The Reflective Practitioner
On The Margins - Talking with Métis Educator Dave Skene About His Life's Work

by

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Abstract

In this Arts-informed Life History I use dialogue and narrative to illustrate "pedagogy in practice" and illuminate the life's work of Métis adult educator Dave Skene. Skene tells stories of experience working cross-culturally to illustrate how individuals are transformed by learning experiences and how they contribute to transformative learning in others' lives. He recounts experiences of working for social justice and community development in the global context of north-south knowledge exchange. Skene's life crosses many borders and the research account walks readers through a life growing up in an urban setting, surviving on the street, discovering God, working internationally with indigenous peoples, listening to stories in

areas of protracted conflict and war, and co-founding a Non Governmental Organization, Global Youth Network. As researcher I interweave reflexive accounts of cross-cultural experiences in Canada and Latin America to contribute to understanding how to undertake life history research and issues in its representation.

Acknowledgments

Many people helped me cultivate and nurture my ideas in different ways and forms. If you've leaned against the frame of my office door and stopped to talk you've influenced my work. If you've passed me in the hallway or in the Peace Lounge at the Institute and told me about your research or your life you've influenced my work. Life history research travels with me from ivory towers, across tables, over coffee, in the street, on my bike, from the city, to the country, in the fields, or on the farm in the 'shop' where I share drinks with Mom and Dad, my brother, Bob, sisters, Helen Marie and Diane, after a hard day's work.

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Although sometimes brief and spaced out, my conversations with Dr. Jean-Paul Restoule are sources of

lifelong learning. His patience and understanding helped me to completion.

Dave Skene, his stories, humility, and friendship inspire my work and remind me how conversations over coffee can lead to social change.

Table of Contents

Introduction

As a life history researcher, I ask open ended questions, follow my interests rooted in the primacy of experience, tell stories of meaning-making from personal experiences, and attempt to understand individual lives in context. Experience, reflexive writing, literature, fiction, and art inform my process and, ultimately, how I represent life. I learn by doing.

I came to life history research because I wanted to tell stories about real people in real places. I met Dave in 2001 when I began my volunteer work with Global Youth Network. This began my eight years of work in cross-cultural experiential education programs in Canada and Latin America. The immediacy of my practice and life experiences guides this study.

Over the past eight years I visited small communities of indigenous peoples in Honduras, communities of people who lived and died during the Civil War in El Salvador, and communities of aboriginal peoples that survived residential schools in Canada. Their stories changed me. They touched me in ways that I can't always express. I came to arts-informed life history research because I wanted to explore the possibility of communicating ideas to audiences who might not otherwise learn of my research. I always thought of myself as a

practitioner, not a researcher. I thought research was something that scientists did in labs, something that was stale, devoid of memories, emotions, and stories, and real things that we carry with us day to day. I wasn't interested in doing research that I couldn't connect with or relate to on personal and professional levels. I didn't want to create something that no one would ever read.

Both life history research and arts-informed research as described by Cole and Knowles (2001; 2008) operate on the notion that all research is autobiographical and that it reflects who we are. Although the research may not exclusively be about the researcher, the presence of the researcher flows through the reflexive elements, throughout the research text and within the representational form. My voice is embedded throughout this research text dialogue. These are only inklings of who I am. To address my initial plan of study and research question, I return to my experiences and how this project began.

Margret Wheatley (2002) writes that most social change initiates or is shaped by a single traceable conversation. When I started this project I thought of my experiences working and learning. I wondered how the cross-cultural experiences-in-place influenced the pedagogical, professional, and personal assumptions of adult educators. I wrote reflexively and searched for answers to my own question. Instead of answers, I expressed

what I learned, what I experienced, how I felt, and how my experiences have influenced me, with a story. I trace my research question to a single story. I called it *Exploring Serendipity*.

On Exploring Serendipity

I wrote about an encounter in May of 2002 during my first experience volunteering with the Global Youth Network. In the small, remote town of La Esperenza, Honduras, I met Pascualita. At seventy-seven, she was a Lenca elder. She was partially blind and walked on shoeless mounds of callous. She stood four feet six inches tall. She reminded me of my Hungarian grandmother. Pascualita guided our team of volunteers to MontañaVerde, a small mountain village three hours by cattle truck and six hours by foot. We slept on the concrete floor of a small stone church. We awoke to the rising sun and the whole community brought us beans, rice, and freshly grilled tortillas tattooed with palm prints of the women who made them. Before our conversation, they gave thanks to the earth, the wind, the sun, the skies, the rocks, and the corn. We finished small cups of strong, black, sweet coffee, and gathered in the church.

I listened to stories of hydroelectric dams and displaced villages. I listened to stories about suffering and loss and resistance and resilience. The stories filled seven hours. When they stopped they never asked us if we had any questions because we volunteered to 'help'. Instead, they asked us what we thought of globalization and we recited textbook answers. They asked us what we thought of the privatization of health care, what we thought of the privatization of water, and what it would mean for them. We recited. They pummeled us with question after question after question. I felt numb and my mind went blank until a young woman asked, "How has the Canadian government dealt with your aboriginal peoples?"

At twenty three years old, I couldn't answer her question. I didn't know.

Now I reflect on this encounter and I think about stories. Native scholar Thomas King (2003) writes, "To every action there is a story". When I think about what I learned, how I felt, and how this encounter influenced me, I always return to stories. I tell them. I write them. I use them to answer questions and I use them to ask more. They can express how I feel and what I know and don't know. Some have a moral centre and some of them just make me smile. They reflect my pedagogy. I learn and nurture the learning of others through stories.

How has Pascualita influenced my research? Once we've heard a story, King writes, "It's yours. Do with it what you will. Tell it to friends. Turn it into a television movie. Forget it. But don't ever say that you would have lived your life differently if only you had heard this story. You've heard it now" (King, 2003). This story changed me. I could no longer ignore the aboriginal person sleeping on the corner of Queen and Bathurst Street in downtown Toronto.

On Stepping out of my World

When the members of Pascualita's community stopped asking questions we shared a warm drink made from corn served with a lump of cane sugar. The elders stepped out of the church and we followed down a foot-path through a forest into a clearing. Two sets of goal posts faced each other. We played futbol on a patchy green field where cattle grazed. It reminded me of playing in the field next to my grandparent's barn on the farm in Fruitland, Ontario as a child. After the game, Felix, one of the Lenca men from the gathering, brought me to his home to meet his family. He fed me cane sugar and showed me how to extract the juice from the cane. Felix and his two boys folded and fed the long stalks of cane through two rolling pins separated by a small gap and connected to a large crank arm. Felix turned the crank arm. One boy pushed the cane between

the pins and the other boy pulled. The cane crushed. Juice spilled into a large brown bucket on the ground. I was far away from my family but the brown bucket brought back memories of the farm where I grew up. I wondered why stepping out of my world made me think about home.

Theorizing My Own Experience

I came to understand my encounter with Pascualita, the experience of stepping out of my world, as a quintessential example of adult education as expressed by Lindeman (Brookfield, 1987), perspective transformation by Mezirow (1981) and "problem-posing" by Freire (1970).

Adult Education

Lindeman (1947, p. 55) wrote that “true adult education is social education.” He conceptualized adult education as a cooperative, non-authoritarian venture informed by learning based in experience. The chief purpose of adult education is to discover the meaning of experience and the preconceptions which influence our actions and conduct. It’s a dialogical technique for learning which makes education coterminous with life (Brookfield, 1987).

My encounter with Pascualita made me ask many questions. Why do indigenous peoples have to suffer? What are the stories of aboriginal peoples in Canada? How, if at all, am I connected? The questions sparked new interests and influenced my decisions in many ways. I started to think about my privilege and how it plays out in my day to day situations. These questions, broadly, initiated a quest for answers.

I describe this experience as stepping out of my world. A characteristic of my world is a natural attitude toward taken for granted day to day assumptions and preconceptions that influence how I act. I don't question the assumptions or preconceptions because they are tacit or implicit. As a result, I acquiesce. The moment I begin to question my world, I step out of it. Oscar Nudler writes that:

> A common characteristic of worlds (and to some extent of frames, too) is the non-reflective, uncritical acceptance of the basic assumptions on which they lie. As soon as we become critical of the assumptions on which a world is based, we somehow step out of it, no matter how strongly we continue to believe in such assumptions (Nudler, 1990).

Mezirow describes moments when we step out of our world as "disorienting dilemmas".

Perspective Transformation

A disorienting dilemma, is a “situation that arises in which individuals become critically conscious of how and why our habits of perception, thought and action have distorted the way we have defined the problem and ourselves in relationship to it” (1981). I volunteered to ‘help’. Before we left for Honduras, I understood ‘help’ broadly as being an English lesson or a construction project. As I listened to Pascualita narrate the story of her people I felt naïve and realized the situation was more grave than ever I expected. In essence, in the midst of a disorienting dilemma, I redefined my relationship to the problem and started to ask questions. Freire calls this process "problem posing."

Stepping out of my world, Mezirow’s disorienting dilemmas, and Freire’s "problem-posing" involve becoming aware of and making explicit the perceptions, thoughts, and habits that are implicit in everyday lives. This process leads to what Mezirow refers to as perspective transformation and Freire as “conscientization”. If we define perspective as ‘point of view’ or the ‘place from which we stand’ and define our world to be a mirror, and transformation as simply ‘a change’. Then if we imagine ourselves standing in front of mirror and taking a step

back. The image of the person in the mirror decreases in size and more of what is around that person comes into sight. If we don't like what we see, we can step back but we can't forget what we've seen. Bell Hooks (1994) simplifies this process as reflection-conscientization-action, a process that Freire refers to as educational praxis. "All genuine education will keep doing and thinking together." Lindeman writes, "experience is the adult learner's living textbook" (Brookfield, 1987, p. 7).

Before my team of volunteers went to sleep that night we gathered in a circle to debrief the day's events. We took turns expressing 'highs' and 'lows' and surfaced any questions to the group. Our leader guided and stimulated discussion, speculated rather than providing definitive conclusions, and sought to nurture our learning because, after all, she was learning just as much as us.

In subsequent years, I led teams of volunteers to El Salvador and to First Nations Communities across Canada. I lived in Ecuador and worked in social services and community development and education. In Havana, Cuba, I developed and implemented a service learning program for Canadian high school students. All the while, I learned and nurtured the learning of others through reflection and action based on experiences, and asked more questions. To me, my encounter with Pascualita in *Exploring Serendipity* initiated "self

awareness", a lifelong process of learning, and best describes my understanding of Adult Education.

On Dave Skene

I chose to examine a single life because I wanted to understand, in an in-depth way, how cross-cultural experiences influenced, and continue to influence, educators over a lifetime. I chose Dave Skene because I related to his process of learning and his practices as an educator. He is Métis and reflects my interests in learning more from aboriginal peoples in Canada. He is a story-teller, speaks of personal experiences, and learns by doing. He is a friend, colleague, and someone I admire. Dave's work with the Global Youth Network is committed to the education of justice issues in Canada and globally. Their work aligns with my interests in social justice and also my understanding adult education as expressed by Lindeman.

Chapter One
The Start

On April 8, 2009, I sit in Gate 17 at Lester B. Pearson Airport in Toronto, Ontario, Canada and wait to board flight AC076 to Caracas, Venezuela. I haven't worked in Latin America in three years since I enrolled in graduate school to focus on adult education and community development. Dave Skene walks into the gate. It's been almost 3 months since our last interview on January 17, 2009. He celebrated his fiftieth birthday in March, just one month before. He wears faded blue jeans, a fitted, black pullover that shapes to his belly, and a black baseball cap that covers his freshly shaven bald head. His blue eyes pierce against his pale skin. As he walks closer he sees me and smiles, revealing a front left gold tooth he got after he knocked out his real one while playing street hockey in Hamilton, Ontario at thirteen years of age. His smile dimples a deep scar on the left side of his chin just underneath his left mouth crease. I stand up and we hug.

Dave just got off a connecting flight from Vancouver. He and his wife, Liz, moved to Vancouver in late July of 2008 to start up the Global Youth Network University program at Simon Fraser University and the University of British Columbia. Dave is the founding directing of Global Youth Network, a not-for-profit charity that focuses on educating young Canadians about justice issues in the Global North and supports long-term transformational community development projects, nationally and internationally, with the end goal

of eradicating global poverty. In May of 2009, Global Youth Network is sending out 240 university students from 15 different Canadian universities on 26 different teams to 20 different countries around the world. Dave invited me to Venezuela to help him and Solom establish a South American leadership team made up of people that have helped facilitate teams of Canadian volunteers in South America, some for as many as ten years. Dave tells me Solom is eating with his wife, Kathy, before he joins us at the gate. Solom first worked with Global Youth Network as an international partner in Brazil where he was the director of Youth With a Mission (YWAM) in Manaus, Brazil for nine years. He has a degree in education and biology, and has worked as a teacher and a school principal in his home country of Brazil. Solom focuses on the development of Global Youth Network's partner countries, specifically with its Latin American country contacts. He also assists organizations in Kitchener, Ontario in their reception of refugees and new Canadians. He moves back to Brazil is July of 2009 and will become the director of Global Youth Network's first South American leadership team. Dave places a blue shoulder bag and a black camera case on the ground next to my maroon artificial leather Adidas duffle bag. I watch his things and he heads to the washroom.

Dave and I board the plane and see Solom sitting next to a window in aisle nineteen. We take our seats, at opposite ends of the plane, because we all reserved our flights at different times. The plane

engines roar, my back presses firmly into the chair, and my body begins to feel light.

More than one year before, on March 18, 2008, I try recording one of our conversations for the first time but over eight years, between 2001 and 2009, I heard him tell many stories about his life. My experiences working with Indigenous Peoples in Canada and Latin America with the Global Youth Network have influenced my work as an adult educator, community developer, and life history researcher. Over the past year, Dave told me his life story. My first goal was to understand his life without asking any "research questions". [1] *We had a short conversation about what my research was about, how the cross cultural experiences-in-place*[2] *influenced pedagogical and professional*

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1 The purpose of beginning with open-ended questions about how Dave came to his present work is to let him articulate, in his own words, how he sees himself and honour how he wishes to be seen.

2 In *Insights and Inspirations from an Artist's Work, Envisioning and Portraying Lives in Context*, Knowles and Thomas (2001, p. 210) define place as:

> An individual and socially constructed reality (Hutchison, 1999; Relph, 1976) – a notion that interweaves the elements of geographical location, social consciousness, and meanings derived from experiences-in-place...it is a place that represents, in literal and metaphoric terms, a focusing of emotive responses to the "sociophysical" context (Berleant, 1997).

assumptions of Canadian adult educators. Dave is an adult educator and an activist. I edited our conversations in ways that honour Dave's beliefs, capture the essence of our conversations, and illuminate the quirks and quarks of our personalities.

Dave and I sit in my living room on Markham Street in downtown Toronto, Ontario. Dave pulls a pile of photocopies from a black backpack. He flips through the pile, stops at an employment record from the Hudson's Bay Company that identifies his relative's occupation as "freeman". Each page contains fragments of his family's history that he and his mother, Pat, collected when she applied for her Métis status in 2005. The last page in the pile is a letter from the Métis Nation Council of Ontario welcoming Pat Skene to the Métis Society of Canada. Dave talks as he flips.

The Fire

"Dan, I'm just thinking that after the fur war, you were no longer forced to work with the Hudson's Bay or the

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Knowles situates his research within the context of a school setting; however, Sbrocchi's (2007) adaption of this definition of place in *Remembering Place: Domicide and a Childhood Home* to the context of her childhood neighbourhood has inspired me to futher extend this definition to the context of cross-cultural experiences to reflect my personal and professional areas of interest.

Northwest Company, you could trade with whoever you wanted. The market opened up. Maybe that's what they mean by 'freeman'"

"Like a freelancer, maybe. Amazing, everything is so well documented."

"The Hudson's Bay kept awesome documentation of workers, labourers, stations, who worked where, all that kind of stuff. You can search names in the on the Government of Canada website, or maybe it's the Hudson's Bay site. I downloaded this from the National Métis[3] site. It helps with the proof of your Métis heritage."

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3 "The Aboriginal peoples of Canada include First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples. The more than fifty First Nations have much in common, but they are different from one another - and very different from Inuit, whose culture was shaped by the demanding northern environment. Different again are Métis people, who blended traditions from Aboriginal and European forebears in a unique new culture" (Canada, 1996). In looking at an analysis of the history of mixed-race Native peoples in Canada, Lawrence comments that "what becomes immediately apparent is highly context-dependent nature of the Métis identity..." (Lawrence, 1999, p. 72) .

The phone interrupts our conversation. We stop talking and Dave begins writing out his mother's family tree in my red leather notebook. I first met Dave when I volunteered for the Global Youth Network in 2001. In 2004 we drove a twelve passenger van filled with ten volunteers across Canada to meet with and learn from six First Nations communities between Toronto and Vancouver Island. I also hiked thirty kilometres of the Bruce Trail with him for a fundraiser in 2006 and we've had coffee many times since we first met. Although he has given me informed consent to do so I hesitate to use the recorder. With the recorder turned off as he wrote out his mother's family tree, I ask, "So, when did you first start thinking about being Métis?" He points to the recorder and says, "Why don't you turn that thing on and I'll tell you." The light on the black recorder turns red and Dave begins.

"My Granny and my Grandma helped raise us. We called my great grandma, 'Granny.' They always told us stories of about our Métis, voyageur, and fur-trapping heritage but no one ever said, "Métis," they said, "Part-Indian." I think part of not saying it had to do with the Canadian government's

definition[4] of 'Métis' at that time. [5] You had to prove you had a certain percentage of Aboriginal blood regardless of whether you grew up in Métis community or had Métis heritage. So, you couldn't self identify as Métis unless you had a grandmother that had full status rights as an aboriginal woman, (Pause) or maybe you had to have a grandfather that had full status rights. I can't remember. So, I don't think they felt comfortable saying they were Métis because of the government's definitions. For my mom too, part of the problem was that her concept of being Métis was associated with a lot of drinking and fighting and negative experiences at home. She always saw it as a bad thing."

"So, she associated being Métis with drinking and abuse?"

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4 The Indian Act defined who is eligible to be registered as an Indian (Lawrence, 1999, p. 71). Consequently, in regulating the lives and identities of Indians, it also reifies the notion of a non-status Indian identity (Restoule, 2004).

5 Often known as children of the fur-trade, the Métis participated as trappers, guides, interpreters, factors, dock and warehouse workers, voyageurs, coureurs de bois, canoe and York boat paddlers, and Red River cart teamsters (Ontario, 2009).

"Yah, that's the way she saw it. They were all French speaking. So, that was her association with it. We knew we had some aboriginal connection and we were 'part-something' and I can remember a few stories that Granny and Grandma used to tell but, it wasn't until I was much older that I started to have more connection with indigenous communities. At first, internationally, with indigenous people in Guatemala and Mexico and Greenland, I began to reflect more on who I was and how I was connected to them. Each time I worked in an indigenous community the people kept on telling me how much I was like them. I remember thinking 'I'm a short, bald, fat guy and I don't really look like you (Laughs).'[6] The first few times it happened, I remember thinking, 'Yah, whatever' but then, as it happened more, I started to think, 'Maybe there's something to who I am that is still connected to that part of my life.' It always came up.

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6 Stereotypes and definitions that imply "Indians are all full bloods" have made it difficult for "lighter" Aboriginal people to be considered "authentic". (see Churchhill; Penn, 1997; Taylor, 1996; Merskin, 1996; Mihesuah, 1996). The "reality" is, Mihesuah (1996) writes, "the majority of Indians are of mixed heritage" (p. 103).

"I remember thinking, 'Okay, what's this thing they're talking about?' Then I talked to my brothers. We agreed we were always, kind of, different than the kids around us, a little bit on the outside kind of thing. We had different priorities. Like, my older brother is a successful business man and he lives in a simple house in the woods with his wife and his dogs. The more we talked, the more we agreed that we were different. Then, we started talking to my mom about the background and the history.

"Mom couldn't remember much so she phoned her last remaining Aunt to see if she remembered any stories. In the process, the government changed its definition. [7] It wasn't how

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7 In response to the events at Kanehsatake (also known as the "Oka Crisis") in the summer of 1990, Prime Minister Mulroney established a four point plan to acknowledge and investigate the plight of Aboriginal peoples in Canada (Restoule, 2004). The plan included the establishment of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples with the mandate to

> investigate the evolution of the relationship among aboriginal [sic] peoples (Indian, Inuit, and Métis), the Canadian Government, and Canadian Society as a whole. It should propose specific solutions, rooted in domestic and international experience, to the problems which have plagued aboriginal [sic] peoples today. The Commission should examine all issues which it deems to be relevant to any or all of the aboriginal [sic] peoples of Canada... (for Seven Generations, 1997 (Restoule, 2004, p. 21)

much native blood you had in you, anymore, it was whether you were from a Métis heritage. Obviously, we were but could never say it."

"How long ago was that?"

"I can't remember when they actually changed it but we found out less than ten years ago. I can't speak for my brothers but when they changed the law I felt much more comfortable

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The Commission's final report was released in 1995 and became the most comprehensive study of Aboriginal concerns in Canada ever undertaken (Restoule, year?, p. 21) Recommendation 4.5.2 of the 440 recommendations addressed Métis Identity. The Commission recommended that

> Every person who (a) identifies himself or herself as Métis and (b) is accepted as such by the nation of Métis people with which that person wishes to be associated, on the basis of criteria and procedures determined by that nation be recognized as a member of that nation for purposes of nation-to-nation negotiations and as Métis for that purpose" (RCAP4.5.2).

This recommended definition of "Métis" was adopted by the Supreme Court in 2003's Powley decision, essentially creating the common law "test" for which Métis people and communities may exercise Aboriginal rights (Restoule, 2004).

saying it. Before then, I didn't feel comfortable just walking around saying, 'I'm Métis.'

"My mom, who wasn't that interested, helped us figure out some of our ancestor's stories. In the process, she decided to go to a Métis celebration for women in her hometown of Dunnville, Ontario. It was a weekend event put on by the Métis Nation of Ontario women's organization. My mom went because it was close to her house.

"The first day she said she got really angry because the women were talking and telling stories and doing whatever they were doing. All my mom could remember were the negative parts of her life. She came home on Saturday and said she wasn't going to go back on Sunday. I don't remember why she changed her mind but she ended up going on Sunday for a sunrise ceremony. They did a traditional prayer with tobacco. You were supposed to hold the tobacco in your left hand and you offer your prayers to the fire with your tobacco. She had all this stuff in her head and she had tobacco in her left hand and she let it go into the fire. It was an emotional release."

"Almost like letting go."

"Yah, so, she said, 'This is who I am.' Rather than thinking all these things were terrible it became, 'This is who I am.' Her grandparents and her parents, they all had their

problems but those problems weren't representative of being Métis. So, we did all this research on our family and she went and got her Métis status.[8] Two of her cousins and her last remaining Aunt went to Midland, got a hotel room, spent a week there, and they contacted a Métis group in Midland who can help you find the information you need to get your status.

"They went to Parry Sound, Midland, and Penetanguishine, dug up their heritage, and they all got their

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8 This term "Métis status" is interesting. It gains its power from connoting "status" in the way it has become common to refer to a registered Indian as a "status" Indian (although there is no definition in law or policy for "status"). Even the well-known "Status" card does not say "status" anywhere on it (Restoule, 2004).

Here, Dave and I use the word "status" to refer to Métis card. The way we are talking about Métis definitions is not uncommon. These passages illustrate its vagueness and confusion. This research is not about Canadian legislation vis a vis the Métis but it is important to note that the idea of "status" Indian is entirely illusory. If it is not real, then "status" as a Métis person is less so. A Métis card may imply membership to the formal group, like the Métis Nation of Ontario (MNO) or the Métis Nation Canada (MNC) or the Labrador Métis but no government has actually recognized MNO cards. However, the Powley decision mentioned above, ordered governments to negotiate with the Métis to determine a process for identifying membership (Restoule would say "citizenship"). This is unprecedented in Canadian law: for the judiciary to order the executive on what to do. They've always interpreted, not directed. Still, both the province (of Ontario) and Canada have yet to recognize the Métis formally (Restoule, 2004).

Métis cards. I want to get my status but it costs $75 to get my long-form birth certificate (Laughs).

"So, you don't have your status?"

"No. The status is free but your birth certificate costs money."

"So, last time we had coffee I felt like we started even though we didn't have a recorder. I was just wondering how you felt about the process?" [9]

"It feels natural. One, because we know each other and, two, because I just tell stories, that's what I do. Whether there's a tape on or not. It's the only way I know how to communicate. I felt fine. I thought we'd sit down and there would be this whole interview process but it seems much more natural than that."

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9 Dave and I talked in a café about stages of his life. To get an idea for how I could structure our conversations, I asked him if he broke his life into parts or stages then what would those parts be or look like. With the information, I constructed what I call a *lifelist*.

"It's nice to have the recorder on when you go off on one of your tangents. It's helpful because each story you tell eventually answers some sort of question (We both laugh)."

"Yah, I'm not much of a linear processer."

"Well, that's probably a good thing (We both laugh)."

"So, I just got back from Modesto, California, where we had our Global Youth Network leadership training. I was sitting with the team leaders and someone asked something like, 'What does Global Youth Network do?'

"And Chris Whitler said, 'We tell stories. That's what we do.'

"That clicked. With Global Youth Network, that's what we do. We take people and put them in a place where they see people living in impoverished and unjust situations to listen to their stories. In the long run, no matter what they do, hopefully that story stays with them and has an impact on how they live their lives."

(An)Other Side of Childhood

"Is that how you got started?"

"Kind of, I've been on the other side. "

"Always, even growing up?"

"I grew up in a working class family. We weren't poor but my grandparents struggled economically all their lives. My father worked as a labourer for TH&D Railway and my mom was a secretary, a typical working class family during the 1960s. We weren't *poor* Poor but it wasn't like we could just have whatever we wanted."

"So you had an understanding of what it means to be Poor?"

"Yah, and from my grandparent's stories too. They struggled all their lives."

"Just to clarify, does that also mean you were always aware of what was happening internationally?"

"No, no. I had no idea what was happening internationally. Well, I had some idea. I remember the first pictures of starving children I saw. They had a huge impact on me. I also remember being close to people who were struggling

growing up. No one hid it from us and it was never really far away. If one of my parents couldn't work, it put us in a whole different situation. We struggled not to become Poor. Also, in my extended family there were always all kinds of problems. People were always staying with my grandparent's when they lost their house or when they were in between jobs or when something bad happened. I always knew people living in those situations."

"This was in Hamilton?"

"Yah. After I left home I lived on the streets in downtown East Vancouver for a few years."

"How old were you?"

"I started leaving home when I was fourteen and left when I was sixteen. Until I was twenty, I lived in total poverty."

"In the street?"

"Not all in the street. I went and built my own cabin and tried to do the mountain-man thing. I built a cabin on

Vancouver Island and lived off the land for a bit. I fished for survival and for money."

"Where did you build the cabin?"

"When I went out to British Columbia I was on the streets of Vancouver for a bit. Then, some friends of mine said I should go up to Whistler.[10] Now it's Whistler-Blackcomb but at that time it was small ski area and just called Whistler. I heard about some cabins left abandoned by squatters. I heard about one down the railroad tracks quite a ways from town. I found it, fixed it up, and lived there for a while but not long. I worked in minimum wage jobs in the ski community for about six months. Then I went back to Vancouver and was back there for a while.

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10 Whistler, located 100km north of Vancouver, is one of Canada's premier ski resorts. Development began in 1966 with the establishment of the Whistler Mountain Ski Corporation and expanded in the 1980s when luxury condominiums and international resort hotels were built. During expansion additional ski runs were also constructed at nearby Blackcomb Mountain (Warkentin, 2000, p. 490).

Then, I went from Vancouver and worked in the Okanagan Valley[11] for the summer.

"Picking fruit?"

"I was supposed to pick fruit but I ended up chopping wood. Not logging but actually chopping wood. I made firewood for this guy."

"With a chain saw?"

"A chain saw, a sledge hammer, and a wedge. He had a contract for four-foot-length quarters."

“Really, four-foot-long quarters?"

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11 “The Okanagan Valley is dry and can almost warrant being called a desert. The area is diverse and unparalleled for its climate and landscape. The Okanagan Valley has hoodoos, orchards, vineyards, mountains, valleys, lakes, highlands, ski slopes, and trails. Starting in the south, near the United States border, a spectacular backcountry conceals the remains of old mining settlements. In the North, through the arid Osoyoos and Oliver regions, there are orchards and vineyards and some of the best fruit- and vegetable-growing land in the world” (BritishColumbia, 2009).

"They had to be four feet and then they had to be quartered."

“So, a log cut four-feet long and then quartered into wedges? That's brutal!"

"It was hard work and I only got paid by the cord." [12]

"We used to get wood delivered to our house in cords in the winter. How much is a cord again?"

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12 “A full cord is a large amount of wood. It measures 4 feet high by 4 feet wide by eight feet long (4' x 4' x 8') and has a volume of 128 cubic feet. A 'full' cord measures 4 ft. x 4 ft. x 8 ft. and is the official, standard firewood measure. But four foot pieces are never used for home heating, and dealers rarely sell four foot pieces. So firewood is not offered for sale in the form of its official unit measurement. This is why buying firewood can be confusing. Other terms, such as face cord, stove cord or furnace cord are sometimes used to describe a stack of wood measuring 4 ft. high, 8 ft. long with a piece length shorter than 4 ft. A common firewood piece length is 16 in., or one-third of a full cord, but other lengths are also available” (Woodheat, 2009).

"It's like eight feet long, four feet wide, and four feet high. I got paid seven dollars a cord. I could do two in a day so I made fourteen bucks."

"What year was this?"

"It was like 1977, I don't know, maybe like 1975 or 1976. My first minimum wage job paid me $13/ day. So I was making $14 a day, in the summer, in the Okanagan, not too bad actually."

"Grueling."

"When I finished the contract, I decided to go to the Island to see if I could get a job, fishing. I didn't know where to go but I ended up in Campbell River. [13] In Campbell River I met

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13 Campbell River's is a town located on the central east coast of Vancouver Island. Numerous resources centres throughout the region depend on forestry and fishing. Campbell River's economy depends largely on a large pulp and paper mill and a lumber company. Many short beaches lie along the gentle, pleasant, forested eastern shore of Vancouver Island making it a popular region for retirees and travelers (Warkentin, 2000, pp. 484-485).

this guy who was building a fishing boat. He sold fish to pay for the materials to build the boat. He lived on Quadra Island, right across from Campbell River. It's a beautiful island. I lived with him and his family. We fished and dug clams. After a month or so, I built a cabin in a bay on the island. I continued working with him on the boat until he couldn't pay me. After, I dug clams and he sold them. We did a big clam dig to get a whole bunch of money and start building the boat again. It was a slow process. We never finished the boat. But I built a cabin and lived off the ocean. A fresh water creek ran near my cabin. I had freshwater, dug clams and oysters, and fished. I ate fish for breakfast and, sometimes, I'd buy a sack of potatoes."

"So you were still pretty young at this point."

"I can't remember the sequence of events but I came back to Ontario for a job then I went back BC.[14] I did the back and forth thing for a long time but eventually, because of my drugs, I ended up stuck in Vancouver surviving on the streets."

"Was that the Hastings area?"

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14 Canadian province of British Columbia

"East Hastings Street, Main Street, Cordova Street, I ended up in the downtown eastside. [15] I had some plans. I wanted to buy a boat and do log salvaging. I went into Vancouver and planned to pick magic mushrooms and sell them back East in Ontario and make enough money to buy a boat. But I got stuck."

"What were you going to do with the boat?"

"Log Salvage, but I just got stuck in Vancouver. [16] My addictions were stronger than my will power."

"What drugs were you doing?"

"Everything and anything, I used heroin and cocaine and all that kind of stuff. I don't know if I was addicted to one drug as much as I was addicted to *just* being drugged. I was high for

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15 A common view of Vancouver's downtown eastside is one of poverty, drugs, prostitution, gangs, and death.

16 Log Salvors are people who salvage logs. They rescue timber from rivers and exchange the timber for money at a log salvage depository. In the city, the equivalent would be finding beer bottles and cans in the streets and returning them to the beer store in exchange for money. When I told Dave my analogy he said he couldn't have explained it better.

about four years. I started using drugs at home in Hamilton. It progressively got worse and worse. It was a time that just got darker and darker. Maybe I was depressed, I don't know. There was this black hole that I wandered around in, this continuous night in my mind. Now, I say I was trying to figure out my purpose in life. I had tonnes of 'why'[17] questions that nobody seemed to know the answer to."

"Do you have an example?"

"I remember the first time I saw pictures of starving children. There was a war in a place called Biafra. I think I was eight. I remember thinking how humanity could do this to humanity and wondering how a child could be in that situation and asking how things like this happened. I remember nobody knowing and I remember feeling frustrated. Nobody seemed to know 'why' or 'how'. I remember my teacher said it was because there was a war in Biafra. I wondered why there was a war. I used to get sent down to the principal's office all the time. I

17 Dave poses many 'why' questions throughout his story. This is what Freire (1970) refers to as "problem-posing," making problematic taken-for-granted social roles and expectations and the habitual ways we act and feel in carrying them out.

acted up a lot and I had a difficult time with my family life but I also struggled because I had these questions nobody could answer.

"When my teacher sent me to the principal's office I would say to the principal, 'You tell me why this makes sense!' I was eight or nine or ten, so, of course I didn't use those words. I would say, 'I'm born, get a good education, get married, find a good job, buy a house, buy a car, and I have kids.' I would say, 'Does that seem like life to you?'

"My teacher would always say, 'Oh my gosh, David! Why can't you just do your work? Why do you have to ask all these questions?' I had the same principal all throughout elementary school. I remember my principal saying, 'You just have to jump through the hoops!' I remember, once, I asked, 'Why do you have to jump through the hoops?' I remember he said, 'That's the system, David,' and I said, "Why does that have to be the system?' and he said, 'That's just the way the system works!' and I said, 'Why can't you change the system?' I always left confused and frustrated. I remember being eleven, sitting in the principal's office, thinking I am going to spend the rest of my life trying to change the system because the system just didn't make sense.

"I think I tried to do that but, without any guidance or help or connection with other people, I grew more and more

hopeless. I didn't know how to express what I was thinking. I was just a kid. I was a very angry and violent kid because of the environment I grew up in. I remember being in grade four or grade five history class and the teacher talking about how missionaries came to civilize the Indians. [18] I remember being red-face and angry and standing straight up and yelling at the teacher about how wrong she was, about how the missionaries didn't bring civilization, and about how they actually killed a culture. I remember my teacher's reaction, 'David, down to the office!' I remember wanting to tear something apart.

"I remember meeting hippies and thinking they seemed to know something. My cousins in Parry Sound who were hippies had their own rock band and lots of land. I remember they brought in a lot the draft dodgers from the United States. They built log cabins and lived off the land. I remember going

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18 Freire refers to this kind of teacher-student relationship and context as the 'banking' style of education. Teachers narrate and students are expected to memorize mechanically the narrated content turning students into "'containers" or receptacles to be "filled" by teachers. Relevant to this point in Dave's story, Freire states, "The teacher talks about reality as if it were motionless, static, compartmentalized, and predictable. Or he expounds on a topic completely alien to the existential experience of the students" (1970, p. 71).

to Parry Sound and hanging out with them. I smoked weed for the first time. I watched them fight and I remember thinking they punched each other out just like me and my brothers at home. The hippies and the draft dodgers were whacked out on all sorts of drugs and I remember thinking they were addicted like me. I tried to find some sort of direction in the whole process but I always left feeling lost and disappointed. That's how I ended up in that black hole in the downtown Eastside. Now, I see that period of my life and as a time of hopelessness. I remember thinking spirituality didn't make sense because if God created this system then he was dumber than all of us. I remember thinking all these thoughts and not finding any answers."

I interviewed Dave five times before we got through the gist of his life once. Dave repeated the story about "jumping through the hoops" several times. After almost a year, it's the only story I had about his childhood.

Conversion Conversation[19]

"So, from the street, you moved into a Dilaram right? What's a Dilaram again?"

"The book, *Just off Chicken Street*, best describes the history of the Dilaram House. [20] They started in Afghanistan and Amsterdam."

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19 'Conversion Conversation', 'Stuck inside a Mobile', and 'Pretending to be Indian' are 'self stories' related to childhood that I collected in my last formal interview with Dave in Chaper Six. I moved them to the beginning to follow the chronology of life. I provide more explanation for this decision in Reflections on the Art of Life History Research in Chapter Nine.

20 Dilaram is a Farsi word meaning "peaceful heart". Floyd McClung Jr. is one of the founders of Dilaram Houses and author of *Just off Chicken* Street. McClung was a twenty-five year old missionary working in India when he started working with hippies traveling the overland trail from Europe to India. The trail is well known amongst travelers of that region and begins in London, England stretches across Europe to Athens, Greece, then to Istanbul, it continues across Turkey and Iran, runs the length of Afghanistan into Pakistan, and drops down to India. McClung describes many people on the trail as 'freaks' - travelers abusing drugs, run-down with lice and diseases like typhoid, hepatitis, and dysentery, and suffering from loneliness, shattered idealism, and being lost without a way home. He talks about the evangelical urge to "win the lost" as being a framework in which non-Christians cease to be persons and become targets turning evangelism into a game of numbers. He searched for a different way to connect with people and started going to where these people were instead of knocking on doors and talking to people with a Bible in his hand.

"Did you live in a Dilaram in Amsterdam?"

"No, I started in Vancouver and all the Vancouverites had all their Jesus experiences in Afghanistan or Amsterdam. So, the people who educated me about the ways of Christianity came from those two movements. They were true blue Jesus People."

"True blue Jesus people, what are they? Is that what you'd call a Jesus Freak?"

"Jesus Freaks were hippies who had a real conversion experience with Jesus. The Jesus Movement brought some of counterculture from the 1960s and 1970s into Christianity."

"Counterculture?"

He started the first Dilaram House in Afghanistan, opened his doors to the 'freaks', and provided a refuge for rehabilitation where visitors could stay, live, and dialogue about Christianity and the role of spirituality in their lives. For McClung, the Dilaram House demonstrated a life grounded in the Jesus' example of living and working amongst the Poor (McClung Jr., 1975).

"Community, simple life, love and peace, they brought things like that into Christianity. In the 1960s, the mainline Evangelical church was still fairly conservative. [21] Hippies started doing church. They never wore suits which was a big thing at the time. There was a way you looked if you were Christian and there was a way you didn't. They blew that whole model apart. The Evangelical Church moved away from politics but the hippies brought some of it back. There were

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21 I asked Dave if he means Pentecostal when he refers to the "Evangelical Church". Below is Dave's edited written response:

> The Evangelical Church is much broader then Pentecostalism but now includes the Assemblies. One way to think about it is to break it up into three main groups in Christian denominationalism- liberals, fundamentalists, and evangelicals. The 'fundies' usually have a very strong dogmatic approach to Christianity. They tend to read the scriptures more literally and are usually critical of groups that don't fit their ideology. The liberals don't hang their hats anywhere. They deconstruct Christianity until there is nothing left and say they are Christian. Evangelicals can be anywhere in between the liberals and the 'fundies'. Some lean more to the liberal side and others are more fundy. I'm over-simplifying but you get the idea.
>
> Up until the 60's and 70's, the Pentecostal movement was seen as a fundy movement because of its doctrine of speaking in tongues as evidence that believers possessed God's spirit. This was very exclusive and created a divide. As the movement matured and as evangelicals became more open to signs and wonders (not just speaking in tongues), some of the barriers came down. Now, the Assemblies have been recognized as Evangelical.

several new expressions of the faith. Some were very charismatic expressions, others connected faith and life. They did really charismatic-type things. Like, if they prayed for someone, they'd be healed. "

"Like miracles?"

"Miracles and being saved."

"And what does 'being saved' mean?"

"For me, 'being saved' was a process. I embraced the idea of Christianity without really knowing anything about it. When I met the guys from the Dilaram House on the street in Vancouver they started talking to me about Christianity. I had to ask them how to become a Christian because I didn't really know what a Christian was.

"And so I said, 'How do you become a Christian?'

"'You just pray.' The Jesus people said, 'You make Jesus Lord of your life.'

"So, that's what I did.

"In the Jesus movement, that's what was happening. It was an evangelical movement where you convert people. It was

evangelism but it was personally evangelistic. Like, it wasn't a crusade or like Billy Graham. [22] It was one-on-one, hanging out, going to the people, that kind of thing."

"When I think about my conversion, I guess I did what they said. It wasn't this great emotional thing that happened but there was something inside of me that clicked. Somehow, it felt like the right thing to do. At that point, I didn't really know God but, now, I see it as the beginning of a journey towards understanding who God is. I couldn't put it in those words[23] at the time but, when I think about it now, that's how I felt[24].

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22 Graham is known for his "crusade" style of ministry, practicing large scale evangelism, and spreading the 'word' and teachings of Jesus Christ in big gatherings and cities.

23 Polanyi (1983) describes tacit knowledge as knowledge which is incommunicable as we are not aware of either our acquisition or possession of it. See also Foley's (2004) incidental and Mündel and Schugurensky's (2005) implicit learning.

24 Schön recognizes that the majority of our knowledge is tacit, "implicit in our patterns of action and in our feel for the stuff with which we are dealing" (p. 49). He goes on to say that our knowledge, even though we may not be in a position to put it into words, is effectively found in our actions. This knowing which is manifest in the doing Schön classifies as knowing-in-action, knowing which is revealed in action but which cannot be described (1983; 1987).

"So, that weekend, I just did what was done to me and I went out on the streets and started telling my friends to get converted. (Laughs)"

Stuck Inside a Mobile

"You didn't tell me much about life on the street. How did you pay for things? Even for your drugs, how did you pay for them?"

"I sold drugs to pay for drugs."

"Did you have any routines? Where did you sleep?"

"I was pretty mobile. Even when I lived in Hamilton as a teenager (before I went out West) I was pretty mobile. I coped with life by using drugs and traveling. I guess traveling could still be considered one of the ways I cope with life (Laughs) but I don't use drugs anymore.

"I remember I used to wake up in the morning and hitch-hike. When I first left home I couch surfed and picked up odd jobs. I first hitch hiked across Canada when I was fifteen or sixteen. I remember standing on 'working corners' where they pick you up for construction jobs or day-labour. I always did

that kind of thing, even in Vancouver. I worked in the Okanagan Valley too but those jobs were more long-term."

"Is that where you split logs?"

"I split logs in the Okanagan and fished on the West Coast."

"So you weren't just on the streets of Vancouver. You moved around a lot."

"I went out to Quadra Island, built a cabin, and lived off the land. During that process I was searching for something. I got more and more depressed. Of course, that's how it looks now but I didn't know that at the time. I wandered around in a dark hole. On my last trip into Vancouver I didn't have the will power to keep doing what I was doing."

"What were you doing?"

"I was traveling around, meeting people, working, and trying to figure things."

"When you got to this last point in Vancouver what were you doing?"

"I was just getting high and living on the street. Living on the street was *really* living on the street. There was a big group of us living under the Georgia Street Viaduct.[25] It was heated and, actually, not a bad place to live (Laughs). We pan handled and sold dope. We focused on getting high and staying high. I had friends and connections but I felt more and more alienated."

Pretending to be Indian

"What were your friends like growing up? Start off in Hamilton. Did you have many friends?"

"Yah, I had friends. I grew up in a working class neighbourhood, surrounded mainly by factory working families and kids my age. I had some good neigbourhood friends. My brother, Mike, is fifteen months older than me. We did a lot of

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25 Under the Viaduct is a well known place to live for homeless people in Vancouver dating back to the Depression in 1931 when the city of Vancouver reduced relief payment for single men. The Viaduct was one of the ramshackle hobo communities where people in need of social assistance sought refuge in the East end of the city.

stuff together. My other brother was two years younger. Two years was just enough difference to keep him from hanging out with us.

"Saturday was Hike Day. Me and Mike and guys from the neighbourhood would walk from our house and follow the Bruce Trail[26] down to King's Forest or Devil's Punchbowl. We'd wake up early in the morning and sneak out our bedroom windows before my parents got up and gave us chores. Once we were out of the house, we'd find our neighbourhood buddies and head on a hike.

"My Dad was violent and unpredictable. I think that's why we tried to be out. But also, in those days, kids played outside. For lunch Mom handed us peanut butter and jam sandwiches through the door and told us to be home when the street lights came on."

"Did you talk about being Métis with your friends?"

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26 The Bruce Trail, Canada's oldest and longest foot-path, provides the only continuous public access to the magnificent Niagara Escarpment, a UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve. It is one of only fifteen such reserves in all of Canada (Bruce_Trail, 2009)

"It came up in small ways. When I was young I tried to assert my aboriginal heritage. I had no idea what that was but I knew that it was there. I said things like, 'I'm part-Indian.' My hair was long, dark, and straight. I looked more the part.

"So, I used those words but I didn't *know* part-Indian."

"Was it something you heard?"

"It was common knowledge. My great grandmother, my grandmother, and my mother all said, 'Part-Indian,' but they never explained what it meant. I remember a time when I was a kid looking for some sort of understanding about who I was.

"I remember starting Grade Three and there was this new kid. I even remember his name. It was David Constantino. It was the first time we met. His hair was blond and his eyes were blue and his skin was fair and he wore bandanas and feathers and he called himself an Indian.

"I thought, 'If he's an Indian then what am I?' He blew my image of being Indian. I thought, 'I just don't want to say that I'm an Indian like David Constantino, who doesn't look like an Indian, who doesn't act like an Indian.'

"I said to myself, 'I don't want to be a pretend thing.' So, I just dropped it."

"What was your picture of an Indian?"

"I always loved the bush and getting out of the city and going for a hike. Not necessarily looks."

"So it wasn't just based on looks?"

"It was what you prioritized and things you did. Having a house was not important to me. I could live in a tent. I could live anywhere. Not that being Aboriginal means being happy living in a teepee or a wigwam. What I mean is, a house isn't necessarily home. I struggled with that, even as a young kid.

"'What did I think an Indian was?' That's a good question. The simplest way to say it is that childhood was so confusing. I wondered who I was and how I was supposed to know who I was and I wondered where I fit in. I expected things to get clearer as I got older, instead, they got darker.

"When I think about my experiences growing up I find it hard to process that time because, even as a kid, it was confusing. Even when I am talking about it now, it's confusing. Even my reflections of what it was like are confusing."

Chapter Two
The Kitchener Farmer's Market

May 2, 2008 Dave and I give a workshop on Storytelling for the teams leaders at the Global Youth Network, the night before the volunteers arrive. The next day Dave gives three workshops on reflection. He introduces me as a researcher and a former Global Youth Network volunteer. Before the volunteers begin their fieldwork, Dave asks them to think about how they plan to bring the experiences they're about to have back home.

During the workshop Dave told a story about living in the Dilaram. The Dilaram was a community house and everyone shared everything. He would come home to find someone in his bed or wearing his shoes. The house had a big table with twenty four chairs. They would take in and feed as many people from the street as they had chairs every night. One night a man who suffered from mental illness was "off his meds", flailing his arms around uncontrollably, and talking but not making sense. Dave said they shared a meal with him and he left as soon as he finished. Dave walked him to the door and the man thanked him for making him feel a sense of dignity.

One thing that I noted about this story is Dave's view of the experience. He recounts it as an incident where he was helping someone

else and not being helped. The Dilaram was also a place where Dave learned to deal with his substance abuse.

May 31, 2008, Dave and I sit across from each other in his small two bedroom apartment in Kitchener, Ontario. We have just returned from the Kitchener Farmer's Market. Dave bought some fruits and vegetables and I bought some fresh apple cider. After shopping he starts telling me more stories about his life while we eat lunch.

The Butcher

"Have I told you the story about the butcher?"

"No."

"I managed a farm in Cambridge [Ontario] for Youth with a Mission[27] after I lived in a Dilaram in Amsterdam. We

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[27] "Youth with a Mission (YWAM) is an international movement of Christians working to help make a difference in a needy world. Founded in 1960 it is now one of the largest interdenominational and international Christian ministries, with over 15,500 volunteer staff based in over 1000 locations in 149 countries.

planned to convert the farm into a halfway house for people transitioning from a short-term detention centre. The detention centre sat next to the farm and we collaborated with an organization that provided skills-training for prisoners.

"None of our staff farmed but they were all interested in trying. Our partner organization was like The John Howard Society of Canada but different.[28] There was a push for justice

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"Coming from many different backgrounds and working in a wide range of situations, YWAMers are united in their desire to be part of changing people's lives and have responded to the "Great Commission" - Jesus' command to His disciples to "go into the world and tell the good news". They believe the gospel of Jesus is not just about words, but also actions. So they share their faith through many different kinds of practical help--from agricultural training to running medical clinics - as well as telling about the Christian beliefs that inspire their actions.

"In addition to our full-time staff, many YWAM locations host short-term outreach teams made up of individuals, youth groups, families and churches who get to participate first-hand in "making God known" through both words and actions. We send out over 25,000 short-term missionaries each year" (YWAM, 2009).

28 The John Howard Society was originally created to bring spiritual help to prisoners in Toronto Jails. Developed from the "Prisoner Aid Association of Ontario" formed in 1876, a citizens' group led by Toronto's Chief of Police reinstated their mandate and started the "Citizens Service Organization" in 1929. They changed their mandate to focus on providing practical help to ex-prisoners with housing, clothing, and employment services. ...In 1946, the Citizens Service Organization changed their name to become the John Howard Society of Ontario.

initiatives in the early eighties but as far as I know, they weren't popular until the nineties."

"In Canada, there was a movement for justice initiatives?"

"It was the early 1980s and it was the first time I ever heard of bringing perpetrators and victims together."

"Like restorative justice."

"We planned to farm and house people on the property. The farm provided the opportunity for ex-prisoners to learn farm skills and develop good work habits to help them return to

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Today, the John Howard Society of Canada is a federation of provincial and local societies comprised of people whose mission is "safe, effective and humane responses to the causes and consequences of crime." The goal is to understand and respond to problems of crime; to work with people who have come into conflict with the law; to review, evaluate and advocate for changes in the criminal justice process; and to engage in public education on matters involving prison conditions, criminal law and its application (John Howard Society of Canada - History of John Howard Societies in Canada).

society. But, I never farmed or knew anything about justice initiatives.

"I remember inheriting 16 cows - half meat, half milk - all crosses between Holstein and Angus. Most of the cows calved the first summer and milking kept us busy. We provided milk for Youth with a Mission, gave some to people in the neighbourhood, and we kept some for ourselves. We raised ducks, rabbits, and chickens and a local farmer donated lay hens."

"So you had a fully functioning farm."

"Yah, the staff started work early each morning. Before we started working on the farm the land was dormant for a long time. We spent a couple months tidying up the property. The farm was one hundred and ten acres but some of the land was unusable because it was covered by bush. The land owner leased eighty acres to local farmers and we worked the rest.

"I am trying to picture how it looked but I can't remember. We had a pasture for the cows. The cows were actually pretty wild because no one really looked after them and they were just left to roam.

"I had never milked a cow before but I learned. I milked them all by hand. Not knowing what to do, I'd crouch

underneath each cow and tug at its teats. My body would get really stiff after four or five cows. And because I couldn't milk them very fast they'd get restless and move their feet. My back and arms would be so stiff that I couldn't move fast enough to stop the cows from kicking the pail. The milk would spill all over the ground. It was so frustrating (Laughs).

"After I'd been doing this for a couple of months the farmer who owned the land stopped by one morning. He walked up to me while I was milking one of the cows. I looked up at him and said, 'Milking these cows is brutal!' and he said, 'Dave, you know there's a machine that does that.' He told me to follow him and we walked into the barn and stopped next to a machine resting on the ground. He unraveled a long hose that was attached to the machine with four nozzles on the end. He grabbed the nozzles and said, 'You put these on the teats and push the button and the machine does the rest.' All I could do was laugh. [29]

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29 When describing practitioners, Schön writes that "[they] deliberately involve themselves in messy but crucially important problems and when asked to describe their methods of inquiry, they speak of experience, trial and error, intuition, and muddling through" (1983, p. 43).

"I didn't know anything about farming but I read and learned as I went. I'd get a load of day-old chicks and I'd put them in the barn and I'd read about raising chickens after I finished milking the cows. We also raised rabbits, ducks, and goats. I read a bunch of articles saying that rabbit meat was the least expensive protein so I raised rabbits. A lot of people were starting to eat goat's milk and goat's cheese so I raised goats too. We also grew our crops on huge mounds of soil. It's a type of farming called mound agriculture.

"Each mound had a mixture of plants, like beans and corn. Certain plants remove nutrients from the soil and others replace. Corn takes out. Beans put in. The plants worked together. I had to learn how that worked but I never liked it because it was too systematic. I preferred raising the animals. None of us were trained. We all learned as we went."

"How did you end up on the farm, Dave?"

"I moved from a Dilaram in Vancouver to a Dilaram in Amsterdam. I hitch hiked from Amsterdam to Germany and

ended up in jail. The guy who picked me up said that we needed to stop at his house before heading to Spain. I stopped using drugs a few years before. When we got to his house he started rolling a spliff. [30] Before he even finished rolling it a bunch of policemen burst through the front and back doors and arrested everyone. I found out that the guy who picked me up sold hash. I didn't think the police would believe that I was just a hitch hiker. In jail, I asked God for help and said that if I got out of this situation, I'd go back to Canada.

"The German police officers asked how I knew the guy. I told them my life story. I talked about living on the street, abusing drugs, becoming a Christian, and living in the Dilaram. I told them everything. I spent three days in jail but, at the time, it looked like it was going to be a lot longer. They finally ended up releasing me and I returned to Canada and moved to Cambridge.

"I heard about the farm while working as a cook for Youth with a Mission. The director of YWAM thought my experiences working in Dilarams would be useful for working

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30 Tobacco rolled with Hash Oil, like a joint

with prisoners on the farm. So, he introduced me to the farmer's son.

"Me and the farmer's son made many trips to the property. When he visited the farm in the evening I went with him. I learned about farming from our conversations.

"I developed good relationships with many farmers in the area. I didn't know how to raise chickens or rabbits or how to grow vegetables. I asked local farmers questions when I needed help.

"For a year I worked all hours on two farms. I worked on YWAM's farm during the day and on John Row's farm at night. John Row was a butcher. He practiced organic beef farming and he hired me to clean his butcher shop. At six o'clock every evening I went to John Row's to hose down and mop up the butcher shop. Almost every night, when I got there, we talked. He taught me about organic beef and he showed me how to butcher meat and make sausages and he taught me about farming. At eleven o'clock, he'd say, "I think that's enough for today, Dave. See you tomorrow." I don't think I ever cleaned the butcher shop once (Laughs).

"John Row's dad was a retired veterinarian. He always stopped by the farm. When he came by we drank coffee. He'd tend to the animals if they were sick; but, mostly, we sat and talked. John Row and his father taught me a lot.

"The plan for the farm never worked out. The local farmers never supported the idea of living beside ex-prisoners and it seemed too cult-ish to try and do it without their support. When Youth with a Mission offered me a teaching position I left the farm.

"But I almost ruined it for myself when I first met John Row. I stopped in to see him and told him I lived just down the road and was curious about the type of farming he did. He told me to come back a couple of days later. He started showing me around and I met his wife and family and he took me through the barns and into the fields. Afterwards, we were just sitting around and talking. His wife was a big lady. When I saw her she was wearing one of those maternity shirts."

"Like a muumuu?"

"I don't know what it was. But, I was just making conversation and I said to him, 'So your wife's expecting eh. When's she due?'"

"Oh my God, Dave, you didn't?"

"She looked pregnant. She wasn't huge but she was wearing one of those shirts and her belly was out and, anyway, he laughed it off. Maybe that's what made him like me. We had

a really good time working together and I learned a lot. It made farming more interesting."

Questions from Outhouse Holes

"Dave, sometimes your stories seem so piece-y. Like, you say "So I was here." (Laughs)"

"And then I was there."

"And, then, I was there for a year and a half and then some other place."

"So you want a timeline?"

"No, not necessarily, Dave, but maybe you could say a little bit more about what happened in each place. Like, what happened after you left the farm?"

"So, after the farm I led Discipleship Training Schools (DTS) in Cambridge, Ontario for Youth with a Mission.[31] It's a training program for new missionaries. I didn't really like being in the classroom because I never really liked school but I loved the part where you got to travel. I'd sit through three months in the classroom just so I could travel for two months. I really liked traveling. That's where education really happened. I ran a DTS in September 1983 and another one in 1984."

"So, where'd you travel with each training school?"

"Mexico, Belize, Guatemala, Greenland, and some different locations in Canada."

"Not El Salvador?"

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31 Dave describes a Discipleship Training School (DTS) as an intensive Christian training course for short term missionaries. The six-month program is split into three months of course work and eight to twelve weeks of outreach or 'field work'. The coursework focuses on character development and challenges participants to cultivate a relationship with God. The outreach gives participants an opportunity to put into practice what they learned and emphasizes cross-cultural exposure and global awareness.

"No, I wasn't in El Salvador until after we started Global Youth Network in 1995."

"At the market you said you traveled to Mexico for your own personal DTS but where did you first go with a team?"

"So after Mexico, I completed two consecutive lecture phases. With the second group we worked in refugee camps in Belize. There were civil wars in Guatemala, El Salvador, and Nicaragua going on so many people fled to Belize as refugees.

"There were two parts to the camp. One part was a camp where refugees arrived and slept and the second part was a little town being built in the jungle. Eventually, refugees resettled to the town where they could farm and build houses. We worked in the camps but also in the town. In the town, the refugees focused on clearing and cultivating the land and we helped with the infrastructure. Actually, our main job there was building outhouses (Laughs). We worked with the community digging the eight foot pits with army shovels." (Laughs)

"Like those little shovels?"

"They were little fold-up shovels that were great for digging holes. You could fold them and turn them into a pickaxe. You could pick and you could shovel. Another

company made cement slabs to put over the holes. They donated the slabs and the refugees built the outhouse sheds and we dug the holes. It was really hard work."

"So what kind of stories did you hear?"

"No one in my group spoke Spanish but Belize used to be British colony[32] so a lot of people spoke English. We had no problems communicating with the people from Belize but the refugees spoke Spanish. We didn't always have an interpreter. Some of the nurses told us stories about what the refugees lived through to get to the camp and I remember how thankful they were to be there. That's also where I met my wife Liz - digging outhouse holes.

"What I remember most from working in Belize is asking questions. [33] When I worked in an orphanage during my

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32 Formerly called British Honduras, Belize became self-governing 1964 but fully independent in 1981.

33 Schön (1987) embraces this perspective: "underlying this view of the practitioner's reflection-in-action is a constructionist view of the reality with which the practitioner deals — a view that leads us to see the practitioner as constructing situations of his practice" (p. 36) "Through reflection, [the

first DTS in Mexico I met some kids growing up in pretty tough situations and I got to hear their stories. The orphanage in Mexico touched me emotionally but the refugee camp in Belize made me ask questions. I remember wondering about the civil wars in Central America and I remember asking why they started and I remember all the Christians giving me the same answers."

"Like, what answers?"

"Like, communism was trying to destroy democracy, that kind of thing. Everything felt new to me so I didn't know what didn't make sense. But I remember being at the camp and working with the refugees but I was left with so many unanswered questions."

"When I got home from Belize, I moved to Vancouver to help start up a new training school for missionaries. I stayed

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practitioner] can surface and criticize the tacit understandings that have grown up around the repetitive experiences of a specialized practice, and can make new sense of the situations of uncertainty and uniqueness which he may allow himself to experience" (p. 61).

with the people I knew from the Dilaram. They were still pretty radical compared to most Christians I knew and they'd read lots about Central America. They gave me books that helped me see the wars in Central America differently. The explanations were more complex.

"I didn't have words to explain how I was feeling but I began to see my faith different from typical, Evangelical, Right-wing Christianity. I wanted to do good things, like work with refugees, but my faith couldn't explain why there were refugees in the first place. I started to think that my faith should address those questions. It was the beginning of a real transformation in the way I thought."

Blue Bus

"While I taught at a discipleship training school (DTS) in Vancouver in 1985, we planned 'relief work' in Mexico City after it suffered from one of the most devastating earthquakes in the history of the Americas.

"Two days before we were supposed to leave we bought a big blue school bus. We never test drove it and we weren't even sure it would get us all the way to Mexico. One of our friends had some experience fixing cars and he thought it look okay so we risked it and bought it. Two days later we packed thirty-six people into the bus and left Vancouver.

"We had no one to stay with along the way. We stopped in Washington State and slept in a church. From Washington State, we drove to Northern California and from Northern California we drove to Southern California and took a day's rest there. Then, we slept in another church in Arizona. After about seven days, we crossed the border into Mexico.

"We drove into a small town and noticed a man grilling tacos at the side of the road. The bus pulled over and I asked him if he knew where I could find an 'hallelujah church'. That's what locals called the Pentecostal Church the first time I visited Mexico. Pentecostal Churches always have a place to sleep if you need it. [34] The man knew exactly what I meant and he took us to the pastor's house."

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34 I asked Dave to explain Pentecostalism. I edited an explanation he wrote.

"It was movement from the late 1800 early 1900. It focused on reviving the spiritual gifts in the church, especially healing, and other miracles. As they formalized into denominational movements, their beliefs rested in a doctrine claiming believers had God's Spirit in them. They would 'speak in tongues', a language unknown to the person speaking. The main denomination that came out of the movement is called the Assemblies of God in the United States. In Canada, it's referred to as the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada. Other denominations developed but Dave says that these are probably the largest.

"Remember when we did the leadership training in Modesto, California, did we stay in a Pentecostal church?" [35]

"Yah."

"Because I remember people saying 'Hallelujah' and 'Praise Jesus' a lot."

"In the early Sixties, Pentecostalism hit the main line churches and other protestant denominations. This was called the Charismatic movement and focused on signs and wonders and speaking in tongues. This had a huge impact on the church as a whole because Pentecostalism was seen as a movement on the margins now influencing the Baptists, Mennonites, and Catholics. This movement, as well as the Pentecostal movement, played a big part in the Hippies becoming Christians.

"The two biggest gifts these movements offered the church and the world was an understanding of God that is not static, but dynamic, personally involved in individuals' lives and in communities, and that each person could engage in a relationship with this dynamic creator. It also began to break down denominational barriers."

35 I co-led a team of volunteers to El Salvador in May 2003 with Global Youth Network. Part of Global Youth Network's leadership training involves working with homeless in Modesto, California. During the two-week trip in February 2003, each participant took turns leading our group for a day. We worked with many people on the street, volunteered in shelters, handed out food in parks, and listened to many people talk about their situations and how they ended up on the street. We slept on the floor in a church shared by a couple of denominations of Protestant groups.

"(Laughs) Yah, that's Pentecostal. So, we found hallelujah churches in each town until we got to Mexico City. We were the largest disaster team to arrive. We had our own house to stay in. It was empty but it had a stove. We made all our arrangement through a Catholic bishop. This was another point of change for me too. While staying with my friends from the Dilaram after I got home from Belize, I heard about this new type of theology. Well, it wasn't new but it was popular. It was called Liberation Theology and it was big in the Catholic Church." [36]

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36 Chathanatt (2004) writes,

> "The historical irruption of what is formally known as 'Theology of Liberation' occurred in the concrete Latin American social situations that are marked by grave inequality, oppression, enslavement, alienation, underdevelopment, dependency, subtle forms of imperialism, repression of freedom and dehumanization attitudes and actions. Reflecting on the concrete historical realities in the light of the Christian faith, a new awareness arose in the believing community that things need not be, and ought not to be, as they are. Spokespersons for the reflecting-searching community, like Gustavo Gutiérrez, who is often regarded as the founder of Liberation theology, articulate their beliefs through the action or the 'doing' of the Theology of Liberation" (p. 31) .

Liberation is a fundamental issue of the liberation theology of Gutiérrez. Gutiérrez distinguishes three interdependent spheres of meaning that pertain

"Oscar Romero."

"Yah, and it was also popular in some of the protestant denominations. Anyway, this bishop I worked with in Mexico City was a Liberation Theologist. The Christians from YWAM told me that liberation theology was communism trying to infiltrate the Catholic Church but my Christian friends from the Dilaram thought it was pretty cool. I met the bishop doing

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to a single complex process of liberation (1973, pp. 21-37, 149-178). They are: "liberation of social, political, cultural, and economic kind; specifically human liberation with its various aspects; and liberation from sin" (1990).

Gutiérrez describes liberation as an aspiration, a process of humanization, and a new human quest. To Gutiérrez, liberation "expresses the aspirations of oppressed people and social classes, emphasizing the conflictual aspect of the economic, social, and political process which puts them at odds with wealthy nations and oppressive classes" (1973, p. 36). In this sense liberation is freedom from concrete social oppressions. A new awareness of the quest of the poor, or the "non-person," for self-realization in history is the most contemporary event of the Latin American theologizing process. Gutiérrez (1981) terms this quest as the "irruption of the poor," not only a struggle for economic justice, but also a new way of becoming fully human. It process of liberation calls for better economic, political, cultural, educational, psychological conditions. Such a liberation process attempts "solidarity with the poor, with their struggles and their hopes ... [and hence] an authentic solidarity with everyone - the condition of universal love that makes no attempt to gloss over the social oppositions that obtain in the concrete history of peoples..." (1983).

demolition work at an orphanage. The earthquake wrecked the foundation of the orphanage so we had to tear it down and build it back up again. Everyone we worked with was from the 'Liberation Camp' so I got a good chance to talk to them."

"So what were they saying? I don't know that much about Liberation Theology - just what I learned about Oscar Romero while working in El Salvador with Global Youth Network." [37]

"For the poor, Christianity became a power-thing. It dates back to the Roman Empire. Religion became power and politics. Then some theologians got together and took another

37 Dave and I corresponded extensively about religion and theology. I asked him to explain how he views liberation theology and what he's taken from it. He responded, "I think any theology is in a dynamic state, it's evolving. Christians get caught up with one particular doctrine, try to defend it, and don't evolve with it. I think liberation theology has evolved from its earliest form. I see God on the side of the oppressed (those without a voice, or those who are being prevented from reaching their own humanity). You are either on God's side with the oppressed or you are against God and the oppressed. There is no neutral ground when it comes to oppression. To be neutral is to be an oppressor. This sounds a little black and white, but it's not black and white at all. I believe that what liberation teaches now is that both the oppressed and the oppressor are caught in ignorance. So liberation is to free the oppressed from oppression and the oppressors from their ignorance. Liberation is not just for humanity but for all creation".

look at the Scriptures and saw that Jesus never used political power to manipulate or control people. [38] Giving up power was part of it. Instead of being the oppressor they saw God on the side of the poor and actually against the oppressor."

"So they reinterpreted the story of Jesus."

"All throughout Catholic history there were similar movements. The idea was that God was on the side of the poor and against the oppressor. They opened up the churches to politics, organizing, and community development. The church became a central place for meeting, organizing, and developing. It changed the concept of the church in many places. But in some places that always existed. So, Liberation Theology wasn't new but, never before, did it have such a strong theological backing of bishops and archbishops. It really took off in Latin America, probably, because the majority of the population is Catholic and it was primarily Catholic movement. There's more to it but that's the basic idea."

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38 Gutiérrez (1979) refers to what Dave describes as 'taking another look at the Scriptures" as a new praxis of Christian faith. It involves reflection on the Scriptures and how it has played out in the actions of humanity.

"So you talked to the workers."

"Yah, the orphanage stayed open while we worked. The kids were there and the nuns who ran the orphanage were there too. The man running the orphanage was an activist. I don't remember if he considered himself Catholic but he wasn't a Jesuit or a priest. He fought in Nicaragua called himself a communist. He said he came to live in the orphanage because he saw too many people die in the war. He said he wanted to educate young people about the socialist idea. I think he was starting a school in the orphanage.

"So, there we were, working in the orphanage, living in an empty house, driving an old school bus, swinging picks and sledge hammers, and nothing else. We hardly had money for food and we struggled to put gas in our bus. Every day I'd say to him 'Just tell us what needs to be done and we'll do it.'

"He'd tell us a wall needed to be ripped down and we'd take our sledgehammers and start pounding until it was gone. He'd asked us to cut down trees and we'd grab some old axes and saws and start cutting until they fell. Even big old oak trees, we'd just chop 'em down by hand.

"Every day he'd come to us and say, "This is what I always believed the world should be like. I know you guys don't

have any money and I know you're barely able to feed yourselves and I know you don't even know how you're going to get back to Canada but here you are working, just like we work, out of the goodness of your heart." It's true that we didn't have a lot of money for food but we always knew what was for lunch. The nuns always made us chicken soup. Anyway, he was amazed. That was his dream.

"We tore down the orphanage and the next group started to build. When it was time to leave, the nuns and the orphans threw a huge party for us. I feel like any time I was with the nuns I was eating chicken soup but I bet you it was enchiladas because I hate enchiladas (Laughs). Sometimes it's hard to remember because I've been to so many countries in Latin America. Every time I'm there it seems like I eat a lot of enchiladas and when you're the leader, your hosts always want you to leave with a full stomach. I have a hard enough time getting one enchilada down (Laughs). The nuns always brought me soup with a chicken claw in it because I was the leader. They told me the chicken claw was the best part so I'd have to eat it."

"I ate a lot of chicken claw soup in Ecuador (Laughs)."

"Anyway, just to bring it back, working at the orphanage changed me because of the questions it made me ask. I

wondered why there was poverty and I wondered why there was so much of it in Mexico. The liberation guys helped me see these problems were connected to my faith. I start thinking there was no separation between my faith and world issues."

"But why would you separate them?"

"At the time, YWAM's expression of faith was heavily influenced by US Christian Fundamentalists. They separate spirituality from issues related to poverty. For the Fundy's in the US, there are only two political issues tied to faith, homosexuality and abortion. No one questions why there's poverty in Mexico. No one even questions why there's poverty in their own cities."

"So poverty is a political question and not a religious question?"

"Yah, it's kept separate from the church. When you start asking questions like these you really have to begin looking at your own country. In the 1980s, the U.S. impoverished Mexico, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Belize, Chile, and Peru. They installed governments that controlled what was happening. If you began to see faith connected to poverty then

you began to question your government and, at that time, people didn't want to question the government."

"Dave, the 1980s were part of the Cold War era. Only communists questioned the government."

"And Communism is anti-religious. So if communism grows then freedom of religion dissipates. That was really the fear. In El Salvador, the government accused the guerillas of being communists but nobody really knew. In Guatemala, the government blamed the civilian uprisings on communism. In Nicaragua, the government accused the Sandinistas of being communists. Everyone used the word 'communism' without really knowing it meant."

"Anything against the government was seen as Communism."

"Anyway, I began to see my faith differently from that experience."

Bibles and Machine Guns

"I taught another discipleship training school and led a team to Guatemala. I can't remember what year it was but I think it was 1986."

"The earthquake in Mexico happened in 1985."

"So, it must have been 1986. The forced cease fire in Guatemala was in 1984 and I went to Guatemala at the end of Rios Mont's presidency. Still, the Christians I worked with from Youth with a Mission (YWAM) weren't interested in politics but, by this time, I couldn't help but ask political questions. Our interpreter was a bit of a radical. He was a Christian but he was Left-wing. We hung out and talked for like sixteen hours a day. He helped me understand Latin American culture and he had been to university so he had a good understanding of Guatemalan politics too. He explained the American influence on the war in Guatemala. He was also vocal about his disdain for Rios Montt. Montt came into power in 1982 and ended up being one of the most brutal dictators in Guatemalan history. He ended the war by killing everyone. He killed a lot of indigenous people. YWAM supported Mont because he was a Pentecostal Christian but they didn't know what he was doing in the countryside. I felt like YWAM turned a blind-eye to what was happening to the indigenous people. I started to question a lot of what YWAM was doing from what I experienced in Guatemala."

"That's really interesting if you think about what we were talking about before with respect to power."

"Yah, YWAM was supporting one of the most brutal regimes in the world. I saw how you could walk into a situation and think you're doing something great but, at the same time, twenty miles away, the people you're working with are wiping out a whole race of people. That's why I could no longer keep my faith separate. I couldn't turn a blind eye just because someone calls themselves a Christian.

"I left the Dilaram in Vancouver when the new directors started imposing structure and being very authoritarian."

"Kind of like me as a researcher (Laughs)."

"(Laughs) It wasn't structure. It was authoritarianism. From my experiences working in Latin America and living in Dilarams, in Vancouver and Amsterdam, I started to understand that many of the problems I saw were related to control and power. I started working toward an expression of faith and leadership that wasn't based on control, power, and authoritarianism."

"Out of insecurity or fear we try to control other people. Control, insecurity, and fear are connected. Control is the antithesis of love – not hate. Hate is not the antithesis of love, it

is control. When you control someone you stop them from being who they really are and try to make them into something you think they should be. That's what was happening. You can see this in any basic relationship like in a marriage or in a friendship or in more complex relationships like in politics and ruling the world. I began to see this as the main issue. Like, is Rios Montt really a monster or is he blinded by his fears, his insecurities, and his need for control and power? Like, I imagine he's not a bad guy. I am sure if you talked to him he'd be nice."

"Hallelujah!"

"(Laughs) Praise Jesus! (Laughs) Anyway, I made the connection between power and control and poverty. To be with the poor you have to sacrifice your sense of control and power. It's very 'insecuring'. Today, Liz and I are not living with the poor like we have in the past but I am fifty years old and I live in a little one bedroom apartment. I have no security. I don't have money in a bank account and I don't have a car. So, at fifty, I feel some insecurity. In fifteen years, I am going to be sixty-five. My pension will be like thirty-five dollars per month. (Laughs). In order to do what I've done I made a lot of sacrifices but in order to have made those sacrifices, I've had to have a certain amount of security. I learned I don't need control. That's

something I think I'm still learning. You have to deal with your insecurities in order to love people and to love this world. I'm still insecure. I'll always be insecure."

"I remember hearing you say you feel closest to God when you're with people, especially the Poor. Is that what you mean here?"

"Well, kind of. I think being who you are created to be is the most spiritual thing you can do."

"Like being yourself?"

"Like being *who* you are created to be and expressing that in this world is the most spiritual thing you can do. Life is the discovery of who you are but I can only find out who I am when I am in relationship with other people. That's the experience of God talking to me or helping me figure something out or helping me deal with my insecurities and need for power. I still need power (Laughs)."

"We all need power or control over something (Laughs)."

"Anyway, I always say people probably think I'm a good leader but I am a terrible follower (Laughs). But that's what life is about, being who we're created to be and expressing that in this world."

"Do you ever feel isolated as a leader, for example, when directing the organization or when leading teams?"

"When dealing with your peers in leadership there is a natural isolation or separation that happens. This is something that you can see on teams and stuff like that. But now, at fifty, it's not there. I just got back from Macedonia with a university team and I was painting a fence with one of the volunteers, Ben. Ben looked at me and said, 'You're the founder of the organization! This never happens' and I said, 'Like what?' and Ben said, 'I am painting a fence with the founder of the organization! You're hanging around and we're having a coffee and stuff like that. This never happens.'

"For me, the separation you experience when you are closer to your peers has gone. I wouldn't know what else to do. Ben said to me, "You don't act like a director of an NGO." (Dave and I both Laugh) Then I asked him, "Well, how does the director of an NGO act?" and he said, "Well, they're not painting fences with students in Macedonia or sitting around

drinking coffee with them." So, I said, "Well, this is what I like doing. The organization exists because I like painting fences with you, Ben." So I feel like those bridges have fallen. I don't know if it's criticism but directors of other organizations always seem surprised when I introduce myself as the director."

"Ok Dave, I'm gonna head home and write down some of the things we talked about at the market. If you have time, could you read over the transcripts?"

"You never told me I had to do any work (Laughs). You're writing the story, I'm just telling it."

Chapter Three
The Day

July 9th, 2008, Dave came down to Toronto one last time before he left for Vancouver. We planned to spend the day together. The first conversation took place in my living room in downtown Toronto. I prepared a spread of vegetables, hummus, cheese and fruit to eat while we talked. We began talking while I made coffee.

"Do you remember from last time we met you talked about painting a fence with a volunteer in Macedonia?"

"Yah, it was Ben."

"As a director, you said that's what you love doing but when I think about my first year volunteering with the Global Youth Network, I don't remember you. Even this year, you were in and out of orientation and not everyone gets a chance to meet you."

"Well, somebody's got to buy the groceries. (Laughs) When you've been buying groceries for large groups of people your whole life you develop a skill that most people don't have."

I flip through notes from our last interview. I look down and see the words Moroccan hash. I laugh.

"I just read the words Moroccan hash."

"That must be from when? I got busted in Germany. But I don't know if it was Moroccan hash (Laughs)."

"I don't know if it was Moroccan either (Laughs). Last time, at the market, we talked about working on the farm and going to Guatemala. Did you live on the farm before Guatemala or after?"

"It was before."

"Ok, now I am starting to see how everything fits together. I was a little confused. I think I have almost everything on tape up until the end of Guatemala. But how did you get from Guatemala to Greenland?"

"YWAM hired me to teach a discipleship training program for new missionaries. The training program has two parts. The first part focuses on character development in the classroom. The second part is field work when they can put into practice what they learned. That's how I ended up in Belize

working with refugees and that's where I met Liz. We got married a few years later. Just after we got married my Dad got cancer. On the phone my mom kept telling me he was fine but Liz and I ended up moving back to Ontario to help take care of him. The cancer was pretty bad and he died four months later. He was only fifty-seven.

"My Dad and I fought a lot. It was violent. I always questioned everything and I think that frustrated him. Then we'd fight. But the time we spent together before he died strengthened our relationship. He opened up as he got worse and we talked more and we connected. I'm grateful I had a chance to spend time with him."

"When Liz and I were living with my parents my mom asked Liz where she would go if she could have a proper honeymoon. Liz said, 'Greenland.' I always dreamed about going North but it was the first time I ever heard Liz talk about of it.

"After Dad died we got a call from friends in Alberta asking us to housesit for three or four months while they traveled. They said I could find work out there so we packed up the 1968 Ford Falcon and went.

"We packed light but we still had to cram everything in the car. Winter had already started and one of the vents on the driver's side of the Falcon was broken and the wind kept

blowing on my crotch while we were driving from Ontario to Alberta (Dave moves around trying to act-out how he was driving). It was so cold. I remember how sore my balls were and the pain just getting worse and worse. It hurt to walk. When we finally got to Alberta, I remember thinking the damage was permanent. The doctor told me it would get better (Laughs)."

"After living in Alberta for a few months I thought my days with Youth with a Mission had ended. But, while we were there, the director of the Edmonton branch offered me his position. I had never lived in Edmonton and I didn't know the people so the position didn't feel right. We felt lost so, during supper one night, Liz and I decided to ask God what was out there for us. While we were eating Liz said she felt funny and then the phone rang and then she answered. I remember listening to her talk on the phone and I remember watching her smile and I remember hearing her say 'Yes'. She hung up the phone, looked at me and said, 'He just asked us to run a school in Greenland.'

"Within two weeks we loaded up the Ford Falcon, drove across the country, and dropped the car at a friend's place in Ottawa. From there, we flew to Greenland and spent the next seven months just north of the Arctic Circle."

Seeing Something In-You-It

"Crazy. Did you run another discipleship training school in Greenland?"

"Yah."

"What was that like?"

"The first time I saw my Métis-ness was in Greenland. We got iced in and snowed in and we hunted seals for survival. We lived the Arctic Experience. It was probably the greatest adventure of my life."

"With the Inuit?"

"Yah, we lived with a few Canadians, a couple of Scandinavians, and the Inuit."

"You were running a school there?"

"Errol, the director of YWAM from Edmonton ran the school but Liz and I helped. Most of the Inuit grew up Lutheran so they had a basic understanding of Christianity. We talked a lot about relationships because many of the clan members suffered from alcohol and drug abuse and many people had been

sexually abused too, you know, typical aboriginal problems. Most people talked like this was normal."

"How do you explain the abuse?"

"I am not an expert on Inuit culture by any means but as clans settled into greater communities some aspects of the culture seemed to change. When things changed from a survival culture some things stayed the same and others didn't carry through."

"So what do you think brought out your Métis-ness?"

"It was the first time I related to another Indigenous group. I never said to anyone, 'I'm Métis. I understand you.' But many of the Inuit told me how comfortable they felt being with me."

"You've probably reflected about this a lot but I'm curious how much you noticed while you were there?"

"We were always told we were Métis but I never thought I looked Métis or anything like that. I always felt different growing up. When I was older I talked about it with my mom and my brothers and we all thought we were different

growing up. My older brother is a very successful business man but he lives in a little cabin with his wife in the woods. He lives simply. He hunts and fishes and he drives an old car. I think we grew up valuing different things. But up until Greenland, I would never identify as being Métis. Even today I still hesitate to say it. But when I was in Greenland something natural happened. I related to the Inuit and I started to think there was a part of me that I didn't really know much about."

"The last time I saw you, you said you might see your great aunt[39] at a barbeque. Did you end up seeing her?"

"I went to the barbeque but we didn't have a chance to talk. We've seen each other at events but we've never really connected. It was interesting to look at my great Aunt, her husband, and her daughter. They all have their status look more Métis than me. I've always seen it in my mom but it's stronger my great aunt. When I look at pictures of my Grandmother, it's even stronger in her. I guess I inherited all the European genes."

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39 Dave's great aunt and Dave's mother applied for and received their Métis status at the same time, in December 2006.

"Anyway, in Greenland, I started to think that maybe I had feelings about being different because there was something different about me."

"I think I know what you mean."

"Anyway, Greenland was good for an adventure and discovery. I fell in love with the North."

"Tell me a little bit about the landscape."

"The North is a difficult place to describe. Greenland is made of rock, ice, and ocean. It's majestic, harsh, and dangerous. Many people I met knew someone that drowned, got lost, or disappeared. The frontier was rugged and unpredictable and everything about it had an element of danger. Even going for a hike could be dangerous. The fog could get so thick that you couldn't see your hand in front of your face. If you moved you'd get lost. The fog had to lift before you could find your way home. Even going down the coast in a boat was dangerous. The currents were so unpredictable."

"When you talked about Belize and Guatemala and you said you left with all sorts of questions. Was this experience like that too?"

"I saw my role at the school differently because I had already gone through that process. [40] I wasn't trying to make anyone into something else. Instead, I wanted to learn from the Inuit and support them and their culture. I took on more of a learner's role."

"How did this come out?"

"It came out in my teaching and it came out in my relationship with the students. I was still processing everything around me but I felt like it was a different experience than Guatemala or Belize. I don't know the right way to describe it."

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40 In the Introduction I describe my understanding of this process as being an example of Mezirow's (1981) perspective transformation.

"Maybe you were more comfortable with your groove." [41]

"I think I was still trying to find my groove but I'd taken on a more supportive role. Before, I felt like leadership was a job where you took people and made them into something. I think the biggest change was that now I felt like leadership is more about supporting people in their own situations. I didn't have an agenda. There was so much to learn. I felt like I was learning more than they were. I didn't bring books to read. I learned so much from the environment and from the people. I felt like other trips changed me but this experience felt much more natural."

"Well, it seems like you were figuring out your teaching style and your philosophy of leadership and even how to work with people living in unjust situations. You can't have life-changing experiences everyday or else you'd never have any consistency in your life.

"So, where'd you go from Greenland?"

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41 I say, "groove," referring to teaching or leadership style. From his response, I know Dave understands what I mean.

Biggest Greatest Dream

"I always wanted to go to a place called Zanskar and, right before I left Greenland, I got a letter from a good friend."

"Where's Zanskar?"

"Zanskar is an isolated kingdom in the Himalayas of Nepal near Tibet. I saw it in National Geographic when I was a kid. The snow only melts enough for people to get there for one month a year. Sometimes, people get trapped there by the snow. So, I got this letter from a friend and his wife in India. I remember he wrote, 'Dave, we're heading up to Zanskar. You wanna go?' and I remember thinking, 'I never told anyone where I was and I hadn't heard from my friend in ages but, somehow, his letter found me.'

"I remember thinking, 'I'm going to Zanskar!'

"So, I said to Liz, 'We'll leave here and go to India and meet with Donny.'

"And Liz said, 'We're not going to India."

"And I said, 'WHAT?! But we can go to Zanskar. It's my biggest greatest dream.'

"And Liz said, 'I think we need to get some roots in our life before we go on our next adventure.'

"I remember thinking I didn't know what that meant. But, I said, "Okay, I guess we'll do that.'

"For some reason, we just picked Kitchener. We knew people around Kitchener but not in Kitchener. Liz and I left Greenland, flew back to Ottawa, and got our car."

"The Falcon?"

"We picked up the Ford Falcon and drove it to Cambridge. The guy I worked with on the farm moved to Cambridge with his family. They had a big house and they said we could stay in the attic. We had this little bed up in the attic and we were trying to figure out what to do and the YWAM base found out we were in town and they called us. They wanted us to lead another DTS. We didn't know what else to do, so, we said we would and ended up back Guatemala."

"You went to Guatemala again?

"Yah, by this time the war was over but it was before the peace accord was signed in El Salvador.

"El Salvador was 1992."

"So, we were in Guatemala before the peace accord but there were still rumblings of revolution. Now that I think about it I'm attracted to conflict and I like trying to understanding it. I want to understand why people fight. I like knowing what people are fighting for, who's right, who's wrong, or if it's possible to know. I like listening to what the people say about war and knowing who's saying it and what their politics are. In Guatemala I got sucked into the politics but it wasn't totally transformational. I had experienced *something* in all my other trips but wasn't able to put it into words until I went back to Guatemala. It was the power of education on these trips. I started to believe maybe these types of experiences could really change people - not just traveling to another country but being with the people in their situations, understanding what's happening and why. It clicked. I realized what I was experiencing was a learning-thing. So, when I got home from Guatemala, I knew I didn't want to be a teacher but I started thinking about how to take these experiences and bring them back home.

Book-Learning about the Lord

"In 1986 Liz and I got married. We just celebrated our twenty-second wedding anniversary on Saturday. Anyway, I came back from Guatemala excited about education. I

remember knowing I didn't want to do YWAM's type of education because you had to bring evangelism into the pot and I started thinking that wasn't quite right. I knew I wanted to facilitate experiences like mine but I didn't know how to start? I remember asking myself, 'What do I do, where do I go, what do I need to learn?' I really didn't know. It was the first time in my life I thought I could be an educator. It's also when I started to discovery of my 'gift'. So, I signed up for Bible college because it was the only thing I knew. I thought university would just teach me how to be a university teacher or an elementary school teacher. I didn't think it could teach me about (Pause)."

"Life?"

"So, I started Bible college[42] in 1988. I knew after the first year it wasn't the right place for me but I didn't know where else to go. So, I just stuck with it."

"Is that when you started a degree in theology?"

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42 Attending Emmanuel Bible College in Kitchener, Ontario Dave completed a Bachelor of Religious Education

"It was a Bachelor of Religious Education. I didn't know where to go for alternative education so I took courses for ten years between 1988 and 1998. When we started the Global Youth Network, I was still working on my degree."

"Did you do one course a year?"

"I studied full-time for a year and a half then dropped down to part time. I chipped away at it, kind of discouraged. I didn't like what I was learning. I had a couple of good professors that let me write about what I was interested in. That helped. I had one professor who supported my way-out-thinking. I read a lot about different belief systems and I learned more about liberation theology. Most of students in my classes would just disagree with everything I said. But, I stuck it out. After, I wished I went to university. I didn't know anything about university. I didn't know you could study what you wanted."

"I think the most important thing about doing that degree was sticking it out. It taught me how to learn in a different way. I didn't have an education because I didn't go to high school. I taught myself almost everything. That's a good education in itself but I didn't know anything about book-learning. I couldn't put my ideas into words. I couldn't take all

the stuff I experienced, put it on paper, and say whether it was right or wrong. But, Bible college helped me do that.

"While going to school I thought seriously about taking students, or young people, overseas to focus on learning people's social, political, economic, and cultural stories. I remember wondering what could create change in people and I remember wondering how a concept of development would look if development was happening in the Rich and the Poor, or in the North and the South. I remember thinking that Canadians needed to 'develop' just as much as everyone else. I believe part of change involves reconciliation between the Rich and the Poor and I believe the only way that happens is by meeting and knowing each other. So I started thinking this was the type of education I wanted to do. I didn't know how to do it and I didn't know anyone who was doing it. Actually, I met with Canada World Youth.[43] They were pretty small at the time. I just felt it wasn't the connection Liz and I were looking for."

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43 Karsten Mündel completed a case study on the Rural Development Exchange Program in partnership with Canada World Youth, Augustana University College, and Universidad Autónoma del Estado de Morelos. Mündel writes: "Canada World Youth is a national nongovernmental organization that has been conducting international youth exchanges since

"So, you were thinking about how to do this type of education."

"While I was studying I ran summer camps for inner city kids from New York City with YWAM. Camp lasted six weeks in the summertime. That's where I met Tim. He was the director of the camp. I remember I said to him, 'I have this idea. I want to do what YWAM is doing but a little bit different. I want to take young people and not do evangelism and not do the missions but I want youth to learn about social justice and connect with people.'

"And he said, "That sounds amazing. I've been looking for new ways to connect with the youth."

"And I said, "I'm just not sure how to do it because it's not really a YWAM-thing."

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its founding in 1971 by concerned Canadian citizens including senator Jacque Hebert. Their mission is to 'increase the ability of people, especially Youth, to participate actively in the development of just, harmonious, and sustainable societies." One of their main focuses is "international youth exchanges based on non-formal educational principles including action and reflection" (Mündel, 2002, p. 33).

"And he said, 'Just do it under what I do.' He ran a youth organization.

"So, I started doing it. The first thing I did was take a group of high school students on March break to Mexico."

"How old were they?"

"They were upper year high school students. That was Rebecca's[44] first trip. She was 15. Jill[45] and EJ[46] had worked with us in the summer camp and they both came on that trip too. They were 17.

"The next year we ran another camp and came up with the whole idea of Global Youth Network. We wanted to run camps and education exchanges but different from what how I was taught in my missionary training courses. Camp was in New York City that summer. We had to change our plans a bit because the kids were really hard to work with. The best I could do was stop them from killing each other.

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44 Current Member of the Global Youth Network Board of Directors
45 Current Member of the Global Youth Network Board of Directors, Co-founder
46 Worked with Global for 10 years, Co-founder

"New York was awesome. You had to go through their luggage looking for knives, and guns, and drugs, and all that kind of stuff. I was the head disciplinarian. I walked around camp and broke up fights. That was my job. It was a pretty active summer."

"I can see you being good at that."

"This is what I would do. Two lawn chairs sat in front of my cabin. I'd say, 'You go sit in that lawn chair,' and I'd wait a few minutes until they calmed down and then I'd go sit beside them. The door separated the chairs so we weren't sitting right next to each other. I'd just sit quietly for like one or two minutes and the kid would start ballin'. I don't know why. It wasn't really a strategy, it just happened that way."

"Maybe they felt uncomfortable."

"Maybe. The first time I sat a kid in my lawn chair, I sat there quietly because I didn't know what to do. I remember thinking, 'What should I do? How should I approach this? I don't want to make this kid feel bad but I want him to know I'm serious.' So, I just sat there quietly trying to figure out what to do and the kid started crying. I let the kid cry for a bit and then I

said, 'Listen, I'm not mad at ya' but we can't have everybody fighting around the camp. If I catch ya doin' this again, what should we do?'

"I remember one kid said, "Send me home," and another kid said, 'Make me clean the bathroom with my tongue.' They always thought of the worst things. Then, I'd say, 'We're not gonna do that but we'll think of something.' I can't even remember what we did most of the time but I know a kid never sat in my lawn chair twice. It worked with the older kids too. Usually, if I had to discipline a kid twice it was because they were trying to get control. If that happened, I'd just drive them home."

"You learned that from living on the street?"

"Yah, from seeing it and from living in the downtown Eastside. Some people control passively but others are really aggressive."

"Like bullying?"

"Yah, bullying and stuff like that. I had such a good time at that camp. The kids were crazy. The camp was supposed to give these kids a break from hell. I'd sit with them and they'd

start telling me their stories. I'd never let them go right away. They'd cry and we'd work through the discipline and then we'd talk. I'd ask, 'So, what's it like where you live? Do you have brothers or sisters?' They'd end up telling me stories about rape and killings and drug addiction because most of their parents were drug addicts. Some of them were sold and raped and some of them lived with an aunt or a cousin who just used them for welfare. Most of them grew up eating chips and chocolate bars. Anyway, after hearing all these stories, I remember thinking, 'Maybe all I can do is give these kids a break, let them swim and play.'"

"Dave, I need to stretch my legs. You want another coffee? We've been talking for over two hours."

"Let's walk some place to get a coffee, just to switch it up a bit."

"Sure, I know this great little place called Ella's Uncle. It's on the way to Trinity Bellwoods Park. We can talk more there."

Chapter Four
The Park

We step outside my house onto Markham Street. It's quiet but the sound of cars louden as we turn left onto the sidewalk on the edge of Dundas Street. We walk by remnants of family-run restaurants and bakeries with old signs written in Portuguese. A wooden bench sits outside a storefront window underneath a mauve coloured sign advertising what once was a beauty parlor but now is Ella's Uncle, a local coffee joint. As we step into Ella's Uncle I can't help but think of how this all got started. I remember volunteering with Global Youth Network for the first time in 2001. Eight years after working with the Lenca peoples in Honduras and leading teams for two consecutive years with the Global Youth Network I would not have expected these experiences to be interconnected with my life and research. Dave and I take our coffees to-go, step out of Ella's Uncle, cross Dundas Street, and pick up a footpath leading into Trinity Bellwoods Park.

The park is dog-friendly, a popular place for baseball, soccer, and frisbee, and an escape for people in the city who crave green grass and old-growth maple trees. Dave and I find a picnic table just off the path. The wind blows strong so I create a shelter with my red notebook to protect the recorder. We pick up our conversation where we left off.

"Dave, I think you just finished telling me about camp in New York. But, how did the Global Youth Network start from there?"

"After New York we ran another camp in Ontario. We focused on outdoor education. We taught canoeing, swimming, and some other adventure sports, and we did lots of group activities. We didn't preach to the whole camp about injustice. We worked in smaller groups and tried to make our discussions creative and fun. It was so nice to be outside all summer.

"At seventeen, Jill was a natural leader. EJ had a strong personality and could run anything. They both graduated from high school and were heading to university in the fall."

"So, their first trip was over spring break?"

"We all went to Mexico over spring break. That summer Jill co-led a team of high school students that worked in inner city Vancouver and EJ worked with us at the camp. We met at the end of the summer to brainstorm ideas about where we could recruit new people. I pictured us working in high schools. Other than Canada World Youth I didn't know any non-faith-based organizations running these kinds of programs but I wanted to make sure we kept it open to people with all sorts of

beliefs. Jill and EJ said, 'Well, Dave, we're going to university so why don't we try it there?" And I remember thinking, 'Oh, university?'

"Dave, you never thought of university?"

"I didn't know anything about university. I remember thinking that university students would be the last people who'd want to travel with a faith-based organization but I remember saying, 'Okay, we'll see what happens.'

"In September EJ and Jill started MacMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario. I was living in Kitchener/Waterloo, Ontario so I said I would try and get something going at the University of Waterloo. That's how we left it.

"EJ put together a huge team and recruited sixteen students. Jill tried something more focused and recruited six people interested in health. I ended up finding a bunch of tree planters from the University of Waterloo. [47] They planted trees

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47 Tree planting is a popular job amongst Canadian Youth. Generally, tree-planters camp in remote planting sites for a couple of months during planting

in May and June so they couldn't leave until July. So, we sent two teams in May and one in July. Jill led a team to Guatemala and set up projects with health clinics. EJ led a team to Mexico and they worked in orphanages. In July, I led the 'tree planters' to Guatemala and we picked up where Jill's team left off. I remember being shocked at how fast it took off. We never thought it would become a program or we would start our own NGO."

"How was it structured? Did you have meetings?"

"We didn't know what we were doing so I would head down to Hamilton and meet with Jill and EJ at least once a week. We figured things out as we went. They formed their teams by January so we didn't have the same structure we have now but we said we needed to have the teams organized by January so the volunteers would have time to fundraise. My team was chaotic - maybe because I wasn't on campus or maybe it was because I'm just more chaotic. My team said they would

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season. It's popular in Northern Ontario and in many areas in Western Canada in British Columbia.

pay for their trip with tree planting money so we never organized fundraising events. We never had to meet as much.

"I had five volunteers, Jill had six, and EJ had sixteen. Have I ever told you the story about the airplane tickets that year?

"Don't think I've heard that one."

Who Needs Tickets?

"I always tried to get a deal where I could. I heard about this organization where I could earn ten percent of whatever business I attracted. Since I had to buy flights for all the volunteers I figured we could save ten percent if I bought all the tickets through this organization. I always heard the best deals on flights were offered three weeks before departure so I booked the tickets three weeks before the first two teams were scheduled to leave. I actually ended up getting a really good deal on our flights.

"We planned a pre-departure orientation for a weekend at the end of April because the volunteers were leaving at the beginning of May. Less than a week before orientation, the travel agency called me. They said, 'We just talked to the wholesaler. The bar codes on your tickets are wrong. Courier the tickets back to the wholesaler, they'll fix the problem and

courier them back to you.' And I said, 'We're leaving in a week.' And she said, 'It shouldn't take more than 3 days.' So, I did what she said and couriered the tickets to the wholesaler. That was Monday.

"I didn't think about the tickets until Friday when they still hadn't arrived. On Friday morning, I got up early and did the grocery shopping for orientation. I got to the office around one o'clock and thought I should check on the tickets. There were only a few hours left in the work week and the teams were supposed to catch their flights early Monday morning. I called the travel agency. All I got was a message saying, 'This number is no longer in service.' I had four different numbers and I tried them all. Every number I called I got this message saying, 'This number is no longer in service.' By the fourth number, I remember thinking, 'These guys have shut their doors and I am not going to have any tickets and the volunteers won't be going anywhere.'

"Since I mailed everything to the wholesaler, I thought I'd try them directly. I found their number in the phone book. I called and said, 'I had tickets to Mexico and Guatemala and was told to courier them back to this travel agency.' And she said, 'I'm sorry, Sir, but that company went bankrupt.' And then I said, 'But I mailed my tickets directly to you.' She searched and searched and ended up finding our tickets but she said, 'Okay, I

found your tickets but I can't release them.' So I said, "What do you mean, you can't release them. Twenty five people are leaving Monday. If I don't get these tickets, they're all going to miss their flights.' She said, 'Sorry, I can't do anything but call this number and maybe they can help you out.' So I scribbled down the number, said bye, and hung up the phone.

"I didn't even know who the number was for but I called it anyway. Some guy answered the phone and started asking me all these questions. He said, 'What type of dealings do you have with this organization.' He sounded like some government guy. After we talked for a bit, he said, 'What you need to do is get this information, fax it to me, and then phone this other number.' So I did what he said. I gathered all the paperwork and receipts and faxed them right away. Then, I called the other number.

"This time a woman answered. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon by this point. She rhymed off a bunch of things I had to do and said she'd have something for the morning but she didn't seem convincing.

"I went home feeling uptight but I still felt like there was hope. I went to orientation and pretended like everything was fine. In the morning, I never called the woman back right away because the government guy I talked to seemed more proactive. He seemed like he was on my side. He ended up

saying, 'You probably won't get your tickets because it normally takes about six months to straighten out cases like these.' He told me there was nothing more he could do.

"I hung up the phone and I remember wondering how I was going to tell the volunteers that they weren't going on their trips and the money they fundraised was gone. I don't know how long I sat in the office wondering what to do but I remember hearing the phone ring. It was the woman who told me to call her back the night before.

"She said, 'Why haven't you called me?' and I said, 'This government guy seemed to be in-charge so I've been talking to him instead.' And she said, 'The man you talked to represents the company that went bankrupt. He doesn't care about you or your tickets. He's just trying gather as much information as possible. He's not trying to help you.' Then she said, 'I'm the government person who's responsible for looking after your case. I'm the one you need to talk to.' Once everything was clear we talked and she told me to call her back at noon the next day.

"It must have not been a weekend yet because there were still holding office hours. I can't remember the dates.

"I told Jill and EJ what was happening at orientation. We debated whether or not to tell the volunteers what was happening. We figured it would only add stress to the situation so we waited.

"I paced back and forth on the hardwood floor in my living room for hours. Eventually, I went to bed and lay awake all night. I got up early and went to orientation. I stared at the clock all morning. Every minute passed so slowly. Finally, at noon, I called the government woman back.

"She said, "I've done this, and this, and this, and this. I have one more thing to do and if I can get that done then there's just one last thing I have to do after that.' Then she said, 'Call me at three and we'll know where we stand.'

"I tried my best to focus on orientation. At three I called her back. She said, "Everything is working out and we can release your tickets but in order to compensate you I need five signatures from executives in my office today and it's four o'clock on a Friday afternoon. So, call me back at five!'

"It seemed too late.

"At 5 a.m., on Monday morning, we loaded the volunteers into an old yellow school bus and drove everyone to the airport. The owner of the wholesale company ended up meeting us at the airport with the tickets.

"That's how we got started."

Shift Work

"So how did the first three trips go?"

"What's most surprising about the first three trips is how long some of the volunteers stayed involved. Jill and Rebecca are a part of the Board of Directors today and EJ was around for a long time. She still feels involved. Many people who volunteered still feel involved.

"The next year, by word of mouth alone, one hundred and fifty students applied to volunteer with Global Youth Network out of McMaster University. Since there were so many people interested in Hamilton, we didn't work in Waterloo that year. We ended up putting together four teams of volunteers but we still had to turn one hundred and ten people away. We weren't really prepared for the response. At the time, EJ and Jill focused on Christian philosophy and spirituality and I talked about social justice, politics, and poverty. As our interests shifted, my role changed over the years.

"During our second year we carved out a structure to the program. We developed and organized the pre-departure orientation. It was a bit haphazard because we weren't clear what we wanted to communicate. I've never been good with planning and structure so without EJ and Jill, Global Youth Network might have been a one-off deal. I liked hanging out with students and I saw it as a great opportunity to talk about social justice and politics. The girls and I worked well together

because we were interested in developing different aspects of the program.

"When it came to structure, I pushed for a less-structured, organic approach to the program. EJ wanted to structure everything. In a sense, I was more philosophical and EJ was more practical. Jill understood both sides. So, together we ended up somewhere in between. From the beginning, however, I focused on being relational."

"Back then, were you using the word relational or was it something you came to understand?"

"I think being relational is a concept that I understood early on because it was something I believed in. As we added structure and administration I made sure I talked to students and listened to what they had to say. I think when you got something good happening most people want to streamline it. For me, it wasn't our program as much as it was theirs. Global Youth Network has been successful because it doesn't function like a well-run machine. We're interested in what our volunteers and partners want to do. In this sense, our volunteers and our partners help us develop. We welcome everybody's ideas. I couldn't always put what's happening to our organization into words like I can today. There have been many

people along the way that have helped me develop my ideas and put them into practice. In that sense, Global Youth Network is still very much organic."

"I asked because I remember hearing you say the words 'social justice' at my first leadership retreat and thinking, "Yah, this makes sense." I never made those connections on my first trip. Again also, you know I struggle with the faith aspect of things. I've always been open to it and I like talking about it but it's not the driving force behind what I do. But, I remember social justice being something that I could relate to. But even the concept of social justice isn't completely clear to me. My understanding is constantly developing."

"And the development of the organization ebbed and flowed as our own ideas developed too. In the beginning, I focused on social justice because Jill and EJ focused on spirituality. Over time, that changed. In our fourth year, there was almost no mention of spirituality at orientation. Students learned about oppression in forty-five minute information sessions all weekend long. They were bombarded with one catastrophic information session after another. Everything led to white males being the cause for every atrocity in world. Although there's some truth to that, the volunteers were left

hopeless. It was depressing. In order to create change, people need to believe that change is possible. That's why hope is so important. As Global Youth Network shifted its focus to politics and oppression, I shifted my focus back to spirituality and faith."

"It's interesting how you shifted to keep spirituality and faith part of the program."

"We've always tried to find balance. I don't know what that balance is but I think trying to find that balance is what creates dialogue. Dialogue has an aspect of spirituality. When trying to understand issues like oppression and poverty people question their beliefs. Whether someone is a Christian or an atheist they have beliefs that shape their understanding the world. Faith means believing in something. Even atheists have faith. In this sense, faith is a part of everyone's life."

"I remember you saying spirituality is a form of relationality or something like that. Maybe for the atheist it's about being with people. Maybe that's spiritual for them."

"Some people have faith in God and some people have faith in others and some people have faith in making the world a

better place. Faith is connected to people in some way or another. It's difficult to find an atheist in many of the places we work. In Latin America, faith is a part of community regardless of whether the community is Catholic, Pentecostal, or Indigenous. Most of the people we work with in Eastern Europe, Asia, Africa, and Latin America have an understanding of the world that's connected to religion. It's important for us to understand how their beliefs influence the way they live if we want to connect. Western ideas of development need to consider how spirituality and religion shape the way communities understand the world. I think it gets overlooked in far too many cases."

"You can't ignore it."

"It gets taken out for some good reasons like not wanting to change their culture."

"Like, they're trying to be neutral Dave?"

"Yah but, in a sense, you can't be. We talk about spirituality and religion because it's integral to the communities we work in. It's been difficult to hold on to that dialogue. People have told me Global Youth Network is not Christian enough. I

get that all the time. But, what does that mean? My understanding of Christianity is that everyone's welcome. My picture of Jesus is that he never turned anyone away. So, when people say we're not Christian enough, I wonder what being 'Christian enough' looks like. We're an inclusive organization because that's what we believe our faith to be. We want everyone to feel comfortable to dialogue about where they are at and what they think. When I start telling people to accept Jesus, I'm closing doors."

"Hallelujah!"

"Praise Jesus! Every head bowed, every eye closed, you want Jesus, come on forward! If I do that, then right away I'm excluding people. I think Christianity has a history of doing that. If you're humble about your own faith then you can embrace other people's opinions and understand how they see the world. You can also share your own opinion too."

"Part of engaging in healthy dialogue is being comfortable with where you're at. It also means also being open to learning from others."

"We've already talked about my pilgrimage to understanding justice and faith together but I would say my own understanding of faith, religion, and God has grown more over the past ten years working with university students than it ever has before."

"Because of the dialogue?"

"Because of dialogue and because I've had to confront my own insecurities and fears. It's not easy to admit that I've been wrong in the past. But, I've had to work through my insecurities to be able to do that."

The Transition

"So where were we, Dave? How did we start talking about dialogue, insecurities, and fears?"

"We were talking philosophy."

"We were talking philosophy but we were also talking about the Global Youth Network over the first ten years. Global Youth Network started as a program under Youth with a Mission and then transitioned to its own Non Governmental

Organization (NGO). Can you walk me through that transition?"

"We started running Global Youth Network under Youth with a Mission, first with high school students then, after, university students. High schools had resources but we felt alienated from the kids because we were in Cambridge and the high schools were in Kitchener. We also felt limited by the institution. So we ended up moving to Kitchener with Chris Whitler, Aaron Alfred, and a few other people. We did all kinds of stuff related to youth work. Chris and Aaron had a comedy team. They performed in high schools and churches and wherever they could do comedy."

"Yah, they're pretty funny."

"So we were still running camps and still running Global Youth Network and we had a little office in the square house. It was my favourite office. We didn't have enough space for kids to just drop in so Liz and I just opened up our apartment. We've always had a fairly open-door policy. Everyone just started hanging out."

"The people hanging out were all people who'd gone on trips before?"

"Both university and high school students. Our apartment was small so it felt like Grand Central Station. [48] We thought moving to a bigger apartment would help but it would become even more like Grand Central Station. When we moved into our house it just got crazy. We kept our doors open like that for about ten years. We still have an open-door policy and people stay with us from time to time when they're working through things and trying to figure out where they're at."

"At this point, you're still working with YWAM right? So, how are you supporting yourself? I know a little bit about how YWAM works. Was a church sponsoring you?"

"A couple of churches sponsored us for a while. Liz and I helped some friends start a welding business that made metal art. We worked for them, part-time, for a first year and a half."

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48 The New York City subway station.

"Welding?"

"Liz and I welded a couple of days a week. When Global Youth Network got busy, I couldn't weld anymore and when Liz went back to school to take more counselling courses, she couldn't weld anymore either. They ended up being very successful. When I told them I couldn't weld anymore, they said, "We'll just keep paying you." They sent me $400 a month for almost ten years."

"That's amazing."

"They helped us a lot but Liz and I have never lived off much money. When Liz and I worked at the Working Centre in Kitchener for about five years that was the most money we ever made and we bought a house with it. We live on about fifteen

thousand a year.[49] When we first got married we lived on eight thousand dollars a year."[50]

"Eight thousand dollars, that's not much for two people."

"We do whatever needs to be done. We live simply and we don't have a car. We chose not to have a car, not for economical reasons, but because we don't need a car. That's how we've always lived.

"I remember visiting when you guys had the house and the office was in the living room and there were people there all the time. There was no separation between work and home."

"I think after ten years of open house we needed a little more space. We've had a few years to recover from that. We sold the house and Liz and I went to Africa. When we got home from Africa, we moved into the apartment that we're now leaving because we're starting up Global Youth Network in

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49 Liz and Dave bought the house in 1998.
50 Liz and Dave got married in 1986.

Vancouver. [51] We haven't had as much of an open-door as before because my role has changed. I'm more like a director now and there aren't as many young people hanging around. I miss that. But, now, Liz works with some older street women so they're always over for tea."

"So, back to the transition, what was that like?"

"To an NGO?"

The Path

"Yah, we talked about the transition on the hike. [52] I remember it being quite stressful. You were doing a lot of the stuff yourself."

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51 The apartment was located in Kitchener, Ontario.
52 In the summer of 2005, Global Youth Network was in transition to becoming its own registered charity and Dave hiked the Bruce Trail to raise money for the organization. A section of the Bruce trail runs close to my parent's home on the Niagara Escarpment. We hiked that thirty kilometer section together and he told me about the transition for the first time.

"Struggling economically is a way of life. It's a choice I've made. There hasn't been a lot of financial stability in my work but I knew that when I made the choice. When I considered separating from YWAM and registering Global Youth Network as a Not-for-Profit Organization and Charity, I thought about the people that have helped us. I didn't want the people who worked for the Global Youth Network to have to be stressed financially like Liz and I have."

"I struggle with the idea of making money for this type of work. Sometimes I feel guilty for what I have."

"Dan, there's a balance that you have to learn. There was a time when I just gave everything away. I never kept anything. I realized that my actions were partly motivated by guilt. I came to understand that being motivated by guilt wasn't healthy. I had to learn how to enjoy going out for dinner."

"You have to learn how to enjoy a beer once in a while too."

"Or often (We both laugh). The choice to live a certain way for the wrong reasons is bad. Liz always says, 'You've made

choices because you want to do what you want to do and no one's ever going to stop you from doing what you want to do.'"

"Where did you learn this, Dave. Is it something your parents taught you?"

"I was thinking about this the other day and I've thought about it quite a bit. I remember walking home from school, like elementary school, like Grade Two or Grade Three, walking home to my parent's house and thinking, 'Why do people own houses? You could put up a tent and be just as happy. Like, a house doesn't make people happier.' I've had those thoughts for as long as I can remember. I used to think that if I lived simply or if I lived a more impoverished life then I'd be an example of a different way of living. Then I thought that was dumb because nobody's ever followed that example. No one that hangs out at our house and works with us has ever said, 'I am going to go out and do what you guys do.'"

"But don't you think that people have tried. When I think of the way I live, I compare myself to you all the time. I think about the way you live your life."

"Sorry about that (Laughs)."

"It makes me feel guilty *every day*, Dave (Laughs). You can't say that your life and your stories haven't influenced other people."

"I guess Rebecca and Jindi, both work part-time and share the responsibility of raising their kids but they have good jobs, too, that pay well so they can afford a nice house. Jill works and Nathan, her husband, stays home and raises the kids. EJ and Graham created their own NGO and work on a reserve in Cat Lake."

"You might not think there is a direct influence but I think your example stays with a lot of people."

"Now that I think about it, most of the people that have worked closely with us, live differently. If I did it all over again I would probably do some things differently. For example, like how EJ and Graham have done it. They've gone after significant funding. They learned how to write the stuff they need to write and network with the right people. Many times, I feel like I stumbled into things and never really knew what I was doing. I didn't know how NGOs worked."

"But you learned."

"Yah, I'm learning. I'm still trying to figure out how funding works. So, I'm still learning. I don't regret the way that I have lived. When Liz and I sit and talk about this, we agree that we never knew how things worked and there was never anyone around to show us to do things. Maybe, we would have done things differently but that's hard to say. It's not that I regret it. It's part of who I am. I don't want to know how it all works out in the end.

"I remember being in a workshop where a psychologist led us through a visualization. He asked us to imagine a stream and then he asked us what the stream looked like. You had to answer all these questions. I remember one question very clear. He asked us to imagine that we just came out of the woods and had to cross a field to get to a castle and he asked what we saw. Most people described different paths or trails, winding and straight, wide and narrow, but I said, 'There's no trail. It's just a field.' I think it was supposed to symbolize how you walk through life.

"For some people, I imagine it's a paved highway."

"For some, it's a little unmarked trail. For others, it's a trail that winds. Each detail said something about *You*. I think that's the way I am, I don't want to know the plan; I want to (Pause)."

"Figure it out."

"Yah, figure it out."

"Make the trail."

"Seriously, Dan, I could give workshops on how to start something with nothing."

Chapter Five
The Screened-In Porch

Dave and I sit inside his screen-in porch in Kitchener, Ontario. It's hot and the air is still. He moves to Vancouver next week so it will be difficult to have more conversations like we've had. He invited me to Vancouver. I thought a good time to visit would be after I've had time to write his stories. I feel like we've got through his life once but it's just a snapshot of the stories I've heard him tell since we met 8 years ago. I decide to take a look at the interview guide that I prepared. We loosely touched on all of it and none of it. I'm reading the guide as we begin to talk.

"I didn't specifically ask you about your understanding of peace but we did talk about justice. I think we touched on all of these things indirectly. I wrote that we would discuss the influence of other people. I remember the first time I asked you if you ever thought of writing your life story and you said it would just end up being a bunch or stories about other people."

"I guess I like talking about myself too much. I'd like to go into a bit more detail about my philosophy of work, why we do what we do and stuff like that. I am still trying to flush some of that out. Development is not one-sided. It doesn't just happen

in the underdeveloped world, or the third world, or the South, however you want to say it. In order for true development to happen privileged people need to understand the interconnectedness of the world and how their lives impact other people. That's one of the most important things that Global Youth Network does. Real development is relational development. It's not people with money connected to people without money. Relationships have to be made in order for real development to happen. That's one of the weaknesses of large NGOs. They're not connecting in a relational way."

"I guess they're not getting to the root of the problem, like, why there's poverty. Part of it has to do with our relationships with other people."

"I read a paper recently on development and spirituality. There are no NGOs that include spirituality in their philosophy. When I think of my experiences in Latin America or in Africa or in indigenous communities, almost all development is tied to spirituality. Spirituality has a part in development. You hear the argument all the time, 'Let's not be spiritual or we'll change the community in a negative way.' In reality, we're promoting a philosophy that says science, economics, and rational thinking are the only way to solve

problems. But, even if you stick to those philosophies, communities are changed because they are pushed away from their own spirituality which is part of their culture. Then, once again, Western philosophies that are non-spiritual become another form of colonization. You need to understand someone's spirituality if you want to connect. So you need to talk about it.

"You distinguish between religion and spirituality, right?"

"In Latin America, the Catholic Church was central to the revolutionary movements. The people kicked open the church's doors and invited the community to help solve problems within the church. They also used the church as a resource. Spirituality in many cultures is a major element. In other places, indigenous groups perform sacrifices or rituals that are an important part of the culture of growing and harvesting food.

"By working with volunteers on projects related to development we take students through a shift in their world view where they see that decisions they make here have consequences for people on the other side of the world. What was that word? They experience something like voluntary

simplicity'. They choose to live more simply or be more environmentally conscious or whatever choices they make, they base them on moving toward more equitable structures and systems within society and the world. That's our part in development, not the small construction projects we do."

"We talked a lot about 'why' questions. So, I'd like to know why you do what you do?"

"Well, (Laughs) I don't know what else to do. I've done this for so long that I don't know what else to do."

"I guess the question is why do you do what you do and where do you see this going?" Do you do it for God or other people or do you do it for yourself?"

"Well, I can't separate my spirituality from what I do. My discovery of God is *You*. For me, people have become God. I find God in people and in nature. It's hard to explain but when I started doing this I felt like I was doing what I was created to do. Some religious people say that they've been 'called' but I don't remember being called or anything dramatic like that."

"Some people talk about vocation, like, vocation in the sense of 'having a calling'."

"I just felt like this was what I was created to do."

"But why do you feel like you were created to do this? What did you feel?"

"I always felt a keen sense of injustice. I experienced different things in my life growing up. I told you about growing up in a violent house and stuff like that but I also struggled with not having answers to what was happening in the world. I saw and experienced things and I didn't know what to do. My parents and teachers didn't know how to answer my questions. Why is there war? Why do children starve to death? Why can't something be done? When I was a kid we were just told, 'We don't know why? Shit happens. Just follow the dotted lines and do what you're supposed to do.'"

"Just jump through the hoops."

"Yah, just jump through the hoops. I told you the story about my principal. You need to do what society tells you. You need to follow the system. So I've always wondered about that.

I remember walking out of my principal's office thinking I wanted to create another system."

"So, what about getting involved with YWAM and going to Mexico, Guatemala, and Greenland made you think that running programs with Global Youth Network was one way to change the system?"

"I guess I am more emotional than I am rational. When I started having these experiences I started to find answers. On my first trip to Mexico I realized I could do something in this world. It was simple. I just hung out with orphans. I felt good about the work I was doing but I kept thinking there was more. Every issue was an issue for me. I never felt satisfied saying 'I want to work with orphans' or 'I want to work for peace' or 'I want to do community development' or 'I want to live in the Amazon with indigenous people.'

"The more I learned the more I began to understand that, maybe, my role was not to be a community development worker or have my own orphanage. Maybe my role was to mobilize and educate other people and help them discover the simplicity of what they can do to make a difference. That took me a long time to realize that.

"I remember being frustrated after working in orphanages and always thinking, 'I could move down here and do something like this.' But it never seemed right. I never thought I'd stay in Canada. I always thought I'd live in another country. Liz was frustrated with me for eighteen years because I was always ready to move to the next country. Every country we traveled to was the next country I thought we'd live in. I was always prepared for that. Only after a few years of running the university program for the Global Youth Network did I feel I was in the right place. I love mobilizing and I love connecting with people and I love helping them through the process of finding out what they can do and how they can make a difference. You don't have to be super smart or have a high education. Some people think you do.

"I remember talking to a professor from the department of international development at the Sir Wilfred Laurier University. I wanted to get students working on development projects. The professor said, 'You can't just send students to do development projects!' And I said, 'Why can't you?' And he said, 'Well, they don't know what they are doing.' And I said, "Well, show me an NGO with educated people who know what they are doing.' Nobody knows what they're doing. And he said, 'They're going to make mistakes,' And I said, 'Show me an organization that's not making mistakes.'

"My hope is that students that volunteer with the Global Youth Network will return and work on long term projects building orphanages, living in communities, and creating local communities that work toward creating a more equitable society. That's more like a dream than a short term goal."

"Global Youth Network is still pretty young. The program is only thirteen years old."

"My dreaming has always been one of the weaknesses of Global Youth Network. Other organizations have marketed themselves better. Organizations like Engineers Without Borders do exactly the same thing we do except once a year they work on an engineering project. They send a lot of people on short term trips to help in orphanages or build houses. My ideas are so broad. My interests are hard to focus.

"I guess, too, part of finding your vocation is not just understanding the things you're good at but also understanding your emotions. I've had emotional breakdowns. Liz always says, 'I just feel that what you do is more important than me.' And I say, 'I love you but I also love what I do and the people I know and I care deeply about people I've met along the way.' I still communicate with people I met in Africa and I'm concerned with how they're doing. I'm emotional and it's very debilitating

at times. Often, I get overwhelmed when I read something in the paper about one of the places I've been to."

"That reminds me about what you said about how being in relationship involves some sort of sacrifice."

"What I am trying to get students to do is turn their emotions on and see the world in a different way. It's what I call ... passion. Passion means having an emotional connection to something that may actually hurt you. It's not passion if it doesn't involve your emotions. In some ways I almost feel driven to do what I do. I couldn't imagine doing anything else. I've said to Liz, "You know, I could quit this and I can go and get a job at a factory but then I am going to become part of a union and then I'll end up trying to start unions and working for worker's rights. It doesn't matter what I do, this is what I'll be doing. It's not a matter of me giving up one thing to do another because no matter what I do I'll end up doing the same thing. I'm fortunate that I still get to go back to many places I've been to and see the people I've met and stayed with in the communities I've lived in. I'm lucky I get to have coffee with them again."

"It's an amazing feeling isn't it. It's been two years since I worked in Cuba but I just met up with one of the Cuban Artists I worked with there. One of the women who volunteered with our project was there for our reunion. She said when he hugged me he closed his eyes closed and she could just tell how happy he was to see me. Sometimes it's hard to make connections with people you're not sure you'll see again."

"I know how you feel. But, there's nothing like being in someone's house and having coffee."

Chapter Six
Bluegrass Brunch

On January 16, 2009, it's below freezing in Toronto but the sun shines on the snow on the ground. Dave's train arrives at Union Station at 11:15am and he's scheduled to leave at 5:45 pm. I take him to the Dakota Tavern for the Bluegrass Brunch before our interview. City folk, families, and Hipsters flow down the basement steps into The Dakota Tavern, order breakfast platters, dine on fruit, eggs, sausage, home fries, and digest the hollow steel twang of the banjo, the bellow of the standup base, the cry of the fiddle, and listen to Three Lonesome Aces sing, bluegrass musicians whose voices need no accompaniment. Over brunch, Dave and I talk mostly about his childhood.

One week earlier, I spent the weekend at the Global Youth Network leadership retreat. It was the first time we talked since he moved to Vancouver in August, five months earlier. Over those five months, I started writing Dave's life story from transcripts but found many gaps, especially, in his childhood. We talked about growing up in Hamilton and he also shared some of his grandmother's stories.

He said Hamilton was a rough place to grow up. He went to Northwood high school. There were gangs. He didn't have fond childhood memories. He felt lost and wanted to leave. He smoked lots of pot and said he was asked not to return to high school in Grade Nine

because he was a 'stoner'. He ended up in a vocational school where he learned to lay brick and weld. Dave said vocational school was supposed to last three years but they gave him his diploma after a year and a half. He said he couldn't remember if he finished a three-year program in a year and a half or they just wanted him out.

Dave said he always loved physical labour and working hard but he never liked laying bricks because he couldn't picture the finished product. He was better at organizing people and he used those skills on the construction site.

We had an interesting talk about God. I mentioned a moment at the leadership retreat when a facilitator was talking about people's views on Spirituality and he used the word God in the introduction. I thought using the word might put people off if they have different spiritual beliefs.

Dave said if he doesn't use the word God out of fear of what people will think then his intentions are not motivated by the right reasons. He said if I don't say God then nothing will change. He uses the word God in different ways so people can begin to associate the word God with different things. It often initiates dialogue.

Going into this interview I started reading literature on Urban Male Aboriginal Identity Formation. Restoule (2004) found that urban Aboriginal identity was remade, rediscovered, and redefined depending on the context in which the Aboriginal men lived. The men in Restoule's study express, in their own words, what being Aboriginal

means, often, negotiating the historical and social contexts in which they have been previously defined. Dave uses God in a different way to change other people's preconceptions about his faith. The conversation with Dave about God makes me think about Restoule's research and redefining what it means to be Aboriginal. I pour some coffee and we start talking.

The Bullet

"The story you told me over brunch about your great grandfather was pretty interesting."

"The Bullet?"

" Yah."

"From my mom's extended family, my great aunt and her kids are still alive. My great aunt told me her memories of the story and my mom also told me hers. Some of it we found when my mom and my great aunt applied for their Métis status in 2006.

"My great grandmother was from the Parry Sound. My Great Grandfather's family, La Liberte, moved to

Penetanguishine from Drummond Island and Sault Ste. Marie. They were Métis voyageurs."

"What was his first name?"

"Clem, Clement La Liberte. His mother's last name was Dusomme. The Dusommes were part of the migration to Penetanguishine from Drummond Island. The Dusommes farmed in Quebec then headed West with the Hudson's Bay Company. Francois Dusomme married a Menominee woman. He was recorded with the Hudson Bay in Red River. The Menominee settled in Wisconsin but were part of the fur trade near Winnipeg and Northwestern Ontario.

"So Clem was Métis?"

"Clem was Métis. Most of the Métis men took on Native wives." [53]

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53 Lawrence (1999) writes that "Distinct Métis identities were created by the fur trade, by its encouragement of significant number of levels of

"French married Native or Métis married Native?"

"Métis married Native and French married Native. The Métis children married Native because they were still part of the fur trade. [54] As the fur trade died and the Métis started to

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intermarriage between white men and Native women, coupled with an absence of white settlement" (p. 77).

54 Lawrence recounts more a complex history. Lawrence (1999) writes that "the rise of Métis nationalism was a response to Canada's expansion westward, and the clear threat it represented to those individuals who were neither recognized as Indian by governments nor accepted as white by settlers, and who were threatened with the same processes of marginalization and displacement by the encroaching Europeans as they had already experienced in the Great Lakes region" (p. 74). Métis were denied their aboriginality because of racist assumptions about not being "authentic" but also as part of a process to regulate Native Identity and who would be recognized as having valid indigenous rights to land (p. 75). The North-West Halfbreed Commissions of 1885, 1886, and 1887, and the Scrip and Treaty Commission of 1899, and the Scrip Commissions of the early 1900's, Lawrence writes were all set up with the express purpose of eliminating the "halfbreed problem" by granting Métis people individual land allotments rather than collective recognition (p. 76). Many Métis who did not speak English and were unaccustomed to having individual land holdings, were targeted by land speculators to sell their scrip for a pittance. As a result, 90% of Métis were landless by the turn of the twentieth century. Those who could do so, assimilated into white society and those who couldn't hide their Nativeness, migrated to start new settlements in the North. Some historic Métis communities in the southern Prairies survived as Métis communities.

settle, Métis married Métis. In my heritage, the change from moving with the fur trade to establishing settlements can be seen. My great grandfather married a Métis woman, his parents were both Métis, and their parents married First Nations-French. My great grandmother's family, too, married First Nations and, as they started to settle, married Métis."

"What was your Great Grandmother's name?"

"Her name was Miner."

"You gave me a newspaper article about her husband Narcisse Miner. She lived until she was 103."

"Yah, my great grandmother's father and my great grandfather's father worked together as voyageurs. You can look it up on the internet. It's a picture of four voyageurs. The picture is of Brissette and Dusomme. The Brissettes moved to Parry Sound. That's my great grandmother's connection. The

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Lawrence writes that "Métis identity virtually went underground in Western Canada" (p. 77).

Dusommes moved to Drummond Island then Penetanguishine. They were buds. Somehow both sides of the family were connected as Métis. For some reason, they came together. There was a relationship there. Parry Sound and Penetanguishine aren't close but they were somehow connected."

"Do you know how your great grandparents met?

"We are trying to find out. They married in Honey Harbour. Honey Harbour sits in the middle of Penetanguishine and Parry Sound but we don't know what brought them together. When they applied for Métis status they followed the Drummond Island side because it was the clearest historical line. It was harder to find information about the Brissettes and the Miners. Remember when we went to Parry Sound and ate at the diner on the reserve. [55] The Native woman cooking was a Miner.

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55 Dave and I led a team of university students across Canada in 2004. We worked with six First Nations communities between Ontario and Vancouver Island. One of our first stops was the Parry Sound Friendship Centre through which we visited some of the surrounding First Nations communities.

“I talked to her. I asked her if she knew any Miners. She said she was a Miner and her husband knew a lot about the Miners from the area. She told Liz and me to come back but when we did no one was there."

"So, your grandparents married in Honey Harbour then moved?

"All of the kids were born before my great grandfather fought in the First World War. My grandmother was the oldest and my remaining great aunt, Isabel, was the youngest. The two boys - Chuck and I can’t remember my other great uncle's name - were in between. They were all born in Parry Sound but moved to Hamilton.

“I remember one story but don’t know how accurate it is. When the First World War started my great grandfather went to war and my great grandmother moved to Hamilton and bought a house on Mohawk Rd. At that time Mohawk Road was all farmland but now it’s urban. I think she worked in the munitions industry but I don’t know for sure.

“My grandfather came home from the war wounded. He was shot in the belly or got shrapnel in his belly in one of the great battles. I think it was Passchendaele.

“He complained about the pain in his stomach. My mom got these medical reports from my great aunt. He complained but nothing was done about it. He ended up filing a formal complaint to the military stating he felt discriminated against because he was French.”

"Not because he was Aboriginal?"

"They never said Métis at the time. He called himself French. I met an older woman from Penetanguishine. She said her family always spoke about being Métis by calling themselves French. She said that was normal. She told me she moved to Quebec with her family. In Quebec, they made her take French in school because the French she spoke wasn't French. She had to learn it all over again. When she moved back to Penetanguishine, where there is still a strong Métis community, she realized she was Métis and what she spoke was Michif.”[56]

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56 The report from the Royal Commission of Aboriginal Peoples explains that Michif is a fine example of the cultural distinctiveness of Métis peoples. Michif is blends components of French and Aboriginal languages in a unique

"You said he was shot in the stomach?"

"He filed a formal complaint saying he was in pain all the time. He got really sick. When they finally brought him to the hospital and opened him up, they found an infectious cyst. My mom showed me a doctor's report that said the cyst was the size of a cannonball.

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and novel way (Canada, 1996). With respect to Cree-French Michif, a Dutch linguist says:

> It is a mixed language drawing its nouns from a European language and its verbs from an Amerindian language... . No such mixture of two languages has been reported from any [other] part of the world... . Michif is unusual if not unique in several respects among the languages of the world. It poses challenges for all theories of language and language contact... . Michif challenges all theoretical models of language. It is a language with two completely different components with separate sound systems, morphological endings and syntactic rules... . The impetus for its emergence was the fact that the bilingual Métis were no longer accepted as Indians or French and they formulated their own ethnic identity, which was mixed and where a mixed 'language of our own' was considered part of their ethnicity (Canada, 1996).

"My uncle Chuck and his brother fought in the Second World War too. Chuck was in the Army and the other brother was in the Air Force."

"Uncles or Great Uncles?"

"Great uncles."

"You said, at brunch, your great grandfather self-medicated."

"Self medicating was the way to go in those days."

"What does that mean exactly?"

"He drank a lot. He had moments of sobriety. He worked hard in construction and labour jobs but he binged on alcohol. He would lose his job and move onto another one. It was difficult way to raise four kids. My Great Aunt Isabel has a

different perspective on things now. My Great Grandmother was good at holding things together.

"When I saw my aunt this summer, she said she didn't understand her father growing up but she understands now. [57] Soldiers self medicated to cope with what they saw and experienced during the First World War.

"Uncle Chuck came back from the Second World War traumatized as well. Uncle Chuck drank a lot and would get delusional. He used to think he was talking to the Queen of England. He thought she was going to work everything out for him. Chuck dealt with it by ending his own life in a cabin on my Grandmother's farm in Marmara, near Peterborough.

"We used to go to the cabin in the summer as kids. We cooked and heated the house with a wood stove. I remember having copper kettle baths, heating the water on the stove and pouring it into the tub. I remember getting slivers in my feet from the wood floors. My mom told us recently that everybody lived up there in the summers, my grandmother and

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57 Dave saw his Great Aunt Isabel at a party in July of 2008

grandfather, Uncle Chuck, Granny, Mom, me and my brothers. I remember bass fishing up there.

“My dad worked in the summers and my mom stayed home. We were in preschool. In the summer, she wanted to be out of the city so we’d go up to the cabin. I was young then. But, after Uncle Chuck killed himself, nobody did anything with the cabin. They rented the land to a local farmer. My Great Aunt Isabel eventually inherited the land and the house.”

"You said your Great Grandfather died getting hit by a car?”

"My great grandfather's stomach wounds never healed. His muscles in his stomach were extremely weak so he had a bad back. When his back got worse he couldn’t work in construction. He ended up as a crossing guard where he could drink and work without anyone bothering him. Coming home one night, he staggered onto the road, got hit by a car, and died."

"What happened to your great grandmother?"

"The women had problems too but most of the men abused alcohol and were traumatized by the War. My great grandmother carried the show. She was the boss.”

"She raised you?"

"Granny and Grandma helped raise me. We called my Great grandmother Granny. Granny lived to be quite old. Grandma actually died before Granny. When Mom went back to work we spent a lot of time at Grandma's place, about three blocks away. We ate lunch and supper there. "

"Did your mom pass on any Métis traditions?"

"She talked about it a little bit. I don't think she knew. Later, when she got her Métis card, she was apprehensive. She tried to escape the dysfunction in her family. She grew up with her mom, dad, grandparents, aunts, and uncles. They'd get drunk and fight. As a young girl she was afraid all the time. I think she married young to escape that. I think a lot of her memories of being Métis caused her all kinds of pain.

"My dad always said that my grandmother was the most loving person in the world. Granny taught us about the woods and different things. The female side of the family seemed to be very strong and self-sufficient. The males struggled with addiction. I understand why my mom wanted to get away from it, but it continued. The Mohawk Rd. house was a nice place to

go but sometimes you just didn't want to be there. People came over and things got crazy."

"What did your mom think about you going through your dark period? Did she see that continuing on?"

"(Long pause) Mom blamed herself but I never blamed her. They were my choices. We never talked about or processed anything. Everyone guessed what everyone else was going through. We didn't communicate."

"Did it happen with your brothers or just you?"

"My younger brother went through something similar. My older brother Mike was over for New Years. He was telling stories to Liz about me when we were younger. I was fifteen and he was seventeen and we were at a bar up on Fifty-Three Highway called the Plantation. We looked older so we got into bars. Mike came drinking with me and my friends that night. The next day we drove somewhere with my dad. Mike got sick and threw up outside the car. Dad just looked at him and said, 'That's what you get for going out with your brother!'

"We were always told to be home at eleven o'clock as teenagers. If we were staying at a friend's house we had to phone but we couldn't just roam the streets all night.

"I remember being at a phone booth when it was eleven o'clock one night. I called Dad and told him I was at a friend's house. A few minutes later, my brother showed up looking to use the same phone booth. He called Dad and started saying he was at his friend's house but Dad cut him off and said he was in the middle of something. He asked Mike to call back a few minutes later."

"In less than two minutes Dad's car pulled up next to the phone booth. He told us to get in and he drove us home. When we got home Dad took me downstairs and strapped me with his belt. Then he walked upstairs to find Mike. He said to Mike, 'What were you doing?' And Mike said, 'I was just walking home when I ran into Dave.' And Dad said, 'Oh, okay.' And then Mike asked if he could go back out and Dad said, 'Okay.'

"Mike said he always did whatever he could to get away from being caught. He said he always put on the good-guy look. He said when I did something wrong and got caught I always took the heat and accepted the consequences for the choices I made. He told me he always admired that about me and said I still do that today."

Clarifying Greenland

"Dave, I have a question about the Inuit. I read over our conversation about Greenland and you said that's where you learned it was okay to be different but the only stories you told me were related to abuse. I wonder if there's more."

"(Laughs) Something you said must have tipped me off. I loved the North and the people."

"Tell me a little bit about the Inuit?"

"What attracted me to the Inuit was the pace of life. It's natural. If you're working and feel like you need to fish, then you fish. The Inuit talk like it's not a choice."

"Do you mean connecting to nature?"

"It's a connection to nature but also a pace. Work is important but they have other priorities."

"Like feeding your family or spending time in nature?"

“It’s not just nature but it’s a pace of life. It’s important to make time for nature but it’s also the speed at which you live life.”

“Are you trying to say there’s more to life than work?”

"We spent four days in the capital city of Nuuk after we arrived. On the second day I walked to the bank to change some money. I pulled on the bank doors but they were locked. There were bank hours posted but they said bank opened at nine o'clock and it was almost eleven. I jiggled the bank doors. I remembered thinking about being in Latin America where banks closed all the time when the power went out. A woman approached me from behind and scared me a bit. I said, ‘Hello.’ and she said, ‘Hi.’ And I said, ‘Somethin' happen? Is the power out?’ and she said, ‘No, the manager had to go fishing this morning and he didn’t tell us. We didn’t know we had to come in early.’ And I said, ‘Oh, does that happen often?’ and she said, ‘With him, yah. We have lots of employees because you never know who’ll need to go fishing.’

"We arrived in Nuuk but spent most of our time in Sisimiut. Sisimiut is Greenland's third largest town, just seventy five kilometres north of the Arctic Circle. The population was about 5,500 when I was there. Some people lived

in apartments but most people lived in houses. We stayed in a house built by some of the first missionaries. When the missionaries first came to Greenland they forced a lot of the Inuit to convert to Lutheranism. Afterwards the government passed a law preventing other religions from settling in Greenland. Even other Christian denominations weren't allowed in but, in 1959 or 1969, they passed a new law that opened it up. We stayed in a house built by the first non-Lutheran missionaries. They called it a mission house. They weren't allowed to establish churches of other denominations but, after the law passed, they were allowed to build mission houses. They popped up all over Greenland. But, even when I was there in 1987 or 1988, people thought non-Lutheran mission houses were cults. Many people thought our mission house was a cult."

"Did the Inuit think you were in a cult?"

"No, because the guy we hung out with was the son of one of the first missionaries. His name was Sven Olaf Osbum."

"Was he Danish?"

"He was Swedish but his parents raised him in Sisimiut with the Inuit. All his friends were Inuit and he went to school with the Inuit. We spent a lot of time with him so the people who knew him accepted us. But the mission house was weird. We associated with it but also dissociated with it. It was a weird relationship.

“It was still a mixed community. There were many Danes but most of the people in our community were Inuit. It was my first real experience being fully immersed in a culture of Indigenous people and I connected with the natural pace of life."

"I kind of understand what you mean but it’s hard to find a word for it."

"It was something that felt natural. Many of the Inuit said they felt comfortable being with me and some of them even told me I seemed like one of them. That had an impact on me. I felt embraced by the community. They were hardy people who experienced a lot of suffering. Every family had at least one tragic story. "

Tragedy

"Could you relate to that?"

"Not in the same way. My family had become fairly urban. I guess my great grandfather died tragically but I was only one or two when that happened."

"And your great uncle too?"

"Yah, that was weird. My mom was funny in how she dealt with things. My dad was funny too but in a different way. Nobody talked about anything. When Uncle Chuck shot himself we got a phone call in Hamilton. Everyone ran around and Grandma and Grandpa and Granny and Mom rushed to Peterborough. They found him and cleaned up everything. Or, maybe, Granny found him because he hadn't phoned home in a few days. I was so young I can't remember but something was weird about it. Granny walked in and cleaned up his mess. We heard things all around us but no one ever talked to us about it."

"My Grandma died of lung cancer. I remember Mom going to the hospital after work and coming home late each night. But, nobody ever talked to us about it. Just before Grandma died she wanted to see us. I remember going to the hospital with my mom and my brothers. Grandma was emaciated, just skin and bones. We were all shocked and not talking about it made it worse. Nobody talked to us about my

great uncle's death either. Maybe, it was some old fashion way. Whatever it was, the kids didn't need to know."

"Do you know if they talked to each other?"

"We used to listen to them talking. When my grandmother died, they had a wake at my house. All these people we knew or heard about came to the house and everyone was telling stories. We were just told to go outside.

"My grandfather was a fiddle player, a Métis fiddle player. [58] They told all these stories about how he'd get drunk and fiddle. My brothers and I listened from outside the window with other kids from other families. They had a big shindig and we listened from outside. Even as a kid, we were on the outside. I didn't know how bad my grandmother's sickness was. I didn't

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58 "The fiddle has figured prominently in the lifestyle of the Métis people for hundreds of years. It is the main instrument used in the Métis jigs. The famous 'Red River Jig' has become the centrepiece of Métis music. Since this European instrument was exceedingly expensive in early Canada, especially for the grassroots Métis communities, many craftsmen learned how to make their own" (Ontario, 2009).

know if it was life or death. It was weird. I can't remember ever processing that kind of stuff."

"Did any of your relatives go to residential schools?"

"No, nothing like that, I can't remember how I went from talking about the Inuit to that?"

"We were talking about tragedy."

"One of the things that I've found or seen in Indigenous communities is a real depth of talking. We didn't have that in my family, maybe because of the dysfunction, maybe because of the mental health issues, or maybe because of the alcohol abuse. But, there was no depth in communication."

"There was community but no communication."

"Maybe communication happened but I don't remember seeing it."

Being and Becoming

"I wanted to share something with you that I've been reading.

"Couture wrote:

> Beginning with the self is characteristic of Native ways. The doing that characterizes the native way is a doing that concerns itself with being and becoming a unique person, one fully responsible for one's own life and actions within family and community. Finding one's path and following it is a characteristic of Native enterprise which leads to or makes to the attainment of inner and outer balance.[59]

"Dave, did you ever associate this with being Native?"

"Maybe not with being Native but I remember reading that native spirituality is partly the discovery of who you are and the giving of who you are to the community. That's also my understanding of spirituality and the Christian life."

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59 See Couture (1991a; 1991b)

"Finding your path and discovering who you are and finding your gift to give to your community. These are all things we've talked about. You've said before that spirituality is being who you are created to be."

"I heard a story from a Métis guy who writes children's books. He said he started writing children's book based on Aboriginal stories. He never knew where the stories came from because he never grew up in an aboriginal community. He told the story of discovering his Métis-ness to the conference. A First Nations Elder asked him where he got the stories. He said he didn't know where they came from. Another Native Elder who was there said, 'Those stories are in you.'"

"I've wondered why I'm not more Scottish or French. Why haven't indigenous peoples assimilated? What makes indigenous people different? I started thinking that there must be something in me. I think Aboriginal people would say it's spiritual, like a spiritual connection with the ancestors that continues with you whether you know it or not.

"I have been reflecting on this whole ancestral thing. I don't believe ancestors disappear. The connection is alive and around us. In the process of understanding my own spirituality, I've started discovering more of my aboriginal connection. The Inuit's pace of life is something I always identified with but

couldn't put to words. I like walking. There is something very natural about that pace of life. If I am not walking I feel out of pace. If I have a meeting, I make time for it. It's how I plan my day."

"Dave, I just looked at the time. It's almost five o'clock. We should get going if you want to catch your train."

"Why don't you come with me to the station, Dan, we can keep talking there."

Dave and I take the streetcar to the subway and the subway to Union Station. The train is on schedule and I stand with him for about ten minutes as the line of passengers slowly boards. I won't see him until April when we leave for Venezuela. He tells me to update him on the progress of my writing. We hug goodbye and I watch Dave walk up a flight of stairs to board his train. I leave Union Station and retrace our path back home.

Chapter Seven
Turning Fifty, Dave Reflects

On March 6, 2008 I received a letter from Dave with his thoughts on turning fifty. His reflections come after more than a year of conversations about his life. I asked him if he wanted to include a written reflection in this account. After a short conversation, we agreed his letter would be suitable.

Dave wrote:

> It seems the last couple of days have been a time of reflection, so, I thought I'd send some of my thoughts your way.
>
> I was thinking about balance the other day. I wasn't thinking about creating more balance in my life, as I believe I will never be a balanced individual, but I was thinking about the indigenous idea of balance. In indigenous wisdom, we do not balance our lives, we enter into balance. When the Creator created, creation was in balance by being what it was created to be. So balance is being what and who you are created to be. It's pretty simple but I always find it difficult to stay in balance. Even at fifty, I still want to be and do things I'm not.

I've also been reflecting on who Jesus is. Jesus, in the Gospels, often referred to himself as the son of man. I'm reading a book by Walter Wink called The Human Being.[60] Wink defines the term son of man as literally 'human being'. Jesus didn't live just to point the way to God but he lived to point the way to being balanced, like being who I'm created to be, being a human being. I like when things become really simple. Life is about becoming fully human.

Back to Indigenous wisdom, in many Indigenous cultures they have some kind of vision quest or dream quest that helps an individual see their role in community. This often comes through a vision or a dream and is confirmed by the community. When the individual's vision has been confirmed by the community the individual spends the rest of their life becoming that vision. If your role is a hunter, you don't just become a great hunter, you learn how to hunt until you can't hunt anymore.

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[60] See (Wink, 2002)

Me, I feel like I've been on a vision quest for fifty years. I fight against my own balance. My ideas of what I think I should be are not the same as the creator's. Sometimes I think I should be living in the jungle in the Amazon or living in a mountain village in Zanskar. Other times, I think I should be a foreign war correspondent in the midst of tragedy and war. Or, my favorite idea of myself is the revolutionary leader setting the oppressed free. Now, at fifty, I think I finally have the vision, something that has been confirmed by the community even before I knew what it was. I'm an educator. This is not just what I do but it is who I am when I enter into balance. It's what the community has confirmed. The cool thing about it all is that the Amazon, Zanskar, and the foreign war correspondent living in tragedy, war and revolution are all part of it. At fifty, I can see more clearly my place in community and this makes me feel like more of a human being.

This education thing was confirmed through a dream I had the other night. I think it was one of those special dreams but I'm not sure because I was drinking a bit before I went to bed. Liz has me on gluten-free diet to see if my belly is a reaction to gluten, so I tried this beer that was gluten-free and didn't realize it was nine point

five percent alcohol. Anyway, back to the dream, I was in a class room sitting in one of those really uncomfortable desks. There were all these strange young people sitting around talking and also looking really uncomfortable in their desks. They were all telling stories about how they heard me speak somewhere, some from Youth with a Mission and some from Global Youth Network, and they were all talking about things that I've said that have motivated them to get involved and do stuff in this world. They were telling stories of working in Cambodia and Macedonia and Brazil and working in different slums around the world. So, I don't know if it was the alcohol talking or the creator showing me my vision, bringing me more into balance. I think it was the latter.

So, here is my final reflection. I have been thinking about how important my friends and family are because, after all, you're all a part of my balance, my humanity. You're actually not just a part of it, you are my humanity, because I've only been able to discover my humanity through you. If you are getting this reflection note it's because you are my humanity. So with that I am thankful that we know each other.

I think the biggest thing I have learned in my life is how privileged I am to have people who know me, put up with me, and allow me to be who I am. Thanks for helping me through these fifty years. We still have about thirty eight years to go, give or take a few.

So what's it like to be fifty? The best way I can describe it is like being eight hours into a two day road trip and it's that time of day when the sun is setting and the sky is clear and it's summer and the natural light is changing but it's not quite night yet. All of a sudden, you get a feeling in the centre of your chest, like a sense of quiet, a peace that says, 'It's all okay.' Or, maybe, this is a better way to describe it, you're sitting with Chris and Aaron in Modesto California having a few whiskeys. Chris is having Southern Comfort because he likes sweet drinks. You've been talking and laughing and then, all of a sudden, everyone is silent. It's not an uncomfortable silence; it's the perfect kind of silence. Or, one last try, maybe you've just climbed a mountain and a beautiful sun set takes away all forms of communication. All you can do is look. That is how I am feeling at fifty.

Hope this finds you all well,
Dave Skene, educator

Chapter Eight
In Venezuela, Pedagogy in Practice

On April 8, 2009, Dave, Solom, and I arrive in Caracas, Venezuela at midnight. Henri, a large black Venezuelan man who grew up in Grenada, picks us up at the airport along with two teenaged Brazilian girls returning from a mission in China, and Marcelo, a twenty-two year old Christian missionary running a soccer program for street youth in Sao Paolo, Brazil. Henri speaks English with a West Indian accent, preaches when he talks, and his voice carries like he swallowed a microphone. He is charismatic and weaves passages from the Bible into every conversation. On the weekend, Henri is heading to the president of the University's house to evangelize him. My body absorbs everything. It's been almost three years since I worked in Cuba and I feel overly sensitive to the sight, sound, smell, and feeling of being in Latin America. Salsa and Raggaeton boom from open car windows and lights from houses terraced into the mountainside along the edge of the highway speckle the night. My jeans stick to my legs and sweat moistens the back of my t-shirt. The conversation in Henri's Sport Utility Vehicle, SUV, switches back and forth between English, Spanish, and Portuguese. I feel far from my shared, windowless, student office at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education in Toronto, Ontario. The forty five minute car ride from

the airport ends as we arrive at the Youth with a Mission House in Chacaito, Caracas.

Marcelo, Solom, Dave, and I put our things in the boy's room. There are three bunk beds along each wall and one single bed in front of a large window. The window is open but has no screen. There are no sheets on the beds and a moist film coats each mattress. I unpack a bed sheet and spread it over the bed in front of the window. Solom smiles from his bottom bunk and he speaks to Marcelo in Portuguese lying on the bed above him. I understand small pieces of their conversation because it's very close to Spanish but I'm too tired to concentrate. Dave lies down on the bottom bunk bed closest to the door. The mattress forms to his body like a hammock. A cool breeze blows through the window. I shut my eyes and fall asleep.

On April 9, 2009, Dave says that the day is a free day. It's Thursday during Semana Santa, the week before Easter, so the streets in the busiest shopping district in Caracas, Chacaito, are quiet. Henri walks Dave, Solom, Marcelo, and I to a local eatery for empanadas and coffee for breakfast. The coffee in Venezuela is not like coffee in Canada. It's strong and served in small cups like espresso. It's too strong for the Brazilians, Solom and Marcelo, so they take theirs with milk. Dave drinks his black but prefers coffee to espresso, like at home, in a large warm mug.

After breakfast, we tour Chacaito. Chacaito is a popular shopping district in Caracas. A cobbled walkable street runs ten blocks,

lined with stores filled with brand name shoes, shirts, pants, and cell phones that decorate the heads of pedestrians walking to the mall. Henri tells us that our meetings will be held in an office in a church in the mall that is under construction. The office is small but air conditioned and equipped with a coffee maker. We walk for almost three hours and decide to head back to the mission house to see if any of our international contacts have arrived.

Back at the house, we meet Ricardo, the director of YWAM in Puerto Ordaz, an industrial city ten hours by bus southeast of Caracas. Ricardo wears a yellow, short-sleeved, collared shirt with blue horizontal stripes. Ricardo's baby face looks brown and soft. His large cheeks dimple when he smiles and laughs and a full, black, well-groomed moustache is the only feature on his face that makes him look forty. Ricardo says that he sends people who have completed their missionary training to countries all over the world. Ricardo received Global Youth Network teams for a few years. Dave says Ricardo is very good with the teams and the volunteers loved working with him. I notice Ricardo arrived with only the clothes he was wearing. Ricardo tells us that Pablo, the national director of Youth with a Mission in Venezuela, is on his way to meet us.

When Pablo arrives, Dave, Solom, and I sit in the living room with him to talk. We discuss the agenda for the weekend. We're meeting at the church Friday night, Saturday morning, and, again,

Saturday night. Sunday we meet at the mission house because, although the church is unfinished, people still use the space for mass.

We tell Pablo that Coco from Peru wasn't allowed to board his flight to Caracas because he never received a letter from Pablo formally inviting him to the meetings. Without the letter, customs would not let Coco board the plane. Solom tells us this happens a lot in Latin America. Pablo is sorry and embarrassed but offers no reason why the letter was never sent. Solom says he just received an email from Ginaldo, a project organizer in Manaus, Brazil. His thirty-six hour bus ride from Manaus to Caracas was delayed at the border of Brazil and Venezuela and he is stuck in Santa Elena. He hopes to be at the meeting on Sunday morning. One year of planning isn't enough to bring all Global Youth Network's partners in Latin America together.

On April 10, 2009, Ricardo wakes up early and makes arepas. Arepas are made with cornflour and water kneaded into a silky dough, formed into thick circular paddies, and cooked, covered, in a skillet with butter. In a second pan on the stove, Ricardo browns thinly sliced ham. He piles the ham onto a small plate, and places it on the table, next to sliced queso amarillo[61] packaged in wax paper. I step into the

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61 Yellow cheese

kitchen and see Ricardo smiling as he finishes frying the last arepa. I cut up patilla[62]*and make coffee by pouring boiling water from a large pot into a wire coat hanger, covered with cloth, sewn into the shape of a cone, and filled with finely ground espresso beans. Coffee drips into a yellow plastic container and I place it on the table when it's full. Dave, Solom, and Marcelo awake to find breakfast on the table. Ricardo, Solom, and Marcelo make jokes in Portuguese and Spanish as we eat. I translate their conversation to Dave. We listen, talk, and drink coffee. After breakfast, we walk through Chacaito to the church in the mall. We wait for Pablo outside the church doors. Pablo arrives an hour late. He says he's having problems at Casa Hogar. Casa Hogar is a home for fifteen children who have been orphaned or given up by their parents in the town of San Sebastian, three hours from Caracas. It's twelve years old, houses children between ages three months and eighteen years, and there are no permanent staff. For several of the children, it is the only home they've ever known. Casa Hogar is one of the projects supported by Global Youth Network. Currently, one staff person is looking after all the children. She is overwhelmed with the amount of work and Pablo spends the whole morning searching for*

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62 Watermelon

help. He can't find anyone and says he might have to drive to San Sebastian to help take care of the kids. He seems anxious as we crowd around a table inside a small office in the church.

The meeting starts. Dave says that he and Solom have been planning this meeting for over a year. These meetings come at a time when Ginaldo is in the process of registering the Global Youth Network as a non-profit organization in Manaus, Brazil. Dave hopes that Manaus will be a model for Global Youth Network's other international partners, including Pablo and Ricardo from Venezuela. Global Youth Network hopes to build stronger relationships with their international partners, create projects mutually, and support those projects until communities ultimately take control of funding and decision-making power. Dave calls it de-centralization. He mentions a Spanish school in El Salvador and a Malaria clinic in India founded by Global Youth Network volunteers but now run by local communities. Dave says the purpose of these meetings is to create a structure that best supports and nurtures this idea.

The faces around the table look receptive. Dave says that this year will be Global Youth Network's largest year ever. Global Youth Network is sending twenty six teams of volunteers to twenty countries from twelve universities across Canada. Global Youth Network still works with Youth with a Mission in many countries. Although some of the work they do is very similar, Global Youth Network's philosophy of faith, justice, and community, is slightly different.

Faith is important to Global Youth Network because it is an integral part of the communities in which Global Youth Network works. Many of the students who volunteer for Global Youth Network are interested in social justice. In order to work together, Dave says it's important to know how each person understands justice. Dave asks each person to write down their definition of justice and read what they wrote.

The room agrees justice has many meanings. Ricardo thinks justice is helping people holistically, in all aspects of their life. Solom thinks justice means having access to human rights. Pablo agrees. Marcelo, the youngest person in the room, shyly says that justice is about making relationships. When it's my turn, I say that justice is a process beginning by understanding how I am connected to the world's problems. Dave says that the root word for justice in Hebrew means to listen, not just hearing, but listening and being open to work with what you hear.

Dave tells a story about YWAM in Tanzania. Life for the Maasai people revolves around the cow. They're a nomadic tribe that follows cattle as they graze. When YWAM started working with the Maasai they recommended that they sell their cattle to pay for education and health care. The people from YWAM wanted to help but they should have been prepared to travel and live with the Maasai and their cows. Dave says this made him understand that part of justice was listening.

Dave continues to talk about balance. Balance is relationship between self, God, humanity, and nature. Injustice happens when something is out of balance, when we fall out of relationship with one of these aspects of our lives. Being and becoming fully human is a journey towards finding balance. Finding balance is one of Global Youth Network's goals.

Part of community is being in relationship with humanity. Dave says that, since he arrived in Venezuela, he's received several emails from students who volunteered in Venezuela asking him to pass along messages to people and families they met when they were here. Many of Global Youth Network's volunteers stay connected to communities in which they worked. Many students have also sought out new connections to people living in poverty in their local communities. Dave knows that poverty exists in many places but he says being aware of it never changed him. It's only when he meets someone living in poverty that his heart is changed. This happens to many of Global Youth Network's volunteers. When volunteers can put a face or a story or an experience to poverty, they are changed and community takes on new meaning.

Ricardo, serious but smiling, is the first to speak. He says that YWAM takes a risk when they work with Global Youth Network's non-Christian volunteers. He always has difficulty explaining to pastors and communities what the volunteers do. Often, Ricardo says, he doesn't say anything to anyone but people assume that teams are

Christian because of the work they do and the values they demonstrate. Now he understands and will be able to explain. Pablo nods in agreement and asks everyone if they'd like some coffee.

On April 12, 2009, Sunday morning we're back in the church. We met all-day on Saturday and Ginaldo arrived late Saturday night. He is barely five feet tall. His dark brown hair is short on the sides and slightly longer on top. The tops of his ears round to a point and match his well-defined jaw and sharp tipped nose. He wears a blue tank top covered with cloud-like images, cut-off black acid washed jean shorts, and flip-flops that provide little support for his wide, high-arched feet. I translated for the meetings on Saturday. We talked about how Global Youth Network's volunteers could better support the international partners. Today, we're talking about the some of the projects that Global Youth Network is working on in Brazil. Global Youth Network has worked in Brazil for ten years and Dave thinks that hearing about these projects will increase the scope for the type of projects possible in the future.

Ginaldo apologizes for missing the first two days of meetings. He begins talking about river communities close to where he lives in Manaus. I understand that river communities are groups of people that live along the river in the jungle. They do not belong to an indigenous group and do not have access to the same traditional knowledge and medicine. Some are mixed race with some indigenous blood and have been outcast from traditional communities as a result. They remind me

of homeless people living on the street, except here, they are in the jungle. They have no documents or access to education that is accessible to people living in the city or in traditional indigenous communities. Ginaldo says that by making relationships with river people, Global Youth Network volunteers leave river communities feeling hopeful and respected and happy that people are interested in listening to their stories.

Ginaldo starts talking about another project in Sao Gabriel, a Brazilian city and municipality mostly inhabited by indigenous people located on the northern shores of the Rio Negro River in the state of Amazonas. Of the twenty two tribes living in the region the Dao are the poorest. When they first migrated from the jungle to the city they lived on the streets. YWAM helped them buy land and build settlements. Ginaldo says the Dao are treated like second-class citizens and they have very low self images. They feel very proud to receive teams from Global Youth Network and have been able to construct a water tower with their support. Ginaldo warns, however, that FUNAI, Foundation of Indian Affairs, is watching over Sao Gabriel and making it more difficult for outsiders to make relationships with indigenous people.

FUNAI is the branch of government that controls interactions with indigenous people in Brazil. Even if Global Youth Network is invited by indigenous communities, FUNAI is becoming more and more reluctant to allow non-profit organizations from outside Brazil to

work with indigenous people. Ginaldo hopes that by registering Global Youth Network as a non-profit in Brazil, projects like these will continue to improve the lives of the River people, the Dao, and other marginalized communities like them in Brazil. Ginaldo pauses and asks the room how we can find justice in this type of work.

Dave starts talking about Paulo Freire and Miles Horton in the book, We Make the Road by Walking.[63] *In the Highlander School in Tennessee, founded by Miles Horton, literate African Americans taught illiterate African Americans to read using the American Bill of Rights during the Civil Rights Movement in the United States. The first thing African Americans learned to read at the Highlander School was that they had rights.*

Ginaldo says that FUNAI is the largest enemy for indigenous people in Brazil. FUNAI says NGOs are changing the cultural identities of indigenous people. Ginaldo says what FUNAI is most worried about, is Indigenous people learning that they have rights. During a break for coffee, Ricardo invites me and Dave to his home city of Puerto Ordaz to visit some projects he's working on. Dave and I are both interested in visiting one project in particular, a group of

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63 See (Horton & Freire, 1990)

indigenous people living in the Delta. Their village is flooded and destroyed every year by the rising flood waters of the Caroni River.

On April 18, 2009, our third and last day in Puerto Ordaz, Ricardo takes us to visit some projects. Ricardo couldn't arrange a trip to the Delta. The Delta is ten hours away from Puerto Ordaz and he said the visit would have been rushed. Instead, Dave and I spent two days touring with a very wealthy family of Evangelical Christians. Everywhere we went, they introduced us as "missionaries from Canada". With Ricardo nowhere to be found I didn't feel comfortable correcting them. They also took us to see two huge hydroelectric dams. On my first Global Youth Network volunteer trip, nearly eight years ago, I worked with a group of indigenous people in Honduras who were displaced by a hydroelectric dam. On the second day in Puerto Ordaz, we visited Gurí.

Gurí was the second largest hydroelectric dam in the world until the recently finished Three Gorges Dam in China pushed it to third. Gurí, named after the village on which it was built, is a wall of concrete eleven kilometres wide and one hundred sixty-two metres tall. Nine red small doors cap three enormous floodgates. When the floodgates open fully, the average amount of water used daily by the

entire population[64] *of Caracas flows through Gurí's gates in one second. Our guide said Gurí supplies electricity to Venezuela, Brazil, and Paraguay; although, this fact was quietly disputed amongst the Venezuelans on the tour. Instead of visiting the Delta, Ricardo takes Dave and me to visit the construction site of the new YWAM base on the other side on the Orinoco River in San Felix.*

Our visit to Puerto Ordaz with Ricardo was not what Dave and I expected. In the car on the way back from the construction site, Ricardo asks us if we want to visit an indigenous community living on the side of road living close to the Evangelical Christian family's house. The car pulls to the side of the road. The side of the road dips down a small hill beside the sidewalk and reveals ten tin roofs. Three short men, wearing only shorts, stand on the sidewalk and show off their lean, tanned, muscular bodies. Ricardo, Dave, and I walk up to the men and ask if we can enter the village and talk. I tell Dave I feel uncomfortable because I'm not sure if they think I'm a tourist. Dave tells me they don't have phones so there is no way to call ahead. If you want to talk to someone in the village, this is how you do it, you ask

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64 Population of Caracas, 3, 196,514 as of 2008

first. The eldest of the three men responds to Ricardo's question. He says, "No," and the three men walk down the hill.

Ricardo talks for no more than two minutes before one of the men comes back up the hill. He tells us we can only go into one person's house. He waves us in and we follow.

We walk down bright, terracotta soil to the bottom of the hill. Four wood posts attach to each tin roof and expose everyone underneath. Two five-house rows make up the entire village. We follow the man through the first row of homes and pass a group of women and small children lying in hammocks and sitting on the ground. No one looks happy to see us.

The man who said 'no' at the top of hill fastens the top button to his clean brown checkered pants and pulls a white shirt with blue three-quarter-length sleeves over his head. We step into his home. The other men from the top of the hill and a few new ones surround him. I realize they are much younger than I thought at first sight. After some short introductions and small talk, in Spanish, I ask the man with the checkered pants how they got here. He said if I had four days he could tell me the whole story. I ask him where he was from and he said they were from a small village about ten hours from Puerto Ordaz. He said his village gets flooded every year by the Caroni River and they are forced to move to high land. They lose their houses, seeds, and crops and start from scratch every year but the soil next to the river is fertile

for farming and it's where they've always lived. I remember the village Ricardo told us about and I ask. "Where are you from?"

The man with the checkered pants says, "The Delta."

Gurí change the height and flow of the river when it was completed in 1986.

I can see into every home when I look around. Small chairs and desks lay under the roof next to us. Ricardo points and asks, "Is this your school?"

"Yes." The man says.

"And how many teachers do you have?" Ricardo asks.

"We have one that comes every day."

Ricardo asks if they remember being visited by a group of students almost two years ago.

One of boys says, "Yah, the ones from University right?" He points to a clear patch of soil just beyond the second row of houses, "We played futbol over there."

"Those students were from the Global Youth Network." Ricardo says, "They work with Dave. Another team will be here in less than two weeks."

"We don't have a futbol anymore." The boy says.

I glance around the village one more time. I see wooden posts and tin roofs and tiny desks spread over the terracotta soil and ask, "How long have you lived here?"

The man with the checkered pants looks at me and says, "Seventeen years."

We shake hands, say thank you, walk through two rows of houses, and we make our way back up the hill.
Ricardo gears the car into drive, pulls away from the curb, and he takes us to pack our things and catch our bus back to Caracas. Dave returns to Canada tomorrow.

April 19, 2009, Dave and I sit in the kitchen at the mission house in Caracas. Dave's flight leaves at midnight. I plan to meet a friend in Merida before I fly home to Canada next week. Two coffee cups rest on the table in front of us. I ask Dave how he thinks the meetings went. He says that if he could have a dream job, it would be this. He loves traveling and meeting people, talking about faith, community, and justice, and setting up projects related to education and social change, all over coffee.

Chapter Nine
Reflections on the Art of Life History Research

Before I begin my next journey, I reflect on theoretical and philosophical roots of life history research and my process of collecting information and representing life.

On Theoretical/Philosophical Roots

In *Lives and Context, The Art of Life History Research*, Cole and Knowles (2001) write:

> Life history inquiry is not, centrally, about developing reductionist notions of lived experience in order to convey a particular meaning or "truth" (be it truth or Truth). Rather, it is a representation of human experience that draws in viewers or readers to the interpretive process and invites them to make meaning and form judgments based on their own reading of the "text" as it is viewed through the lenses of their own realities (p. 10).

Life history research reaches across many disciplines and is influenced by the epistemological orientations and personal, professional, and scholarly autobiographies of the researcher. Historically, life history methodology has been used in many forms however remained static (Cole & Knowles, 2001). The

recent rise of Arts-informed research has encouraged this approach to reach beyond the previous constraints. Psychologists used case studies of life histories to understand psychological conditions and personality development (Allport, 1942; Kluckhohn, Murray, & Schneider, 1955). Dollard (1935) used life history as a method of understanding cultural and social phenomena. Sociologists from the Chicago School viewed life stories as living illustrations of social conditions (Cole & Knowles, 2001, p. 12). *The Polish Peasant* (Thomas & Znaniecki, 1927) interweaves sociological theorizing and the stories of Polish peasant lives in a way that heavily influenced field-based social science researching in sociology and anthropology. Anthropologists, like Langness (1965) and Watson and Watson-Franke (1985), treated individuals as informants of their culture (Cole & Knowles, 2001, p. 12). Although the purposes for adopting the life history approach evolved over the years, researchers across disciplines recognize individuals and their stories as a window into broader social and societal conditions (Cole & Knowles, 2001, p. 12). In order to maintain an aura of objectivity, however, the researcher presence remained distant from the inquiry.

In contemporary life history research, the researcher's presence is visible in the representation of the life and it is also expected. Anthropologist Meyerhoff (1974; 1979) challenged the

conventional researcher-subject relationship. She pushed away from dichotomies of self-other, subject-object, and subjectivity-objectivity, included her own reflexive presence in her research, and acknowledged the intersubjective realm being and meaning-making in the research process. This approach has been criticized for not delivering objective results. Knowles and Cole (2001) argue that using the criteria of validity and generalizability to test the qualities of rigor in life history research is like examining a barrel of apples in order to determine which orange to buy (p. 123). As an Arts-informed Life History researcher, I accept the premise that all memory is selective, and thus, fiction. If I probed a participant's life for universal truths then this method of interpretation and analysis would contradiction the broad purposes of arts-informed life history inquiry.

Cole and Knowles (2001) address the broad purposes of life history research:

> In as much as it is humanly possible, life history inquiry is about gaining insights into the broader human condition by coming to know and understand the experiences of other humans. ...It is about understanding the relationship, the complex interaction, between life and context, self and place. It is about comprehending the complexities of a person's day-to-day decision making and the ultimate consequences that play out in that life so

> that insights into the broader, collective experience may be achieved. Rather, we are suggesting that every in-depth exploration of an individual life-in-context brings us much closer to understanding the complexities of lives in communities (p. 11).

Kohli (1981) writes that "life histories are...not a collection of all the events of the individual's life course, but rather 'structural self images'" (p. 65). The stories we remember and tell about our life reveal aspects of our identity, how we view ourselves, and how we want others to see us. The goal is not to question whether David Constantino really wore feathers and bandanas on the first day of Grade Three when Dave first met him. The question, rather, is based in a conceptual framework that guides our understandings of what Dave was thinking, the meanings he made from this, and other, remembered experiences. Ultimately, how does his thinking and meaning-making influence his future decision-making? Cole and Knowles (2001) remind us that "In an overarching way we seek to understand a particular conception of self" (p. 115).

On 'Self Stories'

Late September 2007, in Casa Acoreana, an open windowed coffee shop looking out on pedestrians in Kensington Market, I first asked Dave if he ever thought about writing his life story. In the coffee shop in January 2008, I asked Dave if he

broke his life into parts, what those parts would look like. I used those parts to construct a *life list*. Those parts are not necessarily evident throughout the story. The *life list* was used as a starting point for gathering information and a check list as we progressed in the process.

As Dave says, "I tell stories. That's what I do." The story is organized into what I call 'self stories'. The 'self stories' portray what Kolhi (Kohli, 1981) calls 'structural self images' and represent a particular conception of self, told to me by Dave, that reveals elements of how he sees himself, and perhaps, how we wishes to be seen. I do, however, acknowledge that I am the sole[65] writer of this text. I crafted the manuscript to represent how I see Dave, how I've come to know him and his work, and edited his words in a way that honours him, his ideas, quirks, quarks, sense of humour, and his stories about Liz. This written work is, in and of itself, a dialogue, which reflects both of our pedagogical approaches.

The 'self stories' can be read on their own yet I've tried to honour the context in which Dave told them. His stories

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65 Dave authored the letter in Chapter Seven Turning Fifty, Dave Reflects.

about childhood, particularly, *Conversion Conversation*, *Stuck Inside a Mobile, and Pretending to be Indian* grew from a conversation while we listened to bluegrass over brunch during our last formal interview, one year after I solicited Dave's *life list,* and three months before we traveled to Venezuela.

I moved these stories to the first chapter to provide readers snapshots of Dave's formative years and adolescence, also reflecting the traditional chronology of life. *Pretending to be Indian* reveals sensitive issues related to identity. Some of the issues were difficult for Dave to explain because, as a child, they didn't make sense. I purposely left pieces of conversation where he expresses not knowing or not remembering or being confused about something to honour his memories, his honesty, and the sense of humility. [66]

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66 "But, I have to say that when I think about my experiences growing up, I find it hard to process that time because, even as a kid, it was confusing. Even when I am talking about it now, it's confusing. Even my reflections of what it was like are confusing." (See 'self story' *Pretending to be Indian* in Chapter One)

Some of Dave's 'self stories' express epiphanies. Epiphanies represent turning points, mark the passage of years and the tone, tenor, and influence of a life. In *Seeing Something In-You-It,* Dave talks about seeing his Métis-ness for the first time in Greenland when he worked and lived amongst a group of Inuit in Sissimiut. Issues related to identity permeate every aspect of this text. These defining moments are not sharp turns because Dave describes his life as a process. Similarly, *Conversion Conversation* is an epiphany in Dave's life when he became a Christian, left the street, and moved into a Dilaram. When I ask him if he was saved, he said, "For me, being saved, was a process". Although becoming a Christian was a turning point in Dave's life, it represents the beginning of a long process of understanding who God is and what role faith plays in his life.

In the process of editing this work, I found myself fixed in Dave's self stories. I wondered what people would think about honouring the life of a Christian missionary - knowing that such a term doesn't do justice to his life and work. Dave worked as a short term missionary but his story is also one of many Aboriginal people in Canada. Does being Métis outweigh being a missionary? Does being a Liberation Theologist dwarf being Pentecostal? Does having your status make you a more 'authentic' Indian? When I buried my nose in one of Dave's

'self stories', I often lost sight of Dave as a whole person, a human being in a constant process 'being and becoming'. I can't separate Dave into parts and expect what I'm left with to equal the whole. Each story provides insight into the complexity of the human condition, how 'self stories' inform and influence other 'self stories', how they are interconnected, and how labeling them or defining them affects, distorts, or clarifies the picture as a whole.

On Process

I followed traditional life history information-gathering processes (Cole & Knowles, 2001), recorded guided conversations with Dave, transcribed our conversations, emailed him electronic copies of the transcriptions. We started each interview by talking about any feelings and memories evoked by the transcriptions. Dave always had opportunities to amend, clarify, or omit anything he said. In addition to our interviews and transcripts, I also observed Dave at work.

Global Youth Network leadership training and pre-departure training for volunteers takes place in January and May each year. For two consecutive years I observed Dave at both weekend retreats at a campground in Cambridge, Ontario. I recorded workshops on reflection where he introduced me as a former Global Youth Network volunteer and researcher. Dave

or I, where appropriate, informed volunteers that my observation focused on him and not their responses or participation in his workshops. Dave and I also developed a workshop on storytelling that we gave together at two leadership retreats. Many of these retreats are run and organized by Global Youth Network alumni who volunteer their time, knowledge, and experiences to keep the program running year after year. When I was not observing Dave, I helped cook meals for volunteers and facilitated workshops in place of alumni who didn't show up. My participation in all of the activities contributed to understanding the culture of the Global Youth Network.

Usually, Dave collected me from the bus station in Kitchener and we drove to the camp. During these drives I never recorded our conversations but had opportunities to talk about our process and his readings of the transcripts. Sometimes I wrote reflections on these conversations and used them as starting points during our recorded conversations. One particular conversation evolved into the final representation of this arts-informed life history research text. This is a collection of dialogues interwoven with narrative descriptions, and framed within the story of setting up a South American leadership team in Venezuela in April 2009.

In November 2008, I edited the transcripts into a collection of short narratives about Dave's life. The narratives were organized into stories with subtitles, similar to how I organized this research text. But I removed my presence and voice. By doing this I had removed part of the context in which Dave told his story. The stories flowed like descriptive narratives and not like storytelling-text. As a result, the essence of Dave's pedagogy – experiential learning, dialogue, and storytelling - was lost in the editing process. As I struggled with writing inquiry that represented Dave's life, work, and teaching style, and also the information gathering processes, I began an inquiry into writing. I reinserted my voice.

On Arts-Informed Dialogue

Pioneers of Arts-Informed Research, Coles and Knowles (2008) write:

> Arts informed research is a mode or form of qualitative research in the social sciences that is influenced by, but not based in, the arts broadly conceived. The central purposes of arts-informed research are to enhance understanding of the human condition through alternative (to conventional) processes and forms and representation forms of inquiry, and to reach multiple audiences by making scholarship more accessible (Knowles & Cole, Arts Informed Research, 2008, p. 59).

"To craft a life in text is to engage in artmaking"[67]

According to Cole and Knowles, Arts-Informed Life History research holds seven characteristics that illustrate evidence of a moral purpose, research presence or signature, methodological commitment, holistic quality, communicability or accessibility of the research text or representational form, aesthetic form including narrative text, claims to knowledge, and contribution. My engagement with four literary works - *Translated Woman: Crossing the Border with Esperanza's Story*; *We Make the Road by Walking: Conversations on Education and Social Change; Zoo Story*; and *Three Day Road* - illustrate my commitments to Arts-informed research as a process of inquiry and representational form.

In *Translated Woman, Crossing the Border with Esperenza's Story*, Cuban American anthropologist, Ruth Behar (1993) spent ten years crossing the Mexican-American border, travelled to Mexquitic, recorded conversations across the table in Esperenza's mint green kitchen, and wrote the life history of a

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[67] (Cole & Knowles, 2001)

Mexican street peddler reputed as being a 'bruja' or witch. This life history informed my information gathering process and representation form of the research text. Behar's length of time in the field, her guided conversations, her narrative descriptions of the context in which Esperanza told her story, and how Behar interweaves her own researcher presences throughout the crafting of the research text all informed and inspired my information gathering process. *Translated Woman*, written in Esperenza's words and told from her voice, also inspired me to do the same. I selected, organized, and edited transcribed text to create a descriptive representation of Dave's life told in his words and from his voice and interwove my own voice and researcher presence along the way. Etter-Lewis (1993), in her book *My Soul Is My Own: Oral Narratives of African Women in the Professions*, describes how grammatical voice can be, and had been, used to express aspects of power. In one way, a story told in Dave's voice communicates an element of power; however, the crafting and editing of the text essentially represents how I have come to know Dave through my experiences and conversations with him over the past eight years since we first met when I volunteered for Global Youth Network in 2001. Time and scope bound this research project and the research text does not represent a complete account of Dave Skene's life.

In *We Make The Road By Walking*, Miles Horton and Paulo Freire (1990) talk a book about education social change and walk readers through their formative years, ideas about education and social change and the experiences that informed the those ideas, and how experience informed their pedagogy and practice of education. My account of Dave Skene's life loosely follows the communicable style and structure of the conversations between Horton and Freire. It also takes readers through Dave's formative years, experiences that informed and shape his philosophy of education, and framed within a story that illustrates Dave's pedagogy and practice in action. Framing the research text within the story of setting up a South American leadership team allows readers to understand Dave's stories of learning and meaning making and the complexity of his life and work. It also demonstrates and embodies the process of 'being and becoming'.

Tom French's *Zoo Story* and Joseph Boyden's *Three Day Road* (2005) influenced my understanding of narrative frames and telling stories within stories to illustrate the rich complexity of an event that could mistakenly be simplified. Life history research is about depth over breadth and understanding the complexity of the human condition and particularly the complexity of the day–to-day events that make up our lives. Narrative can represent research text in an accessible way,

represent meaning rather than make it explicit, and allow the reader or audience to engage in meaning-making processes acknowledging individuals in society as knowledge-makers taking part in the act of knowledge advancement, one of the goals of arts-informed research and making research accessible (Knowles & Cole, 2008, p. 60).

On Shifting from Definition to Context

I struggled with whether or not Dave would be perceived by readers as Indian-enough, or Métis-enough, or Aboriginal-enough. I remember thinking, "How do I write the life history of Métis man who lived most of his life disconnected from this aspect of his identity, who grew up in the city of Hamilton, and who doesn't have his Métis status?" I wondered what aboriginal and non-aboriginal people would think. Would readers acknowledge how Dave sees himself?

Restoule (2004) shifts his study of male aboriginal identity formation in urban areas from definition to process and context. He writes that over half of the Aboriginal population of Canada live in urban areas (Canada, 1996) and cites Peters (1996) who found a tendency in Non-Native writing on urban Aboriginal people to view "urban" and "Aboriginal" as contradictions (Restoule, 2004, p. 24). Lobo (2001) co-edited a

collection on American Indians in urban areas and attributes three reasons for the emphasis on 'rural' over 'urban' in Aboriginal research. First, Native homelands have been overwhelmingly located in rural areas. Second, Ethnographers from the field of anthropology have focused on rural areas fixing the sense of where Indians are located, not only within the discipline but also with the public. Last, popular culture emphasizes the 'rural" image of Aboriginal People, often associated with the past, and further perpetuates stereotypes of Aboriginal people as being rural and irrelevant today (Lobo, 2001).

Current Aboriginal research is shifting from definition to context. Tafoya writes about the tension between the two, applies it to cross-cultural research, and comments, "the more one tries to define something, the more one removes from its context" (Tafoya, 1995, p. 19). It is beyond the scope of this research to provide comprehensive literature reviews on identity, Aboriginal research, and cross-cultural research, but I acknowledge that my approach aligns with Restoule's (2004), and is one that "feels definitions of Aboriginal Identity are constantly shifting, focuses on moments or contexts in which Aboriginal people are in the process of expressing what it means to be Aboriginal, and views urban Aboriginal identity in a constant process of 'being and becoming' negotiating different

historical and social contexts through different processes" (p. 33).

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