

**Connecting, Speaking, Listening: Toward an Ethics of Voice  
with/in Participatory Action Research**

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**Abstract:** Drawing on a participatory research project that brings together university based researchers and two classes of Aboriginal youth and their teachers for the purpose of researching health and wellness, we argue for an ethics of voice in qualitative research. Using participatory research methodologies and digital video technologies students plan and develop short educational films about issues of health and wellness. We exemplify the ethical issues in the presentation of student, teacher and researcher perspectives on what was learned through involvement in a project by incorporating the different voices and interests that comprise the project. An experimental form of representation is used to combine interview segments, fieldnotes and reflective writing so as to highlight the importance of voice in the construction and retelling of research outcomes.

**Key words:** *participatory research, ethics, voice, Aboriginal culture, digital video*

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## 1. Introduction

In the public's eye, traditional conceptions of research are based on a view that sees it as the implementation of specialized forms of knowledge held and used by an educated elite. For those standing outside the periphery of such know how, research is seen as something done by experts rather than a form of knowledge construction undertaken by those without specialized training. The methodologies of participatory action research (PAR) aim to simultaneously democratize and demystify research as a means for understanding and changing the world. Yet, despite PAR's stated goal of actively involving research participants as co-equals, the representation of research findings often remains problematic. How does such research adequately represent the different voices that combine to create the final outcome of the research? A desire to represent and work with participants as co-equals cannot in itself negate existing power differentials. Within any research endeavor the locations of such differences are many. They may lie between university-based researchers and community-based co-researchers, between teachers and students, and between members of dominant and minority cultural groups. Such power imbalances can affect voice. [1]

An integral component of the presentation of research findings is an ethic of voice and voicing, which for the most part, remains unexplored as an issue that impacts upon the ways in which knowledge from such projects get presented, taken up and used. The purpose of the present paper is to demonstrate one way in which the ethics of voice can be addressed in the writing of academic research. In this paper we experiment with combining the voices of teachers, uni-

versity based researchers, and high school students. Through this combination of voices we aim to convey the learning that has taken place in a project that brings together individuals of different backgrounds, ages and experiences to focus on promoting health and wellness among young people. [2]

## **2. The *Traditional Pathways to Health* Project**

*Traditional Pathways to Health* is a participatory action research (PAR) project conducted with Aboriginal teachers and youth. The project brings together researchers from a faculty of education with community partners for the purposes of conducting research about health and wellness and the prevention of injury. The youth choose their own topics to investigate in the area of health and wellness and, using digital video technology, gather material in the form of interviews, images, songs or text, which they then transform into short video productions. [3]

The two high school classes that first became involved in the project were a Grade 12 First Nations Career and Personal Planning (CAPP) class, led by Corrine MICHEL, and a First Nations Leadership class of Grade 12 students taught by Frank CONIBEAR. The two classes in which the project is situated are not typical high school classes. Both are grounded in a First Nations pedagogy and epistemology that sets them apart from the mainstream of traditional high school teaching. In this paper, we consider the role of PAR with indigenous peoples and communities. [4]

### **2.1 Research and the voice of participants**

The paper, which began life as a conference presentation in which several individuals spoke to the project and the students' voices were "present" through their videos and interview clips, has been beset by challenges in transforming it into a scholarly format. One reason for this is the translation of the oral into a written format. While it now is a truism—after BAKHTIN (1981, 1986), that utterances (in both oral and spoken discourse) are heteroglossic, or interlaced with multiple voices—the explicit representation of dialogism within and between individuals is difficult to accomplish in a written format, or at least we have found it challenging. In an oral forum, individuals can take turns speaking, with each of their turns being consciously and unconsciously inflected by others' words and gestures. BAKHTIN identified several ways in which utterances show traces of influences: "others' utterances can be repeated," "they can be referred to," "they can be silently presupposed," or "one's responsive reaction to them can be reflected ... in the expression of one's own speech" (BAKHTIN, 1986, p.91, cited in WERTSCH, 1991, p.110). Influences—that is, learning—from others is a form of intertextuality that often operates in subtle ways (ORR, 2003), yet tangibly contributes to participants' developing a common project. Through the search for a way to include (viz. represent) the multiple voices within the project, dialogical influences have become more apparent; these are discussed later in the paper. Written genres of conversation and discussion have become accepted ways in which to emulate the give-and-take "hereness" of dialogue (for example, see MOORE, MONAGHAN, & HARTMAN, 1997). Paulo FREIRE practiced dialogue as a particular method of action, in which the participants think through issues of social justice and, through their dialogue, arrive at a different place that is more critically informed (FREIRE & MACEDO, 1995). There are also those who have argued, generally, that writing is a form of motion; it is a mode of experiencing, and not just of representing experience (CIXOUS, 1991; GENDLIN, 1965; GIROUX, 1978). Some, most notably LUGONES and SPELMAN (1983), have used the written form of the conversation in order to emphasize the blank spaces between their speaking. The white spaces highlight the incommensurability of their differences; LUGONES is Chicana and SPELMAN is white. [5]

## 2.2 History of this piece

The present article focuses on the dialogism that happened among co-participants in the first year of a PAR project; it is about how the project developed, in large part, through dialogical processes, and how these processes occurred against the background of white and Aboriginal identities. In particular, this paper constitutes a reflection on the relationship between PAR, as a research approach, and indigenous peoples and communities. As HALL (2001) says, the "contemporary practice of participatory research" needs to draw on various practices, including "the Aboriginal Self-Determination movement" (p.175); in drawing on such voices, PAR itself will no doubt undergo periods of ambiguity, reaffirmation, and change. [6]

One of the ways in which that reflection has taken place in this paper is through interrupting the conventional order of academic writing. Usually, a problem is identified, the theoretical background outlined, the methodology presented, and results discussed. While these elements are embedded within our discussion, they have been deliberately reframed within a different order, in which we recursively "circle" back to the voices of the project participants so as to show how the heterogeneity of voices contributed to, and actually created, the project. This approach is methodologically faithful to the importance that the circle took on within the project. Each class session in Frank's and Corrine's classes began with a talking circle in which everyone took turns speaking by passing an eagle feather or a stone. Speaking turns in the paper are signaled by a blank space (to create room for speaking in the cultural tradition of the First Nation participants), and the name of who is speaking. The recursive circling back to participants' voices echoes the circle, as does the collective speaking towards the end of the paper. With the presentation of the different voices linked together with explanatory text, the format we have used in this paper is also reflective of the structure of a documentary film—the medium that students used to present their findings. [7]

In establishing criteria for quality in qualitative and interpretive research, LINCOLN (1995) weighs the importance of voice and she advocates using "the extent to which alternative voices are heard" as "a criterion by which we can judge the openness, engagement, and problematic nature of any text" (p.283). The student voices, as "alternative" to the adult voices, as well as being the "alternative voices" of youth researchers, have been placed to interrupt, contradict, qualify as well as support and enhance others' speaking. [8]

## 3. The Research Team

The research team, at the time of the original writing (2001-2002), was composed of both Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals. The principal investigator and two research assistants (Ted, Teresa and Janet) are of a Euro-Canadian heritage although both Teresa and Janet have a kinship or marital connection to Aboriginal culture as part of their family histories. The two Aboriginal teachers on the team joined following their review of the project's objectives (Frank and Corrine). Within a traditional research lens, the two classrooms represented "sites" for the study. Within PAR, participants are seen as researchers. One teacher, Corrine, a graduate student, was also asked to become a research assistant, a dual position that has influenced her learning during the project as well as influenced our learning. Frank, who had recently completed his master's degree at the university and who has been teaching for seventeen years, had a profound influence on the direction of the project through his use of Coast Salish pedagogy and philosophy linking speaking, Aboriginal identity, and the talking circle. Student voices are represented in the project in and through the videos they created, interviews conducted with them, as well as students speaking on behalf of their videos and participants to diverse audiences in schools and in university classes of graduate students and preservice teachers. In the paper, their voices are heard directly through interview data as well as through others' voices, especially those of their teachers. The students became researchers in their own right. Following discussions and focus groups with the university-based researchers, students went beyond their classroom and school library to collect information for their projects. They choose

their topics and whom they wanted to interview. They sought verbal or written permission from their participants. They videotaped interviews with peers, family, elders, teachers, community service providers or representatives; some also filmed community events. They then used video editing software to organize and present their data in the form of a short film. [9]

The primary mode of dissemination for the project has been the student videos created with digital video technologies; the cross-fertilization between digital video technology and indigenous knowledge in the project is the subject of another paper. The videos, and the student learning processes that have gone into the making of the videos, are at the center of the study "on the ground" in the classrooms. In Frank's classroom, the team has made weekly two-hour visits over the course of three school years for a total of 150 hours of direct contact between the students as community partners and the university research team. Other sites, such as Corrine's, have had between 60 and 90 hours of direct contact. Because of the First Nations pedagogies informing both classes, the students are responsible for "speaking for" their video projects in gatherings that take place at the end of the school year in which friends, family, other community members, school representatives, First Nations educators, and university faculty are invited for a screening of the videos and a feast (sharing of food). Interested students have also come to the university and conferences to present and speak for their videos. In the following paragraphs, we hear the voices of different participants articulating what the most valuable part of doing the video was to them. [10]

→ **Jamie:**

Getting all the remarks from the people who saw the video. I didn't think it was that good but other people did. [11]

The teachers, because of their professional relationship to the students, and also because of a bond of shared Aboriginal identity, feel responsible for "speaking for" the students. The teachers did this differently, though. For Corrine, it showed empathetically through her personal knowledge of what it means to be an urban Aboriginal person, an individual who has been disconnected from family and community because of the effects of colonialism; this understanding has informed her understanding of her students. Most of the students in Corrine's classroom grew up off reserve. [12]

→ **Corrine:**

I want to talk about the vision I had for the students when I was invited to participate in this research project. It is my job to enhance the wellness of the students I work with each day, and they are all at different places in their personal development. When I first heard about participatory action research, I was impressed with the methodology. I was excited at the opportunity to involve the students in the process, and to bring the community into the school. I wanted them to become involved because I wanted them to connect with the First Nations community in a positive way. Many of the students I work with are disconnected from their cultural heritage. Some of them are living thousands of miles away from their territory, some have never met their First Nations family members, and some are connected with their culture but are in the city to attend school. They miss being in a space where it is safe to be who they are. [13]

I can only speak for myself when I say that there is a profound sense of aloneness that lives inside a First Nations person who is estranged from her family, community, and culture. Relationships with other First Nations people helped me to accept who I am, to feel proud of who I am, and to understand who I am. When I agreed to participate in the project, I hoped that the students I have the privilege to work with would benefit from this contact with First Nations role models. The community loves its children and there is an acceptance of your accomplishments that feels very much like familial pride. It gives me a sense of belonging that I do not feel in any other place in my life. [14]

→ **Sheralyn:**

Urban First Nations youth are not as influenced or exposed to their culture. It's important to understand why culture is important: the well roundedness you can have. People who practice later in life gain just as much as someone my age. When you are involved in your culture or any other religious practice, it helps you belong and relate to others who are like you. You're involved with elders who have a lot more knowledge about fasting, sweatlodges, hunting, dancing, your language. I have such a yearning now to go back to my homeland. There is a void there that I can't fill unless I go back there. [15]

Frank CONIBEAR developed a metaphor of "speaking for" the students. This metaphor needs to be understood within an indigenous framework (GRANDE, 2000) rather than within ALCOFF's (1991) critique of the pitfalls of "speaking for" others, in this case, of a teacher for his students. Frank's rationale, no less than Corrine's, arises from his own history as an Aboriginal person, in particular, his coming to understand the role of the speaker within Coast Salish traditions and incorporating this understanding within his own life (as a speaker) and the pedagogy he uses in his classroom and the school (the circle and the potlatch). Frank speaks on behalf of the students (in such contexts as conference papers and articles) and the students "speak for" their participants through their videos. Most of Frank's students are Coast Salish and grew up on reserve, although several also come from other tribal communities from Canada and the United States. [16]

→ **Frank:**

My name is "Tul qwe muwlt," given to me by my late uncle. The name comes from the Lyackson First Nation on Valdez Island. My second "Indian" name is "Chigajaymixw," which was given to me by my wife's family. This name means something to the effect of "teacher of many nations." [17]

I am here to speak for the young people. In my Coast Salish culture, the speaker speaks for a family on matters of importance. I am here to speak for the young people who worked on this research. When we asked them to do research in the area of health and wellness, they came back to the classroom with work that reflected their own voice and vision. My role as teacher was to help them. In that capacity again I am speaking for them. The students also, with their work, became like speakers for the research participants. The participants' voices were heard in the students' work. [18]

At this point I would like to thank the young people and their participants—their elders, their relatives, their friends. It has been a learning experience for all of us. Thank you. Huy ch q'u. The dialogue generated through this research is very important for our communities, for all of us. [19]

→ **Jen:**

I learned the different influences and impacts of culture on people. I wanted the video to not be exclusive to First Nations not in my culture. I didn't want it to leave anyone out. There are different points of view in the video; if you couldn't relate to one, you could relate to another. [20]

#### **4. Participatory Action Research with Indigenous Participants**

*Traditional Pathways to Health* is part of an interdisciplinary group of projects (CAHR [Community Alliance for Health Research]) focused on the prevention of injury to young people. CAHRs are funded by the federal government of Canada through the Canadian Institutes for Health Research and have as their goal the establishment of research partnerships that combine the knowledge and expertise of both university based researchers and members of the community. The CAHR of which this project is a part is called *Healthy Youth in a Healthy Society: A Community Alliance for Reducing Risks for Injury in Children and Adolescents*. The CAHR project

is run through the University of Victoria's *Center for Youth and Society* and shares funding with six other research projects that also focus on injury prevention to young people. [21]

As the CAHR project title implies, the focus of the research is on the prevention of injury to young people. Injury constitutes the leading cause of premature death for young people in both Canada and the U.S. and accounts for the majority of hospital admissions and emergency room visits for youth ages 15 to 24 (ANDERSON & SMITH, 2003). Many of these injuries are preventable and the Healthy Youth in a Healthy Society CAHR is a five-year research project aimed at implementing a variety of intervention and health promotion strategies designed to reduce injury to young people. The *Traditional Pathways to Health* sub-project involves Aboriginal youth, who as a population, experience disproportionately high levels of certain types of injury, the most notable of which is suicide. In the following paragraphs, we hear the voices of different participants responding to the issue whether their ideas have changed. [22]

→ **Megan:**

I see the people who I've interviewed differently. I see them as well rounded. It makes you feel good about that person because you know about the good things they're doing. [23]

Critics of conventional forms of research would argue that Aboriginal people, as "populations," have been positioned as the "problem." As SMITH (1999), a scholar of Maori descent, makes clear: "For many indigenous communities research itself is taken to mean 'problem'; the word research is believed to mean, quite literally, the continued construction of indigenous peoples as the problem" (p.92). Aboriginal health, for instance, has been historically constructed within a discourse of unhealthy bodies in need of being reformed by the state (FOURNIER & KREY, 1997; KELM, 1996, 2004). [24]

→ **Jen:**

Culture keeps us alive. I knew it [culture] was there but I just never had it reflected back to me. My mother's in there [the video] and I can see myself being like her 20 years from now and I can see myself doing the same, passing it on. Culture keeps us alive. [25]

How was PAR used within the project? What is PAR's history with indigenous communities? Is it an accepted form of conducting not only cross-cultural research but "indigenous" research, that is, research directly benefiting indigenous peoples and in which the direct beneficiaries in this study were intended to be the students? [26]

→ **Teresa:**

From my own experience of living, teaching and working with First Nations people, I have become grounded in collaborative research models. Nevertheless, I found that in the beginning I kept aloof from the PAR model, which I hadn't used before or witnessed in use. I was wary of whether PAR had really worked with Aboriginal communities or whether it was simply an extension of the "do good," missionary tradition. I wanted to be informed of other collaborative forms of research that indigenous communities themselves were exploring. My opening research journal entries are therefore filled with questions. I had questions about what we were doing, why we were doing it, did we know what influence we were having, and were we open to changing the PAR model if need be. [27]

According to Budd HALL (2001), who has been involved in PAR before its inception within academia (with the publication of a special issue of *Convergence* in 1975), there is no patent on PAR. Rather, "participatory research as a practice has always existed, whenever farmers, mothers, workers, the poor, the 'pushed out' have struggled collectively to understand their contexts, learn about their worlds and take action to survive or, from time to time, to carve out some gains against the more powerful in our worlds" (HALL, 2001, p.174). Orlando FALS BORDA is credited with the first use of the word, although HALL recalls that Marja-Liisa SWANTZ (of Tanzania) "had earlier used those same words in several of her talks to the university community" (p.172). Participatory action research predates FREIRE's critical literacy by several years, however strong

links exist between the two traditions, the most important of which is the use of research and literacy to raise awareness and generate action. In *Traditional Pathways to Health*, this role is played by the digital video technology. [28]

→ Ted:

As principal investigator and leader of the university research team, I began the project with much enthusiasm, interested to see the potential that desktop video offers as a medium for expression of students' ideas about health and wellness. I felt that the methodology of participatory action research would be a good tool to use, although like Teresa, I felt some discomfort with the orientation that PAR holds towards what FINE (1998) has called "a colonizing discourse of the Other" (p.130). PAR presents itself in much of the literature as being concerned with the interests of oppressed and marginalized peoples, and I often wonder to what extent such an orientation serves to perpetuate the we/they split that separates too much of the world. Can such a stance serve to perpetuate difference while claiming to act in the service of social justice? Is viewing another as oppressed or marginalized bringing a frame of reference to that other that is not of their making, but rather, a kind of ascribed status laid on to them? Such an orientation has the potential to make PAR into something that one "does" to others in the service of liberation. If it is indeed liberatory, for whom is it liberating and from whom and what? Is it yet another form of missionary proselytizing in which the goal for conversion is a PAR defined version of emancipation? The danger in PAR is that by defining others as marginalized or oppressed, it subjugates at the same time that it creates a we/them dichotomy. I am wary of this aspect of PAR. [29]

My original decision to use PAR in this study was based on three arguments: (a) its critique of conventional research; (b) its belief in equality among participants, including the researcher as participant; and (c) its openness to multiple forms of representation. [30]

LINCOLN (2001) identifies two reasons for the emergence of action research. "First and foremost is the broad critique of social science which exposes the seeming inability of social science research to provide incontrovertible answers to persistent social problems" (p.124) such as racism, poverty, and ill health. Conventional empirical modes of social science research, borrowing from the model of the sciences, use an extraction model, in which data is obtained from subjects and results are written up acontextually. Many researchers have become disenchanted with "the failure of social science to engage problems in the sites where they occur: communities, agencies created to deliver social services, corporations, neighborhoods" (p.124). WOLCOTT (1975) had advised researchers conducting ethnographic studies to remain at least one year in the field. The movement in action research towards establishing a "longevity of relationship" (LECOMPTE, 1993) is indicative of the movement towards involving stakeholders in the research process, which does not preclude conducting short-term projects based on specific community needs (REITSMA-STREET & BROWN, 2002). [31]

The second reason, then, for action research's coming into being was the perceived need to reconceptualize the traditional relationship between researcher and researched. If research informs policy, but is removed from the voices of the stakeholders affected by such policies, then what is its point, except to maintain the privileged positions of experts in government and universities? Notions such as "stakeholder agency" (GREENE, 1997, p.173; cited in LINCOLN, 2001, p.125) speak to the desire to shift research into a democratic dialogue, in which research has as its explicit goal to be "responsive to quests of communities for progressive action" (BROWN & REITSMA-STREET, 2003, p.62). Research needs to be directly useful to stakeholders. GREEN and MERCER (2001) say that funding agencies are growing impatient with the limited applicability of conventional research studies. Participatory forms of research represent alternatives to technical assistance that is frequently delivered to practitioners or community residents top-down by experts (GREEN & MERCER, 2001). The reason for involving stake-

holders, then, is so that the research is practical; that is, rooted in actual practices, contexts and situations. KEMMIS and McTAGGART (2000), for instance, have linked participatory action research with the study and discourse of practice. [32]

The involvement of stakeholders in research rests on a belief in research as value-laden, and in which the values that participatory forms of research foster, among others, are "equality and fairness" (GREENE, 1997, p.173 cited in LINCOLN, 2001, p.125). Such values become practice within participatory or collaborative forms of research (BROWN & REITSMA-STREET, 2003; REITSMA-STREET & BROWN, 2002). The line between researcher and researched is deliberately blurred (LINCOLN, 2001, p.126), such that all involved become "co-participants" through sharing "a social world" (KEMMIS & MCTAGGART, 2000, p.595) focused on an egalitarian co-construction of knowledge for the purpose of enacting social change to address a specific problem. In describing such reconfigurations of the traditional researcher-researched relationship, LINCOLN (1995, 2001) turns to feminist theories of caring and connection. A "communitarian" ethic (LINCOLN, 1995, p.280) consists in a "commitment to community—communitas and caritas, or caring concern" (LINCOLN, 2001, p.127) and has the potential "to dissolve the old borders between knowledge-producing and knowledge-consuming elites, and the communities in which they study" (LINCOLN, 2001, p.127). Several researchers have incorporated feminist theories into participatory or collaborative forms of research (BANISTER, 1999; BROWN & REITSMA-STREET, 2003). [33]

My third reason for using PAR in this study was its openness to multiple forms of representation. As many have pointed out, PAR is not a methodology; it is an approach or orientation. "It has been argued (TONESS, 1999) that while action research is quite clear in its ideological focus, it is less clear in either its epistemological focus, or its methodology" (LINCOLN, 2001, p.129). Because PAR's focus is on the "creation of new knowledge," quantitative or qualitative methods (or a combination of both) may be invoked in representing that knowledge (LINCOLN, 2001, p.129). The reason for this openness is so as to allow the epistemology (understandings and knowledge) and methodology (ways to communicate that knowledge) to emerge from the community (LINCOLN, 2001) or, more precisely, through the decision-making process reached within a project (BROWN & REITSMA-STREET, 2003). [34]

*Traditional Pathways to Health* uses alternative modes of gathering and representing knowledge; alternative in the sense that visual and arts-based modes of doing research, though having made considerable inroads, still exist on the margins of educational research (EISNER, 1997; SCHRATZ & WALKER, 1995). "If we reflect on the culture at large and ask how we convey what we know, a large number of forms for doing so come immediately in mind," wrote EISNER (1997, p.5). Among those forms, he includes stories, diagrams, maps, theater, wordless demonstrations, poetry, and film. Further, he argues, "there is an intimate relationship between our conception of what the products of research are to look like and the way we go about doing research" (p.5), or at least there can be. The fact that PAR is flexible in its silence about which methods might be appropriate does not mean that, as EISNER points out, an integral relationship develops between the "what" and "how" of conducting research. The role of digital video technologies within *Traditional Pathways to Health* will be discussed at length elsewhere; suffice to say that the visual, oral, and textual multimedia aspects of digital video technology assisted many students in producing knowledge that they had not imagined possible within a school setting. Conversely, the association of new technologies with contemporary wired culture, especially youth culture, does not mean digital video technologies will attract all youth. One of the project's limitations was its exclusive reliance on this medium. [35]

Because of its history of opposing dominant paradigms, PAR could legitimately be seen as aligned with resistance to authority and thus eminently suited to collaborative research

with/within Aboriginal communities, which have a history of resistance to colonialism and oppression. Participatory research and collaborative action research "emerged more or less deliberately as a form of resistance to conventional research practices which were perceived by particular kinds of participants as acts of colonization—that is, as a means of normalizing or domesticating people to research and policy agendas imposed on a local group or community from central agencies often far removed from local concerns or interests" (KEMMIS & MCTAGGART, 2000 cited in LINCOLN, 2001, p.125). KEMMIS and McTAGGART do not situate PAR directly within anti-colonial or post-colonial theory but their argument suggests that the values that PAR researchers carry with them into the field allow them to share in participants' perceptions of injustice. PAR studies with Aboriginal communities or people nevertheless risk carrying into research traces of non-indigenous social science methodologies. [36]

→ **Teresa:**

My research journal entries are filled with a motion contrary to the skeptical one, one resting on a desire to go with the flow and learn from the two classroom situations and teachers. I reflected on the experience of being within a circle and "how there is a flow and energy already there that we are part of but also not a part of" and wondered "how to enter that flow, like salmon, and go the right way, making mistakes as part of the process" (FIELD NOTES; Sept. 19, 2001). The "mistakes" refer to my own jarring feeling of there not being a fit, initially, between how we were speaking to the students and how the teachers and students were speaking with one another. As the project progressed, this feeling receded. For example, I wondered about how we as "PAR researchers" talked about such things as the project's "purpose." In my journal, I noticed how Frank, "with the suicide question, talked to the student about preparing herself (mentally, spiritually, etc). And for another student's project but also to everyone, he spoke to purpose, of why they're doing this. They're not doing this to investigate something that lies outside of them. This is about who they are and about giving back to community" (FIELD NOTES; Sept. 19, 2001). The feeling of wariness finally disappeared in hearing the students' interviews and listening to them speak about the purpose of their videos. [37]

The project's values of participatory action research (such as equality and reciprocity) fostered the "opening [of] communicative space" (HABERMAS cited in KEMMIS & MCTAGGART, 2000, p.595) such that students and teachers themselves identified health issues they wanted to address. As they saw it, the problem was not the insufficient attention paid to preventable unhealthy practices of Aboriginal youth. Instead, the problem is the lack of attention to Aboriginal sources of wellness and healing, such that even those student videos that tackle a "problem" (such as suicide, eating disorders, diabetes or drug and alcohol addiction) are framed in such a way that the student's focus is on the goal of wellness and, through the inclusion of Aboriginal voices, self-determination in achieving that wellness. This perspective is consistent with studies and recommendations coming from Aboriginal leaders and organizations in Canada (e.g., ABORIGINAL HEALING FOUNDATION, 2002), to which the project has increasingly turned for its conceptualization of youth injury and wellness within indigenous contexts. [38]

→ **Jennifer:**

This was not my first topic, I started with smoking. It wasn't important, though. It would be over and done with. I wanted to do something closer to my heart. [39]

→ **Tony:**

The topic Native soccer league started by his grandfather forty years ago is important to young people because I participate in it. I have since I was five or six. I started with watching. [40]

→ **Ted:**

Developing a PAR project in such a manner is not easy. At particular points in the process, the differences between the culture of the students and the culture of the university felt vast, even overwhelming. I recall our early sessions in which I was presenting to the students in Frank's class, telling them about participatory action research and the whole framework of the CAHR project. I used the same methods I would have used with a university class—I had some overheads, carefully constructed to show each aspect of the ideas I was trying to convey, and as I worked my way through this presentation, I had a strong sense of just how badly I was "bombing" in my approach. Student looks, if they were looking my way at all, were that of indifference. Several turned their backs toward me, retreating in the shelter offered by the raised hoods of their sweatshirts. As a group, they seemed bored and uninterested. I tried to read the situation, wondering if I was reading too much into their apparent lack of interest in what I was saying. Engaging in what SCHÖN (1983) would call reflection-in-action, I tried to readjust my teaching right there on the spot. I speculated about whether it was my pacing. Perhaps I was using language that was too abstract, or laden with academic jargon. Maybe I needed to become more animated. Whatever I tried seemed to have no effect. My fifteen minutes of presentation felt like an hour and a half. I struggled through to the end, wanting, hoping for Frank to get up from his desk where he was working on something, and rescue the session with some kind of sage intervention that would pull it all together, and somehow, make my remarks seem intelligible to the students, or at least, worth listening to. But that didn't happen. Frank continued his work, one ear to the presentation, but he let me struggle. Whether it was out of respect for the autonomy with which I act as a researcher, or whether it was to let me learn about what would and would not work with his students, I'm not sure. I do know though, that from that day on, I knew that the kind of pedagogy I was used to using in a university setting was not going to be of much use to me in the First Nations Leadership class. [41]

→ **Jamie:**

In making my video, I had to consider their my participants' feelings because they hadn't really thought about their past with drugs or alcohol. Well, one did. The interview brought back a lot of memories that weren't good for him, so the interview took a while. [42]

## 5. Past, Present and Future Relations

"A community action research project is a journey of those who are embedded in past relations to one or more communities and who care about their present and future" (BROWN & REITSMA-STREET, 2003, p.64). Several metaphors have been adopted or developed for articulating learning across difference or the space in which new knowledge (including unlearning) can happen; some of those include: "border crossers" (GIROUX, 1993); "border work" (HAIG-BROWN, 1992); "unlearning racism" (COCHRAN-SMITH, 2000); "negative pedagogy" (KAMBOURELI, 2000); "liminal spaces" GUNN ALLEN, 1996; TURNER, 1969) and legitimate peripheral participation (LAVE & WENGER, 1991). While it might be interesting to see how and whether the various positions apply to the individuals within the study, they are cannot describe a social or dialogical inquiry process. The challenge in a study like *Traditional Pathways to Health* has been to keep as close as possible to the media in which the co-participants have forged relationships, namely one rooted in the visual (the video projects) and the oral (speaking about the projects in circles or presentations). [43]

BROWN and REITSMA-STREET (2003) develop the idea of community action research as a journey that begins in the past and brings it forward for the purpose of being oriented towards the future. This conceptualization works well within a research situation of white and Aboriginal co-researchers because of how the past has influenced the present and the desire to change the future. Aboriginal peoples bring a consciousness of colonization, and how it has influenced

definitions of indigenous identity (KING, 2003; OWENS, 1998), community (ANDERSON & LAWRENCE, 2003), and research (DELORIA, 1969; SMITH, 1999). Aboriginal peoples bring indigenous knowledge (ALFRED, 1999; CAJETE, 1994) and a tradition of resistance to that knowledge being appropriated, misinterpreted or misused (ALFRED, 1999; BATTISTE & YOUNG-BLOOD HENDERSON, 2000; LAROCQUE, 1996). White researchers bring their own stories and histories of growing up in particular communities or in particular ways, stories also influenced by the larger discourses in society. The seventh-generation focus of indigenous research and practice looks towards the next generation who will carry these understandings forward: children and youth. The speaking voices within the study show how PAR processes have been used to speak from where one is for the purpose as well of speaking out and across to someone else, the circle being a prime example of this process. [44]

→ **Ted:**

Frank's teaching exemplified the application of a respectful approach towards students, never judging lateness nor absence, or what might seem like a lack of focus. He persisted with patience and support, and his continued and unwavering belief in the students' abilities was, for me, a powerful lesson in the benefits of focusing on the positive. [45]

→ **Jen:**

The whole group was a teaching experience, to learn to be more patient and less demanding. [46]

→ **Corrine:**

Connecting with community members is important in establishing a sense of identity, especially for urban Natives. I hoped students would meet people in the community and perhaps make some connections that would last. [47]

→ **Sheralyn:**

Making the movie has changed me. I've asked people that I've known forever questions. The person opens up about things that you wouldn't normally talk about at the dinner table, stuff that I didn't know about my aunt's past and how tradition and culture played a role in her career. [48]

→ **Janet:**

The videos have the potential to continue and change as they enter a more public space that offers interaction between video-maker, video-participant, and audience. My hope is that the video research projects will allow students to develop increased awareness and ownership of their ideas and hence find this experience as self-empowering. I also hope that the videos created by youth will 'speak to' and be 'heard by' youth. [49]

→ **Adeline:**

Concerning the question who I hope will see this video, I think I want to see more youth communicating with other youth rather than fighting and being against each other. I hope they get this message and do what they have to do. [50]

→ **Tony:**

Concerning the question how my topic contributes to injury prevention among youth I believe that if more youth played soccer, then they could be more focused on participation. If they were conscious of the history, it took a lot of devotion to get it started and to keep it organized. It involves discipline and commitment. It's made a pretty big difference in my life, it's in my hands to do it. [51]

→ **Ted:**

I view PAR as an opportunity for individuals and groups to develop a sense of agency through dialogue, *and from* that dialogue, engage in processes of self-determination. In

such a context, the journey that is PAR is one that is taken side by side rather than with leaders and followers, researchers and subjects, or marginalized and mainstream. [52]

→ **Teresa:**

By the time of the student video presentations, we ourselves, as researcher participants, had become so involved and drawn into the teaching and learning situations, that the teachers' and students' ways of seeing things became more part of our own ways of speaking and doing research. Our project became absorbed into something larger that was both our doing and not of our doing. [53]

→ **Jen:**

I just realized [through doing the video] how much I don't take culture lightly; how much it means to me. [54]

→ **Frank:**

I would like to speak again for having the opportunity to work in this kind of research. I want to say thank you. Huy ch q'u. *Maybe the importance of this work is not so much in the videos but in the dialogue.* The dialogue that occurred in the research is bigger than the research. The young people all made connections with family or friends. Connections were made through the conversation to prevent injury and to promote health/wellness that brought some together in ways they had not done before. The relationships that were established or re-established were stronger. It is this kind of dialogue that makes our families and communities stronger. Thank you. [55]

→ **Adeline:**

This research means to me that I learn something new every day; that you've never known before. [56]

## 6. Coda

Social science research is both a dialogic and relational undertaking that requires its practitioners to pay careful attention to ethics. Too often, participants' voices are left out of the retelling of what was learned through the research. As those who construct, and then apply knowledge and understanding built from the contributions of others, researchers have an ethical obligation to ensure they are as inclusive as possible in the presentation of their work. In this paper we present a range of voices, each speaking about what they learned through their involvement in this project. Together, they tell of the different benefits of participation and engagement. [57]

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