

Relationships for Learning

Susan Dion – The Listening Stone Year 3 / Starting Points, Turning Points, Learning Points

>> [Foreign] So it's really nice to be back here speaking with all of you. I just want to, first of all, acknowledge our elder and thank you for opening in a good way. And it's really unusual to have an elder from my own home community. My mom was born at Moraviantown. So it's especially important to me that you're here. So [foreign]. Just for the people who are new, the work that I do is the evaluation and research on your work. So the collaborative inquiry is what you're doing in the boards. The Listening Stone project is the research project that I'm doing based on the data that I gather from you. So many of you have seen me at the sessions. And either I or one of my research team members called to interview. Some of you did the surveys. But I do the gathering of your stories and then spend the summer going over and reading and interpreting and making sense of what it is that you tell me through those different data-gathering techniques. So this year is the third year that I've done this project. And, when I gathered all of the stories together and I looked at them, it became really clear to me that, this year, this idea of starting points, turning points and learning points is what really emerged in the data this year. And you'll see it on the next slide. The data that I gathered, in year two, because of the job action, I wasn't able to talk to a lot of teachers. So, in year three, it was really important to us that we really focus on hearing the voices of the classroom teachers. So you can see, in total, that, between the interviews and the surveys, we were able to gather the voices of 204 educators. And a number of those were the classroom teachers who are in the classrooms doing the work. And, all together, we had 226 data sources. One of the really important things about year three, because of the long pause that we had, people who were in year one were just getting started. There was a very short period of time that people had to actually do the work of the collaborative inquiry. But what was really unique about this year was, because of that, we were able to talk to people just as they were beginning the collaborative inquiry process. And that gave us a sense of a starting point. So, as a researcher, and really for all of us, sometimes, when we're moving along this journey of creating change in our classrooms and our school boards, we forget. It's kind of hard. We can always see how much more work we have to do. And, sometimes, we forget. Where was our starting point? How much progress have we made? We lose sight of what we've already accomplished because we're so focused on where we are and where we want to go. So that's important for me that we keep that in mind when I talk about starting points, that, if we're thinking about this work, sometimes, it's good to pause and remember all that we've accomplished and where we were when we began this. So the other important thing about this idea of starting points, turning points and learning points, after 3 years of gathering stories from people, really, I get overwhelmed by what I see in terms of educators' willingness to turn toward indigenous education, to turn toward community members and to turn toward indigenous students and do the work of learning. And so, when I think about the history of indigenous education in Canada and where we started, even personally when I started work 30 years ago, we were a long way from where we are today. So

this idea of turning toward instead of turning away, for me, it's so important that the collaborative inquiry is accomplishing this willingness to turn toward indigenous education and do the work of learning. So, when I say turn like starting and then turning, it's like turning your attention to, turning toward the questions, turning toward the challenges. And, when I look at the data, it's not as if first-year boards are at a starting point. And then second-year boards are at a turning point. And you don't learn until year three. Starting, turning and learning is a cyclical process, right? So, at different times, different boards are in starting, turning and learning points. It's not just you do it once. It's a cycle. And we go through this cycle at different times. So you could think about, well, what's your starting point this year? And what are the key events that grab your attention and that you turn toward and that you learn from? So that's kind of the framework for this year's report that I wanted to talk about. Okay. The other really important thing that became really clear to me this year when I looked at the data was that this work is not happening in isolation, right? We know that the broader social-political context is having an impact on what's happening within the school boards. So this slide is drawing our attention to some of the events that are happening, right? Certainly, in the last 4 to 5 years, the Idle No More movement had an impact on public consciousness, the launch of the inquiry into murdered and missing indigenous women, TRC report and the launch of that report and the learning and the attention that that report is providing in terms of the broader social-political context. So I would argue that activists, parents, community members, educators, artists have really been contributing to the work that's happening within the school boards. And we're not working in isolation, right? What's going on in the broader social-political context is impacting what is happening within the collaborative inquiry. So I am going to turn now and talk a little bit about each of the goals that we have within the collaborative inquiry and talk a little bit about what I learned from listening to both educators talk about what they're learning from community members and also what the community members had to tell us about the collaborative inquiry. Sometimes, it's hard even to go back and think about what was our starting point. But what I heard was that, at the beginning, sometimes, there's a lack of trust in the relationship with community members based on the history of our relationship. And making those initial connections can be, particularly in some boards, it can be really challenging to make those connections. Being a little bit cautious about how to make those connections, that's often the starting point for boards as they begin this practice. And, again, when I'm presenting this all, I'm looking at all of the data and looking at the story that emerges. So I also want to say that this isn't necessarily the case for every single board. But, generally speaking, this is what I hear from people, that getting started can be a challenge. But then people also talk to me about key events that really make a difference. And I have to say that, again and again, what I hear from people is it's the conversations. It's the opportunity to sit down across the table from community members. And our collaborative inquiry is unique in the role that community members have in establishing what our questions are going to be so that idea of engaging with and working with community members and the dialog and listening to the stories and hearing the voices of community members. And this is what people tell me, that that's what the key learning happens. And that's the turning

point when we can talk to each other and hear each other's perspectives. Community members tell me that they're learning a lot from the collaborative inquiry. They're learning about educators' commitment. And they're telling me, "You know, Susan, this time, they're serious. This time, they're taking us seriously. And they really want to learn." And so this is a turning point for community members because this collaborative inquiry is different and is having that kind of an impact. So, certainly, there are still lots of ongoing challenges. And, for some of you who are new, the year-one Listening Stone project reports are available on the CODE website. In the year-two report, I have a brief which provides some specific directions if you want some specific guidelines for how to start building relationships with community members and a protocol of sorts of how to do that work. So this challenge, this is kind of an ongoing challenge. But I heard some interesting stories from people. In one district school board where they were really having trouble and they said, "You know, Susan, we listened to your instructions. And we called. And we were patient. And we called again. And we're still having trouble. So you know what we did? We decided that we would have a film night. And we had a film night. And we invited parents and community members and students to come and watch a film. And that got the conversation going. It was like we just had to take that initial first step. And people weren't sure about what it was we were doing. But then we had the film night. And then we had a guest speaker come in." And they had to get somebody from a little bit further down the road, at the university down the road, to come and give a talk. This educator said, "After we did a few things, then the people started to have questions. And, instead of us calling them, they were calling us and saying, 'So what's going on at the school? I hear you did this.'" And it was kind of like an ice-breaker with the community to take that first step and demonstrate that they were wanting to do this work. So that was a new strategy that one of the boards talked about. And, of course, inviting parents in to work with kids, sometimes, that can be a challenge. But another interview I recall with a community member was actually a grandmother. And she said, "My daughter, her son, my grandson was having trouble at school. And my daughter was so upset. So you know what? I just went in." And so this grandmother actually started a grandmother's club and got the rest of the grandmothers in the community. And then they started going in. And I said, "Do you go in once a month?" And she said, "No! We go in three times a week!" Because once the relationship started, then comfort in the relationship grew and appreciation of each other with the knowledge that the grandmother had and what that grandmother could bring to the classroom, once they tried it and they got going, then the value was acknowledged. So that was it. She was saying, "No, no. We go in three times a week." So the learning that's happening in terms of community members, we're learning that these relationships are vital but that they take time and, like all relationships, they can be as difficult as they are rewarding, that, like I said, being patient is important and taking the time to develop the relationship and appreciating each other's perspectives and each other's knowledge and what you bring to the relationship. These are some of the stories that people are telling me. Some educators also told me "You never know where you're going to meet the community members." So attending lots of events, doing that outreach and doing that sort of on a continuing basis because you might think that you're going to meet

the community member in one place. And it turns out that you're standing in line, waiting to hear a talk at the local library. And you find out that there's somebody you totally didn't expect. But you have a conversation. Or somebody asks a question. You go and talk to that person afterwards and find out that they're a member of the community, and they want to be involved in education. Taking those steps to find and build those relationships is what we're learning is really important in terms of the community members. So I'm going to talk a little bit now about increasing knowledge, understanding and awareness for all. This is really interesting, what we're learning about this because, on the one hand, people tell me that "The collaborative inquiry is having such a huge impact on my knowledge and understanding. I'm learning so much from this collaborative inquiry." But, at the same time, the survey and the interview participants also tell me that the biggest challenge is the lack of knowledge, understanding and awareness of indigenous perspectives of history, language and culture. So it's this strange kind of contradiction that we're learning so much. But our biggest fear is how much we don't know. And so that consciousness of that as a starting point is really important, as much as it's a contradiction, also makes a lot of sense, because, the more that you learn, the more that you realize how much more you need to learn. And, as soon as you start trying to integrate this content, then you're learning. But you're also overwhelmed by how much more there is. So, in relationship to this goal, it can be really intimidating as people get started. And people talk at the beginning of a collaborative inquiry about feeling really working in isolation. And a lot of board leads talked about the situation in their boards as being a case where there were champion teachers that were kind of spread out across the board. But people felt sometimes a little bit overwhelmed by the demands made on those individual champion teachers and individuals feeling weary of, A, being the one person who's always asked to do the work. Sometimes, the language and culture teachers and boards would talk to me about that, about, "I'm the only one. And they always ask me. And it's so hard to always be the one," and then, at the same time, being the one, having to go to administrators like principals and superintendents and having to fight for time and attention to this content. So it can be kind of overwhelming and exhausting work. But then, again, the turning point that the collaborative inquiry brings is, I'm bringing people together around the collaborative inquiry table and people starting to feel not so isolated but a part of a team and having a sense of energy from being able to work together to accomplish the change and increasing knowledge and understanding for all teachers in the board or in a particular school community, so this opportunity to work together. Sometimes, people told stories about going to events together. "There was an art exhibition at the local art gallery. And I went with a couple of people from the CI team. And it was so encouraging to be able to go together. And then we met some other people at the talk where Justice Sinclair was speaking. And we went to hear him. And we realized that we're not working in isolation, that there are other people doing this work." And so that sense of being a part of a team and feeling supported in doing the work and then not being the only person going to principals and superintendents to ask for support for this work was really important. I'm hearing stories about school boards offering PD sessions with a focus on indigenous education, so board-wide events, events in the

broader community, introduction of some new resources and certainly the face-to-face discussions and opportunities to talk to different people from the regions at these face-to-face meetings were key turning points in terms of increasing knowledge, understanding and awareness. There are definitely ongoing challenges in this. And we all know that, as much as we're making progress, there's still a lot of resistance out there. And, when I say, "Out there," sometimes, it's really close, right? And, sometimes, it's really challenging to work in confronting that resistance. And I also heard stories from educators who said, "Sometimes, the kids in class will say, 'How come we're doing so much on indigenous education?' or 'My parents want to know why we're spending so much time on this topic in class.'" So those resisters are there. And it is challenging to address those issues. But, again, I think that the work in the broader Canadian context and drawing on that work, the TRC calls to action as a way of speaking back about the absence, historically, of indigenous content in the curriculum. So, sometimes, it feels like we're doing so much because, before, we weren't doing anything. Talking to parents and students about balance and about, "Yes, it's in the curriculum now. And it feels like so much. But it's because we didn't do anything before." So talking about relationship to land and relationship to community and acknowledging that this is our history. This doesn't belong just to indigenous people. This is a shared history. And that's why we're doing the work. We all live on the land. And I always say to people, "Whether your family came 300 years ago or last week, if you live on the land, you're in a relationship with indigenous people." So talking about those ideas as the reason for why it's important that we're doing this work is a way of speaking back to the resistance. But I have to say that the vast majority of educators talk about the excitement that students express about being able to do this work and the commitment. And that's a real learning point that I would say is coming out of the collaborative inquiry is that recognizing that the vast majority of students are inspired and really engaged and wanting to have access to these stories, wanting to do the work, wanting to understand. Again and again, teachers talked about how positive the attitudes of the students were in terms of having the opportunity to understand the history of the relationship and to learn in collaboration with community members and to hear community members share their stories, share their knowledge of the language and culture. And the local history is something that people talked about students wanting to understand. "Okay, so before contact, indigenous people had all of the land. And, now, here's our school. And my family's been living here for 100 years. How did it happen? Where did the indigenous people go? And why are they living on a reserve? And I don't understand." And making sense of that history, students are expressing real interest and a real desire to learn, to understand. And this goes for both indigenous and non-indigenous students, right? They all want to understand those stories in the broader social-political context, they hear and they see in the media. And they want to be able to make sense of it. The change that I'm seeing and the learning that I'm seeing really points to this implication in terms of educators and students, school communities, seeing themselves implicated in the history and having that commitment and that sense of responsibility to learn the history, to hear the stories and then being able to integrate that content into their classrooms in a good way, so recognizing complexity. And this isn't easy, right? This is a hard history

for us to really understand. But recognizing that complexity, this is the work. And this is the place that people are coming to in terms of accomplishing the work. And a lot of educators also talked about emotion and talked about both, A, how emotional the work can be but also starting to think about, "We don't want to get stuck." They say, "Susan, we don't want to get stuck in feeling guilty or angry. But we want to understand our emotions and understand what we're learning. Why do we feel this way? What are we learning that's making us feel this way? And how do we move forward with that learning and not getting paralyzed in fear or sadness?" One of the issues that I hear a lot about and I think a lot about is sadness and becoming awareness of this history often means that people are overwhelmed with sadness about what has happened in our history. And that's a concern for me because people are going to be sad and get stuck in sadness then I often feel that, as indigenous people, we get stuck in that position of victim, like the only thing Canadians can do is cry and feel sorry for us and feel bad about our history. And that's not what we as indigenous people want, right? We're not asking for sadness or tears. We understand that it is sad. Boy, we understand that. We know it's sad. But what we feel is our strength and our commitment and our desire to move forward. And we survived. And we're moving forward. So working through then, understanding the emotions and getting to the point of asking about, "What are the treaties that impact us? And what's the history? What is the Indian Act? And what's the role? And when did it start? And what does it say? And what's the impact on indigenous people's lives? What is self-determination? And what would sovereignty look like?" These are questions that, as we move along, as we do the work through the years, this is where I see people and I hear from educators. This is where people, as they move along the collaborative inquiry journey, are coming to the point of asking these questions and wanting to understand and being able to integrate these topics into the curriculum. So, sometimes, people start the learning with events. And these events are an important starting point. But what I hear is the way that people move along from having events as a starting point and then turning as they learn more and turning toward integration. But I just really want to remind people that the starting, turning and learning is cyclical. And we do it in year one and year two and year three. But also be fair to yourselves. If you're a first-year board, then you're not necessarily where a third-year board is. But give yourselves time to do the work. I'm going to talk now a little bit about the starting points, turning points and learning points for increasing indigenous students' well-being and achievement. And, again, historically, given the relationship between indigenous people and institutions of formal schooling, with the starting point in many boards, and it depends on if you're a board where there's a really visible, identified, indigenous student population, whereas, on other boards, "Who are the indigenous students? Where are the indigenous students? I don't even know who they are or where they are," some educators tell me. So there are different situations across the province in terms of where students are and where educators are in relationship to those students at the start. But, a lot of times, what I hear from educators is about this gap and this distance between the indigenous students, whether they're identifiable or not, and the school community. At the start, there's often a gap. And, again, just like, sometimes, teachers feel isolated, sometimes, the students purposely isolate

themselves. And that's a strategy. That's a protection strategy. So holding back and staying insular and having this wall between themselves and the rest of the school community, passing sometimes, sometimes, the students, they're using these protective strategies and not engaging because, historically, schools have not been so welcoming for indigenous students. So that distance educators talk about, "I don't know them. And I don't know who they are." And I remember one principal said, "Well, this is what we know about indigenous students," but then said, "But we didn't actually talk to any of them because they don't actually really participate very much." So I found that interesting. But really, again, it's an indicator of the work that we have to do. So the turning points in terms of addressing indigenous students' well-being and achievement, having community members in the classrooms and in the schools, again and again, teachers tell me about what a difference when the community members are there. And the community members tell me, "When I first started going in, the students were all on their own and hanging out at this particular spot in the school. And they weren't talking to other people." After I'd been to the school for about 6 to 8 weeks, then the students, they were speaking up. And they just seemed like they were smiling more. And the teachers and I, we were talking after class and saying that, "Ooh, were they raising their hands more? Didn't you notice that they were participating a little bit more?" So having community members in the classrooms makes a huge difference. And I have to say, year-one educators talked about almost this story of shock and amazement. It's like, "We did this novel study. And I didn't know that I even had these students. But, when I introduced this content, suddenly, I heard. And I have three students in my grade-10 English class. And they started talking to be about their family history. And I wouldn't have even known that they were indigenous if I hadn't introduced that content." So the first steps in introducing content is a way that change is happening. And this becomes a turning point. A number of boards are also using the student voice activities that we center around in year two and we're going to put on that website so that people can have a look at the student voice activities because, in those places where you're starting and it feels like there's this big gap between educators and students, the student voice activities seem to be really helping, things like surveys and tea en banc sessions and having a local knowledge and wisdom keeper come in and do a circle with students. Sometimes, educators are telling me, "Susan, I planned three talking circles. And then it got busy. And I wasn't doing any. And then the students, they came to my office. And they said, 'Miss, we need another talking circle, don't you think?'" So the students, once they start feeling heard and feeling like there's a place of belonging for them, then they're stepping up. And they're starting to take a leadership role in articulating what it is that they want and need to accomplish while being and achievement. We know that these two go together. You say well-being and achievement. But you can't have well-being without achievement because, in schools, all students know that schools are places of learning. And, if they're not acknowledged as capable learners, then they're not going to be well. This is one of those points where, when I think deeply about, "What is it that we can accomplish within an institution of public schooling when a system that's created by worldview that's not indigenous, how do we really navigate that divide?" Because our system, the publicly funded education system, there's a lot of

hierarchy in this system. There's a lot of comparing of students one to the other. And, within an indigenous education framework, there's a different kind of looking at individuals and acknowledging that different people have different gifts. I spent a really long time talking to my own daughter about this because she had a learning disability. And she couldn't read. And she couldn't write. But she was just so darn smart. And working through that, how do we acknowledge our students' capacities and recognize that they have knowledge that we want to honor and we want to make space for different ways of knowing and being? And how do we do that in our education system? How do we understand that comparing students and always having a hierarchy can be really alienating for students that come from a worldview that's focused on balance and shared responsibilities and shared acknowledgment of each other's gifts? I was chatting with an educator from the East Coast this summer. And he said, when he was in school, he often felt like there were times when he was supposed to be a storyteller. And he said, "But I was with my cousin in the class. And I knew, and he knew that he was the storyteller. So I wasn't going to put myself in competition with him because that was his gift. And that's what he could do. So I had my own gifts. You know, I was a really good drummer. And I always shared my knowledge through song and drumming and art. But the teachers kept wanting me to be a storyteller. But I just really didn't participate because I didn't want to put myself in competition with my cousin." So I want to be careful here because all students have stories to tell. And I'm not saying that we dismiss cultivating the students' writing and speaking skills. The point of the story is to think about the role of competition and the place of hierarchy within our system. And, if we're using and focusing too much on competition and hierarchy, what are we missing in terms of what it is our students are asking us to hear about who they are and what their gifts are? So really understanding the dynamics within the classroom and the group dynamics with students and how comparing students within this system that almost requires us to do that can be a barrier to acknowledging all students' capacities and the knowledge that all students bring to school. So it's about making space for indigenous knowledge and for all students' contributions to the classroom. So there's some really simple, key points here. A number of school districts have started to acknowledge initial territory at the beginning of announcements. One separate school board, one of the Catholic boards said, "You know, sometimes, teachers or principals are really confused about when do we have to acknowledge?" And the board lead said, "I told people, well, if you would open the day with a prayer, or if you would open an even with a prayer, then you can start with acknowledging the traditional territory." The Toronto District School Board now every single day, every single morning, in every single school, they open with the acknowledgment of the traditional territory. So hearing that acknowledgment contributes to a shift in the school environment. And it might seem like a simple act. But, man, it's significant. That didn't happen when I was in school. There was a total absence. So hearing acknowledgments of traditional territory, some schools, they're doing it once a week, not the territory acknowledgment, but announcements in an indigenous language, the local language. Once a week, they have one of the language and culture teachers with one of the students. They integrate some indigenous language in their announcements once a week. So, while

these might seem like little steps, they actually are having a big impact in terms of acknowledging presence and contributing to creating an environment where indigenous students are having a sense of their well-being matters. Their well-being counts. This idea of having an impact and learning about how to create environments where indigenous students' knowledge that they come to school with, integrating the content across the curriculum, teachers are really telling me about the positive impact that they're seeing for all students and the relationship, not just between indigenous students and themselves. But, in the peer group, it's having an impact as everybody's getting to know each other a little bit better and acknowledging each other's humanity. So I often think about, when I hear these stories and I listen to and read the transcripts, I see evidence of change happening in the physical environment, change happening in the people in the environment, the community members, teachers being able to integrate the content and demonstrating knowledge of indigenous history and culture, the people in the environment are having a change in the classroom community and the place that students feel is being opened up for them to be indigenous and be present in the school. So the physical environment, the people in the school, the content in the curriculum, is having a positive impact on them. And there's been a lot of stories, also, about students, once they become more comfortable, once they see that there's a place for them, the students themselves are taking on leadership positions and bringing more into the school and being more comfortable about having their indigeneity show in the school community. So they're making a difference themselves. And teachers keep telling me about, A, how much they're learning and the difference that it's making for them and for their students. So I don't want to suggest that everything is all better. Like I said, the work continues to be overwhelming. And this is the third year. Now, you're starting the 4th year of the collaborative inquiry. I'm reporting on year three. So I'm really both so impressed with the work that's being accomplished, but, also, I'm overwhelmed by how much more we have to do. And I'm really thankful for year three that allowed us to kind of focus on the starting point and sort of remind ourselves of where we were when we started the collaborative inquiry so as to be able to see the growth as we move through. So I know that you're all sitting. You've been listening for awhile now. And I'm going to ask you. We're going to have a little bit of time for questions. And I have one more slide. But I just want to pause and ask you to think about, in your school community, or within your board, does this idea of starting points and turning points and learning points, is that framework helpful for you as you think about where you are in your particular collaborative inquiry and in terms of thinking about your moving-forward plan? So if maybe we could take 5 to 7 minutes. I know that's not very long. I was given an hour. So take a little bit of time and just talk to each other, even maybe just identifying, if you want to talk about what some of your turning points are or just talk amongst yourselves. Having that time during these sessions to chat with each other and share your ideas and your questions about what's happening because, as much as there are similarities across the boards, every district, every school, you've got your own journey and your own project that you're paying attention to. So I just want to take a few minutes to ask if you have any questions for me that you want to ask about what we're learning because, like I said,

as much as we're in different positions, there are some real similarities that we have in terms of the work that we're doing and really understanding some of how do we really accomplish transformation within our boards? I've been looking really closely at the work that's been happening over 3 years. And I have to confess that technology and design are not my fortes. But, if we think about really centering indigenous students, this should be well-being and achievement. Actually, I usually put well-being first and thinking about that link between well-being and achievement. But what I see and what I'm really starting to understand is how important relationships are to this work and how we change and what contributes to accomplishing the change. So all of those smaller boxes at the top of the slide, the planning meetings, I hear so many stories in the interviews that people tell me about, "Oh, we had a planning meeting. And, Susan, I was sitting at the kitchen table because, once the community members started talking and sharing stories, I learned that my experience with education is so different from the parents and the grandparents of the indigenous students in our school. Their relationship with schooling is very different. And I didn't understand that. And it's really shifting the relationship." So listening and learning with community members, using technology for family outreach, a lot of times, the distance between indigenous parents and the school, the gap is really large. So what I've heard from educators about how they're using Facebook and even texting with families as a way of, again, it's almost like breaking ice in terms of doing that initial contact and sharing stories about what's happening in class. And, sometimes, you know what? It works in an interesting way, because I've also heard stories from educators about ... There was this one teacher who told me, "We were doing some artwork. We brought indigenous kids from across the board together. And, you know, I looked up. And this one student, she kept texting. And I thought, 'Jeez, is there something wrong?' And so I went and I talked to her, saying, 'What's wrong?' And the student said, 'Oh, it's my mom. She doesn't even know how to text. But she just is so anxious about what we're doing and what I'm learning because she doesn't even know anything from when she was in school. She never got to learn anything. So she just keeps bugging me because she wants to know, what am I learning? And what are we doing? And who's talking to us?'" And so, sometimes, what's happening in the school is going home with the student and bringing parents back into relationship with their language and culture because the history of forced assimilation has had such a huge impact on some families. It's really exciting to see that, as educators, we can begin to reverse that and be a conduit for bringing the knowledge back to the kids and the kids bringing that knowledge home and then creating opportunities for engagement. So that, using technology for reaching out has been really successful in lots of schools. I mentioned the student voice activities. Lots of questions about resources. On the one hand, being aware that there are a lot of really good resources prepared, produced, written by indigenous people making sure there's a balance between First Nations, Metis and Inuit resources and, again, indigenous-authored resources. But there's still a lot of questions about how do we identify good resources? And one of the things that I always tell people is humanity. Do the resources acknowledge the humanity of indigenous people? Because, in the past, there was this kind of collapsing of indigenous people based on misunderstanding of our relationship with

the land. Some resources actually tell the story as if we are not human, like a part of the land. So understanding the relationship between indigenous people and the land, that can be a complicated issue. Oh, and resources that completely position us as a people of the past, that also can be a problem. So making sure that your resources, that there's a balance between showing our history as well as contemporary stories that show indigenous people in contemporary times and resources that really do. Having the balance is important but, in that balance, making sure that you're addressing the local. If you're in a community where your students are mostly Haudenosaunee, or just the local community's Mohawk and all the kids that come are Mohawk, then making sure you have specific resources that address the local context. Humanity, local, contemporary: Those are three key guiding points when you're looking at resources. Really, the smaller green squares on the top part of the slide is really continuing to improving student-student relationships, those curriculum connections, student-teacher relationships and school-community relationships. And all of this is impacting indigenous student well-being and achievement and remembering that those are really connected. So you had a chance to talk amongst yourselves a little bit. I like to talk about indigenous being. I know there's some issues around subjectivity and identity. But I think that, when I think about my own indigeneity, I think about being indigenous and how that's informed by my family, my family history, my family stories, my relationship with my community, my participation in what Leanne Simpson calls new emergence. Being indigenous means being in relationship and being a part of my community and contributing to the well-being. And my community really is the urban indigenous community in Toronto. So I think that being is something that we both embody and that we act. Our actions and our indigenous being is informed by our participation in community. And that's something that I'm really hopeful about the collaborative inquiry and how we are actually creating space in schools for students to be indigenous and be good students. Because it wasn't so long ago that the two were mutually exclusive, where you couldn't be indigenous and be an exceptional A student. So that's what I think is one of the many positive things that I see happening with the collaborative inquiry, creating that space for indigenous being in our schools and classrooms. And, on that note, I'm just going to close with a story. This year-three collaborative inquiry Listening Stone project report isn't available yet. We're still going through some final revisions with the ministry and the indigenous education office. But it will be on the website. They're all on the Council of Ontario Directors of Education website. So it'll be there, I'm sure, within the next 3 or 4 weeks. So, if you want to read more, you can find it there. But I'm just going to finish with a story. I want to stay a special [foreign] to all of you who participated in the research. And we'll be coming back to you, I think, next April and asking for more. And, especially the first-year boards, it takes a lot of courage to talk about and to make yourself vulnerable as you are just beginning your collaborative inquiry project. And there I was. Or my researchers were bugging you on the phone saying, "Tell me your story." So I appreciate that people were willing to talk to us and to take that time. So this is a story that my brother, who's a part of the research team, he wrote this story about, after listening to one of the interviews, he wrote this story based on the interview. "I am anishinaabekwe. I am a mother. I am a granddaughter.

I'm a community member. And I'm a teacher. We are having conversations about the Royal Proclamation, about treaties, residential schools and the TRC. This is happening, happening in a good way, as part of our collaborative inquiry. Working with elders, artists and wisdom keepers, my colleagues are interested. They're asking questions. And they are listening. They are invested and committed, even open to change. We are creating a different kind of environment. I see it happening. They say it's new ideas on how to support students, new books in the library and guest speakers at the assembly. I see it. It's in how they talk to students, how they listen to students. And the books, they're not just in the library. They're on the teacher's desk. I walk the hallways of the high school. I hear the kids talking, laughing. I see that one of our kids is running for student council. Posters are on the walls everywhere. Announcements and assemblies are happening. And our students are there. In the hall, I pass a group of boys, young men really. I eavesdrop a little. And they're making plans for the talking circle on Wednesday. They're actually arguing. They're arguing about the big drum. That's okay with me. It's very cool seeing all the different things happening." So [foreign].