

## **Florence Glanfield -Transcripts**

### **Cultural Identity**

>> Well, when I first started school, the schools used to require that our parents would submit our ethnicities on the school forms, and my father always wrote Canadian. And the school would come back and say, well, you can't write Canadian on that. He must be, like, of Ukrainian descent, German descent, and in the community I was living in, it was either Ukrainian, French. And, you know, my mother is of nati [phonetic], is nati, and my father was of English descent, and his argument back to the school. So they'd send the forms back, and he would go, no, I'm not going to do it, and he'd write back, and he'd say I was born in Canada. My, her, their mother was born in Canada or her mother was born in Canada. Therefore, she's Canadian. And years later, I realized, and I asked my dad about why he did that, and part of it was the experiences that my mother had had at school. Now she did not go to residential school, but she did experience racism in school, and she experienced racism in her growing up life. And so my father didn't want his children to experience that. Now I'm much lighter than my sister. So I was pretty lucky in school I think. I didn't really experience racism too much. I, and I loved school, but my sister did, and I know my work in aboriginal education is really to make schools a safe space for aboriginal learners and for aboriginal parents. You know, my sister tells me the story that when she would go to the parent/teacher interviews, she's a smart, articulate woman, and yet she sits in front of that teacher, and she feels like the little girl who was so stupid in Grade Three. So I just want to make schools better for aboriginal parents and learners.

### **Historical Similarities**

>> I currently engage with colleagues in some work in Eastern Africa, and it means that our colleagues from eastern Tanzania come to Canada periodically, ^M00:00:18 and on one of the first visits to Canada, one of our colleagues wanted to see a sort of native community.

^M00:00:30

So I took him to a community just outside of Edmonton, and he was really surprised at the community, because he did have this image that the community would be like he had read in his history books, and one of the provinces -- and the name -- one of the provinces that he knew from the history books was Saskatchewan, because in his history books throughout his schooling in Tanzania, they had learnt about the native or the indigenous word of Saskatchewan and how it was connected to Saskatchewan -- or to aboriginal peoples.

^M00:01:07

But he was really surprised by the community. But what's so fascinating, once we started engaging in conversation, is that in lots of ways many other countries and many of the immigrants have been colonized and live within colonized countries much similar to the way that indigenous communities in Canada might be seen.

^M00:01:37

So when we do have these conversations, we see a lot of similarities. So I think that's quite profound, but I think there are pieces of history that many of us who were born and

raised in this place called Canada are not aware of. How the influences of the government policies around residential schools framed the South African apartheid movement. How South Africa came to Canada to learn about those policies, and that was something I did not know until just two months ago, and these are some of the things that I think we as Canadians and people who live in Canada have to know more about, and the way that we're going to do this is by --

^M00:02:28

I'm going to call it problematizing, but by challenging the history that we're taught in schools and saying which story is really been told about Canada, a place called Canada, about the immigration to Canada.

So I think that's how we're going to deal with it.

^E00:02:48

## **Mathematics**

>> One of the ways we can think about mathematics as being universal is that if we think about mathematics as being a human activity and that all human beings engage in mathematical acts -- and we all do, whether we realize it or not, and maybe what we've been taught is mathematics doesn't help to describe what we do. But if we think about humans as being mathematical, then in that way it's universal.

^M00:00:30

But we've often heard the phrase that mathematics is this universal language, and we make assumptions that if children know how to add two plus four or if they know how to take 642 from 1499, that there is this universal approach, and I actually think there isn't a universal approach and that's a misnomer, that different cultures have adopted different practices about ways that we do and engage in these mathematical operations like addition or subtraction.

^M00:01:06

I don't know who made the statement that, you know, in Western societies or maybe colonized societies we should be more specific. But, you know, when we do subtraction and addition, we do it from the right. Like, we do the ones first, and then we do the tens, and then we do the hundreds.

^M00:01:27

Yet, logically and making sense of the way that we live and we act in the world and especially as we teach reading and writing -- and in the English language, we read from left to right -- we can do almost all of these operations from left to right.

^M00:01:42

So how is it that in school mathematics we teach children to think differently about the way in which they engage in these operations than the way in which they read, because mathematics is a language. It describes something. It describes a process. The numbers do exist for a reason. It's not universal in that way.

^M00:02:02

We look at different school systems across the world, and they will emphasize different procedures and what we might have taught in school.

So if a child comes home and is adding the hundreds first and then the tens and then the ones, that's okay because in mathematics we actually have this commutative

property of addition that says it doesn't matter which order we add in. We'll get the same answer.

^M00:02:30

People say, well, it's more efficient to do it the other way.

Well, it's only more efficient, because I guess somebody told us that?

^E00:02:38

## **Respect Diversity**

>> So one of the things that I have learnt in living and in teaching, and I am going to share that I, I've called myself a teacher since I was five years old. So that's now, like, 51 years. I just think it's really important to know that there is no checklist. There's no checklist on how to engage with indigenous communities. There's no checklist on how to invite an elder into a school. There's no checklist on how children learn mathematics. Is that we are all bringing individual experiences, and we have to look within ourselves and say find the gifts that we bring, and in looking in ourselves finding the gifts that we bring, and finding spaces in classrooms and schools for all children, all parents, all teachers to feel respected, and that their knowledge and their knowing and their experiences is respected. That's, I guess, if there was a checklist, that would be the thing that was on my checklist.

## **Promising Practices**

>> I think the most promising practices that I've seen have all been about building relationships, and in whatever way that might be. So, when I think about building relationships, I think about building relationships with parents, building relationships with the committee. I mean, I think about those teachers who go into a community who may not be from the community. And when they're really successful in the community is when they're building relationships with the people in the community. So, if you're a teacher who is not from an aboriginal community but you're teaching in an aboriginal community, participate in the community that's go down to the local store and make sure you say hi to people and build relationships with the community. And soon, children and families will learn that you're interested in their communities. Now, some of the most promising practices is that we have large number of aboriginal teacher education programs across the country. And what that means is that we're having many aboriginal teachers who are now have completed teacher education programs and can go back to the community and teach. So, one of the communities that I work with in Alberta has their whole elementary school are--they're committed to revitalizing and encouraging Cree language and all of the elementary school teachers in that school teach Cree for example. And many of them graduated from an aboriginal teacher education program. So, whatever way institutions can encourage aboriginal teacher education programs and develop those, I think that's a really promising practice for aboriginal education across Canada. And at the University of Alberta, I'm really proud of the work that we do there because we have all these relationships with different community colleges. So, people don't even have to--if they're interested for example in becoming a teacher, and they live in North Western Alberta, they have the opportunity to get their teacher

education program at a distance and they can stay in their community and, you know, have their experience of teaching and their student teaching experience in the community, I think that's a promising practice. Then, this is directly from kids themselves is that they need to know that people care that they're in school. So, I have the--I just remember this one grade 12 student that I worked with in Saskatoon. And he just said, you know, he had left school when he was 16 and he had returned to school. So, he was now, like 21 years old and he was graduating from school. He had these hopes and these dreams and he had--but he--remember, he had dropped out of school originally. And so, when I said to him, "Well, what helps you go to school now? What helps you to complete this?" And there was one teaching assistant in the school that made sure she said hello to him everyday. And if he missed school, she would ask him where he was. So that was his experience. So, this feeling of inclusion, not just that you can see pieces of perhaps your experiences, but that people care that you're there. So, as teachers that we welcome, we remember that the students who have been there and the students who haven't been there and care enough to ask them about who they are. In my own practice, I think what it's about even one of the students I thought at the university, I noticed, you know, there was this--it was this bright young individual. And I noticed one day that his eyes were not the same. And I asked him about his eyes and I said, "Is something seems to be going on? It's not that you're looking the same as you usually do." And he just stopped, and he said, "You know, no one has noticed that." And he explained to me what was happening in his life. And he was going through kind of a rough period. But to notice people is really, really important. Infusing or integrating aboriginal perspectives across the curriculum. Some work that I've been fortunate enough to engage in recently with two amazing doctoral students have taught me to think, it's not about infusing but it's about engaging with aboriginal perspectives or indigenous perspectives across curriculum. So, we try to use that phrase of engaging. So, building and saying, how do we think about this from a generative perspective? Because in the teachings that I've had about aboriginal perspectives or indigenous perspectives from the elders that I've learnt from is that it's a bringing forth. It's an opening up the space and seeing how things go and that's so different than words like confusing or integrating because it's saying that we're going to bring something in and bring it in. And just like the panelist today, you know, they were--if I'm embedded, that means, I'm within you. So, yeah, it's just thinking about the words in a different way.

## **Relationships**

>> My experience is that there's no single answer and that it's really, really important to understand the community that you live in or that you work in or that the school is in when you are wanting to invite an elder. I think importantly, there's relationships that the--an elder might have with the particular school. But there are elders and traditional knowledge holders in every community that have--that come to those positions because they know different things. So, as an individual, if I want, if I want to learn something, if I want my--the children of my classroom to be engaged in some activity, I actually need to build a relationship as well with the elder. There needs to be some trust and that as an outsider perhaps, I am going to be in a good way with the knowledge when I go to do that. So, it is about building relationships with elders. I've been fortunate enough to

have the opportunity to build relationships with elders myself and you don't really realize when they're going to come into your life sometime. And, I've learnt great number of things. But there are many other elders that I don't have relationships with. So, it's not--it's to be, make sure that we don't assume that an elder will be able to--a particular elder, I guess, will be able to teach or offer what you think you want. So, you have to build that relationship in order to learn. I think it's also really important to realize and this is what the youth have taught me in working with aboriginal youth is that they also are really, really aware that there's so many different cultures and so many different practices that one can't make an assumption as well. One of the things that's really disturbing for me is when there is the expectation that because I'm of indigenous descent, I might know a particular practice. And the youth have reminded me that in fact, it disengages them sometimes when there is an assumption made that they know a particular practice. And let me just give you a specific example. To bring beading in for example and there are some individuals who like to say, well, here's the mathematics of beading and bring beading in and think that because beading has now come into classroom that is, they're going to engage indigenous students in a different way in mathematics. But some of those youth have said to me, "Yeah, they can bring beading in but I don't know that from my culture." But because I'm indigenous, people expect me to know it and it actually sort of marginalizes me a little--in a little different way. So, the teacher is thinking that because they have aboriginal students in their classrooms or indigenous students in their classrooms that beading will help them engage in mathematics but the indigenous students may not have had that experience, and so therefore, don't engage in it. So, it's really, really important to consider the context in the community that you're in. And to build relationships with the grandparents, the parents of the youth, or the caregivers of the youth and learn a bit about their culture and what is it, the experiences. So, the context is really important when you think about inviting elders, when you think about engaging with the perspective, when you think about the words infusing, integrating, showing the traditional artwork and then showing the traditional ways that people may be decorated their outfits. Or, you know, in Alberta, we have beautiful gloves that are beaded, right? And as a matter of fact, I have a moss bag that my great-great-grandmother made when my grandmother was born and the bead work is stunning. But she also reminded me that there is contemporary artist as well. And so, to realize, to not just bring in examples of the traditional practices, because it implies that it's a thing of the past. But that artwork and indigenous people have engaged in all kinds of creativity and that there is so many, you know, contemporary practices as well. So, to just stay in one place, to make it feel like indigenous people, only do these practices is the awkward place for me in this and to make sure that we see forward that there is also contemporary practices. You know, and I think about our keynote speaker today who's a hip hop artist, right? And I was in one session today where they were showing traditional pow wow dress and people are doing the twist. Just as an example, right? It's not--it's to turn our images around of indigenous people. I mean I think Thomas King writes about how we still think of the indigenous person as being that person with the headdress or the woman maybe tanning a hide, you know, outside of a tipi. And those are all indigenous, or images of indigenous people that really sit with us as part of books and the encyclopedias and movies and that we have to start thinking differently about those images.

