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Elders, Family, Teachers:  
Models in Stó:lō Cultural Transmission

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Abstract

Using ethnographic methods and procedures and grounded theory, the following paper investigates language and cultural transmission among Elders, family members and teachers within an Aboriginal Head Start Family program, run by the Stó:lō First Nation, an indigenous community located in the areas surrounding Chilliwack, British Columbia, Canada. Extensive observations and video analysis were used to identify a two tiered model of guided participation, in which the program structure elicited opportunities for dyadic interactions, and whole group modeling of cultural rituals and practices.

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## Introduction

The Stó:lō First Nation (People of the River), is a community of Coast Salish bands who reside in the Fraser Valley and who share many traditions with other Aboriginal communities on the west coast of British Columbia, including a history of challenges faced with the arrival of Europeans (Carlson, 2001) and the difficult legacy of residential schools (<http://www.stolonation.bc.ca/Miramar/Nation/History.html>). To offset challenges of culture and identity loss, members of the Stó:lō community recognize the need to support Halq'eméylem language revitalization and cultural transmission across generations (Gardner, 2002) and have developed a variety of language programs to address this need (Thelma Wenman, Stó:lō Shxweli, Halq'eméylem Language Program Coordinator, personal communication, April 2007). These programs emphasize the active participation of Elders who share their language and other skills with the children and families and who have guided and advised the teachers in these programs (Mary Stewart, Early Childhood Development Manager of Stó:lō Head Start Family Program, personal communication, September, 2007). At the same time, most programs are embedded within Canadian social, economic, institutional and political systems of teacher training and licensure that also influence the educational context within which they operate. Using qualitative ethnographic methods and grounded theory (Charmaz, 2005; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1998), the following research paper examines the process of language and cultural transmission within the Stó:lō Head Start Family Program, to address the following two questions:

- 1) How is language and culture transmitted within this program?
- 2) How does this transmission vary across educational components within the Stó:lō Head Start Family Program?

### *Definition*

It has been pointed out, that pursuing a conceptual or operational definition of “culture” is artificial, given the challenge of pin pointing where one culture begins and another ends, and perhaps more importantly, the pitfalls of stereotyping, through definitions that adopt a view of culture as a fixed entity (Schwartz, Montgomery, & Briones, 2006). With these limitations in mind, and for the purposes of situating our research, we adopt an operational definition of culture as an evolving set of values, beliefs, and practices that have been passed on over time within the economic, political, geographical, and community contexts that serve to shape personal and social identity, and the construction of knowledge. We therefore propose a constructivist approach to aid our understanding of the classroom environment, where culture is viewed as something that is co-constructed on multiple levels. In so doing, we are mindful of Bruner’s comments on the study of mind and culture and what he terms “Culturalism”. In Bruner’s words:

Culturalism’s task is a double one. On the “macro” side, it looks at culture as a system of values, rights, exchanges, obligations, opportunities, power. On the “micro” side it examines how the demands of a cultural system affect those who must operate within it. In this latter spirit, it concentrates on how individual human beings construct “realities” and meanings that adapt them to the system... (Bruner, 1996, pp. 11-12)

For our purposes, therefore, and with Bruner's words in mind; we are aware that the process of cultural transmission is also very much guided by the construction of realities and meanings at an individual level and will be influenced by the child's and adult's past experiences, development and personological characteristics. In this paper we associate, "culture" with ourselves as researchers, the classroom under discussion, the Stó:lō community and the broader values and belief systems that are embedded in the context of each. We recognize the vast macro factors that have an impact on cultural formation are beyond the scope of this paper and will therefore focus on micro factors related to the built and human environment within the classroom context.

### Purpose and Significance of the study

In 2000, the British Columbia Ministry of Education reported school completion rates are much lower among self-identified aboriginal students (38%) relative to non-aboriginal students (77%). According to the Ministry, group differences in educational outcomes between aboriginal and non-aboriginal students is found as early as grade 8, where approximately 12% of aboriginal students are retained and do not progress to grade 9 compared to a 4% retention rate among their non-aboriginal peers (Ministry of Education, 2000).

Following the release of the Ministry of Education findings on grade retention and drop out rates, a report was prepared by the British Columbia Human Rights Commission to investigate Aboriginal educational inequalities (Mattson & Caffrey, 2001). Several complex barriers to education were identified, including: "issues of control, keepers of knowledge (teachers versus community), the role of curriculum in reproducing social and cultural inequalities, poverty, and overrepresentation of Aboriginal students in special education" (p.1). In their chapter entitled "Curriculum: Potential for reproduction of social and cultural inequalities?" Mattson & Caffrey (2001), state that:

The exclusion of Aboriginal knowledges [sic] and language from the current provincial curriculum is a barrier to equality of education for Aboriginal learners. The problem of exclusion is perpetuated by the system's failure to acknowledge that curriculum is very much contested terrain and to examine the relationship between the production of knowledges and power (p.39).

As described by Haig-Brown et al. (1997), the current high school and university curricula are embedded with "assumptions of European superiority [that] continue to be an organizing force, in the way we select content to which we expose the children and adults in our educational institutions" (p. 24). As suggested by Haig-Brown, and others, the Eurocentric content of the curriculum cannot represent the values of all students and their families; as such, it must be seen as an organizing force that disadvantages some students while advantaging others. Marie Battiste provides us with the following explanation:

Critical scholars today are aware, as most were not a few decades ago, that the empirical beliefs of history, geography and social science that invented the context of Eurocentrism often gained acceptance because of the way in which

evidence was presented. Scholarly beliefs are embedded in particular languages and cultures and are shaped by them. This helps to explain the paradox of Eurocentrism, which is resistant to change and continues to exercise a persuasive intellectual power. (Battiste, 2000, p. 59-60)

How does this mismatch between our Eurocentric curriculum and Aboriginal ways of knowing, impact Aboriginal students? Evidence is available to suggest that throughout the province of British Columbia, young, Aboriginal children in Kindergarten programs are often viewed by their teachers as vulnerable to poor developmental outcomes, particularly in the area of communication and general knowledge (Kershaw, Irwin, Trafford, & Hertzman, 2005). Each year, Kindergarten teachers throughout the province of British Columbia complete the Early Development Instrument (EDI), a 120-item questionnaire that assesses level of development of individual children in five areas:

- Physical Health and Well-Being
- Social Competence
- Emotional Maturity
- Language and Cognitive Development
- Communication Skills and General Knowledge

Data from the EDI is then analyzed at the group level to determine average scores for groups of children, including the number of developmentally “vulnerable children” (i.e. those in the bottom 10th percent of scores on any one of the EDI sub-scales) (Goelman & Hertzman, 2006).

Vulnerability rates for Aboriginal students throughout the province were highly variable and ranged from 0% to 37%. In Chilliwack, B.C., a city located in the Fraser Valley, approximately 200 km outside the greater Vancouver area, and the location of the program under study, 15% of Aboriginal 5 year olds were rated by their teachers as being vulnerable on the domain of communication and general knowledge on the EDI, compared to 5.92% for the remaining same age children in the district (Kershaw et al. p.124).

Kershaw et al. (2005) note that the factor that accounts for a greatest proportion of variance in vulnerability on the scale of “communication and general knowledge” is whether children receive educational support for speaking English as a Second Language. Therefore, the range of vulnerability reported across Aboriginal populations of between 0 and 37% was considered perplexing. The authors suggest that “the language experiences of Aboriginal children in some rural and remote areas is sufficiently different from what they hear in school that it is as though the kindergarten teacher is speaking an unknown language” (p. 124). They go on to note that this concern has spawned an English as a Second Dialect program in the Prince Rupert School District.

Admittedly, the construct of “vulnerability” is to a large extent culturally determined. Within the Aboriginal community, or family system this same sense of vulnerability may not be shared. But, notwithstanding these differences in the perception of vulnerability, the finding that the kindergarten teachers themselves judge Aboriginal children to be at risk on the communication and general knowledge, at school entry, coupled with the low high school graduation rates signals a cause for concern and points

toward the discrepancies that exist between these children's cultural milieu and the public school context that awaits them.

### *Early Childhood Curriculum*

In early childhood education, the entire notion of curriculum is confusing to many, given that the so-called "curriculum content" is embedded in classroom rituals, routines, interactions, built environment, materials and in a general sense the culture of the school and classroom. Early childhood curriculum is closely linked to underlying values that the classroom teachers and school communities hold. These values are reflected in greetings, values of play and learning, social processes, guidance, food or snack rituals, songs and stories, choice of play materials and activities, and importantly the image that the teacher and family hold of the child, with respect to ways that children learn, what they should learn, and how they should be supported in these learning processes. In the section that follows, microethnography is used to describe the culture of the classroom and the early learning curriculum embedded within the Stó:lō Head Start Family Program. This is followed by sections that detail two provisional hypotheses and analytic stories related to the research questions.

## Methodology

### *Grounded Theory*

One of the strengths of a Grounded Theory approach is that the researcher returns to the research setting in a recursive process of data gathering and subsequent analysis for clarification, and verification or further data collection (Charmaz, 2005; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1998).

### *Procedures*

This research project began in March 2007, following approval by our university's Research Ethics Board and informed written consent from research participants. We began with a series of in-depth interviews with Halq'eméylem language teachers and a local linguist, Strang Burton, who is working with the community on Halq'eméylem language revitalization. These interviews provided a foundational understanding of the language and cultural issues within the community (MacDonald, *in press*). From these interviews, several challenges concerning Halq'eméylem revitalization were identified, including: 1) translating this traditionally oral language into a printed symbol system; 2) encouraging and maintaining language use in the community is problematic when a limited number of fluent speakers are available who can support Halq'eméylem language use; and 3) promoting the language is constrained by a continued stigma about use of the language particularly among many Elders, adults and youth.

Of the above issues, the most pervasive was the lack of fluent speakers. In the interviews it was determined that the language teachers themselves had difficulty learning and retaining Halq'eméylem because they had limited access to individuals within the community who could help them sustain their heritage language. Fluent Elders had either passed away or were reticent to speak Halq'eméylem due to the stigma they had encountered growing up, as part of either their residential school experiences (where

the language was prohibited and students were punished for using it) and/or because of racial stigma within the community. One exception to this, is Elder Elizabeth Phillips who has worked tirelessly with the local linguist banking words and interpreting language usage in various contexts, and who also works with teachers Koyàlemót Mary Stewart and Seliselwet Bibiana Norris, in the Stó:lō Head Start Family Program<sup>1</sup>. It was also clear from the interviews, that there was a strong desire among community leaders to revitalize the language. This was apparent in the vision of Thelma Wenman, Stó:lō Shxweli, Halq'eméylem Language Program Coordinator, who has the goal of hearing Halq'eméylem spoken in local businesses and throughout the community.

Following the in-depth interviews, and continuing for a year, we observed activities in the Stó:lō Head Start Family Program, and participated in several community events such as a ceremony to honour the babies within the Stó:lō community. Running record accounts, photographs and video records on three occasions pre-selected by the teacher were also collected. Throughout this process, all the video and photographic records that were collected to document the program were also shared with teachers and program participants. Selections of photographs and video clips were compiled into a book for teachers and parents to document some of the cultural protocols of the baby honouring ceremony and the families participating. Visual and audio recordings were also made into multiple copies of a DVD that documented three of the Halq'eméylem language lessons, and included photographs and video clips of the children and families during play, breakfast, lunch, art and craft time and classroom arrival. This was done to create teaching and learning resources for the teachers and families and to make transparent the photographs and video records we had compiled as data. The data itself consisted of our in-depth interviews, uncut versions of the video records, e-mail correspondence, and our notes from classroom and special event visits.

### *Research Team*

Our research team included two university professors/researchers who visited the community; one an experienced teacher educator and past practitioner in early childhood education and the other, a sociolinguist, as well as a videographer. For the data analysis and interpretation, our team also included two doctoral level graduate students studying Educational Psychology, one in the area of early childhood, and the other researching self-esteem and ethnic identity in United States. As previously discussed, our training and educational backgrounds include mainly Eurocentric perspectives both on education and educational settings, however, two members of the research team have bicultural backgrounds and one a biracial background. We actively sought an awareness of the critiques of Eurocentric perspectives and openness to understanding other ways of knowing. As a team, we felt we benefited from the ability to work together and enter into

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<sup>1</sup> There are approximately 10-15 active Halq'eméylem language teachers within the Stó:lō territory. These teachers attain various levels of language and cultural enrichment training. Seliselwet Bibiana Norris has attained the First Nation Language Proficiency certificate, Simon Fraser University (SFU) and the Halq'eméylem intermediate language proficiency, University of the Fraser Valley (UFV). Koyàlemót Mary D. Stewart has attained the First Nation Language Proficiency certificate, SFU, the Halq'eméylem intermediate language proficiency, UFV and the Development Standard Term Certificate; within the Halq'eméylem language and First Nations culture, SFU/ British Columbia Teachers Association.

group discussion that guided us through the research process (Bigelow, MacLean, & Proctor, 2004). We operated under the assumption that we would continually need to remind ourselves, and each other of the assumptions and values that we brought to the research questions. Fundamental to this, was the use of grounded theory, incorporating open coding, with codes derived from the data itself rather than utilizing pre-existing categories based on a priori understandings or assumptions.

## Data Analysis

In our analysis, we began by transcribing the video records using Transana® software housed on a secure server. Video files were uploaded to the server, and imported into Transana® where communication among participants during each of the three selected sessions was manually transcribed. From this, we entered into a process of open coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990), where video segments were sorted into the following programmatic collections: 1) Environmental Print, 2) Transitions, 3) Meal Time, 4) Circle Time, 5) Arts and Crafts, and 6) Play. In this process, clips were segmented into clear beginning and end points based on the start and end of an interaction, and identified with both a time code and by key words descriptors e.g. “communication/literacy”, “leadership”, “scaffolding” and the people involved in the interaction “Elder”, “Teacher”, “Mom”, “Grandmother”, “Infant”, “Toddler”, “Child” as well as the communicative pattern, i.e. “adult-adult dyad”, “adult-child dyad”, “child-child dyad”, “whole group”. During this process of open coding, there was no restriction sought on the number and types of key words used. This was done intentionally to get a good representation of descriptors that would allow tabulation across settings and individuals for the key word searches that followed. This was also a way to generate free word associations about the video segments used in later discussions relating to the features of the interactions. Following transcription and open coding, the two researcher returned to the field and revisited other notes they had made, and individually reflected on their initial impressions in relation to the two research questions under discussion.

In this process, members of the research team continued to employ the constant comparison method to search out similarities and differences among data segments (see Glasser & Strauss, 1967, for a complete description of this process). This was done by running key word searches in Transana® that allowed us to conceptualize some of the key features of the program across program areas, to collapse categories, determine dominant patterns, and to aid in the drafting of “conceptual memos” (see appendix A for examples of conceptual memos). From this, we were able to identify themes or salient aspects of the program while noting their similarities and differences throughout the program, resulting in the development of two provisional hypotheses about the nature of the classroom interactions related to the research questions. At this point in our analysis, it was important to return to the technical literature in the areas under discussion, for both clarification and to determine where our provisional findings/hypotheses were situated. One member of the research team also returned to the teachers of the program for consultation. In our return to the literature and consultation we were then able to develop analytic stories related to the questions under study.

### *The Stó:lō Head Start Family Program*

Similar to other Canadian Aboriginal communities, the Stó:lō First Nation is in the unique position of experiencing population growth that is approximately 1.5 times than that of the non-Aboriginal Canadian average. Children aged 14 years and under constitute 34.6% of the Aboriginal population, compared to 19% reported among non-Aboriginal Canadians (Canada, 2001). To support young families and youth, intergenerational programs are valued as a way of transmitting values and attitudes that reinforce Aboriginal identity and culture (Ball, Pence, Pierre, & Kuehne, 2002). The Stó:lō Head Start Family Program, located in Chilliwack, British Columbia is one such program that has as its overall goal, support for parents through the development of community capacity, parent education, and intergenerational involvement. Details and mandate of the BC Head Start On-Reserve Program can be found at:

<http://www.bcfhns.org/>

According to Koyàlemót Mary Stewart,

Funding was obtained for the program in 1998, in response to the Indian Residential School era, where the majority of the Stó:lō /First Nation students were not exposed to ‘parental observance’ nor experienced an nurturing upbringing; for they were raised by religious figures. In response to this, Stó:lō Nation had mandated that their Aboriginal Head Start Program would be family-oriented and that have full participation from the parent/caregiver and include the extended family. One of the goal of the Stó:lō Nation Aboriginal Head Start Program is to rebuild strong close-knit Aboriginal families and Aboriginal communities; the way it was in pre-contact. We believe that exposure of the Halq’eméylem language and Stó:lō /Aboriginal cultural enrichment is pertinent in developing the positive self esteem and self identity as an Aboriginal amongst the Head Start participants. [To this end] Each family receives a copy of the audio-cassette Halq’eméylem language library; consisting of 6 tapes. The age appropriate information contains culturally relevant, and culturally sensitive materials on the month’s themes and songs; traditional and contemporary [developed by Koyàlemót Mary Stewart]. This ensures that the Halq’eméylem language is reinforced within the home. This will also be beneficial to the children when they enter the Aboriginal all day kindergarten class within the Chilliwack School District. One of the teachers has informed me that the Stó:lō Nation Head Start preschool children arrive to kindergarten with an wealth of the Halq’eméylem language. (Koyàlemót Mary Stewart, Personal Communication, April 2009)

The creation of an Intergenerational program should not be overlooked as ordinary. In metro Vancouver, a large urban city in British Columbia, the opposite is common, where we see a distinct ghettoization of generations within the community. This separation extends to child care programs, where grandparents and extended family members are rarely part of the child’s care and/or community experience (MacDonald, 2005). In many communities or neighborhoods, this “child-free” attitude extends to

condominium complexes and various other community zones that separate infants, children, youth, adults, seniors and the elderly from each other, and conversely artificially binds together same age groupings in institutional settings such as infant toddler centres, pre-schools, elementary schools, middle schools, high schools, colleges, universities, housing complexes, seniors' centres, care facilities etc. Currently, one exception to this separation of generation is found in some East Indian and some other Asian communities, where grandparents are more likely to accompany their grandchildren to community programs in their role as family care provider during the parents' working hours, or in religious communities where special dinners, services or rituals bring the generations together (personal communication, Cheryl Song, Mother Goose Program Coordinator).

During the study, the Stó:lō Head Start Family Program had 20 families registered, of which, approximately 15 children were attending regularly. Of these participating families, all had intergenerational connections to other members of the program and to the Stó:lō community. For example, children ranging in age from newborns to age 4 years attended with their mother, and/or grandmothers and in one case a great-grandmother. In addition, there were other relational and community connections, such as sister-in-laws or neighbours attending together. Strong community ties between the teachers, driver/cooks, and the Elder were also apparent. Members of the childcare community had strong ties to the greater community and were well known to each other and to the parents. The program itself runs two half days per week from September to the end of June, and includes provisions for families to be picked up from neighborhoods by a small bus and dropped off after the program. Program routines include: Breakfast or Snack, Circle, Arts and Crafts, Parent and Child Interaction, Parent Workshop, Lunch and a transition home.

### *Built and Social Environment*

Within the Head Start Program, furniture was new and toys and materials were well provisioned. The room was bright and very clean. The furniture, including child sized tables and housekeeping furniture for socio-dramatic play was purchased from stores/catalogues specializing in educational furniture and materials, making it look very typical of a university or college childcare setting or any other new/modern well equipped preschool program. Within the room and furniture envelope, there were also several features of the room that stood out as being unique to the Stó:lō community. For example, the room décor included the children and parent's names transliterated from English to Halq'eméylem, or their given *Indian name*<sup>2</sup> if they had one passed on to them by Elders in the community. These names were written along with the child/adult's English name. Other features of the *built environment* that reflected Native identity included: the main carpet in the circle time area (stylized Indian motif), posters, translated words and phrases, button blanket doll displayed, dream catcher, teepee, cradle board, drum. Within the *social environment*, all the Teachers and Teaching Assistants,

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<sup>2</sup> Teachers adapted the children's English names to Halq'eméylem using the International Phonetic Alphabet. If the letter sound of their English name did not exist in Halq'eméylem it was omitted, thus modifying the name. Some adults in the program also had Indian names that had been passed on to them by Elders in the community. These names are typically passed on by family members to youth or children who display personal qualities consistent with the meaning of the name.

Drivers, and Elders were from the Stó:lō community, creating important opportunities to develop connections and share skills through role modeling.

#### *Circle time*

Circle time included Halq'eméylem language lessons that took place in the form of translated greeting songs, sung in both English and Halq'eméylem (some of which were also signed using modified American Sign Language)<sup>3</sup>. These were usually followed by other songs (the English variations of which were familiar in ECE programs), and lessons on colour names and numbers in Halq'eméylem and English. Sharing in the form of turn taking to state or repeat their Indian name or transliterated name was also a familiar feature of the lessons, led by the teachers and Elder. Often clarification by the teachers of translations were sought from the Elder, who along with the teachers sat on chairs at the head of the circle, in front of the translated songs displayed on chart paper. The teachers would lead the circle time songs that were typically echoed in a refrain by the parents and, in some cases, the children<sup>4</sup>. During circle time, it was typical for some of children to wander to other parts of the classroom to play with puzzles, and explore books or other play materials. The teachers directed their attention primarily to the parents and grandparents in the program, who were reminded that they were being taught the songs so that they could use them at home with their children. A few of the older children (aged 3 and 4 years) sat either independently (slightly apart from the group) or with their family, and all of the infants were seated with their mothers or grandmothers. The attention and participation of the toddlers and some of the older children in the program varied. For short periods of time these children would sit and listen to the songs and instruction of the teacher, but often would get up and wander to other parts of the room to play. The older children who did remain at circle time were included in the turn taking activities, for example, repeating colour names or other translations and received affirmations in Halq'eméylem for their responses.

#### *Craft time*

Many of the activities organized for craft time were typical of those found in traditional ECE classrooms. The materials and cut outs were often theme related and oriented around traditional North American holidays such as Halloween and Christmas. Crafts included such things as play dough, gluing, and adding glitter to pre-cut shapes. In addition, Halq'eméylem labels for words and names were also available, which could be added by the parents to the finished product. On a few occasions, the Halq'eméylem translation of key English words that related to the craft, such as "pumpkin" were used by

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<sup>3</sup> The addition of sign language has been popular in Early Childhood Education (ECE) programs recently as a way of facilitating communication among pre-verbal toddlers and to introduce children in diverse settings to gestures and other secondary symbol systems. Sign language also has Native American roots and, because of interest, was added as one of the parent workshops when we re-visited the program a year later.

<sup>4</sup> As determined during the in-depth interviews, the language teachers didn't consider themselves fluent in Halq'eméylem. In this way, consultation with the Elder became important to the flow of the lessons and the confidence of the teachers. Comments were passed between the teachers and the Elders who often sang the refrain of the song or key words at a point in the echo where the Elder's voice could be heard over the parents (either before or afterwards).

the teachers, so that parents and children could repeat it. During craft time, parents and grandparents were very involved in the craft, essentially doing the craft for and with the child. In our observations and video records, we noted the parents creating things with the playdough and art materials and that they would often comment to the child about what they were doing and direct the child's attention to what they (the parent or grandparent) was working on. The children examined the materials and played secondary roles but the adults were providing the primary examples for the children and modeling how to proceed. For example,

P3<sup>5</sup>: "I want to make something too"

C4 looks over at her: "What is it?"

P3: "I don't know maybe a pumpkin"

P3 now in louder voice: "Just like this C4" (as she lifts up the cookie cutter).

### *Meals*

Prior to lunch, the entire group gathered for songs of thanks as further discussed, under *transitions*. These songs were accompanied by traditional drumming and led by one of the teachers, Seliselwet Bibiana. Following this, the Elders and guests were invited to help themselves to the food that was set out, while younger adults, and children waited their turn. During this waiting time the adults often engaged the children in conversation or occupied them with activities. This practice of a pre-meal blessings and songs, and inviting the Elders to the table first was noted during other gatherings and ceremonies, such as the Honouring Ceremony for the babies, and at a traditional graduation ceremony for students. The breakfast and lunch meals prepared by the cooking staff included a balanced variety of Canadian style foods, including for example, hot cereal, toast, eggs, coffee, juice, milk for breakfast, and rice, pasta dishes with meat, fruits and vegetables for lunch<sup>6</sup>.

### *Play*

As described in the section on the build and social environment, the play area was well provisioned with a variety of furnishings, and materials that were typical of North American pre-schools and daycare centres. This included such things as puzzles, riding toys, wire maze, toy cars and trucks, a doll house with figurines and furniture, books and bookshelf, housekeeping furniture and accessories, musical instruments and a computer. The play area also incorporated an adult sized couch for reading and visiting. Within the play area the computer software included a matching game with silhouettes of animals, and their tracks, the names of which were pronounced in Halq'eméylem with sounds heard when pointing and clicking the cursor. The children were free to explore within the play area and all toys were safe for the age range of the children attending. Some play materials, for example, the housekeeping dishes, play house and figurines, and musical instruments were moderately open-ended with no explicit use dictated. This allowed children to explore these materials in any way, but exploration was often modeled or

<sup>5</sup> In the transcriptions "P" refers to Parent, "C" to child, "I" for infant and "T" for toddler.

<sup>6</sup> One of the parent workshops observed when visiting the program included a consultation by a local Health Nurse who was providing advice on when to introduce solid foods to infants, teething remedies, cleaning teeth and the dangers of prolonged bottle use.

guided by their peers, teachers, parents or grandparents. For example, when a young child explored the properties of the puppet by putting it on her head, her father redirected her behaviour by removing the puppet and placing it on her right hand, saying "no, it don't sit on your head". C2 takes both hands and gives puppet back to father. P14 repeats "it don't sit on your head". P14 shows the girl the hole in puppet where her hand goes. C2 walks off. P14 places puppet back on his hand, C2 returns. P14 asks C2 to kiss puppet. C2 kisses puppet. P14 removes puppet, gives to C2, C2 places on right hand and leaves. Other materials, for example, the computer game, puzzles, or wire maze, were close ended, and had more explicit functions embedded in their form. In the case of the close-ended materials, parents, grandparents, and teachers were observed guiding and modeling the use of the materials to the children. For example, one mother guided and directed her son through a computer Halq'eméylem language game by prompting, "There's the arrow, there it is--click it--hear it" (Computer says word in Halq'eméylem Elder's voice, Mom (P1) repeats it) "Do you want to see the writing?" (P1 points to screen) "What about that one? Say, Dearwho".

### *Video Analyses*

#### *Identity*

Provisionally, we hypothesized that language and culture forming identity were transmitted within the institutional (Euro-Canadian) structure of the language lessons and the Canadian structure of the classroom setting. The dominant keyword used to describe elements related to "identity" was "bicultural". The code of "bicultural" was grounded in the earlier interviews that we had conducted with the language teachers and other key informants in the community. We continued to see evidence of this in the choices of songs and activities that were chosen in the family program, particularly the adaptation of familiar songs and tunes like "Frère Jacques" adapted by the teachers to LhólheKw' te Sp'óq'es, LhólheKw' te Sp'óq'es, Tawat te' skwix? Tawat te' skwix" (Flying swooping eagle, Flying swooping eagle, can you say your name for me? Or refrains: Ey Swayel tel siyá:ye, Ey Swayel, (Good day my friends, good day). In all cases, the songs introduced during the language lessons were adapted from familiar songs or tunes in early childhood programs.

This conceptualization was used to code the room décor and environmental print, transitions in program routines, several program activities as well as the structure of the language lessons, the latter of which we identified as typically Canadian or North American with European roots. Some program features, such as the blessings and songs prior to lunch were unique to the Stó:lō community. Several songs were coded as bicultural when it was confirmed that some of the prayers were Christian in origin but sung in a traditional First Nations style, to drumming. At the introduction of songs that were unique to the Stó:lō community, Bibiana often took the opportunity to introduce the origin of each song and how it came to the community. This provided the families with an opportunity to understand the significance of the song, naming persons who had sung the song in the past or who had given the Stó:lō people permission to sing the song and why it was important to them. This feature was coded as Stó:lō in tradition and considered to be a direct way to share cultural protocols around the journey and ownership of songs.

The structure of the circle time language lessons included a phrase and response pattern (teacher and whole group echo) with lessons on colours, numbers (counting), foods, and a variety of early childhood songs. Printed English words and phrases that had been translated into the printed Halq'eméylem (using the International Phonetic Alphabet) were pointed to, by the teacher, using finger tracking. This lesson structure was directive and was not spontaneous or conversational. When discussed with the teachers, the use of translations and the printed structure was seen, in part, as a strategy to compensate for the limited fluency of the language teachers, parents and grandparents. This created the need to work within a repetitious program structure that was safer and more predictable for the teachers and other adults. This structure also offered opportunities for the families to learn by observation, modeling themselves after the teachers and Elder. The other reason suggested was that this structure was similar to the way that the language teachers had learned Halq'eméylem themselves (including the printed translations) and it was familiar to them. The difficulty for the parents and grandparents involved in the language lessons was that this structure often singled participants out, using a school-like teacher-student response discourse in a "switchboard" style (Philips, 1983). This had the effect of making some facets of the lessons seem uncomfortable for the participants. For example, in portions of the language lessons where the participants' names were transliterated from English into Halq'eméylem, we noted a visible reluctance to engage on the part of the parents and grandparents, when their transliterated names or their children or grandchildren's transliterated names seemed unusual to them or reminiscent of English words that had other meanings. This observation was consistent with earlier statements in interviews from one language teacher, who pointed out that there were difficulties with the use of some translated words that changed the Halq'eméylem meaning. Traditionally, many words and names were descriptive of their function and in the latter instance, names were descriptive of the spirit within a person. An Indian name, therefore, would be given to a child, adolescent, or young adult, by Elders in the community after knowing the person, and at a time they were ready to receive it. The transliterated names on the other hand, did have the positive effect of allowing the participants to hear their English sounding names in a different way, but by using this transliterated process, the underlying culture and structure had European rather than Stó:lō roots, consistent with our provisional hypothesis.

#### *Interpersonal Flow*

It was found during open coding of the video interactions, and confirmed in observer notes, that the pattern of interactions in this intergenerational classroom was open and did not coalesce into dyadic and small group activities commonly found in other mom and toddler play groups in metro Vancouver. During playtime, it was typical to see the children moving comfortably between adults and other children, and interacting with a variety of adults and children, including the classroom visitors (researchers) and the videographer. During book reading, one mom was observed reading to at least four different children over the course of one session, only one of whom was her daughter. The experience reminded the researchers of the richness of community and extended family experiences, where children received attention from a variety of adults who were available, and the parents were able to visit with other adults and children. It wasn't unusual in the setting to see a baby picked up over the course of the morning sessions by

several adults, or to see toddlers engaged across a variety of activities with a number of people.

Strategies for guiding children's behaviour seemed to focus primarily on modeling appropriate behaviour and ignoring misbehaviour. Other strategies included re-direction, and accommodating by providing alternative materials. Guidance, on the part of one parent, also included positioning her daughter in social proximity, remarking to her daughter and others around her that they weren't attending the program to play with the materials, but with other children. Overall, the children were very relaxed in the room, with only a few exceptions. On occasion, upsets involved materials that were being put away, and/or disagreements over the use of materials between children.

Guidance/support, in these cases, usually came from the mothers or grandmothers but also from other adults in the room. In most situations, minor transgressions were ignored. It was frequently noted that infants and toddlers were often handed items by parents and children in anticipation of their desire for the object, which seemed to dissipate many conflicts, as shown in the examples in Appendix B.

During mealtime, it was typical for family groupings, e.g. mothers, grandmothers and children, to sit together at the table, and stand together during the prayer. During routines, such as craft time and circle time, it was typical to see dyadic interactions, where children were engaged in the craft with either their grandmother, or mother or seated in proximity of their mother or grandmother. This created a rich spectrum of interactions for the child and adults, where sub-groupings within the larger group could be formed and re-formed.

Our provisional hypothesis predicts that this range of interaction styles is another way that language and culture are transmitted to the children. Although English is the primary language of interaction, this more open style where children move freely between adults and engage in a wide range of interactions is seen as unique to this community.

### *Contrasting Settings*

To confirm our provisional hypotheses, our research team entered into lengthy discussions comparing and contrasting settings within the classroom. Our most engaged discussion concerned the circle time and pre-meal prayer time. We had all noted separately that children capable of walking or crawling were not continually encouraged to attend to the teacher during circle time. Compared with our knowledge of other mom and toddler programs, children's attention to circle time at this Head Start Program was sporadic, with many children engaging in separate play activities for much of the time. More importantly, we realized that this was not the case during the pre-meal blessing and song time, when the children were held (either lifted or hands held), and all members of the community stood together in a circle. This contrast led us to re-examine the structure of the two circles and the significance of each, and also to investigate dyadic and whole group structure, returning to the program literature and interviews.

#### *Whole group contrasts*

In our re-examination of the structure of the circle and prayer time, we diagrammed the interactions and noted that the pattern of flow in the group circle time for the language lessons was qualitatively different than the pattern of participation in the group prayer. The former could be best described as either a question and answer bi-directional

flow between the teacher and participants. When contrasted to the whole group participation of the prayer time, we noted that all participants were cued to start and sang in unison. The community and intergenerational structure of the prayer was more holistic and participatory compared to the institutional nature of the circle time language lessons. From this, we felt that although the lessons occurred in a circle configuration, the intent or objectives were oriented toward individual practice and isolating skills for the adults, whereas the nature of the pre-meal gathering was communal with a community focus. Children who participated in the language lessons observed and modeled the parents, who were the focus of the teacher's directions. The teacher confirmed that the language lessons were directed at the parents and grandparents, who were then encouraged to pass on the songs and activities with their children and grandchildren. This emphasis on parent education during the circle time explained the difference in the focus for the parents and grandparents, who were attending to their own learning and the language lessons. It was further hypothesized that these differences may have also been a reflection of the parents and grandparents' attitudes toward school structures.

#### *Within group dyadic contrasts*

The video analysis was then extended to compare and contrast the interactions between parent/grandparents when dyads were found and when children "flowed" between adults in an open pattern. To identify dyads, a keyword search of "adult-child dyads" was entered across the video collections in Transana®. The dyadic interactions between parents or grandparents and children were found to occur during play time, when the children came up to the parents, and during computer time and craft time when there was a joint purpose identified by the adults. We then began a content analysis of these dyadic interactions and found that support was provided to the children through demonstration, modeling, simplifying, repetition, translations, visual cueing, gestures, and hand over hand guidance. As well, the parents/adults were often situated in close proximity to the children. As shown in the examples in Appendix C, the most common scaffolding approach was modeling of the skill and verbal re-direction. The main examples of modeling were taken during craft time, where parents and grandparents were very involved in the craft and essentially doing the craft (playdough, gluing, and glitter etc) for and with the child, but also occurred when the messages from the materials were very explicit, such as the computer, puzzles, and wire maze at the play centres. We observed two styles of verbal interaction: the first and most frequently observed was a style of drawing the child's attention toward the material or object that the adult was focused on or working on, as well as a second style of directing communication to what the child was focused on. The free play setting precipitated more of the latter style, where adult comments focused on what the child was attending to, and in the former case, during the craft time, it was common for parents and grandparent to get the child to attend to what the adult was doing. Both styles have been identified in the literature (Estigarribia & Clark, 2007).

## Analytic Stories and Connections to the Literature

### *Question 1: How is language and culture transmitted within this program?*

Modeling of language and culture was seen as a dominant form of cultural transmission. This was apparent in the way that the language program was structured, with respect to directing lessons to the adults in the program, with the expectation that they would pass their knowledge on to their children and grandchildren. It was also seen in the prayer and serving rituals that were performed prior to lunch. During these opportune times of cultural transmission, protocols were shared, e.g. the origins of songs, importance of routines etc.

During craft time, when parents and grandparents were cueing the child's attention to craft projects initiated by adults, modeling was also a dominant form of teaching and learning. This teaching style required the children to respond to verbal cueing, visually attend and share a joint focus of attention that the adult had initiated. The exception to this occurred during free play, when adults (visitors, teachers, parents and grandparents) were more likely to enter into conversations about what the children were doing and playing with. Modeling was also found in the composition of the program leadership and staffing, and the intergenerational inclusion of the Elders, grandparents and teachers all from the Stó:lō community.

### *Question 2: How does this transmission vary across components of Stó:lō Head Start Family Program?*

Overall, we found that language and culture were transmitted across all areas of the program with examples of both dyadic and whole group flow across a rich spectrum of family members, teachers and Elders. This intergenerational and community interaction was seen as vital to the creation of many learning opportunities and support for culture and language transmission. Program areas that were unique to the Stó:lō community included the pre-meal prayers and intergenerational aspects, particularly the participation of the Elders. Bi-cultural features included the structure of the program itself and the language lessons, including the translations, and transliterations.

### *Connections to the literature*

Our findings are consistent with aspects of the literature on guided participation discussed by Barbara Rogoff and others (Rogoff, 1990, 2003; Rogoff, Mistry, Göncü, & Mosier, 1993). Rogoff's model of guided participation postulates that learning through keen observation and shared attention among complex events, is more apparent in some cultural communities where the children were less removed from adult interactions and activities. The sense that children were not separated from events, and learned through active participation in cultural systems of practice, was consistent with our observations of the children's participation in the pre-meal prayer, where the children were brought into the circle and held by the parents at eye level facing the teacher. This was also found in the intergenerational program flow, where children moved among members of the community who were representatives of a variety of generations. Similarly, children could observe adults and/or participate in the language lessons. In addition to this, we also saw other evidence of what Rogoff referred to as "distal" interactions, where adults were providing explicit instructions and directions to teach their children. Examples of

distal teaching and learning process could be seen in the ways that the parents and grandparents were guiding children's attention and sustaining a joint focus of attention, for example in free play, computer time, and craft activities. From this, we posited that these school-like activities (i.e. during craft time) were interpreted by the parents and grandparents as being for the children's non-traditional education, and as such, they felt more inclined to guide them verbally by getting them to attend to demonstrations and interpretations of them.

In this way, we propose the existence of a two tiered model of guided participation in the classroom setting, where the program itself stands as a structure that guides participation in particular Canadian/European ways, along with a second tier of guided participation that allowed children to engage in cultural flow or complex cultural routines and participate through "keen observation".

When adults were guiding the children's participation, we found our examples were consistent with other literature that takes into consideration context variables. For example, Bretherton and Bates (1979), as cited in Rogoff et al. (1993), determined that adults entering into conversations with 2-4 year olds during free play time were more likely to converse about what the children were focused on, compared to conversations that occurred during a joint drawing task. As pointed out in the literature on joint focus of attention, these differences in the initiation of the language event were found to be significant for later vocabulary development. Parents who entered into conversations about what children were focused on were found to have children with more extensive vocabularies relating to the objects under discussion, than parents who had to first solicit and sustain the child's interest in the object or material under discussion (Tomasello & Farrar, 1986).

### Limitations

During the video sessions, we were under the assumption that our presence affected the characteristics of the program, and in fact this was verified by teachers in the program who commented that they had added to their lessons, and were less inclined to repeat lessons during the days that were selected for video documentation. We also felt that the discussion and interactions of the adult participants were to some extent affected by the presence of the camera, in that on a few occasions parents seemed to modify their discussion, turned away, or averted their gaze from the camera. The children seemed less inclined to notice the camera, although they often engaged the camera operator, and at times were engaged by the camera operator. We felt that we had to accept these contextual changes during the video taping as integral to the study methodology and adopted a perspective suggested by documentary researchers that the camera would highlight characteristics that the participants felt comfortable about sharing or displaying (Beattie, 2004). This perspective seemed reasonable in a classroom setting where often teachers and parents are presenting their best professional or personal characteristics and skills. As previously mentioned, the teachers selected the days of the video taping, but rather than seeing this as a limitation, we felt that this allowed fuller program participation (the teachers reported that more families attended, knowing that the sessions were going to be taped) and created the opportunity for parents and teachers to share their program at times that didn't conflict with other events or activities.

As white middle class parents, educators, and researchers working within the Stó:lō community, we have been aware of the limitations that our Eurocentric perspectives bring to our interpretation and analysis of these research questions. It has been well documented (Ball et al., 2002; Battiste, 2000; Cannella, 2002; Cannella & Viruru, 2004; Dahlberg & Moss, 2005; Dahlberg, Moss, & Pence, 1999; Haig-Brown et al., 1997; Moss, 1994) that researchers bring with them cultural lens that affect their perspectives and conceptualizations about such fundamental things as quality, practice, interactions and programmatic characteristics within classroom environments. But in a similar way to immigrants who only become aware of their culture at the point when they enter a different setting (Schwartz et al., 2006), rather than regretting what we bring to these research questions, we have tried to use our understanding of early childhood education programming, teacher education, and our own perspectives as a way to compare and contrast programmatic and interpersonal features within the Stó:lō Head Start Family Program with traditional early childhood programs. This is something that we would not be able to do if we had been previously immersed in the Stó:lō culture and/or had no or little knowledge of conventional European and North American models of early learning. In the same way, we have also been acutely aware of the tendency of many to hold an image of young children and families from minority cultures as ill prepared for school. As pointed out by Jim Cummins, this conceptualization strips away our understanding of “culture, language, identity, intellect, and imagination from our image of the child” (p. 42). Further, it scapegoats teachers for their inability to remediate children who are “deficit”, while at the same time ignoring other socio economic conditions and racial disparities that are associated with underachievement (Cummins, 2003). It became important, therefore, to adopt a research perspective that honours the complexity of the setting. To these ends, we utilized a process of ethnographic documentation, a research team approach, grounded theory methodology, and participant verification to adequately document and interpret the teaching and learning that was taking place within the program.

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## Appendix A

Example of Conceptual Memos:

Date: 2008/11/04

Memo: Guidance

Collections: Play, meals, circle time, transitions

Keywords Used: modeling, leadership, re-direction, ignoring, gestures

Strategies for guiding children's behaviour seemed to focus primarily around modeling appropriate behaviour and ignoring misbehaviour. Other strategies included re-direction, accommodating needs. The children were very relaxed in the room, when looking at the overall tone in s1. There were two exceptions to this when C1 becomes upset that the paddles are being put away and he still wants one (even though he has put his away) and later when he takes something away from T3. In the latter case T3 is very upset.

Guidance/support in the former case came from C1's mom and in the latter case, intervention came from another grandmother in the room. In both situations the other parents who were proximate seemed to ignore the transgressions.

\*check on contexts presence and absence use of guidance strategies and under what conditions. Interactions verbal/non-verbal, strongly modeled.

## Appendix B

### *Mother, Toddler and Infant*

Mother (P6) and T3 (toddler-f). T3 hands P6 red ball with right hand. P6 is holding blue and yellow ball. P6 takes red ball. T3 uses right hand and picks up a second red ball from the floor. Hands ball to P6 who thanks T3 for handing her a ball. P6 asks T3 if she wants some [balls]. T3 does not respond, P6 says: "Here I'll give you some." T3 sits on edge of infant (I2-infant-f) turns right to face I2, reaches for multi-colour soft ball I2 has in mouth. With right hand T3 stretches arm out to show I2 the ball, retracts arm and turns to left away from I2. I2 reaches for ball with left hand when it is shown to her by T3. P6 points with left hand to T3 and I2, tells T3: "share with her." P6 tells T3 to give multi-colour soft ball back to I2 and that she will give T3 a different ball... [repeats message]...tells T3 to let "baby" have multi-colour soft ball offering repeatedly the red ball to T3. T3 turns to P6 (clockwise) while P6 holds red ball in front of T3. Keeps offering ball to T3. T3 looks at red ball in P6's hand, while holding multi-colour soft ball in right hand. I2 has eyes fixed on multi-colour soft ball and reaches left hand out for multi-colour soft ball. T3 takes red ball with left hand from P6, gives up the multi-colour multi-colour soft ball.

*Older and younger Child*

Another child approaches (G2) She pauses for a moment, appears to look around the room just behind and to the side of the toddler (T1). She (G2) observes for a moment, then kneels down. The child with the triangle sticks (G1) looks at the approaching child, takes a triangle from a plastic box and drops it on the floor in front of the approaching child.

## Appendix C

*Play time*

## Dad and daughter

R (P14) and M (C2-child-f). (C2) has puppet on left hand. P14 "what does he do? Does he talk?" C2 pulls puppet off of left hand with right hand. P14 takes puppet from C2 and places on his hand. P14 begins to model puppet talk to C2. C2 reaches with right hand to left hand of P14 to remove puppet. P14 removes puppet with left hand and places on C2's right hand. C2 removes puppet with left hand and places on top of head. P14 "no, it don't sit on your head." C2 takes both hands and gives puppet back to father. P14 repeats "it don't sit on your head." P14 shows girl hole in puppet where hand goes. C2 walks off. P14 places puppet back on his hand, C2 returns. P14 asks C2 to kiss puppet. C2 kisses puppet. P14 removes puppet, gives to C2, C2 places on right hand and leaves.

## Mom and Son at the computer

"There's the arrow, there it is--click it--hear it" (Computer says word in Halqemeylem Elder's voice, Mom (P1) repeats it) "Do you want to see the writing?" (P1 points to screen) "What about that one? Say, Dearwho" (covers mouth to cough) Boy (C1) points at screen with cursor, "That one" C1 points cursor to top right Sound of computer difficult to hear. P1, "Say that one again" (C1 clicks on icon at bottom instead and computer reads). "This one about a different one" C1 presses top left not where mom is pointing (P1 asks again and points) "press one of these." C1 "uhh!" P1, "Yup" (P1 points there) "go slow, yup" C1 "uhu—good" C1 "hee" P1, "bearfox--click him" C1 moves away slightly and P1 clicks it the computer sounds "Twetwo", C1 repeats "Twetwo", P1, "There you go now you can see him." C1 makes sound, both looking at the screen throughout Now C1 makes squeal, P1 looks down at him. C1 clicks on bottom left and repeats after hearing the computer "Sulewet"-- (P1 points to screen) "What are these?" "This one? One of these" (P1 repeats) C1, "uhh" (C1 moves cursor) "Yah" C1 making sounds P1 laughs "good C1" coughs repeats C1 pushes cursor again and computer repeats and mom repeats words Mom points again, Press this one can you see more. C1 climbs on chair to press screen instead of use cursor. P1 "no with the arrow" Resettles (C1 makes sounds) "with arrow". C1, "cougar", C1 continues to click "wolf" "fox" "umhum" "Thats a shohoo" (C1 makes soft throaty sound to imitate sound of animal) because of the sound it makes. (linking word sound to animal sounds) C1 presses and sound repeats "Squowet" C1 repeats. P1, "copy it, sqool" C1, "baby" Mom "Umhum," C1 "bbb" C1 presses again computer voice "skag" repeats, "skag" C1 "ggg" P1, repeats.

*Craft Time*

## Grandmother and Grandson

Grandma (G1) to Grandson (C3) "Here leave the lids on because they dry out ok. You don't want them to dry" (Lots of noise in the background) "One button, two buttons, how many buttons? Is that enough buttons?" (Grandmother putting glue down a row for buttons on a craft project that she has initiated). C3, "I try" G1, "One more?" (Using glue crayon on the ghost to make a button) (C3 touching hand to G1's) "Oh you want to try, go ahead and try, (guiding hand lower to next area on ghost needing a button) squish a button on" (C3 squeezes glue crayon with whole hand grasp)"There you go, horray, C3 did it" C3 points to the space below the button he "Another one? OK One more".

*Open Interactions Adults with Children*

## Adult and Toddler (Not her daughter)

Adult (female) calls out to T2 (toddler-f), "want a baby?" T2 is on floor, uses both hands to help raised to feet, and walks to adult. Adult hands doll on top of pillow to T2 who has both arms extended, palms upright into T2's arms. T2 pulls doll and pillow close to chest. Returns to her mother. Kneels down and places doll with pillow on floor.

## Adult and Children (Open Interactions across group)

C3 (child-f) and T3 (toddler-f) [sisters] playing with dolls. C3 wraps doll in blanket. C3 takes doll out of crib and places in Infant's (I2) lap. I2's mother (P13) says: "ah, that's nice." T3 follows and places doll in I2's lap. C3 drops third doll in I2's lap. T3 copies sister and drops fourth doll in I2's lap. Mother (P13) positively affirms each doll. T3 finds puppet in crib, holds up with right hand, says "puppet."