.

BRAID THREE BE-LONGING: HOMERUN OR RUN/HOME

Every year, once spring has sprung, my world regains proper proportion because baseball is back. I love the central metaphor of the game—all of us helping each other to make it home. Funny how a game can teach us so much about life.

— Richard Wagamese, *Embers*

One of my favourite childhood memories is playing softball. I learned (be)longing is a key part of the softball curriculum. (Be)longing, feeling like a part of the team. Be(ing) in longing. Longing to be a part of, longing to be a good player, longing to improve, longing to be admired, and longing to be the best. I was a part of the team but awkward, longing to be(long) and understand social nuances. Not fitting in, but fitting in as an all-star player—it was a weird juxtaposition for a 12-year-old to maneuver.

In times of uncertainty, I turn to the central metaphor of baseball, making it home. I hit the ball, run the bases, team cheering “slide!” “run!” “go go go!” and the opposing team screaming “catch it!” “throw it [the ball] home!” “tag her!” As in baseball, my journey with(in) doctoral studies has felt similar, some cheering me on, some questioning my pilgrimage, some opposing my choices, and others indifferent.

ALLYSHIP

I sat with how to (be)long in allyship for many years. In the latter half of my 39 years, I have realized there is no one way to be an ally. It looks different, feels different, and is welcomed, or not, in the spaces we inhabit in a multitude of ways. I am guided by those who journey with me, navigating uneven terrain.

In my masters’ degree, I wanted to collaborate with Indigenous communities in language revitalization. I was apprehensive, afraid of making fatal errors. Like a fumbling toddler, I wandered around in the unknown landscape. Guided by Elders, their teachings, gentleness, honesty, and candid stories are kept safe in a place in my heart and mind.

An Elder gently suggested I keep a reflective journal. I was apprehensively drawn to writing but struggled to find the words. I am thankful I heeded the wise words. In rereading the journal, I found what resembles a poem.

Entrusted with stories
 This scared place calls
 Enter with a good heart
 A clear mind
 An offering
 Sweat beads dripping in blinding darkness
 Wind wailing outside the lodge
 Sizzling heat from scorching rocks
 A welcoming warmth
 Emitting sweet cedar aromas
 Indebted to my guides
 Gentle and still
 I welcome the wave of calm
 I erred, and I learned. I am still learning. I will still err. I will seek guidance.

I acknowledge that allyship takes different forms, grounded in place and space. It is listening, loving, action, activism, and so much more. But mostly, it is a curriculum—a curriculum of love, hope, fear, and (be)longing.

CAUTION

I am interested in unearthing inequalities, injustices, and power differentials plaguing Eurocentric education. Historical realities embedded in the Canadian curricular landscape are central to my pilgrimage. However, others remind me to proceed with *caution*.

Cautiously, I question the place and space I inhabit. In my early years, plagued by a naive understanding of sociopolitical power structures, I *struck* out, not understanding where I went wrong. Understanding I do not have a role in every place and space was a crucial turning point. Acknowledging my positionality, what I represent physically and my entanglement with others is a crucial part of my liv(ed)ing curriculum and my path with heart (Chambers, 2004).

As foster parents, my partner and I engaged in candid conversations. Youth in our care described how intersectionalities influenced marginalization and discrimination, perpetuating cultures of *oppression, impoverishment, addiction, crime, gangs, and the stigmatization of mental health*. Their stories of liv(ed)ing curriculum demonstrated the systematic oppression of certain populations.

As Weber and Mitchell (2002) describe, our stories are not only our own. Although they are not my narratives, the entanglement of stories illuminates hegemonic culture. I am mindful when engaging in life writing and *métissage* that authors (be)come exposed and vulnerable. However, it is next to impossible to challenge historical realities without exposing vulnerabilities in our liv(ed)ing curriculum.

Authoring my story as entangled with others opens a space for (be)longing and (re)storying through vulnerable expression. Hopeful to (re)story and (be)long, I continue my pilgrimage with an open heart, respect, relevance, reciprocity, and responsibility (Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991).

HOME COMING

Caught between third and home, the catcher blocking home plate, the third-base-man behind me, nowhere to go. I'm stuck in a *run-down*—attempting to get to home plate or back to third without being tagged out. The run-down, a metaphor for my early adult years, and perhaps, to some extent, I still carry this back-and-forth between home and third with me.

From hitting the ball at home plate, running to first, second, third, and back to home, the base-path, the path with heart, guides me. Bases represent critical stops along the way. Sometimes I linger at a base for a batter or two, sometimes I run right past, touching the tip of the bag as I go. Other times, I'm called out and start over again.

The more I dig into the central metaphor of baseball, the more I see the game embedded in our everyday lives: as a baserunner, stopping and lingering in some spaces, passing quickly through others, rounding first and going to second, or having to start over when I am called out. As a fielder, I have made fatal errors allowing others to score or advance, caught fly balls getting the batter out, and made plays holding runners in place. At different points in our lives, I believe we take on the role(s) of fielder or batter, and other times, we are the (im)partial umpire.

Seemingly there are challenges to coming/home/coming. In baseball, as in life, obstacles prevent us from arriving at the place and space where we root ourselves. I often question, will the reckless entanglement of stories keep me from coming home?

TYING THE KNOT

The curriculum is not comprised of subjects, but of Subjects, of subjectivity. The running of the course is the building of the self, the lived experience of subjectivity.

— Pinar, (1994, p. 220)

Through a juxtaposition of past, present, and future, I have presented a tapestry of relational curricula, in constant flux, the Subjects and subjectivity—the liv(ed)ing experience. I introduced my pilgrimage by theorizing life writing *métissage* as a

curricular and therapeutic practice where my *currere* could be braided into larger narratives of curriculum research (Chambers et al., 2002; hooks, 1991). Each braid, hand-me-downs, death (be)comes, and homerun or run/home presented readers with context, a connection to liv(ed)ing curriculum in different spaces and places and times.

Through *métissage*, I pondered the ethos of Canadian curriculum and the path with heart engrained in my liv(ed)ing curriculum, a necessary point of departure for critical curricular and pedagogical studies. To be committed to curricula honouring the complexity and richness of the human experience in a Canadian landscape requires authenticity and autobiography (Chambers et al., 2012).

Give me broken branches, and I will build a fort (Aoki et al., 2004). By looking to *métissage* as a theoretical framework grounded in place and relationality, we can provoke a profoundly relational way of thinking about curriculum. Conceivably, it is time to challenge curriculum development by asking, Why this knowledge? Why this place? Whose knowledge counts? and Whose knowledge permeates Canadian curriculum?

Donald (2009) reminds us we must seek opportunities to develop deep understandings of our shared histories. Through life writing and *métissage*, we can begin to piece together Ted Aoki's broken branches, collectively assembling an authentic and meaningful fort. After all, "There is nothing standing in *currere*'s way except our internal fears and insecurities of what we might look like from a distance" (García, 2021, p. 45).

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