Research in Practice Projects

Catching Our Breath:
Collaborative Reflection-on-Action in Remote-Rural BC

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RiPAL-BC

Research in Practice in Adult Literacy
British Columbia

Preface

Research-in-Practice Projects (RiPP) started as a way to encourage and support practitioners to engage in research about their practice. College and community practitioners were eager to participate in research activities but seldom had the required resources and energy to write a research proposal for a small individual project. Practitioners explained that their "proposal-writing" energy gets directed to program delivery proposals. RiPP offered an alternative. Building on previous research-in-practice projects carried out in Alberta by The RiPAL Network, RiPP involved five literacy practitioners in research-in-practice projects and provided them with research education opportunities and support.

In the fall of 2003, literacy program coordinators, instructors and others involved in literacy practice were invited to participate in a facilitated meeting to explore possible research topics they might be interested in pursuing. During the following weeks, those who were interested in continuing with the project developed individual research proposals. Throughout the next eighteen months, five practitioners collected data, analysed it and wrote their findings. The group came together several times to discuss the research stages they were navigating and the challenges they were facing. Online discussions allowed the group to stay in touch and maintain the level of support required to make progress in their individual projects.

The process was not without challenges. Writing, especially, became an almost insurmountable hurdle that was hard to make space for in busy professional and personal lives. Practitioner researchers worked for many months; dedicating many more hours than the project had anticipated, to produce research reports that would be rigorous but also speak clearly to the audience they care about most, other practitioners and community members.

In this report, Anne Docherty describes what she calls the balancing act of contradictions that many practitioners in remote-rural and aboriginal communities are embedded in. Anne argues that collaborative reflection-on-action offers practitioners a socially, culturally and economically shaped space to reflect on their practice away from the hurriedness of their daily tasks. This collaborative space allows practitioners to look at themselves as participants in learning relationships, thus activating the potential for individual and collective change.

Marina Niks
RiPP Coordinator
ripal@literacy.bc.ca

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Introduction

This research project began with my questions and ideas about the usefulness of collaborative reflection-on-action in supporting literacy practitioners. Collaborative reflection-on-action involves practitioners coming together weekly to share what has happened in their workweek. They do this by completing a three-page diary and then sharing this diary with each other. The diary includes questions which prompt discussion about the work and, more importantly, about why we do the work.

I became involved in this research project because I saw an opportunity to give closer attention to questions and doubts I had about the effectiveness of current practices for training, supporting and offering professional development to literacy practitioners. I live and work in a rural-remote community. Our population is over 80% Gitxsan First Nations. In my community, literacy practitioners work for the school district, community college, band offices, and non-profit community groups. Regardless of where the practitioner works, their emotional and skill development needs are not being met. As I engaged with other practitioners in reflective practice I repeatedly heard stories about the struggles and the complexities of literacy work. And, it seemed to me that what was missing was an opportunity to support practitioners to connect with their values, beliefs and principles and then connect practitioners with communal values and visions of community members. I wanted to see an opportunity for the context of literacy work to be opened up and explored. I entered this project believing that if practitioners could be supported to situate themselves within this context, then the complexities would provide richness for the practitioner rather than overwhelming the practitioner.

When I started this research project I had grown frustrated with the barrage of professional development that gives literacy practitioners more resources and tools for our "teaching tool-kits," when in fact what is needed in our practice is time to sort through the contextual realities of the people we support and a space to figure out how the tools we are given might be applicable and useful. Sometimes, I think that professional development is a never ending spending spree where we pick up tool after tool, but rarely do we stop and really examine the tool and figure out how, and if, the tool matches the job we have to do. I have also grown frustrated at the lack of consideration given to the unique set of conditions that comes from teaching and/or supporting literacy in the remote-rural and aboriginal community in which I live. Remote-rural communities are usually spread out over large geographic distances. These communities have small populations. Often they are grouped as regions because of population base and this has become one way of self-describing our communities to funders, our urban colleagues and to other allies and partners we work with. However,

by describing our community as a region we often miss out on describing the unique characteristics of remote-rural communities. My remote-rural community has a population of 350 people; our immediate neighbouring community has a population of 900 people.

In my work I can easily go door-to-door to gather public opinion. My neighbours are also my friends and family. The participants I support in my practice are from my community. They too are my neighbours, friends and family. There is a complex relationship between student-teacher or learner-practitioner when you teach in the same remote-rural and aboriginal community in which you live. My "students" live next door to me. When I support them to deal with oppression, joblessness and impoverishment, I don't leave this reality behind when I head home, because it is on my doorstep.

Living and working in a remote-rural and aboriginal community is a balancing act of contradictions. It is here that I learn how to cry and yet laugh at the same time. It is here that I witness deep wounds and horrific socioeconomic realities and it is here that I witness a resiliency to life and holding onto hope that I've never seen before. As much as I'm committed as a practitioner, I'm also committed as a citizen. Literacy work in remote-rural and aboriginal communities is about improving our home and it is as much about participating in my community as it is about supporting others to participate. When seen through this lens it becomes a complex relationship that deserves space and attention. The tools that I lack in my teaching tool-kit are space and time to process and find clarity within this complexity. And I am finding that as I describe this to my colleagues and friends I am not alone in my needs.

As I support other literacy practitioners in my region, I hear similar frustrations and receive many requests from practitioners to design peer and professional development that allows for "breathing space" to sort through the complexities of the learning relationship in a community where not just the learner but also the practitioner lives with the overwhelming social and economic conditions.

This report is situated within a remote-rural and aboriginal community in northwest British Columbia. This research project emerged because of my need to sort through the murkiness of such conditions, to discover myself in the learning relationship, and to be more intentional in my role to create practice that is more responsive and effective to long lasting community change. This research report talks about the changes that happen when literacy practitioners begin using collaborative reflection-on-action and take the time to see and act on these changes because of describing, processing and exploring various elements

of their practice. The collaborative reflection-on-action process discussed throughout this report was designed for the literacy practitioner who teaches and/or supports literacy in the same remote-rural and/or aboriginal community in which they live.

It has been a murky process to clearly articulate my research question but I do know that this research project allowed me to explore some hunches I held about collaborative reflection-on-action as well as to discover *What happens when literacy practitioner are given time and space to process their experience and learning with others?*

Examining what happened in the collaborative reflection-on-action process followed in this research project enabled me to further explore these hunches and find answers to my research question, specifically that:

- Collaborative reflection-on-action sets a physical and emotional space away from the hurriedness of daily tasks. This space gives practitioners a chance to catch their breath and examine beliefs and visions for their work as well as how their work leaves them feeling. It gives a place to ask honest questions about their practice in front of colleagues.

- Collaborative reflection-on-action allows practitioners to look at themselves as a participant in the learning relationship.

As a result of this research project I can better understand how integral it is to engage in collaborative reflection-on-action, for it offers practitioners who work in remote-rural and/or aboriginal communities a space to reflect on their practice as one embedded in, and shaped by, social, cultural and economic conditions. This space also opens up an opportunity for honest discussion about the complexities of working in the remote-rural and aboriginal community in which you live. And, the collaborative space also opens up the possibility of, and potential for, individual and collective change.

Using Literature

There are several practitioner research reports that informed my project. I have used the literature in several ways. Mary Norton's *A traveler's guide to literacy research in practice* (2003) was my first "lifeline." It gave an outline of what my report could look like. I had imagined my report had to reflect the academic research style and so I was relieved to see an outline that looked both manageable and useful.

The research project that produced *Dancing in the Dark (Niks, Allen, Davies, McRae & Nonesuch, 2003)* had involved some of my colleagues. From their involvement in a collaborative research project I saw in them a confidence to write about their practice. I also saw them develop skills to critically examine their practice. This inspired me when I was feeling insecure and intimidated. Their courage to work together, inquire together and write about the process fed me hope that I too could write a report with some usefulness to other practitioners.

Literacy for Women on the Streets, by Lucy Alderson and Diana Twiss (2003), also practitioner research, taught me how to write sensitively about deeply disturbing issues of injustice. I learned from this report that such issues can be written about respectfully without "watering down" the injustice, by highlighting the daily realities that include hurt, hardship and celebrations.

Towards the end of writing this report I was introduced to *What goes on here?* by Kathleen Barnett, Lesley Hamilton, Joe MacNab, Tara Mitchell, Helen Seehagen, James Shillinglaw, Corry Wink, and Sandy Zimmerman (2004), and this was the final influence on my report. The presentation of the data analysis in their report is both simple and profound. The presentation lets the data speak. I had been struggling to do this. I had felt as though my interpretation was filled with run-on sentences and compound adjectives. My interpretation was drowning my data. This report helped me relax. It showed me how to uncover the depth behind the data.

I had been frozen in my analysis of the data. In the report *What goes on here?* (Barnett *et al*, 2004), there is a sentence that unstuck me in my writing. The phrase "making the familiar strange" became an "Aha!" moment for me. For over a year I had worked on data analysis and yet I felt as if I was failing to represent the depth behind the group's words. When I read this sentence a light came on for me. That was exactly what we had been doing in our research activities. It was exactly what the practitioners had written about in their reflections. They were removing themselves from the immediacy of their practice and they were de-constructing their practice until it was no longer familiar. This allowed them to critically examine the various dimensions of their practice and it allowed them a deeper understanding of its complexities.

Collaborative reflection-on-action stems from the academic work of Donald Schön. In Educating the Reflective Practitioner (1987) Schön wrote about the effectiveness of reflection-in-and-on-action as a professional development tool for formal educators. He researched its effectiveness in helping new teachers shape their practice and their understanding of their practice. I have struggled to explain my relationship with Schön's work. I can't say I fully know or understand his academic writing but I have used my interpretation of his work to design tools for educators who work in the informal arenas of community rather than in schools and classrooms. Schön's work has influenced my designing of these tools and his writing has helped me understand there is a depth of thought behind reflection as a tool for professional development. Schön's work ignited my interest in reflection and a passion to create tools that challenge other practitioners to think more deeply about their practice and share this thinking with their colleagues.

I have grown to understand the use of reflection as a powerful tool for professional development more from the work of Mark Smith than from any other. Mark Smith specializes in the field of informal education and lifelong learning. He is the Rank Research Fellow and Tutor at YMCA George Williams College, London and Visiting Professor in Community Education at the University of Strathclyde.

In studying Smith's work I began to shape a reflective tool that I thought could help me and colleagues find a space to gain perspective and understanding of the dire socioeconomic realities that we are immersed in. I also wanted to learn how situating myself in the learning relationship could influence my practice in relation to the groups I supported. From studying Smith's work I now believe it is critical that practitioners take the time to articulate their values, principles and approach to their work and to recognize that they have an agenda when entering a relationship with learners. It is important to name this approach and to name this agenda while allowing learners to do the same. From this comes a sharing of power in the relationship. It reminds us that we are adults working together with different roles. It reminds us that we each teach and we each learn. Identifying values, principles and approach became a fundamental piece of reflective work throughout this research project.

Mark Smith has written several books on informal education and the role of relationship building and conversation in fostering environments conducive to learning. Smith states, "Reflection requires space in the present and the promise of space in the future" (Encyclopedia of Informal Education). This quotation speaks to what I was trying to achieve in developing reflective tools. I wanted to find a way in which we could command a space that was conscious in the immediacy of working with groups. I also wanted to find a process where we

could "file away" the immediacy of our actions, knowing we could return to it at a later time. Considering Smith's models and ideas, I saw how many of my colleagues and I would react to and act in our learning environments and the groups we were supporting. Smith's work introduces the "weekly round" as a tool for informal educators to name their practice. The tools I used in the collaborative reflection-on-action are adapted from the weekly round tools described by Mark Smith (1994).

In using the works of Mark Smith I have gained a better understanding of the differences between academic research and practitioner research. I am not a scholar nor am I a researcher and I find the work of Schön, and other academic literature, unapproachable. I am a practitioner and so I have been drawn to the research and work of other practitioners. Through my interactions with the literature I have learned that as a practitioner my lens directs me to approach research and write about research in a particular way. I approach research and write about research in a pragmatic manner. I need to feel that the research is connected to or leading to action. It isn't enough for me as a practitioner to only have reflection or knowledge. I have to see the connection between this conceptual thinking and hands-on doing. Perhaps this is why I have had greater success in being informed by the work of other practitioners in the field rather than by academic literature.

The ways in which I have interacted with literature is different than I had expected. I have worried that there is a "right" way to conduct a literature review. Using literature has opened up questions for me: Why did I put more importance on academic research? Do I believe that an academic researcher knows more about literacy practice than a practitioner? Why was I placing higher value on what's written about experience than on the experience itself?

This research project has raised underlying assumptions that I may have held that academic research is somehow more credible than practitioner research. This project has given me more confidence to "own" the knowledge that has been created from my experiences. It has helped me recognize that credibility comes in many forms. I leave this research report believing that my practice is informed by the multi-dimensional learning relationships that I am immersed in. This includes literacy participants, local mentors, practitioner colleagues and academic colleagues and the knowledge shared through reading numerous research articles and reports.

And yet, in saying this a profound influence throughout my research project has been Marina Niks. As an academic researcher and as my research mentor, Marina

has shared her writing around reflection and her knowledge of the research process. I must admit I have not been an especially eager student in this process. I have hesitated about decisions, I have procrastinated on deadlines and I have been lazy. Marina has constantly "pushed" me in this project. Although this was not a relationship with written literature I appreciate how this has been a review of knowledge. The relationship with Marina is behind every aspect of this report.

Methods

The research I describe in this report was an action research project. That is, I implemented an intervention with practitioners and collected data to describe and analyze what happened when practitioners were given a space to share and collaboratively reflect on their practice. In this section I describe the intervention, participants, data collection methods, data analysis and ethical considerations.

Collaborative Reflection Sessions

I met with six practitioners every second week for seven months, two hours at a time. In the end, because of vacation scheduling and people attending out-of-town work commitments, we met a total of twelve times over the seven-month period. The sessions were held on weeknights. The time varied depending on the responsibilities and commitments we each held at any given time. Usually, the sessions were between 7 p.m. and 9 p.m. The sessions always ended by 9 p.m. as some practitioners had early morning commitments. The sessions were energetic and fun and often a time for "catch-up" between people. Sometimes, the sessions were laden with emotion; however, they always ended with a "pulse check" to make sure no one left with a heavy emotional burden. Because practitioners were often caring for children, coaching, teaching extra-curricular activities, or engaging in after-work activities themselves before attending our session, the gatherings usually involved food.

We followed a collaborative reflection-on-action process to reflect on our practice. Collaborative reflection-on-action involves practitioners coming together on a regular basis and using a set of framing tools to document, process and explore elements of their weekly practice. I designed the tools that we used. I designed these tools by adapting tools suggested by Mark Smith (1996). I designed the process based on my early introduction to reflection-on-action as a young teacher in Scotland in the late 1970's.

The initial tool used in collaborative reflection-on-action is the Values and Aims Sheet. On this sheet are a series of questions that direct practitioners to think about the "big picture" of their work. It is used as a conversation starter to talk about the "why" of our work rather than the "how." The Weekly Round is a two-page journal that directs practitioners to describe, process and explore significant parts of their practice. The two pages are framed as a reflective diary. The final page of the reflective journal is the Field Log that challenges practitioners to connect their daily activities with broader goals. These pages are shown and described more fully in the Appendix.
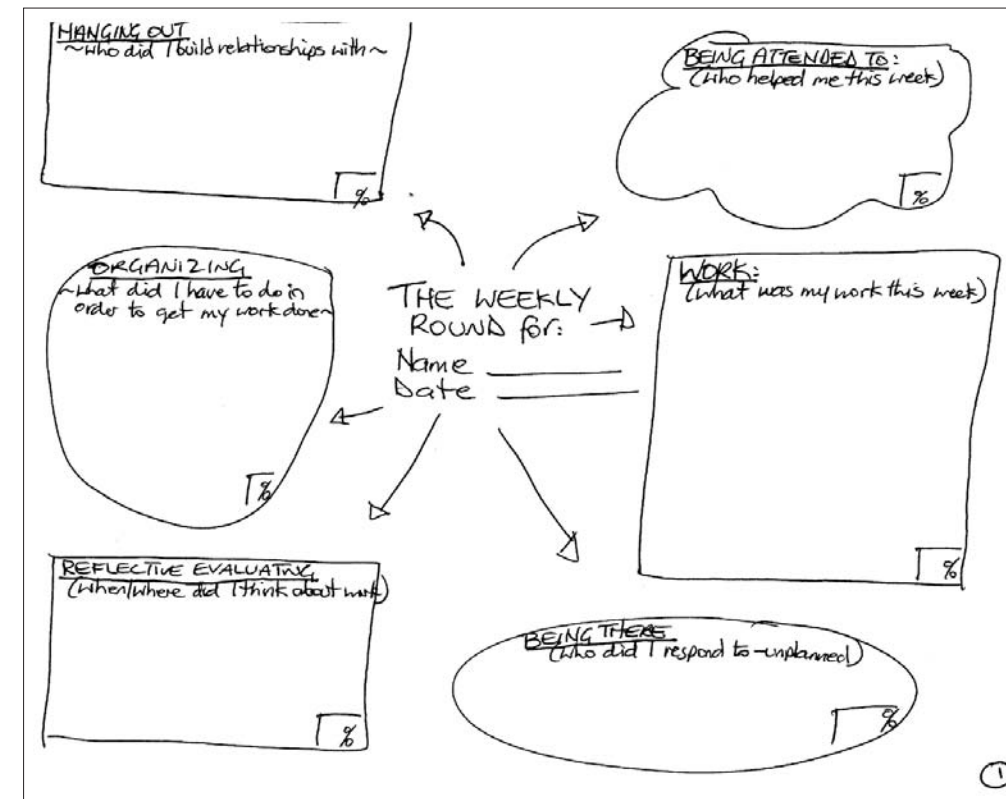
A page from the weekly round reflection-on-action tool

In our collaborative reflection-on-action sessions we used common goals that were identified at the beginning of the project as our broader goals. These goals included: supporting others to identify their own learning needs; helping people move ideas into action; decreasing poverty; resisting the homogenization of society; and connecting individual values with community values and goals. Articulating these goals took time; the practitioners struggled to identify their values, principles and goals. For some the struggle was that they had never been asked to consider the values and principles that lie behind their practice. Most of the practitioners had never thought to describe their approach and when they began to do so they started to see areas that were contradictory to what was described as their mandated approach. The conflicts they saw between their personal approach and mandated approach included: pressures for testing; measurement indicators; and a lack of recognition by the system of opportunity to support adults in real life situations. And so, the practitioners began to unpack and sort through the dynamic elements of their learning relationships. These relationships included learners, colleagues, administrators and funders. This process involved building trust with one another in order to feel more

comfortable in being vulnerable. The practitioners were asking deep questions of themselves in front of their colleagues. They were questioning their agenda and their role in supporting other adults to gain more control over their lives.

The goals guided the reflections. Each week we explored how the "daily grind" was leading to a greater action and helping us realize the goals. Sharing the weekly reflective journal opened up many questions that led to conversations and inquiry about our individual practice, our collective practice and the relationship between our practice and community.

The practitioners engaged in this reflective process live within neighbouring communities.[1] The participants all lived and worked in communities within 10 kilometres of each other. This made meeting more manageable than if we had lived 100 kilometres apart. They were people who lived in the community in which they worked. This reality brings a deeper complexity to the learning relationship because often the practitioner and learner are related or neighbours. This complexity is talked about later in this report. The participants varied in how long they had lived in the communities, how extensive their relationships and ties were to the community and where they practiced and/or supported literacy. Some participants had extensive family connections and had lived in the community for over 30 years and others were recent arrivals having only lived in the community for one year. The practitioners included classroom instructors, health educators, environmental educators, popular educators and community economic development professionals. The group included five women and one man. Their ages were between 30 and 55. The group were diverse in their enthusiasm for reflection. We had the "reluctant reflector" and we had extremely intentional reflectors. The group members were also diverse in their practice: two members worked as salaried staff in formal institutions and the other four were on contract with several non-profit health-literacy organizations. Four members of the group had moved into their jobs because it was a way to make a living in the community and two members of the group had moved here specifically for the work. All were working with people who would be considered "marginalized"; most were working with individuals who had not found success in school or work life. Most were working in local and/or alternate settings for literacy such as youth

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1- In our rural region we have 14 distinct communities including two municipal districts, seven reserves, two non-incorporated settlements and three ranching valleys. The smallest community has a population of approximately 200 people and the largest has almost 1100 in its population base. The closest communities are separated only by political boundaries while the furthest spread are about 100 kilometres apart. Of the 14 communities, seven are almost immediately bordering one another.

groups, kitchens, health stations, alternate programs, independent schools and political arenas like the treaty process.

It was a diverse group: some young mums, one a grandmother; some were avid outdoor people; some were extroverts, others introverts; some held graduate degrees and others a high school diploma. There were common links between the group, including a "wanting" to create collegiality and explore the underpinning social and economic conditions that influenced their work daily; a desire to learn and critically examine their practice; a desire to celebrate humanity and laugh in response to the dire socioeconomic realties surrounding their practice and daily life; and a desire to find hope and instill hope within their families, friends and colleagues.

Collaborative reflection-on-action isn't always an easy process. As practitioners explore their practice and question their practice, they are often exposing inadequacies, uncertainties and insecurities that they hold. It is hard work. From the struggles and celebration I realized that this deceptively simple process demands a skilled facilitator. As I facilitated this process, I realized that the facilitation is also hard work. I took time outside of the sessions to consider the questions posed, the potential implications of questions posed, and the pacing of information sharing, and I always saved time at the end for people to debrief the session and leave the session feeling okay with what had been shared. By taking this time our process became rewarding work. The group environment became a profound and almost sacred space to explore and share, cry, laugh, worry and celebrate the life we are living.

Collecting the Data

The data for this project was participant responses to a series of reflective questions posed after every second collaborative reflection-on-action session. In total there were eleven questions posed. Five participants answered all eleven questions and one participant answered nine of the eleven questions.

At first I had planned to tape conversations prompted by a reflective question and use the transcriptions as data. At the first session I placed the microphone in the centre of the table; however, it became a distraction. After only a few minutes the batteries ran out and the microphone clicked off. I replaced the batteries and we again focussed around a reflective question. At the end of the conversation I checked the recording and realized that some voices hadn't been picked up by

the microphone. At the second session I tried this method again but some people said they were uncomfortable talking when the microphone was on. I then thought I would simply take notes while people were talking but quickly realized that my data would then be my interpretation of what was being said rather than the participants' reflections. Finally, I decided I would email the group one or two reflective questions after every second session. The group thought this would be manageable and liked the idea of having time away from the session to reflect on the question.

And so, after every second session I would send out an email or fax with two reflective questions. The participants would then email or fax back their answers. I created a series of files on my email program. When an email response was returned to me I simply filed it under the person's name. I had one practitioner who didn't use a computer and so we would fax. I had a hardcopy file set up for this data. At the end of the sessions, I printed off the email responses and created a file for each practitioner.

Data Analysis

I coded the data as part of my analysis. I read the responses and jotted down recurring words. As I was coding, themes seemed to jump off the page. As I continued to analyze, the themes began to run into each other. I finally ended up with four themes that I thought reflected the data provided to me by the participants. I began to work these four themes into my report by writing a paragraph about the theme and then returning to the data to ground my observations and analysis. Over several months the themes from the data analysis were beginning to overlap and finally I was able to write two statements that I believe sum up what the practitioners were discussing in their data responses. The two themes that I write about are how *collaborative reflection-on-action sets a physical and emotional space away from the hurriedness of daily tasks* and how *collaborative reflection-on-action allows practitioners to look at themselves as a participant in the learning relationship.*

The Questions of Ethics

When deciding how to create a group I struggled to identify how I would promote this project to local practitioners. I also struggled with whether to be

inclusive or exclusive. This was difficult for me. Being inclusive is an important organizing principle for the non-profit organization I work for. Our work is about participation in community life. We foster activities for active citizenship. We support groups to learn to work together in diversity. We believe that being inclusive means all citizens are invited and supported to contribute and benefit from community life. And yet for this project I deliberately chose to be exclusive and limit opportunity for involvement to a selected group of practitioners. I wanted to engage a group in a reflective process that could potentially create vulnerability as well as profound discussion around theory and practice. It was important to me that each group member be comfortable with the discussion and with challenging me and others. I wanted to feel assured that power would be shared and balanced within the group, and that any member at any time would have the capacity to challenge any perceived power imbalance.

In my community there are practitioners who have had formal education and training in the literacy field and there are practitioners who have the experience of growing up locally. Often this "local" practitioner has been identified as a healthy person who isn't struggling with issues of alcohol and/or anger. They most often have demands placed on them well beyond their current skill set. I've learned to recognize the importance of the "professional" practitioner and the importance of the "local" practitioner. I wanted a balance of both in the group and I wanted a baseline of emotional health. In our communities many of us are damaged. Our most recent social and economic history has created grave hurt throughout our communities. People struggle with emotional and spiritual dysfunction, which manifests as struggles with alcohol and drug dependency, mistrust, anger and fear. In order to be able to engage in reflective practice it is necessary to create an environment for emotional safety. I wanted group members who didn't have emotional and anger-driven barriers that would jeopardize group safety and trust. As I chose the practitioners for this group I struggled with the lack of participatory process and the judgement that I was making about emotional fitness for participation in this project. But I chose to be exclusive as I felt a responsibility to ensure group emotional safety as much as I could. And so, I invited ten practitioners that I believed held a capacity and willingness to understand and discuss theory and practice; respect confidentiality and humanity; respect diversity of thought; respect diversity in culture and diversity in approaches to practice.

I also invited people I believed would critically challenge my theories. Of the ten people invited six were able to commit to the sessions and the work required between the sessions over a seven-month period.

From the beginning of this project I have struggled with protecting confidentiality. We are a small community and we all know each other very well. I wanted to maintain confidentiality so no one would have to worry about repercussions or misunderstandings by their quotes in this report. And, yet I'm not sure that the worry of confidentiality is my worry to own. Perhaps this is a paternalistic attitude. The practitioners in this project are capable people. They chose to participate and I fully disclosed my intention for the research aspect of the project. Each one knew their involvement would lead to data for a research report. However, I worry that as I analyze and write about the data I see even more clearly the worries, complexities and challenges that come from being a practitioner in a small community. It is clear that finding time for balance, finding a space to inquire with honesty without fear of repercussion, and finding trust within a group are critical needs of practitioners in remote-rural and aboriginal communities. I am concerned that as I reveal the data I am disclosing individual struggles and worries about their practice. I have tried to quote and present data in a way that will not make visible the individual and yet stay true to the data that was presented to me. In a remote-rural and aboriginal community there is often only one health educator or only one adult educator. In our communities I only need to describe the practitioner's job and I have identified the person. We also know one another's nuances and have an intimate knowledge of how we use language to express ourselves. By giving a direct quote I could be identifying a group member.

The group helped me solve my concern about revealing their identities. When I couldn't find a solution to this worry I showed the data in this report to the practitioners. No one has objected to their words being used and agree that, for the most part, they could not match each quote to a person. When a practitioner recognized his or her own quote they told me they were ready to speak out and therefore the worry of recognition was unnecessary.

I also worry that throughout this report I am describing my community through a negative lens. What I am trying to do is describe the beauty and complexity that is woven throughout a history of pain and injustice. I worry that I am presenting my community in one way, as one of hurt, anger and dysfunction. Yet my community is also filled with love, hope, laughter and a sound local knowledge of how to live place-based. With this comes an inherent knowledge of values and vision for a future. The recent history of far-removed decision making and paternal forms of governance have created a disconnect between values and practice. I love my community. It is home. Living in my community reminds me daily that I am part of this pristine wilderness that surrounds my home and my worksite. People here live with a deep connection to the land and to kin and it brings a special resilience and ongoing feeling of hope.

And yet, it also brings the despair of witnessing struggle. This research project is intended to create a space to ask honest questions and discover honest solutions. And so, as I worry about protecting confidentiality of individuals, I too worry about presenting my community in black and white. It is not. Like any community it is full of grey and it is complicated, rich and multi-faceted.

Practitioner Researcher: Stepping Out

While engaging in the data analysis I made a series of observations about some of the contextual realities facing the literacy practitioner within my community. Like so many people in my community, the practitioners who provided me with data are courageous individuals. In a small community once you hold your head up you are, to quote a local term, "fair game." In a community with dire social and economic conditions, being noticed means you receive overwhelming requests for your time. It also means people have heard you, know your stand on community issues and therefore can disagree with you. In a healthy society this disagreement can lead to deeper understanding, new knowledge and a celebration of diversity. In my home it can lead to personal attacks that can be hurtful and sometimes dangerous. It can be frightening to speak out.

I have learned the skill of living in a small community. I know when and where I can speak openly and I know when to keep my head down. And yet, as I worked with these practitioners on this research and since have worked with other practitioners, I am learning to be less frightened. The practitioners who engaged in this reflection-on-action process have said it has given them a safe place to speak out. And by having a safe space they have begun to understand their practice and their relationships more fully. They have also said they wish they could have more places where they could honestly explore their practice and the profound issues impacting learners. When I hear this, I become inspired to create more safe spaces within our communities. I am also becoming inspired to challenge others to create safe and caring spaces for their colleagues and neighbours. I am learning to speak my conviction and as a literacy educator to act out what we often support learners to do—take more control over my life and engage more in community life.

As I share what I am learning about collaboration, exploring my practice, asking honest and difficult questions of myself in front of my colleagues, I am becoming more confident. I am also hearing from others how they found refuge in a safe space to clarify process and articulate their challenges in supporting literacy

development in a region where contextual conditions are dire. As a result of their participation in this project, the practitioners have demonstrated a confidence in beginning to speak out in staff meetings, in creating change within their daily practice and in sharing their struggles and successes with others in the community. Collaborative reflection-on-action allowed each of us to make this change. The bond of collegiality supports individual confidence and gives a space for honest inquiry that challenges our thinking and widens our perspectives. As practitioners in our remote-rural and aboriginal region, we have discovered a process that continues to address our need in sorting through complex learning relationships. This process allows us to find meaning from our actions and experience to inform and improve future actions and experience.

Engaging in this project as a practitioner-researcher has been difficult. It has brought both rewards and challenges. I have been pushed to explore my practice and my beliefs and approaches to practice beyond that of reflection. I have come to realize that the rigour demanded of research challenges me to change the lens in how I look at my practice. I have examined my practice and the reflective analysis of my colleagues about their practice. By doing research I have been able to look at activities and tools and create knowledge. Without this research, my activities and use of tools would have given me only experience. I believe by having to write this report I am creating knowledge rather than only experience. This is a key element in practitioner research. And, it has been key for me in that I now believe that both my practice and my ability to make sense of the complexities around me have improved profoundly only because of this practitioner-research project and because of the collaborative reflection-on-action that I was able to engage in.

Data Analysis: An Interpretation

After seven months of collaborative reflection-on-action meetings, opportunities to share thoughts and feelings about our practice and to document this, I have learned the following: Collaborative reflection-on-action offers practitioners who work in remote-rural and/or aboriginal communities a space to reflect on their practice as one embedded in, and shaped by, social, cultural and economic conditions. The collaborative space also opens up the possibility of, and potential for, individual and collective change.

As a researcher looking at the words of the collaborative reflection-on-action group, I have organized their discoveries in two themes that give insight about what happens when the literacy practitioner is given time and space to process their experience and learn with others:

- Collaborative reflection-on-action sets a physical and emotional space away from the hurriedness of daily tasks. This space gives practitioners a chance to catch their breath and examine beliefs and visions for their work as well as how their work leaves them feeling. It gives a place to ask honest questions about their practice in front of colleagues.

- Collaborative reflection-on-action allows practitioners to look at themselves as a participant in the learning relationship.

Collaborative reflection-on-action sets a physical and emotional space away from the hurriedness of daily tasks.

The practitioners engaged in the reflection-on-action process are like many literacy practitioners. They are underpaid and overworked. Their paid work is often part-time and yet they work many more hours than they are paid for. The practitioners in this project also work in the same remote and rural community in which they live. This means the relationship with learners is multi-dimensional and complex. Learners are also neighbours and sometimes family members. As practitioners in small towns we live next door to our learners, we play on the same sports teams, our children are friends. As practitioners we are called on continually for volunteer work. The practitioners in this project volunteer on boards and committees, they coach, they counsel, they write proposals and evaluations for local groups who lack capacity to do so themselves. They are constantly being asked to help out in community life. There are few practitioners and overwhelming needs. They are always busy or being asked to be busy.

The practitioners wrote about the need for a space to stop and make sense of this constant busyness around them:

> There is no space in my day to talk practice with other instructors. I feel stressed for time. It is always so busy (S, email reflection #2).

This need for space, and the notion of constant busyness, was identified by each of the six practitioners. The classroom-based teachers talked about the hurriedness of going from class to class; they told me that their busyness included teaching students, working outside of class with students, prepping for class, marking assignments, attending staff and department meetings, and that even professional development added more busyness because more information was thrown at them without any space in their day to consider how to incorporate new tools into their practice:

> I can barely sit still because I'm suffering from a week of development, strategic plans, and new directives. Why do I have to debrief on my time? Why can't this be a staff meeting? I bet we'd learn to really hear one another. I might get to know the other people in the building in a whole new way (M, email reflection #2).

Their frustration was directed towards the lack of place to unpack all the information and tools they were gathering. They wanted a space to sort and make sense of where and how they could use what they were learning from the professional development and many meetings. There was never time to process any of it. And there certainly wasn't time to process it in a group and make sense of the information as part of a collective:

> …Feel like I've opened a book in the middle of the chapter, no idea where I'm going with this or why I am trying to do this outside of here (S. email reflection #1).

> I want to bring this (reflection) in to work but there is no place. There is no time. Why is there never time? (S. email reflection #4).

The community-based practitioners spoke to the same level of busyness but to the busyness of community life—they work in a community that suffers from almost 90% unemployment and they talked about the hurriedness of teaching groups, working with individual clients, community meetings, writing proposals, writing final reports, and the constant interruption from people who are trying to find something to keep them occupied. Without jobs some individuals struggle

to find a reason to get up in the morning and so visit the community practitioners as one way of forcing themselves to still engage:

> I feel like I want to hide in a back office. I want to hide from all of it. I find it harder not to blame. I wonder if I carry resentment around and if I'm becoming angry and that affects my perspective. I don't have any place to talk about any of this. It's becoming a problem (ST, email reflection #3).

The community practitioners also spoke about a sense of guilt because they had work, they were living a more comfortable life than their neighbours, and they were trying to avoid the jobless individual so they could get their work completed:

> I feel like I can't complain. If it is so bad for me then what must it be like for the group and they're my neighbours. How can I figure this out without sounding 'whiny'. Filling in my round gives me a place to put it all down and know that I'll be heard with compassion but I'll be challenged right back. This is refuge (D. email reflection #4).

Collaborative reflection-on-action creates a space that provides a refuge for the busy practitioner. The practitioners in this project, like most practitioners in our region, want a safe space where they can honestly talk about the emotional intensity of their practice, the fears they hold for their practice and for their community, the guilt that hangs over their heads as they try to sort out contributing to community and having a life of their own, and their desire for an opportunity to build trusting relationships to break down isolation.

The practitioners repeatedly talked about the "breathing space." This space was both concrete and emotional. The concrete space of a place and time gave people an opportunity to process their daily work. This weekly space gave the practitioners a place to dig deeper into their work than the hectic pace of their daily practice allowed. This weekly place allowed each practitioner to see themselves within their practice and to see their potential:

> I find I'm different now than I was before I started this. I'm more aware of being in the moment and I think I'm better at evaluating what I'm doing as I do it. I'm keeping mental track of what happens in the day and then I'm jotting it down because I know there is a place to deal with it later (M, email reflection #5).

By having space outside of the numerous daily activities, the practitioner is better able to create a mental space in the moment. The practitioner is developing a pattern of seeing herself and seeing how she approaches her practice. There is a

shift from "re-acting" to "acting with purpose."

Several of the practitioners talked about seeing changes not so much in their practice but more in how they thought of their practice while working with learners. They were conscious of this shift because they knew they were coming to the weekly session to describe, process and explore with others:

> I'm not sure I'm changing what I do in my practice but I do know I think about what I do a lot more than I used to and something is different because I have to come to this place and share it and think about it (SB, fax reflection #3).

By setting aside time each week to explore, the practitioners created a pattern of reflection that brought in more than just an evaluative thought process to the actions but a more profound pattern of questions that touched the why's of what they do, and this seemed to create a breathing space, an invisible product:

> Sometimes I feel more pressure and a bit scared because I'm committed to spending time each week to work on asking myself different questions. It is hard work and I'm not fully convinced I like this space each week but I guess I believe it is for the better or why else would I come here? (D, email reflection #1).

However, by having this place to explore their relationship with the learner and their place in the community, the practitioners were able to see the significance of their role. The practitioner doesn't always need more information or more strategies to teach, sometimes the practitioner needs time and space to process the skills and information they have been given. By having a time and space to explore their work with others the practitioner develops knowledge rather than just experience. This knowledge comes through dialogue and debate, through conscious and structured thinking, and through transferring skills gained from professional development into strategies that will work in each practitioner's unique literacy environment.

The framing questions in collaborative reflection-on-action guide practitioners to see their skill set, to reflect on their experience and to turn this into knowledge. The framing questions are deceptively simple. For example, one set of questions asks the practitioner: *What do you think about this work or the prospect of this work? What might be significant? What might be unsettling? What might emerge from this work?* The questions probe and push practitioner to think beyond the immediacy of their work. They hint at deeper thinking, they challenge honest inquiry, they push the practitioner to share knowledge and they begin the discussion about naming what makes a good teacher.

As the practitioners answered the questions, their responses inspired debate among the group. The practitioners began to identify what was exciting about their practice and what was frustrating about their practice. By continually asking "why?" we began to touch on values, beliefs, hopes and dreams. The practitioners were able to connect the deeper questions around why they do the work to surface issues about time, skills, planning, instructing and relationship building. By having a space to have a deeper conversation about core values and beliefs the practitioner could see why they were frustrated or why they put more energy into some parts of their practice than others:

> Without the questions I don't think I'd be challenged to think about how I relate or how I interact with students, it would be easy just to look at how to fill my teaching tool box and now that I think about it that's what frustrates me so much. I don't want to go to any more professional days I want *time and help* to sort through all of this and discover a bigger picture that fills me with intent so that I can use those tools with much more purpose and excitement. I struggle to find a common thread, having a structure to look at what I do and to look at what I want to do might help me weave this thread (S, email reflection #1).

Although the practitioners repeatedly questioned why this powerful process is not happening within their work environment, I wonder if this space can exist within individual workplaces. I now believe it needs to be removed from the worksite. Perhaps the physical shift in environment helps. Along with the cross-sector inquiry maybe there is a profound reflection allowed that would otherwise not happen if we were too close to the immersion of our daily practice. It shifts our perspective, which feeds a different emotional response.

Collaborative reflection-on-action allows practitioners to look at themselves as a participant in the learning relationship

> It's not that I'm avoiding the poverty of the students or of the community but I'm finding some ways to look at all of it and decide how and where I fit in. I feel like I am more hopeful and confident that I do have something to contribute and that even though my subject seems so unimportant in the midst of all this hardship it is part of the overall building of literacy that will lead to change on many levels. This gets me excited about my subject again (S, email reflection #3).

The practitioners said they needed to stop and learn: learn about relationships; learn about wider community conditions than they were directly addressing; learn not so much the skill for their job but how to process their feelings after interactions; and learn how to see themselves in the midst of something much bigger than "literacy":

> I don't want to keep doing this. I need to feel like I have a real relationship with my group but there is no place to do it. We are all too overwhelmed. We are so busy. How did it spin out of control? I want the group to know me—it has to be about personal relationship but that takes time and it needs its own place. Where is that? (SB, email reflection #2).

The relationships explored by these practitioners started with the practitioner-learner relationship but it soon included the practitioner-practitioner relationship and finally expanded to discussions around the many relationships involved in the learning process. The relationships are multi-dimensional within each dynamic: learners were also cousins, learners were friends and learners had children who were friends with the practitioners' children. The same dimensions existed between colleagues.

Taking time outside of the busyness of practice to explore oneself in this web of relationships leads to more effective practice. Practitioners are pushed by the system to "see" the learner but rarely to "see" themselves. By engaging in collaborative reflection-on-action, the practitioner is able to "see" her/himself and talk about the messiness of being so connected and/or disconnected to the realities of learners. It is this deeper thinking and questioning that makes effective practice. It is knowing why I do what I do and knowing what I want from what I do that makes us more effective teachers. When I know what I want from my practice I can name my agenda and, if I share this with my learners, it invites them to consider their agenda. We begin to have a learning relationship between two people who know what they want. If a learner can name their learning needs I can gain skills and tools to support this to happen. If I continue to only gain skills and tools without this knowledge I may not be as effective in facilitating success.

As the practitioners began using collaborative reflection-on-action on a weekly basis, they changed. These changes included higher levels of confidence at work and at home because they were becoming more aware of how the power dynamic within the relationship shaped how they viewed learners and learners viewed them. The practitioners talked about setting their agenda openly with their groups and inviting their groups to share back. The practitioners talked about being more confident to share themselves with their learners rather than 'hiding' behind

curriculum or activities. They took time to be citizens together and to talk about what was important to them in their lives and in their community:

> This week I made an effort to actively connect with students outside of teaching time. I found them in the hallway. There is no place to let them know me, I just have to teach. I now wonder what kind of relationship is this? I feel pressed for time in the classroom and yet I want the students to know me as much as I grow to know them... And so, I found the time to smile at them and just hang out with them, the way we do outside of work (S, email reflection #3).

As practitioners worked on building relationships outside of teaching time, they began to notice they had higher levels of engagement in community organizations and events. By intentionally developing relationships that acknowledged the complexity and the many dimensions that existed, they began to see their learners in a different light. This helped them feel connected in a more natural way to them as neighbours and fellow citizens:

> I went to a feast, I've never been before because I wasn't sure and yet people were obviously happy to see me. Some of the learners have come up and mentioned to me how nice it was to see me there. I'm now attending the community meeting. Before this I thought I didn't have anything to contribute. It's a good feeling to remember this is my home too. I think I was too busy worrying about being the "professional" and forgetting to be a neighbour (ST, email reflection #4).

The practitioners saw themselves as dynamic in the relationship. In the classroom or group setting, they may be the teacher but in the feast hall or lunchroom they are also a learner. Once practitioners had recognized this dynamic they had a heightened consciousness of knowing when they were teaching and when they were learning. Some of them shared this awareness with their groups:

> When I talked to the group about the first time I went to a feast and how I was helped by the others at my table, they laughed. It was good to talk about my fears about not knowing how I should act. I told them how nervous I was to stand at the door. I felt out of my element. They sounded surprised that I should have the same feelings that they do. We ended up talking about what we know and what we don't know. We agreed we are all teachers and learners. It's made a difference. I'd never thought of just talking like this before (ST, email reflection #4).

The practitioners also developed greater intention about understanding their practice. By doing this collaboratively they developed a sense of collegiality in that they could question themselves in front of others and ask for help. Because the literacy practitioners took the time to see the changes take place they were able to describe them. And, once described, there is more opportunity to act. As the practitioners felt a bond with others in the collaborative reflection-on-action group, they began to wonder what might happen if they shared this exploration with their colleagues within individual work places. And so, they began to question how to build relationships with colleagues and not just with learners:

> I read another great book, The Courage to Teach and it talks about the need to develop a network of colleagues. In fact most books that I read talked about this stuff. Why is it then that I am building my network with a group of people that don't even work in the same place as me – why can't I do this in my own staff room? (S, email reflection #4).

At the end of this research project the practitioners were still questioning how they might find time to intentionally build relationships that would allow for collaborative inquiry similar to what had happened in the collaborative reflection-on-action sessions:

> Still not much relationship development with colleagues, recognize the importance but hopeless at creating it even though we've talked about it right at the beginning. I don't think I can bring this in to the workplace – it doesn't fit with the system we have right now. The system doesn't allow for "relationship building" (M, email reflection #4).

By "seeing" themselves in the learning relationship and taking the time to talk about themselves in the relationship, the practitioners opened up opportunity for inquiry with each other. By asking questions of themselves and asking questions with each other the practitioners were excited to talk about the why's of the work. The practitioners were also excited to see the potential in relationships. This potential included learning while teaching and teaching while learning. It also included collegiality between practitioners and it led to talking about their hopes and dreams for their community beyond only literacy work. By the end of the reflective sessions the discussions moved beyond the immediate practice and focussed on issues of justice and the role of literacy in creating opportunity for people to participate in society. The discussions were profound and rich and moved from an immediate to a larger picture but always finished with a plan for action within daily practice.

It soon became noticeable that those who engaged in this process every time were more intentional and purposeful about this inquiry in their daily practice than the practitioner who missed a session. Practitioners who had missed a session talked about "letting it go." They described how they would go back to a feeling of the "daily grind" and they would begin to doubt that they had any power to make change in their practice. The practitioner who missed a session would return saying that rather than responding to situations in their learning environments they were acting and reacting without a lot of conscious thought. There was a definite shift in perspectives and intention between meeting consistently and not meeting consistently.

Practitioners said they felt lonely and isolated in that they didn't get an opportunity to talk about their work with other staff members. They looked forward to the collaborative reflection-on-action sessions with colleagues because it was an opportunity to ask honest questions of themselves and each other. This kept motivation and enthusiasm alive particularly when they often described their work as being "in the trenches" because of the overwhelming social and economic conditions within our communities. And it kept motivation and enthusiasm alive because they were finding a way to make sense of the complexity that exists in the learning relationship.

In our communities, relationships are of particular importance. The Gitxsan nation has lived here for over 10,000 years. The society is based on relationships. Gitxsan families are organized around what is known as the *wilp*. Each *wilp* can have up to 200 members. A *wilp* relies on a relationship with specific areas of land for fishing, hunting, food gathering and spiritual purposes. The society is based on extensive family relationships with specific ties to one another. The settler culture is over 100 years old in our community. This heritage has also created extensive ties to the land and to large family units. Beyond family, neighbours depended on relationships for survival. This still plays true today and like many small rural communities marriage between families has created layers of connectivity between people. One's place in community is woven through an intricate web of connection. The web is multi-faceted. The web has been woven with historic cultural threads. When I teach in a classroom, my learners are also my community traditional teachers. It demands a shift in our roles that isn't always easy to explain. When I work with youth I am teaching my nieces and nephews and I am teaching the friends of my children. In these situations sometimes I know too little. But, more often I know too much. When I know too much about my learners, they know too much about me. I lose the power of being an insider/outsider.

I wonder how the webs of connections are woven between practitioner and

learner in urban environments. I believe that all practitioners weave multi-dimensional webs with their learners. Relationships are dynamic. They deserve exploration. However, I think the practitioners in this project may have a complexity in relationships that is unique to remote-rural and/or aboriginal communities.

The practitioners in this project are not removed from the daily lives of their learners. They are the neighbours who call the police because they hear the screams for help. They are living next door to the learner who shares his one bedroom home with seven others. They are the neighbours trying to decide if it is best to have a child removed from the home, or best to keep them immersed in family. They watch the learner as he conducts drug trafficking on their street.

We know too much. It creates a complexity that demands attention. It creates an emotional web that requires space and time to sort. The web is intricately woven and it requires recognition as a central piece of the learning relationship.

The literacy environment can open up opportunity. The practitioner creates this space through an insider/outsider role. They learn to know their learners; they support them as they sort through the complexities of their lives. This allows the practitioner to be an "insider". However, by having some distance from the learner's day-to-day realties they can also play the role of the "outsider," they know without knowing too much. They are free to hear the dreams and desires of the learner. They can mirror back the dreams and the potential dreams that they see within the learner. This is a powerful dynamic within the practitioner-learner relationship.

This research project has left me with further questions about the complexity of relationships. It has left me with questions about how and where we find time and space to collaboratively explore our practice. However, it has left me convinced that practitioners who take the time outside of the busyness of their practice can sort through the complexities and provide quality literacy service. This process, however, deserves recognition and support from funders, managers and organizers. This is a conversation that I, and the practitioners in this project, hope might happen as a result of this research project.

Conclusion: "So What?"

The practitioners in this research project took time to stop and explore where and how they fit in the complex arena of literacy development within our remote-rural and aboriginal communities. As they explored where and how they fit, they learned about their practice. They were able to make strange the familiar and so unpack, sort and re-pack what was once unconscious.

As a practitioner I have learned a lot. This project has helped me better understand my practice, my colleagues and my emotional responses to the social, cultural and economic conditions we all struggle within. And, I appreciate more than ever how all of these dimensions impact our ability to provide quality literacy services.

I am a practitioner who tried on the research hat while doing this project. It has helped me see my practice in another light. I do not think I can say I am a researcher but I do agree I have been a practitioner-researcher. The practitioner lens is always there and it has shaped the "so what?" of this report.

Researching as a practitioner is a unique experience. I have never explored my practice with such rigor. This is the first practitioner research report I have written. The writing of the report has been a challenge and a huge learning curve for me.

As a practitioner I had to always ground my analysis in the context of the practitioners who fed me data. I had to spend time doing this before the analysis made sense to me. It has been a long process. It has been a difficult process. Diana Twiss wrote, "I don't know who first said this but it rings so very true to my experience. 'I hate writing, but I love having written'" (personal e-mail). I'm beginning to appreciate the comment.

I have learned that *creating a space to "make the familiar strange"* (Hamilton et al, 2004) *results in more quality practice.* By deconstructing our practice we can begin to see the dynamics involved. Making the familiar strange begins by removing ourselves from the immediacy of our work. It involves unpacking that which we do daily and almost instinctively. It demands time to sort, make sense of and then re-pack the pieces of our practice.

I have learned that *reflection requires space in the now and a promise of space in the future* (Encyclopedia of Informal Education). Gaining reflective skills creates a space in the immediacy of our practice. I learn to stop and think about what is going on. I learn to draw on past experiences and experiences of others to respond to a situation rather than act or react. I learn to hold the thought and emotion of the now and bring it to the future space where I can then, again, make

the familiar strange. It is a process of learning that involves feedback loops.

I have learned that *situating me in the learning relationship leads to greater learning by everyone in that relationship.* The more I "see" me the more I open up potential to "see" the learner. The more I understand myself and all that I bring in to the relationship, the more able I am to give focus to the learning that needs to take place.

We learn with and from each other. Why would we imagine the practitioner-learner relationship to be any different? I learn with and from my learners; they learn with and from me. As a result of this project I better understand the elements needed to practice reflection. And I have seen through the words of the practitioners in this project the results of taking the time and space to explore such elements.

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Appendix

Collaborative Reflection-on-Action Tools

The initial tool used in Collaborative reflection-on-action is the Values and Aims Sheet. This sheet asks the practitioner to think about the "big picture" of their work. It is used as a conversation starter to talk about the "why?" of our work rather than the "how."

Describing values and aims [before entering into relationships]

Because we are sensitive to building relationships and are often in a 'service' role to other groups or individuals we are constantly making judgments about what initial approach and/or practice might work best for others. This means that we must be clear on what it is that we find significant before we can work with others to determine what they might find significant:

Describing my work:

Describing my bigger picture:

Values that guide my work:

Personal aims at work:

Mandated aims at work:

Collision and/or Cohesion between the two sets of aims:

Values and Aims Sheet

We completed this sheet individually and then discussed it in a group setting.

Once a collaborative set of goals had been identified (either common or diverse) the group learned how to use the weekly round reflective tools.

The common values recorded on the individual values and aims sheets were next transferred to page three of the weekly round reflective tools.

The **Weekly Round** is two pages and asks the practitioner to describe, process and explore significant parts of their practice. The two pages are framed as a reflective diary.
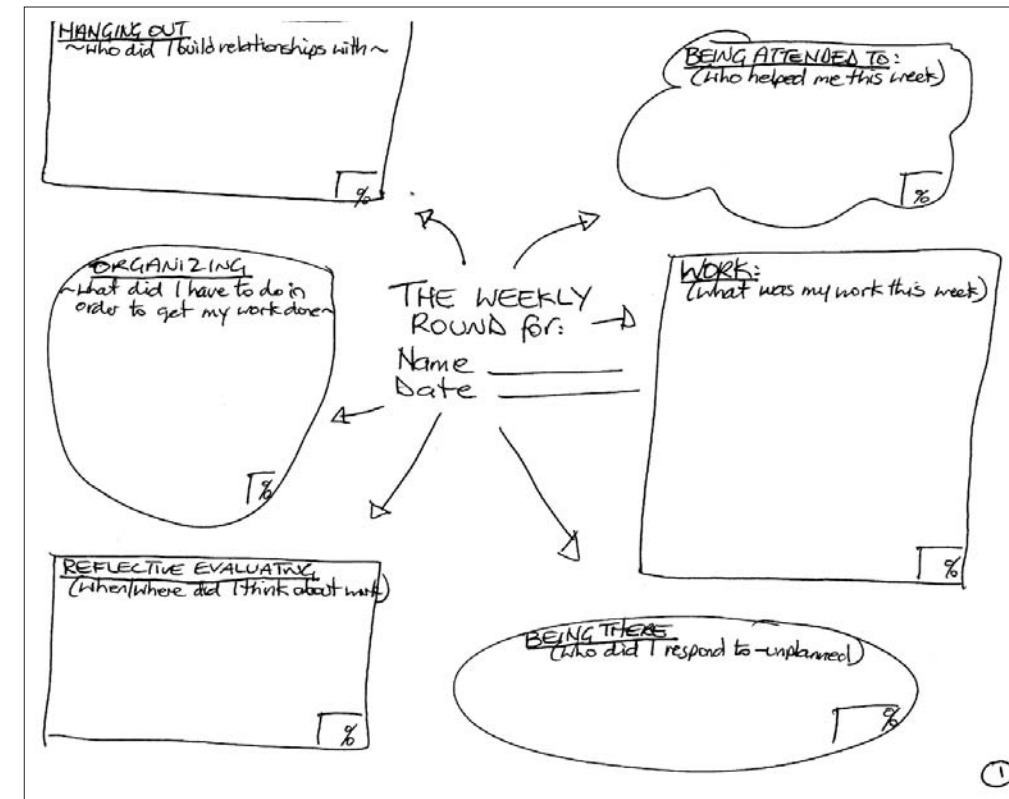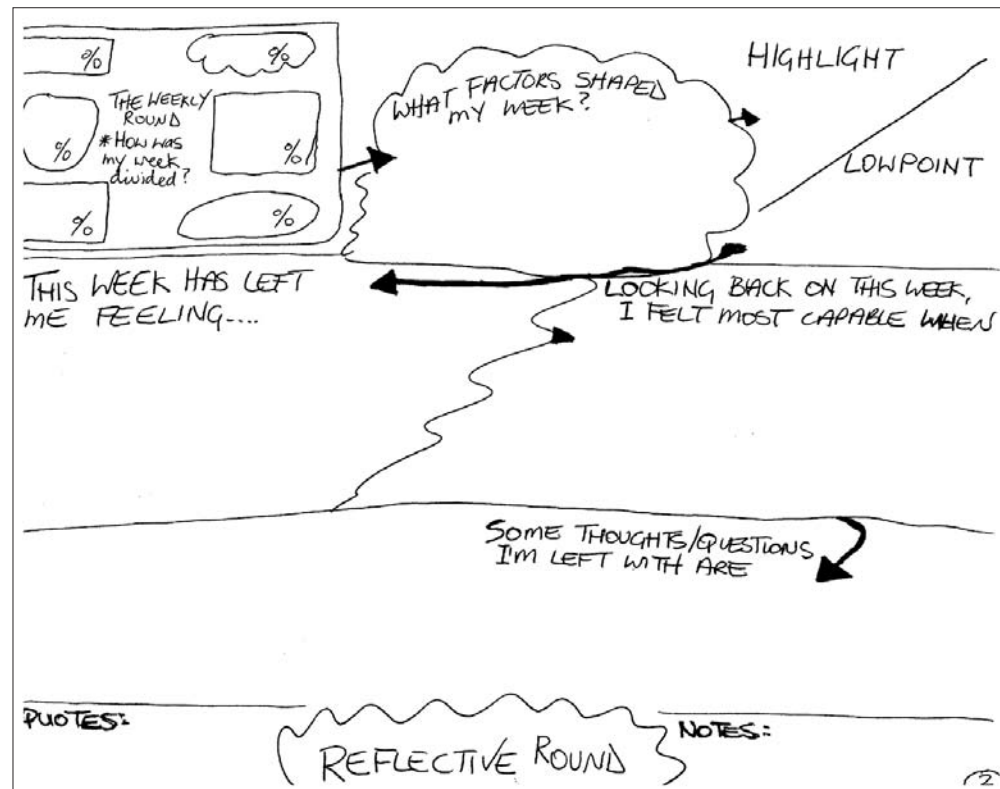

The first page of the weekly round guides us to describes the work week

We found the weekly round a useful tool in sorting, clarifying, organizing and planning our work.

We noticed that the practitioner who engaged in this process every week was more intentional about daily practice than the practitioner who missed a session.

We also enjoyed the relationships that developed through examining and questioning our practice as part of a group.

The second page of the weekly round guides us to process the week

The final journal page is the Field Log that instructs the practitioner to link their weekly work to one of the identified common goals from the Values and Aims sheet.
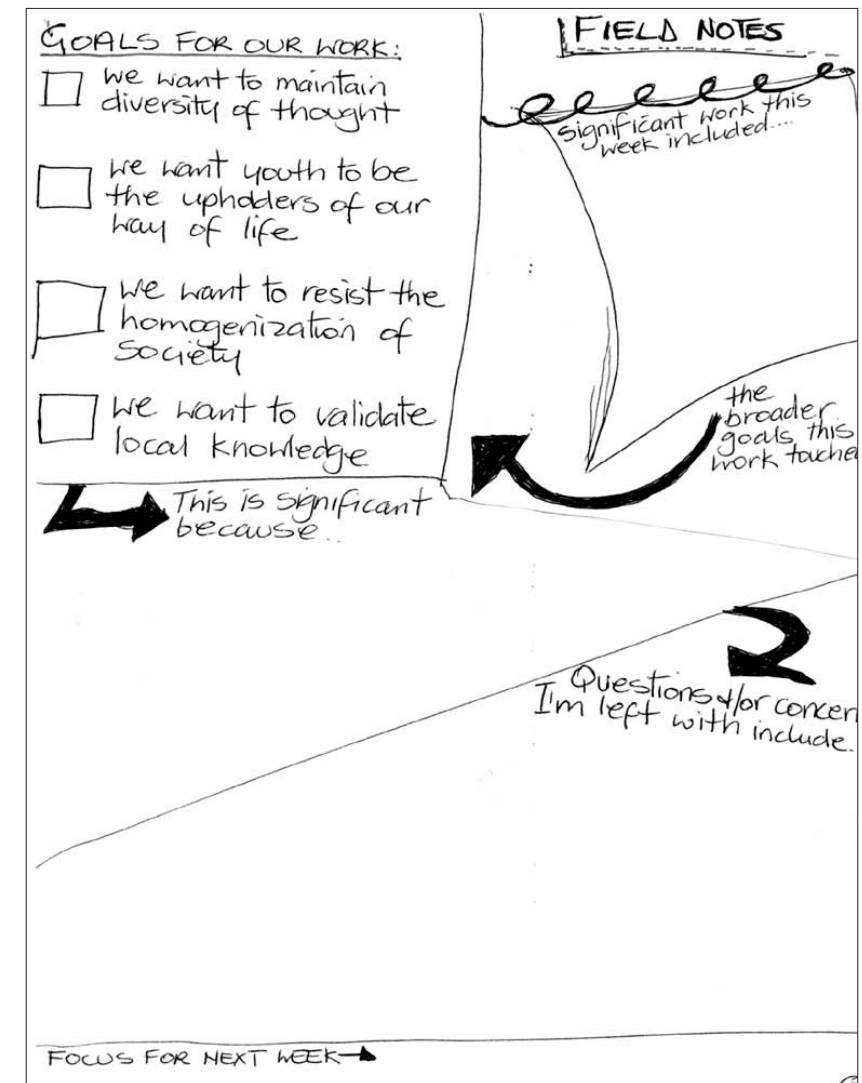
The field log explores significant aspects of the week

The final page of the reflective tools challenged practitioners to connect their daily activities with broader goals.

We used the common goals identified at the beginning of the project as our broader goals.

Each week we would explore how the "daily grind" was leading to a greater action.

By engaging in collaborative reflection-on-action we developed sets of questions and ideas about activities and practice. Such questions led to challenges not only about daily activities but also about the values, aims and systems that influence daily practice.

Reflective Questions

The reflective questions were sent out following every second collaborative reflection-on-action session. In total five questionnaires were sent out with two questions on each questionnaire, except for the fourth questionnaire, which only included one question.

Reflection #1
What do you think about this work or the prospect of this work.
What might be significant? What might be unsettling?
What might emerge from this work?

Reflection #2
What are you thinking about when you leave the reflective sessions?
What are you thinking about when you are back in your own work situation?

Reflection #3
What lens do you use when looking at your practice.
How is this affecting your relationship with others?

Reflection #4
What conversations have you had with others about reflective practice?

Reflection #5
Why do you want to practice with intent?
How does this reflective thinking impact how you perform your job?