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## CHAPTER 8

# *Developing Cross-Cultural Partnerships: Implications for Child Care Quality Research and Practice*

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*Working across cultural and institutional differences is a significant challenge within early childhood services. In this chapter Alan Pence, with the University of Victoria, and Marie McCallum, with the Meadow Lake Tribal Council, describe the evolution of a collaborative post-secondary educational Project that resulted not only in the development of an innovative, cross-cultural, curriculum model but also in the establishment of a caring and respectful partnership. It is argued that such partnership approaches contain broader implications for the study and advancement of quality child care.*

## INTRODUCTION

This chapter recounts the evolution of an unusual partnership in North American post-secondary education for work in early childhood services. It is a partnership between a university degree programme located on Canada's west coast (British Columbia) and an Aboriginal Tribal Council representing nine First Nations (individual reserves) in the north-central area of Canada (north-west Saskatchewan). Although separated by over 2,000 kilometres, and vast cultural and institutional differences as well, the partnership has thrived over the five-year period of its existence. The survival and development of the partnership has meant stepping outside expected and typical institutional relationships to identify a common ground of caring, respect and an interest in innovation upon which the collaborative project could be built.

While the impetus for the partnership was the development of a post-secondary child care curriculum, the implications of the partnership move beyond curriculum to address issues at the core of quality care regardless of culture. Both the specific elements of this university/First Nations partnership, and the broader implications of its partnership approach for child care research will be explored in this chapter.

## THE MEADOW LAKE TRIBAL COUNCIL AND CANADIAN FIRST NATIONS EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION

The Meadow Lake Tribal Council of Saskatchewan (MLTC) and the School of Child and Youth Care (SCYC) at the University of Victoria commenced their partnership in 1989. The initiative was Meadow Lake's.

The First Nations of the Meadow Lake Tribal Council believe that a child care program developed, administered, and operated by their own people is a vital component to their vision of sustainable growth and development. It impacts every sector of their long term plans as they prepare to enter the twenty-first century. It will be children who inherit the struggle to retain and enhance the people's culture, language, and history; who continue the quest for economic progress for a better quality of life; and who move forward with a strengthened resolve to plan their own destiny.

(MLTC, 1989, p. 1.)

MLTC's stated interest in supporting its children and families through child care programmes emerged in the mid-1980s as part of Tribal Council economic development consultation with each of the nine Meadow Lake First Nation communities (MLFN). In the period 1985-1988 the Meadow Lake Tribal Council had developed and expanded its training and economic development ventures to a significant degree. However, a number of the participants in the training programmes were dropping out due to a lack of reliable, good quality child care services. In addition, small business developments were also struggling; many of these business initiatives depended on single parents both as individual entrepreneurs and as employees. Without reliable child care services, parents were often forced to drop their employment to care for their children. The result of an MLTC economic development assessment, completed in 1987, was that almost all of the nine First Nations communities within MLTC identified child care as a specific requirement in their community.

Although child care had emerged as a key economic and educational support for development within the nine MLFNs, resources to develop services were blocked by inter-governmental disagreements over jurisdictional authority for such services. Throughout Canada, child care services are designated as a provincial responsibility; however, on-reserve social services for First Nations individuals are provided through agreements with the federal government. With the exception of the Province of Ontario, all of the other nine Canadian provinces had been unable to resolve the dispute over which level of government was responsible for child care services on-reserve. The result was that virtually no First Nations communities in Canada (except for Ontario) had funded, on-reserve child care services.

MLTC was well aware of these problems in the development of services to on-reserve First Nations people and was prepared to move quickly when it learned of a new federal government initiative that was to be made available

for the establishment of innovative demonstration and development projects through the Canadian Department of Health and Welfare Child Care Initiatives Fund (CCIF) established in 1988. The Meadow Lake Tribal Council submitted an initial proposal to CCIF in 1988 for Phase 1 planning dollars. The plan that emerged contained an on-reserves services development component (family day cares and a centre-based child care programme) and a training and education component designed to support the services aspect of the plan.

### A PARTNERSHIP IS ESTABLISHED

In order to fulfil their fuller vision, MLTC required a post-secondary institution partner. Early in 1989 the leadership of MLTC approached several institutions, but were disappointed with the responses they received. A number of colleges and universities already had established programmes which those institutions felt would be able to meet MLTC's needs, but none was enthusiastic in accepting MLTC's vision as the starting point for a new and unique programme. The School of Child and Youth Care did not have an established First Nations degree programme, but did possess a strong interest in First Nations child and family issues and in community-based education.

While other post-secondary institutions with established programmes appeared to be in a more suitable position to respond to the MLTC overture, paradoxically those institutions' prior developments had introduced a degree of institutional rigidity, inhibiting their ability to respond flexibly and creatively to a new initiative. The paradox of knowledge and experience as an impediment to development, rather than an asset, is a thread that weaves throughout the MLTC/SCYC project and is, it will be argued later in this chapter, a component of current limitations in the more global study and development of child care quality as well.

Having virtually no institutional experience in developing curriculum partnerships with First Nations communities (although a number of individual faculty members had First Nations' and other cross-cultural experiences), the SCYC's child day care specialist approached the first meeting with the MLTC Executive Director with hesitant interest. That hesitation was quickly eased, however, as the vitality of the MLTC Executive Director and the strength of his commitment to the Project became evident. A partnership in principle was established at the first meeting in May 1989 between Ray Ahenakew, Executive Director of MLTC, and Alan Pence, child day care specialist at SCYC.

The first stage of the newly established partnership involved the undertaking of a literature review of First Nations early childhood curriculum work by SCYC on behalf of MLTC (Greenwood-Church and Pence, 1990). That work led to the submission of a jointly developed proposal to the federal government by MLTC late in 1989 (MLTC/SCYC, 1989). The proposal received funding approval in the summer of 1990 and the MLTC/SCYC Child Care Career and Educational Ladder Project officially commenced work on 1 September 1990.

### A MODEL EMERGES

The autumn of 1990 was an extremely busy and challenging period for the newly established partnership. The CCIF grant was for a three-year period during which a full two years of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) curriculum had not only to be developed, but delivered at a site remote from the curriculum development team based at the University of Victoria. The Project team felt it was critical to avoid the temptation, given the tight timeline, to just take existing ECCE curricula and add a few cultural artifacts to make it 'culturally appropriate'. Such practices of superficial 'add-ons' had, in the eyes of the curriculum development team and MLTC, been justifiably criticized in the literature.

The question of how to proceed in this largely uncharted domain was the major challenge to the curriculum development team, and it was at this point that the partnership began to move from an agreement on paper and in principle to a true test of reliance, one on the other. The nature of the partnership was forged in the early months of the Project as the curriculum development team, in co-operation with and support from the MLTC, sought to define the nature of what would become a unique curriculum design and process; the quality of the partnership and the product were tempered through the partners' combined efforts to operationalize the new model. Through the process of development and application numerous personal and professional commitments as well as friendships were established between the two organizations extending from administrative through to delivery levels. These commitments proved to be critical to the unification of the two organizations into a strong and meaningful partnership.

As a result of these significant, and often personally felt commitments, it became increasingly less adequate, over time, to describe the Model and the Partnership in dispassionate and objective terms; such a description would exclude the 'spirit' of the partnership which had become so central to its character and success. When approaching the federal government for extended financial support for the Project, beyond its initial three-year period, the words of the academic partner in describing the Project came out in non-academic images and in a story form – the story of an odyssey, an image of a little boat on a big sea. That story follows to provide both a description, and some of the flavour, of the Project as viewed by the lead author.

#### *Presentation to Federal Departments' Representatives, February 1993*

As we co-operatively began our planning work for the education and training aspect of the Project, and as we considered our review of the literature on First Nations post-secondary education and child care training, it increasingly seemed that the Project must enter uncharted waters if we were to accomplish our objectives. We knew that there were many challenges ahead. We knew that we would encounter times of rough seas, times where some of us would not be paddling in unison with

the others, times where fog would obscure our vision. We also knew that we needed to come up with some way that we could stay on course, despite the challenges that lay ahead.

Meadow Lake and UVic (SCYC) decided to bring together a small group of advisers who were not a part of the boat, but who might be able to help us identify how we could prepare for the journey. We all (MLTC, SCYC and Advisory members) met on two occasions late in 1990 and once early in 1991; what emerged from those meetings was a set of guiding principles which we would come to use as 'stars' to guide our way. Some of the principles were integral aspects of either UVic, MLTC or the collaboration. Others followed from discussions with the consultative group. The seventh, *The Generative Curriculum Model*, was the conceptual structure and process plan designed to give life to the principles and the curriculum.

Those principles became the guide for our curriculum work. We believed that if we stayed true to them, no matter where we ended up, it would be a better place than what we had found in the First Nations early childhood literature and what we had found in post-secondary education practice. The principles are:

1. *The Community Initiated/Community Based Approach:*

The first principle was largely established by the nature of our coming together and confirmed in our early discussions. The initiative was MLTC's, and we both considered community-based education as the way to proceed.

2. *The SCYC Scope of Child and Youth Care Services:*

The professional scope of the School of Child and Youth Care was part of the appeal of our program to MLTC. Although child day care was the immediate focus of the Project, the broader range of services to children, youth and their families within the scope of Child and Youth Care was of great interest and relevance to MLTC.

3. *The Educational and Career Ladder:*

The education and career ladder was also of great interest to MLTC. The Council did not want their community members to pursue 1 or 2 year programs that might lead to an academic dead-end of non-transferable credits. Ours was a step-on/step-off, four-year degree, education and career ladder (see Figure 8.1).

A CHILD AND YOUTH CARE CAREER AND EDUCATIONAL LADDER		
COURSE WORK	PROFESSIONAL	RESPONSIBILITY
A 40 hour Introduction to becoming a Family Day Care Provider	<b>Pre-Professional</b>	Daily operation of a FDC program under central agency supervision
10 month, Certificate level, ECCE educational course work and supervised practica	<b>Para-Professional</b> ECCE – Level 1	Assist, under supervision, in child care group program (day care centre)
10 month, Diploma level, ECCE educational course work and supervised practica	<b>Professional</b> ECCE – Level 2	Lead the delivery of daily activities and care for normative 2 to 5 year olds
3rd year Child and Youth Care Courses	<b>Professional</b> ECCE – CYC/Level 3	Planning, funding, and supervision activities for normative or specialized child populations
4 year, Baccalaureate Degree in Child and Youth Care	<b>Professional</b> ECCE – CYC/Level 4	Planning, funding, and supervision activities for various child and youth care programs

FIGURE 8.1

4. *Bi-Culturalism:*

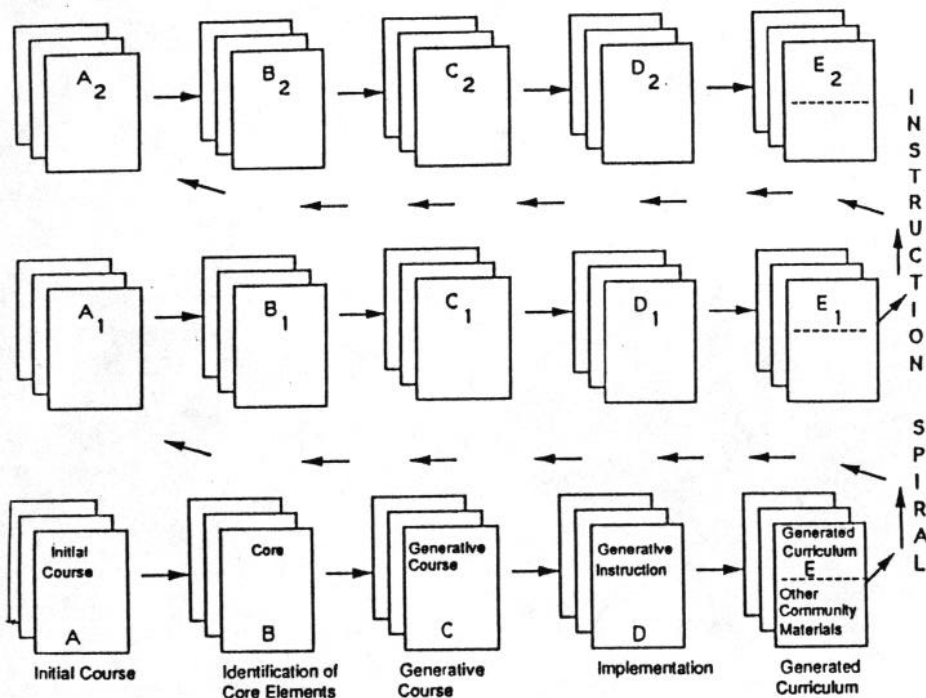
Bi-cultural respect and learning was fully supported by both partners. One of the Elders described it as two sides of a feather – an understanding of majority culture, values and practices, and First Nations culture, values and practices.

5. *Empowerment:*

This principle reflected the desire to move away from a deficit oriented, 'sickness' perspective, to a strengths identification approach using *strengths* as the building blocks for child, family and community development.

### 6. The Child as an Ecological Focus:

An ecological framework of interactive systems and system levels is central to much of the work of the Project. The framework sees children and children's well-being as central to the well-being of families and of communities.



#### THE GENERATIVE SPIRAL MODEL

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
COMMUNITY INITIATIVE	CYC SCOPE	CYC CAREER LADDER	BICULTURAL	EMPOWERMENT	CHILD AS ECOLOGICAL FOCUS	GENERATIVE CURRICULUM

#### FOUNDATION OF SEVEN PRINCIPLES

FIGURE 8.2: Generative Curriculum: The Spiral Model

### 7. The Generative Curriculum Model:

The seventh component of the principles work was a conceptual model to operationalize the principles-driven curriculum. The basic structure is a spiralling model that successively builds on culturally appropriate information generated in the preceding deliveries of the courses. The spiral structure rests on the foundation of the seven principles (see Figure 8.2).

I will come back to the principles and the Generative Curriculum Model a little later on in our agenda, but right now what I'd like to do is to 'fast forward' our little boat on the big sea: through all of the storms of operationalizing the principles; past the doldrums when new people would arrive and need to be oriented to the boat and its mission; and through the static of miscommunications that inevitably occur, to where we are today, two and a half years into the Project.

I am very excited by the place we have come to. It appears to be nothing less than a new shore: a new approach to First Nations post-secondary education and to the preparation of students to work with young children, their families and communities. It is an exciting place to find ourselves, but we need your help to go ashore. Not all of the mountains, valleys and shoreline are clearly visible from our vantage point in the boat, but here are some characteristics that *do* exist and which we *can* describe:

- It is a place where students are allowed to remain rooted in or near their communities and are not required to move far away for months or years at a time.
- It is a place where students can apply what they learn, on a daily basis, with their own people and in their own communities.
- It is a place where students can step off a career ladder to pursue professional employment and step back on to pursue degree work.
- It is a place where both majority and First Nations information is valued.
- It is a place where a mainstream University and a First Nations Tribal Council work in co-operation, harmony and trust.
- It is a place where Elders play a key role in contributing to curriculum, to students and to children's and communities' development.
- It is a place where students, Elders and teachers are all instructors and are all learners.
- It is a place where communities take the responsibility for defining and describing the caregiving practices and standards that they will follow.
- It is a place where strengths, rather than weaknesses, are considered the appropriate starting place for developing strong children, strong families and strong communities.
- It is a place that provides many new things to learn, not just for First Nations and Universities, but more broadly for 'any community' and any post-secondary institution.

In short, what we have discovered thus far on our shared voyage is the outline of an alternative landscape – a land form influenced by a different set of principles than those we typically experience. It is a landscape that, in my opinion, offers great promise at a time when we need promising alternatives.

(Pence, 1993)

The opening comments on the Project contained in the story recounted above were augmented later in the day with details of the Generative Curriculum Model. Those comments have been paraphrased below to provide the reader with a sense of the process entailed in the Generative Curriculum Model.

The saga of the Project, conveyed in the boat story, contains parallels for an understanding of the Generative Curriculum Model (GCM) as well: both the Project and the Model can be understood in terms of the 'mechanics': of meeting, of planning – of writing, of teaching; and both can be understood at the level of a journey, the meta-level accomplishment of performing the 'mechanics'.

The initial mechanics of the Generative Curriculum Model are reasonably straightforward: Step 1, an identification of certain courses that have been identified by institutions and authorities as requirements to receive academic and professional credentials; Step 2, an analysis of these courses to identify key concepts and content that must be included in the curriculum to receive the credentials. (Thus far the GCM does not deviate from mainstream curriculum orthodoxy, however . . .). Step 3 acknowledges that these key concepts and content are culturally embedded and that other cultures may have similar or dissimilar concepts and learnings. For example, in the team's research for a child development course, course writers came across a Navajo developmental chart, showing an ages and stages structure not unlike a chart for Erikson or Piaget, but emphasizing the child's development of spirituality and a sense of community-belonging, both important issues in a Navajo child's development. Such a chart did not exist in writing within the MLFNs, but all partners felt that the 'generation' of such information was of critical concern. Step 4 addressed the question of how the Generative Curriculum Model would work within the class. Clearly the traditional didactic learning structure of instructor as fount of all learning and students as passive receptacles was inappropriate for, in this course, students and instructors had much to learn. The appropriate source of community-specific information for the MLFN were the Elders, and in some cases other community members. In the Generative Curriculum Model Elders are an integral part of the weekly course structure; their knowledge, experience and wisdom is a critically important and respected part of the curriculum, as is learning from 'mainstream' western sources.

The final 'mechanism' of the Generative Curriculum Model, Step 5, is the collection of the generated material that comes from the Elders, from the communities, and from the students in forms (videos, tapes and print) that can be passed on into the next iteration of the course and become a part of an ever evolving and growing curriculum that includes valued and useful information from both mainstream and community perspectives. The result of the Generative Curriculum process was the outcome desired by the MLTC

programme graduates as they were prepared to work either on- or off-reserve, with children and families from either aboriginal or non-aboriginal heritage.

Descriptively, the mechanics and processes of the GCM are fairly straightforward; operationally, putting that description into practice, is challenging. Almost a year and a half of the Project had passed, with a number of courses tested in the field, before the curriculum team felt it had a solid, consistent approach to operationalizing the principles. Instructors, students and course writers as well wrestled with this new approach to post-secondary learning.

The end result of the challenges: the challenge to break with the typical, the known, the secure; the challenge to identify principles that could chart and guide a new approach; the challenge to devise a model that could incorporate the identified principles; the challenge to operationalize the model both in curriculum and instruction; the challenge to hear from the community and to understand its strengths; and the challenge to learn while doing, resulted in a Model that transcended its mechanics, that became more than the sum of its parts. What emerged from the MLTC Project and the Generative Curriculum Model was an evaluation and a contextualization of western practice: for example, information in the valuable and influential document *Developmentally Appropriate Practice* (Bredekamp, 1987) was balanced by what the GCM team members referred to as 'Community Appropriate Practice' (Mulligan, 1993). Curricula that are not respectful of cultural diversity, that do not acknowledge that there are many trails that lead up the mountain, cannot expect to generate the pride and self-respect necessary to develop caring caregivers. In the words of one of the students for an assignment on professional values:

Respecting the dignity and worth of each individual will reflect who you are as a person . . . A caregiver will build trust and good working relationships among co-workers and parents if she treats them with care, understanding, and with great respect.

As identified in summative evaluations (Cook, 1993; Jette, 1993a), the process of the Generative Curriculum Model had a ripple effect that spread well beyond the students, the courses and those immediately involved, to touch the lives of children, families and other community members, in ways that were not fully foreseen. In a manner reminiscent of the eloquent words of the National Grand Chief of the Assembly of First Nations, Ovide Mercredi, this Project moved beyond the lives of those immediately involved:

When you heal a child, you heal a family;  
When you heal a family, you heal a community;  
When you heal a community, you heal a nation.

(Mercredi, 1991)

The overtures to the federal government to provide additional funds to further develop and understand the Model were successful, and an additional nineteen months of funding were made available to the MLTC/SCYC partnership. In addition, the Province of British Columbia became interested in the Project in late 1991. The province provided community needs assessment dollars in

1992, and in 1993 provided funds for a second pilot with the First Nations of the Cowichan Tribes located on Vancouver Island in British Columbia. This second pilot was a critical next step in the evolution of the Model, a test of its transferability to a culturally dissimilar First Nations community and a test of the ability of the partnership model to extend to a three-way collaboration among: a First Nations community, a College course-delivery partner, and the University curriculum development partner. While it is too early for a full evaluation of this three-way partnership, the early signs are positive. Given those positive signs, and the prior success of the original partnership with MLTC, the stage is set for a national, multi-site pilot involving First Nations and post-secondary delivery institutions in various parts of the country, working in a series of three-way partnerships with the curriculum team at the School of Child and Youth Care, University of Victoria.

## REFLECTIONS ON NOT KNOWING AND ON THE PARTNERSHIP

Returning to the original partnership between MLTC and SCYC which laid the groundwork for that which followed, a central paradox emerges: that the success of the Project is based as much, or more, on the partners' awareness and appreciation of what is not known, as on what is known. Neither the Tribal Council nor the School had an awareness of the issues the other faced on a day-to-day basis, nor of the knowledge that was necessary to operate effectively in the other's milieu. That knowledge came to the Project by way of the partnership. It was this *acknowledged lack of knowledge* that was essential to the formation of a strong partnership – a partnership based as firmly on necessity as on desire.

Just as firmly, each respected that the other partner did know its own environment, was effective in that other environment, and would utilize that knowledge and effectiveness in support of the partnership and the overarching objectives of the Project. Such trust is not a given, it is both gained and learned. Gained over time through small but consequential acts; learned over time as one sees, hears and learns about the other and the environment of the other. Slowly a fuller picture of the partner and its environment emerged, and slowly trust was tested and established.

Early in the Project's history a pooling of the partners' knowledge bases indicated that there were relatively few successful experiences that could guide the development of this particular initiative. The review of the literature by SCYC produced little in the way of exemplary early childhood and child and youth care post-secondary programmes. Likewise, MLTC's collective experience of post-secondary educational programmes produced little that was deemed exemplary and some that had been problematic.

Somewhat surprisingly, the effect of this infertile search of the literature and recollection of experience was not restricting, but freeing! What both reviews suggested, was the need for new and innovative approaches to First Nations post-secondary education. Furthermore, both the MLTC experience and the review of the literature suggested that little would be lost, and potentially much gained, through trying new approaches.

The effect of that awareness was to reinforce to an even greater degree the reliance that each partner must place in the other. If there were no existing maps to use as guides, each was all the more dependent on the resources and the resourcefulness of the partner. Our freedom to explore would be limited only by our collective creativity, our vision, and our ability to support the other.

We had by that time begun to forge another characteristic of the Project, a willingness to take risks and to depend on the support of our partner in doing so. For the SCYC team this risk-taking involved a 'realigning' of the Project's primary allegiances away from the university institutional structure and mores, which it was felt would inevitably prove too inflexible and slow-moving if we were to be able to follow smoothly the requirements of the new partnership. Such a realignment of allegiances carries the potential of institutional wrath, but the review work that had been undertaken provided a solid argument against orthodoxy and for innovation. Such a decision to turn from traditional, institutional responses to pursue new and untested approaches to meeting a community's needs could not have been undertaken without a growing sense of trust and a belief in the combined strength of the partnership.

The MLTC also took risks in working with their new academic partner. The experience of many First Nations in attempting to work with academic institutions has been problematic, and in many cases there is a distrust of non-aboriginally controlled institutions. MLTC was not exempt from voices of concern, both from within and external to their organization. At a number of points along the way, critics of the partnership emerged. Time was needed to show the merits and the potential of the partnership, and the cost of buying that time was shouldered by the MLTC and SCYC Project leaders.

In the early months of the three-year funding period instructors were hired, students commenced studies, and course writers developed curricula, not on the basis of a full and informed plan, but on the basis of a willingness to take risks in pursuit of the Project's objectives, and a commitment to engage in ongoing evaluation in pursuit of better and clearer processes and products. Risk, trust, error and evolving support were the essence of the early period of the Project.

As noted earlier, a Project does not develop on a foundation of risk and trust without moving beyond the rational to embrace the emotional. A high level of personal caring emerged to join the project objective of 'quality care', imbuing the latter with personal sentiment and commitment. The Project became more than a partnership effort to develop a culturally relevant curriculum, it became itself a caring environment. In that transformation the traditional separation between researcher and subject, university and community began to dissolve. As it dissolved it became easier to see, to understand, and to be in the other's world, and to appreciate more fully what quality truly meant both to oneself and to the other. Quality had to do with a state of mind and a state of being. It had much more to do with ways of measuring things internally and subjectively, than externally and objectively. As noted by Ms Debbie Jette, Commencement Speaker at the student graduation ceremony in June 1993, quality was not just a moment in time, measurable, replicable and quantifiable, but rather what that moment meant 'looking ahead seven generations

and back seven generations' (Jette, 1993b). If the quality of that moment could meet that test, then the quality was good. These are tests of quality not found in western academic literature. The School would not have looked for them, nor seen or felt them, without our partner's guidance.

Clearly this Project and Partnership have significant personal meaning to the principal author and to other members of the SCYC and MLTC teams, and the partnership approach and the Generative Curriculum Model are of potential value in a variety of cross-cultural, post-secondary education applications. But there is another dimension to this experience, one which has much broader relevance to child care researchers in their understanding of quality child care. That other dimension, a missing element in most western child care research, lies at the heart of caring.

## REFLECTIONS ON PARTNERSHIPS AND QUALITY CARE RESEARCH

The single greatest value of partnership research to the study of quality child care is the opportunity that partnerships provide for caring to occur within the research enterprise itself. That component is critical, for without the light of caring, that which is sought may well be lost. This 'finding' of the MLTC/SCYC Project cannot be found in the 'data' of the Project. Its accuracy cannot be tested, its understanding is elusive. Its 'truth' is as indefinable as caring itself – its presence must be felt, for it cannot be objectively observed or measured.

Entry into the world of 'caring research' is a step through the looking glass of 'research on caring'. The tools, the rules and the 'way things are', are different on the two sides. It is a place that, like the MLTC/SCYC partnership, is largely uncharted. And like that partnership, it requires a leap of faith to enter and explore it. But even at this very early stage of exploration, there is a strong sense that in order to understand quality caring, one must possess the 'quality of caring'.

Undertaking 'caring research', possessed of a 'quality of caring', is not a traditional value within research and academic communities. Such perspectives and positions are not a part of western science, western objectivity, and western rationality. They speak of mysticism, faith and the immeasurable. But then again, is caring measurable? Is it not, at least in part, transcendent? Is using scientific instruments and methodologies to understand caring, not, in some way, akin to searching for God with a telescope?

Clearly there is a land beyond the looking glass of western rationality and science that has yet to be explored in our search for understanding quality care. And also, quite clearly, there are dangers there for those who make their living as academics and researchers. But even on the 'safe side' of the mirror, the world of western science, there is much that research has yet to learn about quality care, and this research too could be facilitated by partnership activities.

## LIMITATIONS OF RESEARCH ON QUALITY CARE

The limitations that exist in research on quality care stem largely from researchers' failure to appreciate the broader ecology of child care – to place themselves outside the micro-system of the child's immediate environment. Early in the field's history, child care science became monopolized by a psychologically oriented, positivist model of research. While extremely valuable, the information resulting from this approach tends to be narrowly child-centred, micro-system focused, outcomes oriented and contextually limited. The broader social, cultural and historical elements of quality care research have been and continue to be underdeveloped in the western literature and in particular the North American literature. The self-contained, scientifically controlled model of western positivist empirical study is restricted in its ability to perceive and understand social and cultural assumptions, values and mores outside its practitioners' own traditions and orientations. Such research is problematic not so much for its generation of wrong answers, as for limitations in its posing of questions. The current literature on quality care is problematic both in its assumptions of what constitutes desirable developmental universals, and in its restricted understandings of diverse environments, social change and cultural diversity.

The compelling questions that relate to the realization of quality care in contemporary North American society cannot be adequately understood without shifting from a search for 'quality universals' to a search for 'quality perspectives'. Such a transition requires movement away from the ever finer measurement of micro-system environmental variables to an awareness and appreciation of quality care perspectives as held by an expanded reference group, including not only caregivers, parents and children, but also employers, elected officials, licensing officers, opinion leaders and others in the meso-, exo- and macro-systems of the child care ecology. Many of these perspectives are at present lacking in the research literature on quality care, and while these broader perspectives remain absent, those who wish to develop a campaign for improved care quality will be at a profound disadvantage as they lack critical information regarding the socio-political environment in which they must act.

The points made above can be seen as one potential form of partnership research, an intra-cultural research approach that would seek to include a diversity of perspectives. There is much that child care research has to learn from the broad circle of child care stakeholders. However, the expanded list of stakeholders provided is clearly western in its conceptualization. In order to generate a relevant cross-cultural list of stakeholders, the MLTC/SCYC Project would suggest that an inter-cultural partnership is required. While at one level one could argue that a cultural informant would be able to generate such a list, at another level the realization of a caring project requires much more than information. It was largely through the realization of vulnerability, the *need for* and not just the *desire for* a partner, that established the critical ingredients of risk, trust, faith and ultimately, caring, to occur within the MLTC/SCYC Project itself. And it was through the realization of caring within the partnership that the manifestation of caring through the partnership became possible.

This paper would argue that in cross-cultural child care projects, where the objective is culturally appropriate quality care, the means of developing care and the ends of achieving care must be understood as one. Indeed, in both inter- and intra-cultural quality care projects the means and ends of caring must be evidenced.

## CONCLUSION

The partnership work of the MLTC/SCYC Project has opened many doors previously not noticed by those involved. Each door required a level of awareness, faith, trust and commitment that would not have been possible outside a partnership model. Through the dynamic of the partnership, caring itself entered the Project and an activity that had begun, in part, as research on caring, became caring research.

The transformation was a profound one that lies beyond the pale of western scientific traditions. Yet, how can we come to know caring, a most powerful and delicate phenomenon, without bringing its quality into our work? How can we measure caring, when we do not know it?

Caring relationships present great challenges to western science and western ways of understanding: for they cannot be built, they must be nurtured; they cannot be imposed, they must be desired; they cannot be seen, they must be felt. They are in opposition to many tenets of western science and culture, but without them our understanding of caring will be forever elusive and fragmentary.

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