

**Sacred World Outlook and the Curriculum:
Ecological Perspectives and Contemplative Practice**

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Dedication

Dedicated to my mother and all the mothers that have come before
and to my children and all the children to come.

Abstract

This thesis explores an alternative worldview, sacred world outlook, as a foundation for an educational approach that integrates contemplative practice with an ecological perspective. At its heart is a connection to, and a reverence for all life. The importance of place-based and culturally relevant curricula is central to the approach and the thesis acknowledges the significant contribution of Indigenous knowledge to its evolution. The thesis further explores how holistic and contemplative pedagogical practices are a foundation for a curriculum that furthers a profound and heartfelt understanding of the interrelationship and interdependence of all phenomena. It is proposed that such an understanding is vital to the education of current and future generation of students in order to relate to, and begin to resolve, the ecological and humanitarian crises we face in the world at present. It is suggested that the introduction of contemplative practice into the curriculum and its implementation, not only as a personal practice but also as a teacher practice and a pedagogical approach, opens possibilities of a genuine commitment to action that cuts through the assumptions of mainstream Western culture—assumptions that further the growth economy and consumerism and the destruction of the environment, and which underpin an approach to education that furthers such views and practices. The perspective investigated in this thesis is based on 20 years of teaching experience and curriculum design in various cultural contexts, including a recent curriculum design project in Bhutan for young Buddhist monks. The study employs the structural approach of View, Meditation and Action, derived from Buddhist tradition, as a lens to examine the following questions: *In the context of curriculum, what does sacred world outlook as an alternative worldview offer to educators and their students? How is the sacred world outlook in the curriculum informed by an ecological perspective and supported by contemplative practice? And, how has my understanding of the role of place and culture in education been shaped by my experience as an educator in various contexts and as a long time Buddhist practitioner?* The importance of storytelling to this approach is highlighted by the insertion of autobiographical “vignettes” throughout the narrative, that illustrate and enrich the theoretical aspect of the study.

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Chapter 1

Background and Approach

When human beings lose their connection to nature, to heaven and earth, then they do not know how to nurture their environment or how to rule their world—which is saying the same thing. Human beings destroy their ecology at the same time that they destroy each other. From that perspective, healing our society goes hand in hand with healing our personal, elemental connection with the phenomenal world. (Trungpa, 2004d, p.105)

There is a community on the northwest coast of Scotland that is probably as self-sustaining as anywhere can be on the British Isles these days. Ecologically, its carbon footprint is minimal—no roads to speak of, no cars and only a couple of ATVs, no grid electricity, only windmills, and access is only by boat unless you want to walk three miles around the cliff path from the nearest road. Until recently the houses were rebuilt from the ruined shells of cottages from the 1800s, built by the Indigenous people of Scotland who had been cleared off their land as their landlords made room for sheep, in the name of progress and their own enrichment. Everyone there grows their own food, and some farm and raise cattle. Many carry on cottage industries to make a bit of cash. Several dye and spin their own yarn and knit it into hats, sweaters, and blankets.

Many years ago, one of the residents invented a spinning wheel. It is the most marvellous invention. It is made completely from bicycle parts. Whatever bicycle created this spinning wheel, it was once a machine for propelling its rider in a linear fashion through space. Perhaps the bumpy track that passes for a road there was too much for it, and it fell apart. Its creator, one of the first newcomers from the south, wasn't one to waste anything. He saw the potential for transformation in what others might have seen as a pile of junk. He took it apart, reimagined it and reconstructed it into another machine, one that was static, but still incredibly productive as well as durable.

The transformation of a machine that at one point in its existence functioned as a vehicle for moving its rider from A to B in a linear direction and then was transformed by imagination and skill into a spinning wheel, that in itself is a machine which transforms fibres into thread, is a

powerful metaphor for me at this point in my life. Propelled by livelihood and the necessities of life and raising a family, my trajectory has been pretty linear with stops along the way for reflection and contemplation. I have always had to get back on the bike and continue on the path. But at present, as I stop to write my thesis, back in my native Scotland and away from all of those demands, I contemplate what is important to me to write about. I feel as if the bicycle I have been riding has been transformed into the spinning wheel. The act of stopping and falling apart, reimagining, and transforming, describes what I am experiencing. As I go around and around in my head with ideas and topics and questions, all the tangled fibres, the strands that have made up my life so far, are being teased out, awaiting transformation into a different reality. Speed and movement forward is no longer so appealing. That machine no longer supports me in any case. I feel as if it has fallen apart, or at least is in the process of falling apart. I have stopped, and it is time to take what was and make something new out of it, something useful and durable, maybe even beautiful. The yarn (another word for story) can be woven into fabric, and the fabric itself can be transformed in whatever way the imagination pleases.

The act of turning a bicycle into a spinning wheel is a profoundly ecological action, one born of insight, intelligence, and skill. For me it works as a personal metaphor, but I feel it is also a social metaphor. As a society, the linear concept of economic growth and development is wreaking havoc with the environment. We need to recognize that it is falling apart, stop the devastation, and rethink how we live our lives personally, as well as in the political and economic spheres. For the world to survive the ravages of greed and destruction which is the path we are presently on, young people, the inheritors of the Earth, have to become aware of the situation. Education therefore is central to that process, and it is becoming abundantly clear to me that an ecological perspective, supported and informed by a contemplative approach to teaching and learning has to be central to our work as educators. Bringing those two together is sacred outlook. Taking the bicycle apart and re-envisioning it in a sustainable way is the outer work. The inner work is spinning our consciousness into awareness—awareness of process rather than product and the interdependence of our existence with that of the planet. It is through education in its broadest sense that such transformation is possible.

The raw material, the data, for this thesis arises from my experience of teaching at the elementary level for 20 years and the insights I have gleaned from that, which is inseparable from my commitment to the Buddhist path. As well, my more recent experience of living and working in the Himalayan Kingdom of Bhutan, where I am writing the curriculum for an integrated academic education for young Buddhist monks, plays a major part in the way this thesis has evolved. Seeing firsthand how modernization impacts a traditional culture has been a huge influence on my thinking. It has saddened me to see how a culture that is so inherently dignified and that has existed sustainably for hundreds of years has, in one generation, been negatively impacted by modernization and consumer culture. In mainstream Western culture, the values of consumerism and material gain have come to dominate all aspects of our lives. Our children are profoundly affected by it, and not always for the better. In 20 years of teaching I have seen enormous changes in the way children relate to the world and each other. My experience of seeing how modernization has impacted Bhutan has thrown a spotlight on the Western culture and society and our approach to education and its role in society. In order that young people are prepared for being independent and prosperous in this world, education and curriculum of course have to be relevant to the world we live in. I contend, however, that in order for this to happen we need to challenge the concepts that underlie our current dominant perception of reality that is based on a neoliberal perspective, namely that prosperity and personal happiness are based on material gain. This approach is founded on the Mechanistic Universe worldview (Bai, Eppert, Scott, Tait & Nguyen, 2015) that sees the world as mechanical, predictable and “out there,” separate from the inner world of feelings, thoughts and sensations. It legitimizes all manner of outrageous damage to the environment and the forms of life, human and otherwise, who live on this planet.

I propose, as an alternative to mainstream K-12 schooling, a curriculum based on sacred world outlook. That the world is inherently sacred is a teaching that I first received from the Tibetan meditation teacher, Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche. Far from rejecting our sensory experience of the world, taking a view of the world as sacred recognizes that we create the world we live in through our perceptions and our response to those perceptions. From the perspective of sacred world outlook, the separation between “me” in here and “that” out there is merely another construct, but one that is deeply embedded in our psyche and that influences everything we do, think, and feel, moment to moment. An ecological perspective on curriculum recognizes that

everything is interconnected and sees the world that we live in as a totality, rather than being fragmented into unrelated parts. Everything matters, from the smallest detail of how we set up our classrooms to our overall view of curriculum to our attitudes and actions in the world. Engaging with contemplative practices within the pedagogical context is a way of seeing how we create our perceptions of the world and helps us to break down the separation between subjective “me” and objective “that.” Taken together, an ecological perspective and contemplative practice can be described as the sacred world outlook.

The realization of how all this fits together came to me quite suddenly and dramatically. I was sitting in the library reading David Orr’s book, *Ecological Literacy* (1992). In this book, Orr puts forward his ideas for what needs to change and how, and the role that education has in the process. I became aware of feeling very uncomfortable, my heart was pounding, my breathing shallow, and I felt close to tears. In my head I was asking myself, “What is going on?” but in my heart something was falling into place which only came into clarity a bit later. What became clear to me was that education for what Orr calls “eco-literacy” could no longer remain just an idea to which I made a nod and carried on. It had to become central to what I was doing in creating the curriculum in Bhutan, and a focus for my on-going educational journey. It had to become heartfelt, not only for me, but for students and teachers everywhere.

The term “eco-literacy,” however, addresses only a part, from my point of view, of the way to proceed. Since becoming a Buddhist and learning about the Shambhala teachings from Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, taking the view of the world as sacred has been central to my journey in life. “Sacred,” as Trungpa uses the term, is not meant in the religious sense; rather, “sacred” means having a heartfelt appreciation and respect for the world that goes beyond an intellectual commitment to a way of being and knowing that includes body, speech, and mind.¹ He explains:

According to the Shambhala vision, you are sacred, and your environment is also very sacred. The sacredness is not from the point of view of religiosity. Rather, because you pay so much attention to your environment and because you are so concerned about the details as well as the general pattern of your life, therefore the environment and the discipline you have are extremely sacred. (Trungpa, 2004c, p. 240)

To see, feel, appreciate, nurture this world in all its extremes, to recognize the interdependence of all its parts, animate and inanimate, and act with awareness for the consequences of those actions—these are the aspirations I hold for myself, for my students and for all people. But, in order to even begin to bring these aspirations into some kind of lived reality, I have to be willing to see myself and my actions clearly, or else it is easy to fall into habitual ways of doing things and be lulled into complacency. Trungpa emphasized that the path to waking up to sacred world outlook has to be imbued with awareness, and nurtured through the practice of meditation and other contemplative practices. I am therefore exploring the idea that contemplative practice has to be one of the feet upon which a view of sacred world outlook in the curriculum stands, both as a personal practice and as a pedagogical practice. The other foot is understanding that our place in the world from the point of view of sacred world also requires that we take an ecological perspective. In the context of curriculum this means seeing education as a path in which body, speech and mind are integrated, not only within the individual, but also between the individual and the environment, close and far, which we inhabit along with millions of other species with whom our existence is interdependently entwined.

The teachings of many Indigenousⁱⁱ knowledge and wisdom traditions have an important role to play in this respect, challenging the rational and reductionist view of reality, and offering alternative worldviews which are grounded in ecological values and communicated through narratives and art in a community oriented context. According to Battiste (2002), “Indigenous knowledge comprises all knowledge pertaining to a particular people and its territory, the nature or use of which has been transmitted from generation to generation” (p. 8). The stories from Indigenous traditions, and wisdom traditions from around the world, through which the tradition’s worldview is communicated, have played an important part in the evolution of my ideas and my approach to teaching. I have referred to sources from Indigenous and non-Indigenous writers who have worked closely with Indigenous Elders, in this thesis and in my work. I have told the stories to my class, not in a random fashion, but as respectfully and holistically as I was able being a non-Indigenous person, beginning with the culture’s creation story and continuing with the stories that describe and make sense of how to live sustainably and respectfully on the Earth, always within the context of the culture itself. An example of this is the Hopi creation story and the stories that describe the migrations that followed. The stories were the foundation of a unit that focused on the Hopi, and the interrelationship of their culture with

their livelihood as farmers in the desert. Stories of this kind resonate with the teachings of sacred world, and in most cases, could be understood to be an expression of the same appreciation of a harmonious way of living in the world and the community of humans, animals and the spirit world.

Background to the Study

Embarking on writing a thesis is something I have come to later in my life, having had a family, taught for 20 years and travelled widely. Along the way I have been fortunate to encounter many brilliant teachers, and been exposed to many ways of understanding the world. Inevitably, therefore, my thesis is a product of many influences. My challenge has been how to weave my experience into a coherent whole and communicate what I have learned within the context of this thesis. The Oxford English Dictionary defines context as, “The circumstances that form the setting for an event, statement, or idea, and in terms of which it can be fully understood” (context, n.d.), and it is derived from the Latin *contextus*, from *con*—“together” and *texere*—“to weave.” The threads of my life, therefore, past, present and future, are the raw material—the data, if you like—for what follows, my task being to weave them together to create a meaningful representation of my experience and a vision for how that carries into the future. I see the texture of my tapestry, therefore, as being not only theoretical but also very personal. Stories and storytelling have an important place in how this thesis has evolved and to highlight this I have woven what I have called “vignettes” into the tapestry—reflections, little stories and memories drawn from all periods of my life that add colour to the narrative. These “vignettes” expand the context of my thesis beyond one that is purely academic to one that has an autobiographical texture. I have placed them in the text to enrich and highlight, directly or indirectly, how I have experienced, in my own life, the issues that I address in the thesis.

The most influential warp threads of my life tapestry are four in number. Firstly, in my early 20s I discovered dance and the importance of embodied experience, balancing the head with the heart and the mind with the body, in contrast to my political and intellectual pursuits at the time. Next, through this exploration, in the early 1980s I encountered the Tibetan Buddhist teacher, Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche at the Naropa Institute, whose teachings on compassion and the nature of reality have guided me ever since. As well, as a mother and as a teacher of elementary

age children at the Shambhala School in Halifax, Nova Scotia, I entered what has become my life's work. Within a framework of holistic practice and multicultural awareness that integrates the arts and a contemplative approach, the curriculum I taught at the Shambhala School opened many doors both in my practice as a teacher and beyond, as well as being a convergence of many of the threads in my life. The last thread, one which stands out in the overall tapestry of this thesis, partly because it is at front and centre of my life at present, and partly because it has been the catalyst for a shift in my thinking around curriculum which has brought me to the present study, is my work in Bhutan.

The alternative approach considered in this study is based on the view that economic prosperity and personal happiness are based on considerations which include concern for the environment, compassion and appreciation of diversity, and awareness of the basic goodness of self and other. These are valued as outcomes of the educational journey, as well as the more conventional outcomes which include the ability to think critically, to be creative and flexible, and the ability to problem solve. Such an approach allows for ways of knowing and meaning-making that go beyond the educational framework of the neoliberal and scientific reductionist approaches to education and curriculum. It fosters the integration of the physical, intellectual, emotional, social, and spiritual aspects of the student's being while supporting the desired outcomes outlined above.

I approach this work from the perspective of a white, educated, middle class woman who has been fortunate enough to have been able to take advantage of the many opportunities that life has presented to me. Having lived, loved, worked and studied in the UK, France, Portugal, the USA and Canada, as well as having travelled extensively, cultural expression and the forms it takes have always been a source of fascination for me. I have been challenged time and again by the requirements of making a life and fitting into a culture that is unfamiliar by managing the basics of language, food and water, as well as by social conventions—assumptions made on my part and by my hosts—and by spells of loneliness. There have been many joys and delights along the way, too. I have met wonderful friends and been exposed to ideas and ways of looking at the world that would not have been possible otherwise. The experience of learning French as a young adult and becoming comfortable in that language, for example, opened my awareness to

how much a culture is bound up in its language and its forms of expression. I thought and felt differently when I spoke French.

In Bhutan, I was confronted by all of the above difficulties, and being the only Westerner most of the time, not speaking the language beyond a few phrases, and being in a non-European culture added its own set of problems. On the other hand, the experience was also extremely rich and thought-provoking. Working on the task that I had been asked to do—to design a curriculum for young Buddhist monks—there was always the question in the back of my mind as to the appropriateness of my presence there, and how I might best relate to my Bhutanese colleagues as a Westerner and an outsider in the context of our work together. During my time in Bhutan, the questions that arose for me around my position as a privileged, white woman reflect the concerns of many writers who address the question of research and other endeavours undertaken by Westerners in so-called “developing”ⁱⁱⁱ countries, and with Indigenous people (Cajete, 1994; Chinn, 2006; Gruenewald 2003; Kanu, 2003; Smith, 1999). These questions circulate around the issues of appropriation of knowledge and culture in colonial and neo-colonial contexts.^{iv} While this topic is beyond the scope of my thesis and current work, I do, in Chapter 5 of this thesis, consider some of the on-going questions that arose for me about my presence, role, and relationships as I led curriculum design there. My experience certainly resonated with the words of Smith (1999), as I reflect on my work in Bhutan, to the effect that work in this milieu was “a humble and humbling activity” (p. 5).

The people I met in Bhutan were infinitely gentle, charming, and dignified, and the young monks were an endless source of delight and enthusiasm. I had the advantage of familiarity with the Buddhist culture, and this aspect deepened my understanding of Bhutan and of life in the monastery. There were also times when I was confronted by behaviours and assumptions that did not fit what I took to be a given in Buddhism. This study, therefore, is a very personal, and the perspective that I have brought to bear on the subject matter is heavily influenced by my experience, and is mine alone. While remaining sensitive to what it means for a white Westerner to design curriculum in a non-Western country, and to the questions and issues involved, the topic of de-colonizing knowledge is beyond the scope of this thesis. My intention in this thesis is to integrate the experience of working in Bhutan and my background influences into a wider

perspective which includes those of contemplative and Indigenous education, Buddhist philosophy, ecology, political economy, and the role of place and culture in education.

Major Questions of the Study

As I reflect on my work in Bhutan and my teaching experience, it has become evident to me that the health of the planet and individual well-being are inseparable. These two aspirations have to be at the heart of the curriculum if our children and grandchildren are to have a world in which to grow up. It is this that has brought me to an exploration of the idea of sacred world outlook as a worldview in education. In this approach, education for ecological sustainability goes hand in hand with the development of values that promote sustainability, namely appreciation of the environment, community and diversity, and the view of all life being interconnected. By bringing a contemplative approach into the teaching environment, these values can become personal and immediate rather than purely theoretical. To this end I explore the following questions in my inquiry.

- In the context of curriculum, what does sacred world outlook as an alternative worldview offer to educators and their students?
- How is the sacred world outlook in the curriculum informed by an ecological perspective and supported by contemplative practice?
- How has my understanding of the role of place and culture in education been shaped by my experience as an educator in various contexts and as a long time Buddhist practitioner?

The Threads

In the following sections I will take up the metaphor of the tapestry, each section detailing a thread of which has brought me to the present. I discuss how these threads have influenced my perspective on curriculum and its role and function in society and how they weave together and continue to manifest in my work.

Dance. My undergraduate degree is in sociology which I studied at the London School of Economics (LSE). In my early 20s during the three years at LSE, I became involved in student politics and joined the Communist Party, as a response to the imbalance and injustices that I

perceived in the world. I also became involved with the women's movement. It was an exciting time full of discussion, passion, and idealism. After I graduated I was very involved in organizing a ten-day conference called the Communist University of London in which many of the prominent Marxist thinkers and intellectuals from the UK and some from Europe came and ran courses for students. So, between that and some of the lecturers and students at LSE, I was exposed to a heady mixture of ideas. Looking at that time from the present perspective, I realize that I was looking at the world in a somewhat blinkered fashion. But, in many respects the influence of that time in my life has stayed with me.

I was, however, starting to feel the imbalance in my life, which was entirely taken up with intellectual pursuits. I found myself gravitating towards people who had some kind of spiritual perspective to their lives rather than just a political one. One summer I saw a performance by Twyla Tharp and Company, an American post-modern dance company, at the Edinburgh Festival, and I decided on the spot that I was going to take up dance. On my return to London, by chance I found a dance collective made up of students of some of the most interesting post-modern dancers in the UK and the US at the time. For the next three years I went to classes and workshops regularly while my active involvement in politics became less. I was becoming more and more disillusioned with left-wing politics and what I perceived as the egotistical stance of the leadership.

As I distanced myself from politics and became more involved in dance, I took several dance classes a week in modern and Graham technique, as well as going to workshops and exploring the whole idea of improvisation. As I became more in touch with my body, I was aware of a sense of freedom and relaxation returning to my being that I had been missing. As a child, I had been quite physical, playing outside, climbing trees, delighting in nature and creating worlds of play. As a teenager, I loved to dance at parties whenever there was the opportunity. Looking back, I realize that when it came to dance I was uninhibited and spontaneous and that I really didn't care what people thought of me. It was an outlet for all the hormonal angst of those years. However, during my student years I had become very serious and intellectual in my political life, and although I still loved to dance, the me that danced and the me that was political were very separate. As I got back into dance as a discipline and in touch with my body I was particularly taken with an improvisational form called contact improvisation in which one dances with

another dancer, maintaining a point of physical contact, giving and taking weight and moving as one body. Once one develops trust and overcomes the sense of awkwardness at being so closely entwined with another person who may be a stranger, there is a tremendous sense of liberation, playfulness, and intimacy. I remember saying to a friend, “Who needs sex when you have contact improv?” Some need was being fulfilled that hitherto had been missing in my life, a need I had probably been seeking through rather soulless and short-lived relationships. I remember, too, realizing that I was engaging in a kind of movement meditation, which, in retrospect, was very true, as one has to develop one-pointed mindfulness in maintaining one’s attention to the point of contact, as well as allowing a sense of awareness of the surrounding space, and your partner in that space.

One weekend, one of the mentors of the dance collective and one of the original inventors of contact improvisation, came from the US and did a workshop in London and told us about a program that she would be teaching for a month in the summer in Boulder, Colorado, at the Naropa Institute, now Naropa University. My friend and I decided to go, both of us having the idea that we would find a dance teacher there with whom we could study intensively.

Naropa and Buddhism. I did find a teacher, but not a dance teacher. At Naropa I met Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, the founder of Naropa Institute, a Tibetan Buddhist meditation teacher. My visit there also coincided with a visit from the head of his lineage of Buddhism, the 16th Gyalwang Karmapa. I met many students of these two teachers and was elated by the energy of the teachings, both in my dance classes at Naropa and the Buddhist teachings I heard. I met many Buddhists whom I found to be some of the most intriguing people I had ever met. They were able to combine playfulness and humour with intelligence and uncluttered thinking. It occurred to me that it might have something to do with meditation, and so I decided to learn to meditate. I had arrived in Boulder still very full of my Marxist-feminist ideas about how things should be, but disillusioned by what felt like the self-serving nature of so many of those who were involved in these activities. It appeared to that they lacked any real desire to make things better except for themselves or their own interest group. The Buddhist teachings on the nature of ego and selflessness from which compassion arises were exactly what I needed to hear at that time. In addition, the possibility of an enlightened society was intriguingly part of the mix. Here, I felt, was a way of looking at the world that made sense and could be effective. I remember

meditating in a room full of other young people and having the sudden realization that whether or not my neighbour was male or female, right- or left-wing, black or white, we were all subject to some of the same pains and difficulties of living in a human body. At that moment, the blinkers really fell apart.

*Naropa Institute encapsulated for me everything that was of value in American culture. The phrase “pushing back the frontiers,” came to me over and over again, as I was challenged to think and re-think my preconceptions of what I had taken for granted, and the dogmas of politics in which I had engaged. My impressions of America had always been one of extremes: of slavery and racism, and bitter conflict between settlers and Indigenous peoples, but also of innovation and radicalism. My first impressions of that country were formed as a child by TV shows such as *The Lone Ranger*, *Lassie*, and *Wagon Train*. They conjured up for me a wild and untamed land, inhabited by cowboys, Indians, and determined and resourceful settlers struggling against an unpredictable environment, and the ever-present threat of attacks by hostile natives. I recall the shock of the assassination of JFK, the landing of men on the moon, and—as a young teenager—the anti-Vietnam war protests and the hippy movement were part of my consciousness entwined with the events of 1968 in Europe. As a student in high school I spent three weeks in Princeton, New Jersey, on an exchange trip, living with a family and briefly attending a school for the privileged children of the Princeton élite. Nonetheless, I was to meet Vietnam vets and “real” hippies while I was there, the subculture of protest and the hippy movement coexisting uneasily alongside the wealth and privilege of middle class America. On my return to Scotland, I was filled with a spirit of rebellion against the narrowness of British class and culture, and what I experienced as the confines of my life. In contrast to the staid, Presbyterian atmosphere of Edinburgh in those days, America had presented me with a vision of freedom—freedom to protest, to challenge the status quo, to create a different kind of society based on love and unfettered by the morality of our parents’ generation. For the next year I pushed against every boundary that I encountered, real or imagined. I wore my skirts as short as I could get away with, I stayed out late, drank too much, and partied hard. Miraculously, looking back on that time, I never got into any serious trouble, but my poor mother was driven to distraction. Alongside that, however, I was exploring new ideas and engaging in heated debate with my friends, family, and teachers, who were mostly amazingly tolerant and accommodating. I heard about feminism, and other religions besides Christianity, and was introduced to the I Ching. I*

was reading Jung and Freud, and gaining some insight into the injustices of the class system, and my own privileged position within that from the research in which my sociologist mother was engaged. Significantly, looking back, I also heard about a Tibetan lama who had a meditation centre at a place called Samye Ling in the Scottish borders. I heard that meeting him was life changing from people who went there, but decided that I did not want to change that much. I was happy with things as they were. It was not until ten years later, when I arrived at the Naropa Institute, that I found out that the lama in question was Chögyam Trungpa, founder of Naropa.

My first summer at Naropa presented me with a view of what education could be and what it meant in its true sense. The weaving and interlacing of cultural forms and the freshness this brought to traditional disciplines resulted in innovative and exciting expressions. The Japanese influence was strong, because, as I was to find out later, Trungpa Rinpoche was a great admirer of the simplicity of Zen forms, which he felt expressed the quality of joining Heaven and Earth. This idea, I was to discover, permeated much of what I was experiencing at Naropa: the idea that vision, the Heaven element, and Earth, the aspect of practicality, were brought together in the creative act, the Wo/man element. The process and the resulting form, whether a flower arrangement, a calligraphy, or a poem, was a powerful mirror of the state of mind of the practitioner. The practice of these forms was encouraged by Trungpa as a way to bring meditation practice into everyday life.

My first exposure to this view being made explicit was with the Japanese poetic form of haiku. My work-study job for the summer was to check students' registration at Allen Ginsberg's course on haiku. There were only about twenty-five students, and we gathered in the sitting room of the student residence. Allen invited me to sit in on the classes, and I tried my hand for the first time at writing haiku under his brilliant and unorthodox teaching. The workings of the mind which have to do with the heart, as opposed to the intellect which deals with concepts, was new territory for me. Bringing them together on the spot, as a haiku, was sometimes startling and often awkward as I saw myself judging my own and others' work and trying too hard. Letting go of preconceptions, I discovered, produced the best and the most spontaneous work, although not something easily achieved.

This quality of spontaneity was present in all the classes I did that summer. Contact improvisation, contemplative dance (which mixed movement with meditation practice), aikido, African dance, and Maitri (which brought Tibetan Buddhist forms and practice into psychology)—all were infused with the quality of melding mind and body, intellect and intuition, as enlightened activity.

Two years after that first summer, I returned to Naropa and enrolled in the dance therapy BA program. I spent the next two years immersing myself in dance, Buddhism, and my work, which was being a nanny. I also met the man who was to become my husband. Naropa was the first time in my formal education in which I experienced the true meaning of the word educate, in the sense of *e-ducare*—a drawing out. Teachers as much as students were on a journey of learning together, and the by-line for Naropa—*Joining Intellect and Intuition*—really described the experience. For the first time I felt that body, heart, and mind were being addressed equally. I was able to synthesize the experiences and different aspects of my life up until that point. It was an inspiring and exciting time.

Enki and the Shambhala School. After graduating from Naropa, marriage, and a move to Nova Scotia, Canada, family and children took up the next few years of my life. I also became involved with a group of young parents in the Buddhist community who wanted to start a school. In 1994 the Shambhala Elementary School opened in Halifax. This was the culmination of two years of work on the part of myself and this group of parents. We wanted something for our children that would allow them to directly experience the world they lived in, and to hold all those who inhabit it in reverence. We wanted them to grow up into thinking, compassionate, fair-minded individuals who were creative in their approach to the challenges that life would throw at them and who were willing to take risks on many different levels. We wanted them to be able to accept and celebrate differences among the peoples of the world, to have confidence in their abilities and to offer innovative creative solutions to problem solving in all areas from entrepreneurship to scientific invention to artistic and academic endeavours. On a more mundane level we wanted our children to be able to play, create and imagine. For this to be a reality it was clear to us that a diet of worksheets and rote learning, sitting in desks for long periods of time and limited opportunities for creativity and physical activity was not sufficient.

We began working with Beth Sutton who had designed a curriculum that addressed these issues. Her approach integrated the best of Waldorf and Montessori education, the United Nations school, the Bank Street school and the developmental theories of Erik Erikson, Joseph Chilton Pierce, Jean Piaget and Rudolph Steiner. As a long-time practitioner of Buddhism, she integrated key aspects of Buddhist theory of mind and its development. She delved into the work of Paul McLean (1990) on the triune brain and the work of Jean Ayres (1972) on Sensory Integration. The result was a curriculum and teacher-training program which not only covered the academic subjects in depth, but also taught them using an arts-integrated pedagogical approach, albeit on a slightly different timetable than would be the case in public school curricula. The approach has become known as the Enki approach (Sutton, 1998, 2005),^v and the teacher training program, known at first as the Contemplative Teacher Training Program, was later known as the Enki Teacher Training Program. The idea that curriculum and methodology are inseparable is fundamental to the approach, and the potential teachers, myself included, studied movement, art, and storytelling with a view to teaching all the academic subjects including mathematics and science, as well as social studies and language arts through the medium of these disciplines. Through a multicultural approach, thematic units draw from many wisdom traditions around the world. Depth of understanding and personal connection to the material, and thus meaning, are emphasized in this curriculum rather than the superficial accumulation of facts. The integration of body, speech, and mind is a central concern. In the classroom context, this means paying attention to the body and the physical aspects of learning, through movement, dance, and games, as well as fine motor activities; speech means the communicative aspect of learning through artistic expression, imagination, relationship, and emotional and social learning; mind is the conceptual, intellectual and analytical aspect of learning, as well as the spiritual. From this standpoint, the curriculum can be described as contemplative, both in content and in the methodology, employing a variety of approaches that allows children to connect to the material in their own ways. The arts play an important role in this regard, particularly in the elementary years, as a medium for self-expression and meaning-making throughout the curriculum.

I took the teacher training course with the idea of being the school administrator, but the opening of the school coincided with the birth of my second child. The following year, however, I began teaching French, and then spent two years as partner/assistant teacher before taking on

responsibility for a class on my own. For 20 years I taught in the elementary grades. I mainly taught grades 3 and 4, but also other grades from Grades 1 to 6, researching and developing the view and activity of the Enki curriculum in the context of the Shambhala School.

Bhutan and Dzongsar Jamyang Khyentse Rinpoche. Dzongsar Jamyang Khyentse Rinpoche is a renowned and respected Buddhist teacher, both in Bhutan and the world. He is also known internationally as a movie director under the name of Khyentse Norbu.^{vi} Education is central to Dzongsar Khyentse's vision, and Lhomon Education was created under his auspices to promote an academic education in his monastery in Bhutan that integrates the principles of Gross National Happiness into the curriculum. My connection with Dzongsar Khyentse dates back to 1997 when he came and visited the Shambhala Elementary School. Several years following that visit I was invited to design a K-2 curriculum for a school that Dzongsar Khyentse wanted to start in Australia, based on the Shambhala School curriculum. This I did, and the curriculum was accepted by the New South Wales Board of Studies, but the school was not able to come to fruition due to financial restrictions. In 2012, on the strength of that and my work and experience at the Shambhala School, I was invited to go to Bhutan to participate in a two-week teacher education workshop on integrated curriculum, sponsored by Lhomon Education.^{vii} These experiences were also the inspiration to take up further education and pursue a Master of Arts degree in education.

Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche has expressed his desire that the monks at his monastery, the Chökyi Gyatso Institute, should have a secular education as well as a Buddhist education in order that they can be better equipped to relate to the world outside the monastery, a world which is undergoing rapid change and development. The Lhomon Education curriculum which I am engaged in formulating is based on the ideas of Gross National Happiness (GNH) which frames the development philosophy of Bhutan as it opens to the modern world.

As a model for development GNH differs from other development policies and strategies in that it does not focus solely on economic development. It takes into consideration the well-being of its citizens and the protection of the environment while acknowledging the importance of Buddhist values and Bhutan's culture and Buddhist heritage. It establishes the view, or principles, by which modernization and economic development should proceed. The principles of GNH are born from a commitment to the Buddhist values of kindness and compassion. It

takes into account the interdependent relationship of all phenomena, central to Buddhist thought, recognizing that one cannot ignore the effect that economic development has upon the environment. Well-being is understood to mean not only material well-being, but also emotional and spiritual well-being at the individual, community, and national levels. As a long-term view of development, it seeks to protect the future of not only its citizens and the Bhutanese environment, but also the future of the planet.

The Lhomon Education (LME) curriculum aspires to integrate these values into an educational program that is relevant to the students' needs. The Bhutanese public school system is based on the colonialist Indian system, in which rote memorization, teacher-led pedagogy and standardized testing are predominant, particularly in the higher grades. The LME curriculum includes Indigenous and traditional ecological knowledge in the curriculum, emphasizes a connection to the natural environment, employs place-based teaching and learning, and strives for relevance to the lives of the students, who, in this case are Buddhist novice monks. Aligning the elementary school curriculum with modern approaches to teaching especially in mathematics and science, has been a concern for the Bhutanese Ministry of Education (Gordon, 2013). However, the underlying assumptions that reinforce the neoliberal colonial agenda remain unchallenged, particularly at the high school level. Standardized testing, competition, and rote learning from textbooks is the norm in high school. Recognizing this, Lhomon Education was founded to address ways to bring GNH principles into education.

The Approach—View, Meditation, and Action

We are what we think
All that we are arises with our thoughts
With our thoughts we make the world.

Dhammapada I.1 (quoted in De Silva, 1998)

These, then, are the threads of my experience which have brought me to the present moment, in which I am envisioning what sacred world outlook means in the context of curriculum. It is based on ecological perspectives and contemplative practice, and informed by my teaching experience and the work I am engaged in in Bhutan. I draw extensively on my personal experience, using autobiographical sketches to illustrate and expand upon my ideas. My purpose

is to define and *refine* what I mean by sacred world outlook in order to clarify the ground upon which my approach to curriculum is based.

I have chosen to approach this thesis using the interrelated concepts taught in Buddhism of view, meditation, and action (Khyentse, 2003). This is a traditional way of communicating the fundamental teachings of the Buddha and the foundations upon which they rest (the view), contemplating their significance and implications (meditation) and bringing them into context and making them relevant for the practitioner, both personally and socially (action). Together these three form the basis for a commitment to the Buddhist path. I have chosen this approach because I feel that it both structures and describes the process that I need to take in writing this study. I have included the description below as an illustration of how Chögyam Trungpa worked with his students using this approach by which the view is established and then deepened through practice, both of meditation and in the world. It is also how I have approached my life, although not always explicitly. The concepts of view, meditation, and action are constantly occurring and re-occurring when I look back on how my life has evolved, particularly in relation to my experience as a teacher and a Buddhist. Taking view, meditation, and action as an approach to structuring my work provides a way to describe the process and my insights as I worked at the Shambhala School and also with the teachers in Bhutan and the implementation of the material in the classroom.

In the years before the passing of my teacher, Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche in 1987, he had asked his students to move to Nova Scotia, but up until he died, only a handful of them had heeded his wish. He had a grand vision, one which was enticing and at the same time outrageous and revolutionary, of establishing an enlightened society in Nova Scotia. This view of social organization undercut all my previous versions of how society could evolve. His vision of an enlightened society was inclusive, non-materialist, and based on a view of humanity as basically good, and a vision that trusted the heart as being the motivator of our actions. He chose Nova Scotia as the place to plant this seed because it was not caught up in the materialist rat race of US society, and the people still had a strong connection to the Earth and to their roots. He also saw Nova Scotia as removed geographically from the rest of the continent and therefore as somewhat protected. He assured us that it was a safe place, a refuge. The concept of refuge is a central metaphor to Buddhist thought and represents a commitment to a way of life in which the

practitioners, or “refugees,” embrace simplicity, honesty, and engagement in practice that undercuts ego. It is also an expression of devotion and commitment to the teacher. It requires letting go of self-serving attitudes and a willingness to face adversity with equanimity.

Holding the vision of enlightened society for the benefit of all beings, he educated us in what enlightened society meant, and taught us to meditate as the means by which we could cultivate the qualities for living a genuine, compassionate, and wholesome life. It was not until after he died that his students, myself included, took up his call to make his vision a reality to the best of our abilities. The shock of his passing was a call to action for many of us, and in 1987 and in the years following, hundreds of his students moved from the US, and some from Europe, to live in Nova Scotia. We brought with us a diverse range of skills and abilities, but for many there was tremendous frustration because of the challenges of living in Nova Scotia. At the time, Halifax, the capital of Nova Scotia, was a very slow and conservative town, with few amenities, and certainly very little choice of consumer items. But this was exactly what Trungpa wanted us to experience. Being faced with our assumptions, materialism, and speed was uncomfortable to say the least.

I arrived in Nova Scotia for the first time on April 6, 1987, two days after the death of Chögyam Trungpa. A large group of his students had chartered a plane from Colorado, and we arrived in Halifax on a dark and cold afternoon, the rain pouring down. I was met by friends who were already living there, and we went immediately to the house where Trungpa had lived. Many students were gathered there to pay their respects and to meditate for the last time in the presence of his body which was in sitting meditation posture. It was an emotional time, but strangely, a powerful sense of his presence radiated in the room. That was my last experience of his physical existence.

Leaving the house, the rain had turned into snow, big fat flakes which melted where they fell. We drove out of town in the dark to my friends’ house and in the morning, I awoke to the spectacular view of Saint Margaret’s Bay in the spring sunshine. The quality of the light, the brilliance of the day, the sad and tender heart I was experiencing, and the ongoing sense of presence of my guru, galvanised my desire to move as soon as possible to Nova Scotia, and fulfill my commitment to him.

On our return to Colorado, my husband and I began the process of emigrating to Canada which came to fruition in June of the following year. We had packed up and moved our belongings previously, arriving in Halifax at the end of the November in a giant snowstorm, having driven across the country from Boulder. Over the next few years we put down our roots, not without many upheavals and insecurities. For myself, and for many others, it was a time of assessing what exactly we were doing there in Nova Scotia, what establishing enlightened society meant in practice, and at the same time attending to livelihood and family. The community, known as “sangha,” gathered to practice together, ponder these questions, and support each other in our lives. Many of us over this time had made connections with Nova Scotians, and our experience of them was one of warmth, friendliness and openness which bore out Trungpa’s perception.

In 1990 my first child was born, and in the next years the question of his education began to enter into my thoughts. A friend one day told me that she and another friend wanted to start a school in Halifax that would put Buddhist and Shambhala ideas into practice. She asked me if I wanted to join them. This immediately resonated for me. Several years earlier, another friend had asked Trungpa in my presence what kind of work I should do when I got to Nova Scotia. He replied, “Some kind of education situation.” Until the moment that my friend asked me to join her in starting a school in Halifax I had not really understood how this would materialize. All of a sudden, my teacher’s words became clear. I knew that this was choiceless, that I would be part of this endeavour to create a school, and I understood his words not just as a suggestion, but as a command. This was going to be my part in bringing his view of society into reality.

When I look at my understanding of curriculum through the lens of view, meditation, and action I can see that it has gone through recurring cycles which can be articulated from this perspective. For example, in the beginning of the Shambhala School we attempted to stick to the Enki curriculum as closely as possible, almost word for word. At a certain point, we realized that some aspects were not realizable given the circumstances of starting a small alternative school in Nova Scotia. One of these was that the teacher should follow her class from Grade 1 to Grade 5. Although this is an ideal that I would have loved to see continue, it was not practical, as we did not have the teachers to take a new Grade 1 class every year. We went through some soul-searching to figure out what was central to our work using Enki and what we needed to adjust. We had to shift our view of what we were doing while maintaining our commitment to the

fundamentals: an arts-integrated holistic curriculum, and the integration the body, speech, and mind in the curriculum and the methodology. Thus, on the organizational level, the school took on a different look. As we had combined grades the children stayed with one teacher for 2 years, rather than staying with the same teacher for all the elementary years, but at heart we were still committed to the Enki view and approach. While I felt there was a loss in not following a group of students through the elementary years, I found that it gave me the opportunity to really go in depth into some of the topics I was teaching. Every time I taught a topic I found out more about it, and I felt able to enrich the curriculum and my teaching. I was also able to adapt it to the needs and abilities of the children in the class. On a practical and worldly level, as a mother of young children, it meant a lot less work in the summer preparing new material!

View, meditation, and action offers a recursive process of learning, reflection, and implementation, and is not a rigid and linear approach to scholarship. In creating a curriculum parallel to writing this thesis, I have encountered shifts in my understanding of the project. Through reading, discussion with teachers, immersion in the project in Bhutan, and experiencing the challenges and delights of that, I have gone through many cycles of understanding, particularly as applied to the action aspect. My view, that of sacred world outlook, has remained quite stable but has deepened as I contemplate this work in the light of it, and in respect to my experience and the study I have done. My understanding of the action element, putting it into practice, has evolved through a deeper understanding of interdependence, and the importance of place-based and culturally relevant curriculum. I contemplate my work from these perspectives as it played out in the cultural context of Bhutan, recognizing the limitations of my understanding as a person of European descent.

In the context of this thesis I look at how sacred world outlook is a lived reality for many in the non-Western world. In Bhutan, as in many other traditional societies, traditional ecological and Indigenous knowledge is, in many respects, inseparable from an understanding of the world as sacred as well as the beings that live on and beyond it. From this point of view, I describe how traditional and Indigenous knowledge is included in the curriculum as part of what I am describing as an ecological perspective. I consider how contemplative practices including, but not limited to, mindfulness meditation in a pedagogical context are the path to sacred world outlook taking root in our beings and those of future generation. I align myself in this respect

with the ideas expressed by Zajonc (2006), Bai, Eppert, Scott, Tait and Nguyen (2015) and Ergas (2015) who see contemplative pedagogy as a transformative rather than an instrumental innovation in the field of education. For transformation to happen through education, a willingness to step back and see the whole picture is necessary—taking a big view rather than solely addressing the problems in isolation. Contemplative practice offers a path to taking a bigger view of the role of education in society, as does an understanding of interdependence.

In order to address the questions of the study, I explore the following ideas from the perspective of view, meditation, and action throughout the thesis:

1. Taking the view of sacred world outlook in the curriculum, as defined, integrates the spiritual and the secular aspects of being human in a worldview which is conducive to awakening students' inherent sense of self-worth (basic goodness) and their compassionate concern for the world and all beings that inhabit it.
2. A contemplative pedagogical approach is an effective way of sensitizing students to ways of knowing and meaning-making beyond the rational and reductionist conceptual framework upon which much of today's education is based. Such an approach promotes confidence in basic goodness and the integration of body, speech, and mind.
3. An ecological perspective and contemplative practice together form the basis for an understanding of the interdependence of phenomena, which then gives rise to "right action" (i.e. engagement in the world which supports and respects diversity, sustainable environmental practices and the prevention of harm to all species and beings, rather than being based on self-centred concerns and the pursuit of material gain).
4. Sacred world outlook approaches the task of education holistically, not only from the point of view of pedagogical practice, but also from within the context of its role in society and in the current global political economy.

View, Meditation, and Action from the Buddhist perspective

Below I offer a brief overview of the Buddhist perspective of view, meditation and action which forms the basis for my understanding and practice of sacred world outlook in the curriculum. Establishing the view, in Buddhist practice, is of fundamental importance, as it implies a commitment to the Buddhist path, based on an intelligent and informed inquiry into the

principles formulated by the Buddha and the experience of their truth and relevance to the human condition. In the same way, for the individual, whether teacher or student in the realm of education or elsewhere, adopting sacred world as view implies a commitment to, and an understanding of, the relationship between the view, meditation and contemplation as path, and the action that arises from that. The interaction between personal understanding and how we impact the world in small and large ways is central to my thesis. The description of this process, as it has been practiced since the time of the Buddha, will, I hope, give form and substance to the view of sacred world outlook that I am proposing and to the implications for personal and curriculum practice and theory that emerge from that.

View, meditation, and action are seen in Buddhism as interrelated concepts (Khyentse, 2003) which are based upon, and also deepen, the understanding and realization of the interdependent nature of ourselves and the world in which we live (p. 2). Known as *pratityasamutpada*, translated as dependent co-arising or interdependent origination, this worldview is described by Macy (1979) as follows:

In [Buddha's] vision reality appears as an interdependent process. All factors, psychic and physical, subsist in a web of mutual causal interaction, with no element or essence held to be immutable or autonomous. Our suffering is caused by the interplay of these factors, and particularly by delusion, aversion and craving that arise from our misapprehension of them. (p. 39)

Khyentse (2003) discusses view, meditation, and action as three aspects of wisdom, which from the Buddhist perspective, manifests as enlightenment, the perfection of skillful means and compassion.^{viii} Practitioners on the Buddhist path aspire to right view, establishing that through meditation, and cultivating skillful means: the ability to act according to what is required, on the spot and without hesitation, for the benefit of all beings. The teachings say that, through the understanding of the interdependent nature of our existence, both conceptually and through contemplation and the practice of meditation, we will recognize the delusional nature of the self which is the cause of suffering at the personal level and in the world. By giving up, or wearing away, this delusional self, and also through the understanding of dependent co-arising, we will be able to liberate ourselves from suffering, cease to carry on harmful practices and thus cease to cause suffering for ourselves, for others and in the world. In adopting the view, the practitioners

commit to working with the realities of how their meditation and their activity in the world impacts themselves and others in an on-going process of refinement and understanding of view, meditation, and action.

View

Right view is the forerunner of the entire path, the guide for all other factors. It enables us to understand our starting point, our destination, and the successive landmarks to pass as practice advances. . . . To arrive at the desired place one has to have some idea of its general direction and the roads leading to it. . . . The practice of the path . . . takes place in a framework established by right view. (Bodhi, 1994, p. 15)

The concept of view was taught by the Buddha in The Noble Eightfold Path. He taught his disciples that to understand right view leads to right action, and conversely wrong view leads to wrong action. “Beings are the owners of their actions; they spring from their actions, are bound to their actions, and are supported by their actions. Whatever deeds they do, good or bad, of those they shall be heirs” (attributed to the Buddha, quoted in Bodhi, 1994, p. 17).

Central to Buddha’s teachings is the view that before we can be effective in the world, the desire to end suffering, both for the individual and in the world in general, has to first be established and understood. With right view practitioners of the Buddha’s teaching can embark on the path to liberation from suffering without causing any further suffering in the world. Adopting right view and engaging in the path, in Buddhist doctrine, is the practice of meditation and the gradual relaxation of those habits of body, speech and mind which cause suffering to oneself and others. The doctrine of *Kama* (Pali=action, in Sanskrit, *karma*) teaches about the consequences of actions performed without establishing right view. Habits of body, speech and mind lead to actions which have consequences, which in turn breed consequences of their own. An important aspect of *karma* elucidated by Macy (1979) is that because in Buddhist teachings our thoughts and our actions are interdependent, cause and effect become a cyclical, rather than a linear process. It inserts the element of choice into how we conduct ourselves. “It is what we *choose* that bears a recoil effect upon us—creating tendencies and dispositions, forming and perpetuating habits. *Karma* then is not deterministic, mechanical or inexorable, but can always be modified by present choice” (p. 44, italics in original). In order to lessen the impact of

negativity and the resulting *karma* of these thoughts and/or actions, the establishment of right view, that can also be called a frame of reference, is important. The path for the establishment of right view within the context of Buddha's teachings is the practice of meditation.

Meditation. The Eightfold Path is contained in the fundamental teachings of the Buddha, the Four Noble Truths. These are the truth that suffering, arising out of impermanence, is the basic state of existence for all sentient beings; the truth that desire and attachment to our egotistical existence are the cause of suffering; the truth that beings can be liberated from suffering; and that through following the Path we can attain liberation. From the point of view of individual practice through meditation and contemplation on these truths, Buddha taught that we can gradually liberate ourselves from habits, particularly our attachment to ego, which drive us to grasp onto what is considered beneficial, reject what is considered harmful and ignore whatever does not appear to directly affect us. Attachment to ego is the fundamental cause of suffering, not only personal suffering, because through our actions based on ego attachment we create suffering for others. At the centre of the Buddhist Wheel of Life, this attachment is depicted as a pig, a rooster and a snake holding each other's tails in an endless cycle of greed, aggression, and delusion (see Figure 1, p. 33). The Wheel of Life is, in itself, an illustration of dependent co-arising and the causal chain of the psycho-physical factors of our existence which lead to suffering and the liberation from suffering (Macy, p. 40).

Action

Our views might not be clearly formulated in our mind; we might have only a hazy conceptual grasp of our beliefs . . . these views then condition action. . . . The actions along with their consequences hinge on the views from which they spring. (Bodhi, 1994, p. 16)

Thoughts driven by egotistical desire, hatred and delusion, therefore, give rise to actions that cause harm. Conversely, recognition of this is the first step to casting off these habits of mind and the actions that follow from them. The causal relationship of thought giving rise to actions as explained in the doctrine of dependent co-arising does not make a dualistic distinction between the mental and the physical phenomena. Macy (1979) contrasts this with Western traditions "in which greater reality and/or greater value is assigned to the mental realm" (p. 45). The separation

of the mental and physical realms in mainstream Western thought, in contrast to the Buddhist view, is that “the path of liberation involves progressive release from the toils of matter” (p. 45).



Figure 1. The Wheel of Life, from a Bhutanese wall painting (J. Mitchell, Paro, Bhutan, 2012)^{ix}

She goes on to explain the relationship of the individual to society which stems from adopting the view of dependent co-arising, or interdependence, and the call to action which it implies.

“Because the self is a process formed through sensory, affective, and cognitive interaction with

the world, it cannot be abstracted from its social context. The interdependence of person and community is an assumption reflected in the institution of the Sangha [community of practitioners] and in its symbolic value as a model of social ideals” (p. 47). Humans and their environment cannot be seen as independent from each other within the context of dependent co-arising. Neither do we act independently, as our actions, whether of the body, in our speech, or in the mind have an impact on our environment and vice versa. “Basic to the ideals of social equality, economic sharing and political participation, which the teachings present, is the notion that the human being arises co-dependently with its natural and social environment” (Macy, p. 47). For De Silva (1998) this view provides us with an understanding of the causal patterns that have brought about the ecological crisis that we are experiencing in the world today; it points us towards patterns of behaviour that lessen the impact on the planet.

View, Meditation, and Action in the Context of this Study

Establishing the view—sacred world outlook. In defining sacred world outlook, the view, I refer to Chögyam Trungpa’s (Trungpa, 2004) teachings on the subject as well as to Jeremy Hayward (Hayward, 1995, 1997), one of his most senior students. I examine how sacred world outlook has found expression in Indigenous cultures, including that of Bhutan. It also underpins the work of Sutton (1998, 2005) and the Enki curriculum, and is implicit in the articulation of Gross National Happiness. I am taking the opportunity to spell out the idea of sacred world outlook as a worldview that can be transformative in educational theory and pedagogical practice. The term *sacred world* as it was adopted by Chögyam Trungpa conveys the experience of connectedness to the world as ordinary and at the same time magical, described in more detail in the next chapter. The influence of worldview on curriculum in mainstream educational circles, and the political and social implications of this, has been recognized and elaborated upon by curriculum theorists including Miller (2006, 2011),^x Onega (2014), Bai (2001) and Eppert, Vokey, Nguyen and Bai (2015) among others, and I offer the worldview of sacred outlook as a contribution to discussion and dialogue on the topic. I feel it is important for teachers to understand how worldview influences curriculum and in putting forward this alternative worldview for curriculum, I invite that dialogue and reflection. Aoki (1993) and Pinar (2012) have elaborated on curriculum as a process that is influenced by the people involved, the environment, and the social and historical circumstances as a “complicated conversation” (Pinar,

2012). In encouraging the recognition of autobiography in curriculum, these writers have opened up the field of curriculum theory beyond the understanding of “curriculum-as-plan” (Aoki, 1993). In this vein I have examined how my experience as an educator intersects with the view of sacred world outlook drawn from my Buddhist practice. In the classroom context, I describe how view is implied and worked with through story, arts, and experience, at least in the early years. The articulation of worldviews and their influence on educational approaches is a valuable discussion to have with teens throughout their schooling.

In the chapter on sacred world, I express my understanding of sacred world as it manifests in some Indigenous cultures and my perceptions about its presence in Bhutanese cultures. I examine obstacles to sacred world outlook, particularly how a dualistic mindset arising from scientific rationalism influences the way we view our world, and how that is reinforced by language. I describe the tenacity of the neoliberal agenda and its metaphors (Bowers, 2001) which we regard as truths, and the overriding influence of the neoliberal agenda in education worldwide. Neo-colonial and neoliberal curricula ignore or, at best, pay lip service to the questions of ecology and sustainability. Rather than engaging in a process which supports diversity, sustainability, and creativity, the view of neoliberal curricula is to educate students to be consumers. It views education as a homogenous product, which can be adapted to any geographic or social context. I look at my work in this context and pose sacred world outlook as an alternative worldview to the neoliberal agenda for education, one that values the traditions of a specific place and culture, while integrating modern education holistically and respectfully.

Meditation—contemplative practice as path. Mindfulness meditation as the foundation of contemplative practices both in the classroom and as a personal practice is the ground for understanding the relationship between the external world and the inner world. As I describe in the chapter on Meditation, it is also a path for bringing about transformation, both at the individual level and in the world, and for awakening the experience of sacred world outlook as a lived reality for students and their teachers. In the chapter on meditation I describe how sacred world outlook and Buddhist principles have influenced my practice as a teacher. From this perspective, I define my understanding of how mindfulness practice is the foundation for contemplative practice as pedagogy. I also reflect on the role of meditation and contemplative practice as a method for creating a space of creativity, flexibility, and openness in my work, not

only as a teacher and designer of curricula, but also as a student and writer in the context of this thesis. I discuss teaching with and through the arts and how the arts can be seen as contemplative practices in the context of teaching and the curriculum.

Dealing with the reality of the death of a loved one is probably the last thing any teacher wants to face in her class. However, this was something I had to face a few times over the years. If there was some warning, the weeks that led up to the event gave me the opportunity to go through rehearsals in my mind as to how to create a way for the students to express their feelings and their care for their friend who had lost a loved one. Books and discussion with other teachers were helpful, but on one particular occasion that stands out, it was the children themselves who showed me. Hearing the sad news at lunch time, it was a sober and shaken bunch of children who went outside for recess that day. As I watched them play, I saw that in small groups they were gathering bundles of sticks and with them they were building a variety of structures. I wandered around and heard them talking about their friend, and it became apparent that these structures were offerings to him. I let them continue with this activity well past the time to come inside. I wanted the spirit of this experience to continue once inside, so I ditched the plan for the afternoon and instead I pulled out everything I had that could be used to create a card or an object for them to send to their friend: felt scraps, beads, feathers, ribbon, yarn, beans, glitter, pasta, coloured paper, buttons, and more. They threw themselves into this activity wholeheartedly. As they worked I heard some of them discussing their experiences of losing a pet, or the death of a grandparent. Their creations were fabulous, and as they immersed themselves in their work it seemed they were processing their feelings about death and dying. I felt so grateful to have the freedom to make a call such as this one. It was the right thing for us all.

Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche talks about “atmosphere” in a school. While this can be hard to define, it is also tangible when one experiences it. For me it was sometimes as simple as making eye contact with a student, empathizing with what they were saying. It was also palpable in my classroom on painting days when the children became silently absorbed in the experience of water and colour. My role as a teacher, as I have understood it, is to create this atmosphere, one where the children are as relaxed and as happy as possible. Dzongsar Khyentse says, “The most important quality of a teacher is actually kindness. Really it should not be treated as a job. . . this

is big responsibility, you are actually responsible for somebody's life, especially kids if there are so many kids at school" (Khyentse, 2014). Simple practices, attention to the classroom environment, and nurturing moments of genuine connection, all contribute to what can be described as contemplative practice and pedagogy that has kindness at heart. These I discuss in the chapter on meditation. Central to the discussion is how these aspects of pedagogical practice work together to integrate and synchronize body, speech, and mind in the students to awaken sacred world outlook.

Action—the ecological perspective. A secular^{xi} curriculum within the context of sacred world outlook, requires a commitment to holistic pedagogy and an understanding of the interdependent nature of our existence which I am calling the ecological perspective. Action, therefore, has an ecological perspective arising from adopting "right view," and from the transformative effects of meditation and contemplation. My understanding of this, based on my experience, and its expression and implementation in the curriculum, are the specific actions I am articulating in this study in the chapter on Action. The curriculum for the young monks at the Chökyi Gyatso Institute (CGI) in Dewathang, Bhutan, aspires to support GNH values and incorporate its stated values, those of environmental conservation, preservation and promotion of Bhutan's cultural heritage, sustainable and equitable development, and good governance. Using a holistic approach, it incorporates education for sustainability, contemplative practices, traditional ecological and Indigenous knowledge, and local wisdom. My work in Bhutan has highlighted for me the importance of a culturally relevant and place-based curriculum. Learning that takes place through observation and engagement in the natural environment is a springboard to understanding and making connections, not only of the mind and through concepts, but of the heart. It engenders a love of nature, a sense of wonder and endless curiosity.

In the jungle it is shady under the canopy of tall trees. Vines and creepers trail down from above and snake across the almost invisible trail. It is very steep, and I am very preoccupied with keeping myself from pitching headfirst down the mountain. This is hard as there is so much to look at and my attention is constantly diverted by my young companions who are so familiar with this environment and keen to share it with me. They are constantly pointing out interesting things:

"Look, here is where a wild boar has been digging to make a sleeping place"

“There is a porcupine’s hole in that tree”

“We use this plant for medicine.”

“There’s a woodpecker’s home up there, Madam.”

“Look at the flower growing on the tree.”

“This is elephant poop, Madam. Very big.” I was glad that it was obviously quite old. . .

“What do you call this in your language. . . we use this for. . . this is a. . .”

In keeping with the approach of view, meditation, and action, it is the action element that acts as the mirror by which I have evaluated my work and that informs adjustments and changes that I have made in the process and its practice. In the final chapter, I describe how the challenges and the cultural differences that I encountered in the course of my work in Bhutan have affected my view and the outcome of the project. My expectations, as a middle class, English-speaking woman of European heritage were often unrealistic, challenging me to reconsider my role and my work in the Bhutanese context. Using the approach of view, meditation, and action gave me a resource with which to understand and write about my experience in a way that I hope is accessible and beneficial to a wide range of readers and educators.

Significance of the Study

My aspiration is that this thesis will be valuable in the creation of curricula in a wider context than the Chökyi Gyatso Institute (CGI) and Buddhist inspired schools like the Shambhala School. In taking sacred world outlook as the view in designing curricula, my objective is that it will contribute to a growing body of research on how an ecological perspective within the context of contemplative and holistic practice can be employed by educators inside (and outside) the classroom as well as by policy makers. Ecology in the context of this study refers not only to the broad concept of ecology in which all phenomena are seen as being interdependent, but also to the particularities of the locality and the culture for which the curriculum is intended. The Bhutanese teachers and I explored local Indigenous and traditional knowledge for inclusion in the curriculum during my time in Bhutan. This complements and builds upon the work that has been done by Battiste (2002), Bartlett, Marshall and Marshall (2012), Cajete (1994) and others

on the role of Indigenous and traditional ecological knowledge in place-based and culturally relevant education. Storytelling and the oral traditions that exist in Indigenous cultures offer a rich resource of wisdom and knowledge and are central to my view of curriculum. They enliven and enrich classroom practice, and convey a wealth of knowledge in a holistic context. It is my conviction that such a curriculum can contribute to a relevant and meaningful educational experience for all students, regardless of the culture or country in which they find themselves. For the future of the planet and the reversal of the disastrous and unsustainable policies which are devastating the environment and consequently leading to untold human hardship, education in general and curricula specifically, need to be relevant and culturally meaningful in the twenty-first century. I maintain that the curriculum needs to address all aspects of the students' being: physical, intellectual, emotional, social, and spiritual, and that all must be placed in the context of the ecological imperatives of our age. If the planetary crisis in which we find ourselves at present is to be mitigated and reversed, then inspiring an allegiance to sacred world outlook in the future generation becomes an essential task of the educational endeavour. I hope that this discussion of sacred world outlook and its place in the curriculum can have some bearing on curriculum design in the future.

Chapter 2

View–Sacred World Outlook

The ordinary world already is and always has been sacred. This means that the world is complete in itself and is basically pure. . . . Everything works together. It is so ordinary we usually don't think twice about it. But that ordinary world is sacred and magical when we look again, when we feel it, see it, hear it, open all our senses to its profundity.

(Hayward, 1995, p. 3)

On our honeymoon, my husband and I went to the Southwest of the US and visited some of the sites of habitation of the Ancients, the ancestors of the Pueblo peoples. The cliff dwellings at Mesa Verde, with the walls still standing after 1000 years under the shadow of enormous sandstone ledges, are truly magnificent to behold. In one that was accessible to the public we were able to go down into a kiva, the circular, semi-underground structures, that are thought to have been used for both ceremonial and non-ceremonial purposes. There was a small voice inside me that told me that I was violating some kind of code in descending the ladder into the kiva, that I was not invited and not actually welcome. My curiosity overcame that voice, and we clambered down into the kiva which was dark and unadorned, except for a firepit in the centre. That night coyotes screamed around our tent, and we both had horrendous dreams, as if the local spirits were attacking us. Coincidence, perhaps, but it was an uncomfortable enough experience that we decided to leave and go to Chaco Canyon.

Chaco Canyon was once inhabited by several thousand people, who left behind magnificent dwelling structures and large-scale kivas, some still in good condition and others ruined but visible. The atmosphere there was more benevolent, it seemed to me. A prominent flat-topped butte in the centre of the canyon acted as a focal point, and as I later found out, was in fact the locus of sun and moon calendars carved into the rock on its upper surface. As we wandered around the extensive ruins with their beautiful stonework, I felt at peace. That evening, as the sun went down, the canyon walls glowed red in its light. Some children in another campsite were playing, and their voices echoed off the canyon walls. I imagined they were the voices of children from ancient times who had played there in the shelter of those warm encircling canyon walls so long ago.

The next day we visited the Great Kiva, which measures about 60 feet in diameter. Having only been in North America for a few years I had very little knowledge of the Indigenous people and the practices and traditions that have been handed down through the ages. I had been reading bits and pieces on our travels and was intrigued by what appeared to be so many similarities between the Shambhala and Buddhist teachings and what I was observing in these ancient structures. The huge Pueblo Bonito that housed hundreds of people had small kivas interspersed with the rooms which were the gathering places for the different clans. Some distance from the pueblo the Great Kiva was designed like a mandala, with the four directions clearly marked. I had read that many of the structures were arranged according to the astrological calendar marked on the butte, the solstices and the lunar events aligning the heavenly energies with those on Earth. Standing there in the centre of the Great Kiva, I had a sudden insight: perhaps the reason Chögyam Trungpa wanted to be in North America was because here there was a living tradition that resonated with the traditions of Buddhism and that were expressed in similar ways. As in the Buddhist and Shambhala teachings of sacred world and enlightened society, I had the sense of spirituality permeating the mundane world of the everyday lives of the people who had lived here. I had an intuitive sense of the boundaries between the material and the immaterial being softened and the mundane aspects of living and survival as being inseparable from the sacred. At that time, however, I was only vaguely familiar with the animist Bön tradition of Tibet which preceded Buddhism, and which influenced many of the forms that were adopted in Buddhism. As I have learned more about both Indigenous traditions and Buddhism, I have noticed many commonalities between the two. I attribute this to what I understand as the non-dualistic view that gives rise to the experience of sacred world as a lived reality, by which the power of ordinary things can give rise to insight into the mysteries of our existence.

Departing Chaco Canyon the next morning, we were making our way along the 25 mile dirt road out of the canyon when we saw a carload of Navajo people (as we called the Diné then) whose car had broken down on the side of the road. There was no traffic on this road, as it was outside the tourist season, so we stopped to see if we could help. A young man climbed into our car and asked to be taken to the nearest town. He was silent for many miles as we bumped along. Suddenly he pointed at a small picture of Chögyam Trungpa we had on the dashboard. “Who’s that?” he asked. We told him that he was our teacher, that he was from Tibet and that it was said that the people from whom his people were descended had come from that part of the world

thousands of years ago. Again, he was silent for a long time. Suddenly, as we passed a very large flat-topped butte, he pointed to it and said, "This is where our people came from." And he told us the Diné creation story in detail, of which I unfortunately do not remember much, having no reference point for it at that time, except that the butte was the point of emergence of the people from a previous world. He also told us about the sweat lodge, the medicine that could heal what the white man had taken from his people, and that many had turned away from that medicine. He shared a lot on that short journey. Not long after, we arrived in the town. We took him to the place he indicated and without a word, he got out of the car and disappeared. We sat and looked at each other, both of us somewhat stunned by this unexpected and extraordinary sharing. Whether it was his desire to correct our misapprehension about the origins of his people, or whether it was some sense of fellowship inspired by the picture of Chögyam Trungpa that caused him to share so much with us, we will never know. Whatever it was, it was a gift.

What is Sacred World Outlook?

Sacred world outlook might not be as far from everyday experience as it sounds. The word "sacred" tends to conjure up an image of saints, churches or mosques and organized religion, which is only engaged with at specific times or on particular days of the week. However, the idea of sacred world, according to the great meditation teacher, Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, goes beyond the boundaries of organized religion. As he explains it, sacred world is the world we live in, the everyday world of trees and greenery, children and old people, animals and birds, weather, day and night. It is profoundly ordinary, and at the same time, mysterious and magical. Amidst all the changes that happen in the environment and in life—the transformation of the environment through buildings, roads, and with mechanical and technological innovations—it is still certain that the sun will rise in the morning and set at night, that the spring will come, and that the tides will continue to rise and fall. There is a rhythm and beauty to the natural world that is very easy to understand as sacred. It is always there, it is beautiful, it is purely as it is. Even in the midst of busy lives it is possible to catch glimpses of the magical and sacred world—the bird singing its heart out in the morning inspiring us to get out of bed, seeing the first crocus that blooms in the spring after a long cold winter, a warm smile from a complete stranger, the sun bursting out from behind a cloud, the magic of a rainbow. From this point of view sacred world is very ordinary and accessible to everyone at any time. Connecting, opening the senses,

however briefly, with what Abram (1997) calls the “sensuous world,” is a pathway to experiencing its power and magic. For that brief moment, the world and the experience are one and the same, and by looking deeply at that moment one can see that worries and stress have been abandoned, if only very briefly. The key to sacred world outlook is connecting to that moment in the midst of the pressures of daily life. It is there to be rediscovered. As Hayward (1995) says:

We are all capable of experiencing in this way. Such moments have varying degrees of intensity, from the merest flash to the deeply affecting. Yet we all do experience moments that point to the sacredness of our world. When our habitual anxieties are quiet for a moment, we can feel the living energy of the world of which we are a part. We discover a sense of value as well as humour in our lives that gives our lives meaning and wholeness. (p. 4)

This sense of meaning and wholeness is the experience of basic goodness, as described by Chögyam Trungpa; basic goodness is the key to the rediscovery of sacred world. The idea of basic goodness is central to the teachings on Shambhala society that Chögyam Trungpa gave in the West. He envisioned an enlightened society modelled on the ancient, some say mythical, kingdom of Shambhala, which he described as follows:

Spirituality was secularized, meaning that day-to-day living situations were handled properly. Life was not based on the worship of a deity or on vigorous religious practice, as such. Rather, that wonderful world of Shambhala was based on actually relating to your life, your body, your food, your household, your marital situations, your breath, your environment, your atmosphere. (Trungpa, 2004b, p. 171)

Relating simply and directly to one’s world is the way to connect to basic goodness which, as Trungpa describes is unconditional.

Unconditional means that goodness is fundamental. You don’t reject your atmosphere; you don’t reject the sun and moon and the clouds in the sky. You accept them . . . basic goodness is *good* in the sense that it is so basic and *therefore* it is good, not in the sense of good as opposed to bad. It is good because it works. It is a natural situation. (Trungpa 2004c, p. 236, italics in original)

Tuning in to this natural situation, the natural order of one's world, is what makes the world sacred as opposed to mundane, actually blurring the distinction between what is sacred and what is mundane. By taking an attitude of basic goodness, even the most mundane situations can be considered sacred. Cooking a meal, changing a baby's diaper, brushing our hair, dressing ourselves—all uphold and contribute to the continuity and natural order of the world, and appreciation of these details, however small, is the experience of basic goodness which reawakens a sense of sacred world. “We have to work with the sense of sacredness and richness and the magical aspect of our experience. And this has to be done on the level of our everyday existence, which is a personal level, an extremely personal level” (Trungpa, 2004a, p. 378).

My observation over the years has been that children, given the opportunity, naturally experience the world with a sense of wonder, curiosity, and imagination. Their play, explorations and social interactions are all about making sense of their world and experiencing it fully. The world as a sacred place is the totality of their experience from this perspective. “Our rediscovery of sacredness as adults reminds us that as young children we were immersed in the sacred world,” says Hayward (1995, p. 4). This is true in my experience. As a child, I loved to climb trees. I would go as high as I could in the branches and just sit there. The feeling of being one with the tree is still very vivid in my body. I remember feeling almost invisible as I blended in with the tree, of experiencing the world as it did, the birds in its branches, the people walking below. There have been moments as an adult when I can recall this experience on a visceral level, such as when I had a sudden recognition that a beloved plant in my care was in distress. For that moment, there was no separation between me and the plant. There was a completeness in the experience that was on the level of communication, and I woke up to its plight. Hayward again says, “This sacred world is ordinary, but our experience of the ordinary can be magical” (p. 5).

In Buddhist and Shambhala thought, basic goodness, or *buddhanature* as it is called in Buddhism, is understood to be our birthright, the basis of our being and our existence. The reason it is not always accessible is because of the tendency to obscure its existence with conceptual mind. There is a constant second-guessing of the experience of being present and in the moment, of awareness of the world, of “nowness” as Trungpa calls it (Trungpa, 2004b, p. 73). Judging, making distinctions between what is pleasurable, what is disagreeable and what to ignore, is constantly occupying the mind in daily life. The distinctions we make between good

and bad are often far beyond the level of conscious thought, but they nonetheless govern action in our moment to moment existence. This overlay of conceptual thinking is traditionally described as being like the clouds that cover the sun and hide its brilliance. The sun, our basic goodness or buddhanature, is always there, but at times the clouds of conceptual mind conceal it. “The conceptual mind is always dichotomizing, dividing everything into opposites and most modern people do not know that a state of mind beyond dichotomizing exists or could exist” (Hayward, 1995, p. 27).

Indigenous Culture and Sacred World Outlook

Given the complexity of the discussion that exists around the term “Indigenous knowledge,” I have found that the term “traditional ecological knowledge”^{xii} to be helpful. “Traditional ecological knowledge” can be defined as “a cumulative body of knowledge, practice, and belief, evolving by adaptive processes and handed down through generations by cultural transmission, about the relationship of living beings (including humans) with one another and with their environment” (Berkes, Colding & Folke, 2000, p. 1252). Turner, Ignace & Ignace (2000), add the word “wisdom” to the term, as in “Traditional ecological knowledge and wisdom,” that they define as being:

Knowledge of ecological principles, such as succession and interrelatedness of all components of the environment; use of ecological indicators; adaptive strategies for monitoring, enhancing, and sustainably harvesting resources; effective systems of knowledge acquisition and transfer; respectful and interactive attitudes and philosophies; close identification with ancestral lands; and beliefs that recognize the power and spirituality of nature. (p. 1275)

From this perspective, Indigenous knowledge and traditional ecological knowledge are similar and I use the terms interchangeably in this thesis according to the context.

A way of life and existence which is open and accepting of energies beyond that which are evident to humans has been part of the human experience as far back in time as we know (Hayward, 1995). In many cultures, that connection to other realities is still alive and meaningful to the people of those cultures, and there is a sense of communing with those beings or entities in a day-to-day, very ordinary way. Kami shrines in Japan are a way of communicating with the

spirits of the natural world. First Nation peoples in Canada and North America have many ways of expressing their connection to the phenomenal world. A Mi'kmaw^{xiii} friend of mine, before picking some cedar from a tree for using in a smoke ceremony, quite unselfconsciously put his hand on the trunk of the tree as if he was addressing an old friend and spoke for several minutes to the tree in Mi'kmaq, thanking the tree and asking for permission to take some of its branches for the ceremony. Trungpa introduced his students to *drala*, a Tibetan word meaning “beyond aggression.” Hayward describes drala as “patterns of living energy” (1995, p. 28). Waking up to the existence of drala energy is central to Trungpa’s teachings on Shambhala and sacred world. It is through drala, as with the equivalent expression in other cultures, that we can reconnect to the world as sacred and begin to break down the barriers between ourselves and the phenomenal world.

One of the key points in discovering drala principle is realizing that your own wisdom as a human being is not separate from the power of things as they are. . . . There is no fundamental separation or duality between you and your world. When you can experience those two things together, as one, so to speak, then you have tremendous vision and power in the world—you find they are inherently connected to your own vision, your own being. (Trungpa, 2004b. p. 82)

This state of mind is inherent and natural in many cultures. Trungpa describes the relationship between drala and an attitude of sacredness towards the world as follows:

[S]ome American Indians in the Southwest grow vegetables in the desert sands. The soil, from an objective standpoint, is completely infertile. . . but the Indians have been cultivating that soil for generations; they have a deep connection to the earth and they care for it. To them it is sacred ground, and because of that their plants grow. That is real magic. That attitude of sacredness towards your environment will bring drala. (Trungpa 2004b, p. 88)

Drala, kami, gods, spirits: all are the names for “patterns of energy” (Hayward, 1997) that point to a way of perceiving the world and acknowledging its sacredness.

The role of language, and oral language in particular, as I discuss below, is fundamental to how we understand the world and to how we open to or close down to the sacredness of the world. Oral language is the foundation of all cultures, systems of thought and ways of knowing, and at the root of our very human-ness. In cultures that relied solely on the spoken word for the transmission of knowledge, the ability to be in tune with the world around one was of paramount importance. Holmes Whitehead (2013)^{xiv} shows how the Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia, in each successive generation, learned the secrets of their world—the ways in which they were acutely attuned to shifts and changes in their environment, through the stories and the wisdom of the Elders. Individuals were not separate from the environment, but an integral part of it, and there was no separation between “that out there” and “me here.”

To the Old Ones of the People [Mi'kmaq], Creation itself was fluid, in a continuous state of transformation. Reality was not rigid, set forever into form. Here form changed shape according to the will and whim of the Persons manifesting those forms, at any given moment. This Creation is clearly depicted in Mi'kmaw stories, not only through their content, interestingly, but through their basic structure and the language in which they were told. (Holmes Whitehead, 2013, p. 2)

Knowledge was therefore holistic in nature. Individuals were not separate from the community, the animals, the plants and trees of the world that they inhabited. To know the one, one had to know all. Survival depended on the ecological balance of everything within the environment being stable and sustainable. Referring to North American Indigenous culture, Nicholas (1996) asserts that “[T]he essence of cultural survival depends on the survival of a distinct and essential view of the world, and for Aboriginal Peoples this world view is derived from and sustained by the land as the source of life, and by human relationships to each other and to the land” (p. 61).

Oral language and the knowledge passed through it was the vehicle for this understanding. Sable and Francis (2012) describe the way in which the stories, myths, legends, dances and songs of the Mi'kmaw people of Nova Scotia all contained within them the wisdom of the community and the culture. Through those forms the knowledge of the land and the place of people within that was communicated.

[The Mi'kmaw] narrative tradition is rich in place-names that are mnemonic devices for providing a framework by which to remember relevant aspects of cultural knowledge. . . . It is the *power* of the stories and the consequent significance of the place names to individuals within the cultural community that gives us a glimpse into what can be termed another world view. The Mi'kmaw culture, essentially, is inseparable from the land of Eastern Canada. (Sable & Francis, 2012, p. 19, italics in original)

Australian Aboriginal peoples' understanding of their world and their ability to survive in the often harsh and arid landscape is intimately connected to their knowledge of the "song lines" (Abram, 1997; Chatwin, 1987) which literally act as guides or maps as they move through it. The sacredness of the world was not in question for Indigenous peoples who, it seems, lived it as a daily reality. Their perceptions of the world included realities that in Western mainstream culture would be considered to belong to another world which, depending on your point of view, is separate or non-existent, fanciful, or downright untrue.

My experience of living in Bhutan with the monks and hearing stories about their view of reality makes me realize that what I take for granted, coming as I do from a Western scientific standpoint, is not necessarily how they understand the world to be. They are far closer to another reality which is open to possibilities of strange happenings, magic, and a close relationship with a world of spirits, gods, and the power of natural phenomena in an embodied form. Two young boys told me of seeing a local healer pull some kind of material out of a sick person's body without breaking the skin—which led to that person's recovery. At a less extreme level, prayer flags and prayer wheels are part of the landscape everywhere you look, in order to magnetize the blessings of the local spirits and the departed and living gurus, and to disperse those blessings on the wind.

Sacred World in Bhutanese Culture

In Bhutan, I was struck by the living example of a people who still live by the traditional values and are deeply connected to the land, despite the incursion of modernity and the creeping influence of consumer culture. The lives of the people in the area where I stayed are infused on a daily basis with the communion between themselves and those beings that are invisible to the eye but present in the hearts of the people. Some of the daily rituals, such as making the water

offerings in the morning, are explicitly Buddhist, but I had the sense that many of the rituals had their roots in far older traditions, dating back to the earliest Bön animist tradition, despite having a Buddhist overlay. While I was there, there was a fatal accident which uncovered a very real fear of ghosts that appeared to be quite widespread. People did not want to sleep alone, and effigies with money woven into intricate patterns of threads, with butter lamps burning in front of them appeared at the site of the accident. I also experienced the rituals and customs around death and dying while I was in Bhutan. Monks are invited by the family to do pujas (rituals) at the bedside of the sick person in hospital. After death, cremation takes place on an astrologically auspicious day. More than one body can be cremated at the same time as there are two cubic concrete hearths at the cremation ground, of about a metre in each dimension, within which the bodies are placed, and a fire of huge logs built around them. The lama and monks recite pujas throughout the burning of the bodies. Offerings are made to the fire and to the deceased, for which a troop of monkeys competed, providing some welcome relief from the long ceremony and the unhappy atmosphere, as the mourners scrambled to protect the offerings and chase away the monkeys.

The monks were running with flashlights to the site of the fire which had started in the grass below the pole where the electrical wires had shorted, showering sparks onto the ground. Some were pulling hoses down the hill, others were grabbing branches and beating at the flames. The fire was put out fairly swiftly, and it was not long before the electricity was restored. Later I learned that one of the monks, aged about 15 years old, had brushed the electrical wires with a bamboo frond that he was using to beat at the fire, and he had been electrocuted. He was momentarily knocked out but was otherwise unharmed. On waking up the first thing he did was to run to the nearest house, dip his feet in a pail of water and walk across the wooden veranda of the house. I was told that when he awoke he was not sure if he was alive or dead. He knew that the way to find out was to see if he could see his footprints, and if he couldn't see his footprints, then he would know that he was no longer in the world of the living.

The lunar calendar determines the dates for all important events such as the new year celebrations. Astrologically auspicious dates for undertaking various tasks are printed in the national daily newspaper, *Kuensel*. The local astrologer is consulted for dates to move house, take a journey, or get married (which is a fairly recent, Western-inspired formality), and usually

such events will be accompanied by some kind of ritual performed by a monks or the local lay monk called the *gomchen*, to pacify or dispel harmful entities, and to invoke blessings from the benevolent ones. The Bhutanese are generous with their money offerings to the monks and gomchens, whether in the temple at Buddhist pujas or in their homes when they request them to come and do a puja for purification, blessing, or some kind of exorcism. In general, generosity pervades the way of life of the people I met there, of which I was often the fortunate recipient. I was always in a dilemma as to how to repay their kindness.



Figure 2. Prayer flags (J. Mitchell, 2017, Dewathang, Bhutan)

The landscape reflects and embodies this sacredness that is so central to the lives of the people. Prayer flags, printed with prayers and auspicious verses, are erected on tall poles in any spot where the wind blows, or strung between trees on ropes. Stupas, constructions that represent the body of the Buddha, are a common sight and are often focal points around which the community

gathers, especially the old people who circumambulate the stupa reciting prayers, beads in hand. The prayer wheels, too, are gathering places, and it is common to see old people making their circumambulations while young children play in the dirt, dogs sleep in the sun, and teenagers check out their phones. The prayer wheel, painted with mantras, has a bell which is struck with every complete turn of the wheel, as another way to disperse the blessings and prayers being offered by the person turning the wheel. Local deities and spirits are acknowledged to be everywhere, but there are certain rocks, mountains and places that have special significance because of something miraculous that had happened there, or because it is where a famous guru gave teachings. These events live in the folk memory of the people.

There is a seed which is encased in a fan-shaped white transparent membrane, measuring about two centimetres across, which is offered as part of the ritual in some ceremonies in Bhutan. This is because, I learned from the young monks, the shape of the actual seed is in the shape of the letter CHA which is the sixth letter in the Chöeke^{xv} alphabet. The Buddha promised that his teachings would be contained in the form of sacred letters after he was gone. To the Bhutanese for whom the world is a reflection of the sacred, this seed embodies the Buddha's speech.

Despite all this, it seemed that meditation and mindfulness practice, in the way we think of it in the West, is not something that the Bhutanese practice in general. Mindfulness practice has been introduced by teachers such as Dzongsar Khyentse to the Bhutanese, and it is becoming more prevalent among the younger generation. The monastery gives a week-long mindfulness training for teachers in the Samdrup Jongkhar area every year. In the three years that the training has been offered, it has grown in popularity. As I understood it, for most Bhutanese, especially the older generation, their practice is one of devotion, and the accumulation of merit through making offerings at the temples—to the gurus and to the teachers, as well as through pujas and the prayers and circumambulations they perform at the stupas and prayer wheels.^{xvi} At the Chökyi Gyatso monastery, on feast days the local women cook enormous batches of food which they carry up the road to the temple. The local people crowd into the temple, and while the monks recite the liturgy, play the music, and perform the ritual, the children are running around in and out of the building, the women are chatting to each other, and the men, fewer in number for some reason, are carrying on subdued conversations. It is a time for the young to flirt, exchange texts and show off their best clothes, the colourful *ghos* for the men and *kiras* for the women.

Everyone crowds in for the feast section of the ritual, which is served by the young monks and eaten off banana leaves instead of plates, part of the zero-waste policy that the monastery follows.

Apart from the food, which is plentiful and often very tasty, the whole ritual is a feast for the senses. Cymbals, horns, conches, and oboe-like instruments are played at particular spots in the proceedings, colourful decorations and paintings of gurus decorate the walls of the temple and incense is burned throughout. This too, is an aspect of the sacred view in that the senses are not seen to be problematic and distracting as they are in the Judaeo Christian tradition. On the contrary, the senses are the gateways to human experience of the world, the environment and the beings and spirits that inhabit it. The elements are all imbued with a sacred quality and are manifest as *dakinis* (female deities) of earth, air, fire and water. Protecting spirits are associated with the elements, to whom regular offerings and prayers are made. A powerful sense of *drala* pervades the environment, and the recognition of this sacredness and the desire to uphold it is manifest in the details of daily life, from the way people dress to the buildings and the richness of the temple decorations.

Worldview, Duality, and Sacred World Outlook

In the following sections I examine how the experience of basic goodness and sacred world outlook is diminished by a dualistic worldview, and the mechanisms by which duality and a dualistic worldview are perpetuated. I address four aspects which I perceive stand out in this respect, as I inquire into sacred world outlook as a worldview for alternative curricula. These are: scientific-rationalism and reductionist worldviews which give rise to, and reinforce, dualistic thinking; the role that language plays in our perception of reality; the underlying metaphors and power of the neoliberal agenda; and the role of education in the transmission of neoliberalism and the breakdown of Indigenous societies.

The worldview of scientific rationalism. The ability to live in and experience sacred world, as described by Trungpa, has been all but lost in mainstream Western society. The perception of the world as a magical and sacred realm, full of potential and wonder, is not part of the dominant scientific-rationalism of Western mainstream culture. Trungpa attributes this to a pervasive sense of “basic badness,” influenced by the Christian doctrine of original sin that

permeates cultural expression and influences the view of human nature in Judeo Christian culture (Hayward, 1997, p. 102). The idea of original sin presupposes a flaw in human nature and gives rise to a sense of having done something wrong a long time ago, something that makes us undeserving of goodness. “Because we have this idea, it is very difficult for us to accept or even understand the idea of basic goodness. . . . Belief in our fundamental blameworthiness is so deeply rooted in our upbringing that we accept it without question as the final truth about human nature” (Hayward, 1995, p. 7). Trungpa also suggests, according to Hayward, that this sense of human nature being flawed has crept into many institutions and is evident in the sciences, our education system, economic theory and many systems of psychotherapy (p. 7). He suggests that much of the malaise experienced in Western society, such as depression, anxiety, emotional numbness, and a sense of disconnectedness, stems from this fundamental belief in a flawed human nature which can also be felt as physical pain and a longing which strikes at the heart.

This deep inner hunger is felt throughout society, even among those of us who live at a level of relative physical comfort and affluence. . . . Our education offers little clue as to how to satisfy this hunger. We grow up with only a narrow and piecemeal vision of how to live our lives. We become driven by empty and pointless goals to which we have no real allegiance. We drift on a sea of anxiety and confusion. We lose touch with our human heart and our basic goodness. (Hayward, 1995, p. 8)

The sense of human nature as flawed has been compounded by ideas that have taken root in the scientific community over the last 300 years. The predominant scientific understanding of the world is based on the supposition that we exist as separate from our environment. Bai (2001) describes how this view came about in the 17th century from Descartes and others whose theory of the Mechanical Universe reduced everything in the universe to dead, inanimate matter, with only Mind being excluded from that (p. 5). The assumption then evolved that human beings were the sole possessors of rational thought, and thus were superior to all other species. The understanding of creation put forward by the church, in which God made man and woman to have dominion over the animals and the Earth, reinforced this idea. As the Mechanical Universe worldview gained acceptance, matters of the spirit were relegated to the church, while the material world became the domain of science, exacerbating the split between mind and matter. The view of Mechanical Universe led to an accepted understanding of reality in which the world

“out there” was completely separate from “me here.” The understanding of phenomena was seen as being dictated by a series of processes that existed internally as an extension of rational thought, rather than between the individual and the world.

[A]ccording to the Cartesian reductionism, perception is not a matter of sympathy, resonance, or communion between the perceiver and the perceived. Cartesian perception is no more than the complex mechanism of lights impacting and exciting nerve cells. Any affective qualities that are adjunct to this mechanical process are mentalistic epiphenomena which are best accounted for in terms of the perceiver’s cognitive ability to attach symbolic significance to perception. If we are moved at all by what we see, the credit goes not to the perceived at all but to ourselves, that is, to our well-furnished Mind. (Bai, 2001, p. 8)

Bai goes on to explain, “Cartesian reductionism leaves no room to think of perception as *also* the perceiver’s participation in the perceived, that is, as a communion, a transfusion, between them” (p. 8, italics in original). She proposes that Descartes approach and the view of Mechanical Universe “legitimated the duality of Mind and Matter, and then reduced Nature to the order of Matter, thereby authorizing humanity, whose essence is supposedly the Mind (the so-called ‘rational nature’), an absolute dominion over Nature. The consequence is the radical alienation of human presence from the natural world” (p. 2).

Descartes’ view of Mechanistic Universe supposes that we are nothing but extremely complex machines and that the world is made up of matter that occupies empty space. From this, a dogmatic approach to science has evolved that denies feeling, intuition, communion, and connectedness within and between all aspects of phenomena. This persists in the way scientists view the world to the present day. This kind of determinism, the legacy of Descartes, colours perception and ways of relating to the world as well as to our inner world of feeling and the relationship between the two. From this standpoint, the energy and feeling of love or any other emotion, any sense of connectedness as well as sense perceptions, all are filtered through the rational and conceptual mind. These are then automatically filtered and segregated into what is favourable or not, dismissed as irrelevant or, in the case of scientific rationalism, assumed to be “untrue.” The constant need to assert ourselves in the world through this process is reinforced by

scientific rationalism which undermines the ability to see and experience phenomena in their totality. “We live as if our conditioned beliefs were the only truth, our perceptions become reduced, and we feel the sacredness and the enchanted world as a threat to our sanity” (Hayward, 1997, p. 27).

Hayward (1997), himself a physicist, describes how such a view of the world is determined by preconceptions and beliefs. This includes the way conventional science views and describes the world and, in the West, how science has become a widespread story that is taken to be the final truth. However, Hayward points out that truth is perceived differently in different cultures. “The stories we are told as children showed us what to experience as *real* in the world. We usually think that what we believe is real is based on what we see and hear. But this is only partly true. It is just as true to say the opposite: that what we believe is real decides what we will see and hear in our world” (p. 7, italics in original).

Hayward identifies how scientists are given the last say on what is real and what is not, and the validity of our experience is called into question if it does not fall into what has been determined as “real” by science.

Much of what scientists say is tremendously helpful and true. It is not that the world that their stories describe is completely wrong, or doesn't exist at all. It is just that the modern description leaves out so much—it leaves out the sacredness, the livingness, the soul of the world. . . . Scientists tell us . . . that the part they leave out is not really there.
(Hayward, 1997, p. 6)

One well-educated monk asked me if it is true that in some places in the world the sun didn't rise for several months at a time. When I told him that this was the case in the extreme north and south of the globe he asked for an explanation which led to me setting up a model, using plates and cups, of the sun in the centre and the Earth rotating around the sun. As I started to move the Earth around the sun he stopped me and pointed out that I had it the wrong way around—the sun should be moving around the Earth. He was startled and very surprised to learn, that although it looks as if the sun moves across the sky on a daily basis, the opposite is true. That the sun moved across the sky was his experience and totally valid from one point of view. From the perspective of mainstream Western thinking, it might seem astonishing that anyone could reach his age and

not be aware of this, although we often talk colloquially in the West about the sun moving across the sky. I didn't feel totally comfortable refuting what was for him obvious. It put the finger on one of the central tasks in designing curriculum for young Bhutanese: how to reconcile the conventional Western scientific viewpoint which tends to understand phenomena as being separate from our experience, while acknowledging and validating the natural propensity of the Bhutanese for seeing the world as magical and sacred. For this reason, I have emphasised the importance of Elders, healers, and local knowledge holders in the educational approach I am designing in order that the students maintain some kind of fluidity between the reality that is held to be scientific truth in the West and the reality which resides in the wisdom of the local people that goes back generations.

Scientific method has much to be said for it, in that it relies on close observation; it nurtures healthy doubt; it is driven by creativity and imagination; and it strives to be unprejudiced. The sense of wonder, curiosity and exploration which propels the scientific endeavor is an aspect of our humanity that has brought many benefits. The problem arises, however, with the persistence of the dualistic view, in which the role of the observer is discounted and the external world is seen as separate, rather than alive, influenceable and influenced by our presence and observation. An unquestioned acceptance of the view that matter and mind are separate is what Hayward (1997) calls "Dead World." It is based on the presupposition that "facts" based on conditioned beliefs are unquestioned truths that run counter to sacred world outlook and to a sense of wonder.

It is awe and wonder that has driven the human mind to great scientific discoveries, and now the findings of modern physics are challenging much of what is taken for granted in our world and in the Cartesian view of science. The conclusions that have been drawn from these discoveries are strangely in line with Buddhist understandings of mind and matter, in that the more we try to make matter finite and solid, the more it appears to be composed of space and energy (Hayward, 1997). Conversely, space, rather than being a vacuum and empty, has been shown to be alive and responsive (p. 118). An analysis of the work of Nagarjuna, a third century BC Buddhist sage, by Kohl (2007), reveals the similarities between Nagarjuna's philosophical stance and that of quantum physics on the nature of reality. Kohl determines that both systems point to the same conclusion:

Reality is not static, solid or independent. It does not consist of singular, isolated material or immaterial factors, but of systems of dependent bodies. . . . In quantum physics we call such fundamental two-body systems earth and moon, electron and positron, quark and anti-quark, elementary particle and field of force. Nagarjuna calls his systems or dependent pairs walking person and way to be walked, fire and fuel, agent and action, seer and object of seeing. . . . These bodies are not independent and they cannot be observed singly because in their very existence and constitution they are dependent on each other and cannot exist or function independently of each other. (p. 80)

The assumption that matter is solid and space is empty is fundamentally challenged when we see them as existing interdependently, as fragile but constantly interacting systems. Kohl poetically describes this understanding of the nature of reality in Buddhism and quantum physics when he asks:

What is reality? We have become accustomed to firm ground beneath our feet and fleeting clouds in the sky. The concept of reality of Nagarjuna's philosophy and the concepts of complementarity and interactions of quantum physics teach us something quite different: . . . everything is built on sand, and not even the grains of sand have a solid core or nucleus. Their stability is based on the unstable interactions of their component parts. (p. 80)

Language, dualism, and sacred world. Abram (1997) explores in depth the relationship between language and world view in Indigenous oral culture. His reading of phenomenologist Merleau-Ponty brings him to very similar conclusions to those that are found in Trungpa's teaching: the dualistic way of understanding the phenomenal world that has become a habit in mainstream Western culture is one that obscures the ability to experience the world as sacred. Abram describes how language is born out of the direct sensory experience of our world "that actively draw[s] us into relation. Our spontaneous, pre-conceptual experience yields no evidence for a dualistic division between animate and 'inanimate' phenomena" (p. 90). He goes on to say, "Human languages, then, are informed not only by the structures of the human body and the human community, but by the evocative shapes and patterns of the more-than-human-terrain" (p. 90). This echoes Trungpa's words: "Sometimes when we perceive the world, we perceive without language. We perceive spontaneously with a pre-language system" (2004b, p. 40).

However, the habitual conceptual overlay on this spontaneous first glimpse obscures the ability to relate to the world as sacred. Trungpa goes on to say, “But sometimes when we view the world, first we think a word and then we perceive. In other words, the first instance is directly feeling or perceiving the universe; the second is talking ourselves into seeing our universe” (p. 40). The practice of meditation, “[s]ynchronizing mind and body is looking and seeing directly beyond language” (p. 40). Both Trungpa and Abram point to the possibility of going beyond dualism in the understanding of experience through making a direct relationship to our perceptions. In oral Indigenous cultures, Abram suggests, the landscape speaks directly to the perceiver, and the worldview of the culture is intimately connected to it and is also expressed through the language. Trungpa asserts that sacred world is accessible to us all through the practice of meditation and relating to our perceptions non-conceptually. Direct perception gives rise to non-dualistic and “pre-language” ways of seeing the world which Abram describes as existing in oral Indigenous cultures.

Abram (1997) points out how the invention of writing and the alphabet has allowed the transmission of knowledge within and between cultures and also how written language severs the connection to the landscape. By replacing the symbolic power of the natural world as the primary source of information for survival, the written word mediates the direct experience of the natural world (p. 98). Written language weakens the direct symbolic relationship of the landscape to the individual, the community, and their perception of the world. The written word becomes the source of knowledge, replacing the oral transmission of culture with that of textual forms of communication. The ability to abstract through the written word further entrenches the fundamental dualism between subject and object, as articulated by Descartes (p. 78).

The importance of meditation and contemplative practice in unravelling attachment to the perceived truths of dualistic thought, constructed through the medium of language, is emphasized by Trungpa. Hayward elaborates on this in his discussion of how language determines the inner world of thoughts, feelings, and emotions.

It’s not only when we speak to others that language filters and molds our reality; we constantly do it to ourselves too. We are continually talking to ourselves and interpreting the world to ourselves. . . . You only have to sit and do nothing for five minutes, or less, to realize the chatter is going on and is unstoppable. . . . The chatter is bound up together

with your emotions. It interprets the world in terms of your emotional reactions to each event in your life. (1997, p. 86)

He goes on to describe how fixed beliefs are unraveled through the practice of meditation. The on-going chatter of the mind as it constructs and solidifies a view of reality becomes more transparent. Paying attention and slowing down gives rise to glimpses of clarity into the process and the definition of what reality is, and this reality becomes more expansive and inclusive. Through meditation practice, Hayward suggests, the possibility of loosening the attachment to constructed reality arises “if we can move in our language and see through it to a world beyond language” (p. 87). Language, then, can be both an obstacle to sacred world outlook as well as a means of freeing us to reconnect with sacredness.

As already discussed, Hayward points out how personal and socially accepted stories determine the “truth” about reality. He further elaborates how the use of language determined by scientific-rationalist world view compounds this predisposition, diminishing the possibility of experiencing the world as a sacred realm.

How did we lose the ability to feel the energy patterns of the gods or dralas? By refusing to name them, by saying they did not exist, science and church gradually disabled us from seeing them. And if we did perceive them we weren't supposed to believe they were real. They were no longer in our language, so we could no longer see them in our world. (Hayward, 1997, p. 80)

He calls attention to how the English language is based on facts and things, and how education is focused on separating the parts from the whole from an early age. “At school you learn that the world is full of real things, and that *facts* are statements about these real things” (p. 81, italics in original). He continues, “Language creates our world as well as being a fluid, changing, partial mirror for it. . . . [W]e do not perceive through our senses a world ‘out there,’ ready-made. Our senses interact with *something* to create a world. And language plays a significant part in this world-creating that each one of us is doing each moment, without even realizing we are doing it” (p. 82, italics in original). Bai (2001) also makes a similar point: “People tend to believe that the way they perceive and relate to the world is the way the world *is*. Implicit in this view is the reasoning that there is a direct one way causal relation between how the world is (that is,

independent of our views of it) and the way we perceive and relate to it” (p. 2, italics in original). As well, context, body language, gesture, and many other paralinguistic elements of speech influence meaning and how we understand things (Hayward, 1997, p. 83).

That the English language is fact and noun based compounds the process, whereas in some cultures this is not always the case. Sable and Francis (2012) describe how the Mi’kmaw language is relational and verb based, which allows more fluidity in expression and meaning as well as giving rise to a worldview which is non-static and ever-changing. Battiste and Henderson (2000) explain this as follows:

The Mi’kmaw language builds on verb phrases that contain the motion of the flux, with hundreds of prefixes and suffixes to choose from to express a panorama of energy. The reliance on verbs rather than on nouns is important: it means that there are few fixed, separate objects in the Mi’kmaw worldview. What these people see is the great flux, eternal transformation, and interconnected space. . . . Mi’kmaw knowledge does not describe reality; it describes ever-changing insights about patterns or styles of the flux. (pp. 76-77)

Little Bear (2000) says the languages of Aboriginal people are

for the most part, verb-rich languages that are process- or action-oriented. They are generally aimed at describing ‘happenings’ rather than objects. The languages of Aboriginal peoples allow for the transcendence of boundaries . . . there is no animate/inanimate dichotomy. Everything is more or less animate. Consequently, Aboriginal languages allow for talking to trees and rocks, an allowance not accorded in English. If everything is animate, then everything has spirit and knowledge. If everything has spirit and knowledge, then all are like me. If all are like me, then all are my relations. (p.78)

Trungpa’s teachings on sacred world challenge the traditional scientific view of reality and present the path of mindfulness and awareness meditation as one way of going beyond the limitations humans can impose upon themselves and their perceptions. It opens possibilities beyond that of dualism and alienation from nature, not only in scientific thinking, but in everyday thinking.

Perception here is not just what you perceive but the whole act of perceiving—the interaction between consciousness, the sense organs, the sense fields, or the objects of perception. In some religious traditions, sense perceptions are regarded as problematic, because they arouse worldly desires. However, in the Shambhala tradition, which is a secular tradition rather than a religious one, sense perceptions are regarded as sacred. They are regarded as basically good. They are a natural gift, a natural ability that human beings have. They are a source of wisdom. (Trungpa, 2004b, p. 81)

The neoliberal agenda. The neoliberal view that underlies globalization and its economic rationale is founded on beliefs that undermine the ability to experience sacred world outlook. Although it is predominantly an economic theory, neoliberalism has trickled down to become the guiding principle for social policy including education. Neoliberalism is a package of ideas that explain and give legitimacy to the global market economy, driven by the requirements of economic growth and profit which are seen as the basis for the development of wealth. As Hall, Massey, and Rustin (2015) explain, for its legitimacy and continued reproduction particular foundational beliefs have come to be generally accepted as a truth in the dominant Western culture.

The current neoliberal settlement . . . is crucially founded on embedding as common sense a whole bundle of beliefs—ideas beyond question, assumptions so deep that the very fact that they are assumptions is only rarely brought to light. In the case of neoliberalism this bundle of ideas revolves around the supposed naturalness of ‘the market,’ the primacy of the competitive individual, the superiority of the private over the public. It is as a result of the hegemony of this bundle of ideas—their being the ruling common sense—that the settlement as a whole is commonly called ‘neoliberal.’ (Hall et al, 2013, p. 9)

According to Bowers (2001) the tenets of neoliberalism are not a new phenomenon. The paradigm and the assumptions that he identifies as “root metaphors” underlying the neoliberal agenda are those that enabled the success of the Industrial Revolution. These metaphors took hold as the requirement emerged for creating a different social order than that of a medieval society based on an agrarian economy. A compliant workforce was necessary to fulfill the endlessly repetitive and boring jobs in the factories for the whole project to succeed. The rural

population was lured to the cities and the factories by the promise of material well-being, or else driven by destitution and the breakdown of agricultural communities. These root metaphors which underlie the Western worldview, were instrumental in the transition from medieval to modern ways of perceiving the world. Of particular importance are the concepts of mechanism, linear progress, evolution, economism, and the autonomous individual. Bowers (2001) maintains that they are as present in the mainstream way of seeing the world in the West as they were at the start of the Industrial Revolution. It is therefore hard for us to recognize how these root metaphors influence present thought and material expressions of culture because they are so embedded in accepted ways of looking at the world and in our language. Because of this, these metaphors are reproduced through the generations, and they influence decision making in all spheres of life. Furthermore, they have pervaded the world through the phenomenon of globalization, as Hall et al (2013) describe:

Neoliberalism has its origins in eighteenth-century liberal political theory and political economy, from where it derives its touchstones. It has been revamped and reworked to be appropriate to these times and geographies, and it is multiple in form in reflection of these expanded geographies. But its core propositions, of the free possessive individual engaging with others through market transactions, remain the touchstone. . . . The attempt has always been to present them as eternal truths—concepts of markets and individuals being merely descriptive of an ideal state of nature. (pp. 9-10)

These “truths” echo through the generations and reverberate around the world. They have been adapted to meet social and economic conditions, but the underlying thrust remains the same. The underlying assumption of the scientific rationalist idea is taken to the extreme whereby the environment is seen as dead and separate, legitimizing the plundering of natural resources without regard for the consequences. Shiva (1988), in her critique of “maldevelopment” in India driven by scientific-rationalism, says, “Its reductionist nature is an epistemic response to an economic organization based on uncontrolled exploitation of nature for maximization of profits and capital accumulation. . . . The reductionist worldview, the industrial revolution and the capitalist economy were the philosophical, technological and economic components of the same process” (p. 23).

The environmental, political, and social costs of neoliberalism. The consequences of the neoliberal view, not only in India, but worldwide, are enormous. That coal, oil, and gas are finite resources is conveniently ignored in this view, as is global warming which has come about as a result of rampant consumption of those resources. The effects of climate change, due to global warming, are being experienced around the world.^{xvii} Climate change, precipitated by global warming and the burning of fossil fuels, has resulted in rising sea levels, the loss of traditional knowledge in agriculture through the pushing of fertilizers, pesticides and the like, and the loss of culture and language of many Indigenous peoples throughout the world from habitat destruction and forced migration. Neoliberal attitudes and rationales as espoused by multinational corporate companies and their political allies, for whom profit and unlimited growth are the bottom line, result in a culture of denial and ignorance as to the effects of their activities. These companies often disregard the warnings about unbridled extraction and burning of fossil fuels, or even refute them outright. Natural resources are plundered for profit with no regard for the environment and communities that are affected by their extraction. Climate change puts present and future generations at risk because of desertification of agricultural land and mass migration to urban centres. One of the underlying factors in the Syrian war is thought to be the drought in 2006 which forced rural dwellers into the cities, where crowded conditions and shortages provoked unrest (Hammer, 2013). To protect interests in oil, and other valuable resources, democratic institutions are ignored or invoked when it is convenient such as in Chile in 1973 and Iraq in 2003.^{xviii} These conflicts were hugely profitable to the multinational arms manufacturers and global companies who were able to take advantage of them to consolidate their hold on available resources and profit from the sale of arms to the government, to say nothing of the profits that were gained in the “reconstruction” that followed armed conflicts.

Globalization, and the metaphors that underpin it have given rise to the movement of populations away from rural areas and an agricultural lifestyle, to the cities and an urban existence. Hall et al (2013) draw parallels between the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century industrialization process and what is currently happening with the urbanization of society and agri-business interests taking over the agricultural sector.

Much of what has gone on through globalisation over the last thirty years resonates with events in late eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century England, when industrial and urbanised capitalism was first finding its form. The expulsion from their land of millions in the global South recalls the enclosures of the commons. The vast migrations to the ever-expanding cities are like the migrations of earlier industrialisations (these within-nation migrations being just as socially disruptive and potentially explosive as migrations between nations). There is the creation of a vast new force of ‘free labourers’ with all the personal and social wrenchings (as well as new freedoms) that that can entail, and the further commodification of land and labour. (Hall et al, 2013, pp. 10-11).

Populations are separated from their land and environment by force of circumstance or by persuasion. Either by choice or by necessity they become subject to the dominant worldview that propels these changes. This happened to the agrarian population during the Industrial Revolution, to the Aboriginal communities in Canada and in Australia in the era of residential schools, and in India in recent decades (Shiva, 1988). As a result of consumerism and the lure of material wealth similar movements are happening in “developing” countries like Bhutan at present. Agricultural land is being bought by developers close to urban areas, and young people are increasingly drawn to the urban centres which are few and still very small by Western and South East Asian standards.^{xix} Young people and their families are influenced by the promise of jobs, material wealth and happiness based on a consumerist definition of the word. There is a growing number of unemployed and disaffected youth who are turning to drugs and violence and sleeping on the streets in Thimphu, the capital of Bhutan, rather than returning home and facing the loss of face that that entails. The villages are emptying, and only older people are left to grow food and maintain the traditions and knowledge accumulated over the centuries.^{xx} The *Bhutan Observer* (2010) makes the case that, “in the face of modernization and urbanization, the rural farmer is becoming an endangered species alongside the pygmy hogs, the tigers and the red pandas” (p. 7). A consequent threat to food security is seen in the growing dependence of Bhutanese on imported food from India. Bhutan’s dependency on India was demonstrated when a global food crisis in 2007 led to India cutting its exports of rice to Bhutan in 2008 for a short period of time (p. 1). Climate change, as well, is an increasingly real threat to agriculture in Bhutan, with increased rainfall, which causes flooding and landslides.

The popular appeal of neoliberal policies is the promise of wealth and material well-being. However, the cost of neoliberal policies is shouldered by the poor, with cuts and austerity measures being the solution to financial crises, as we saw in Western countries following the crisis of 2008. As such the gap between rich and poor has accelerated so that 99% of the wealth in the world today is held by only 1% of the population. An Oxfam briefing on the issue of wealth disparity said the following:

In 2014, the richest 1% of people in the world owned 48% of global wealth, leaving just 52% to be shared between the other 99% of adults on the planet. Almost all of that 52% is owned by those included in the richest 20%, leaving just 5.5% for the remaining 80% of people in the world. If this trend continues of an increasing wealth share to the richest, the top 1% will have more wealth than the remaining 99% of people in just two years, with the wealth share of the top 1% exceeding 50% by 2016. (Hardoon, 2015, p. 2)

Fighting for the survival of oneself and one's family requires the adoption of the views and assumptions that underlie the neoliberal economy, namely competition, individualism and the determination of success based on accumulated wealth. The result is the rending apart of peoples' inherent connection to their land and their culture, undermining their connection to the natural goodness of the world. In order to survive, it seems one has to adopt the current definitions of reality, and the "truth" of the dominant culture and its worldview.

The neoliberal view of education. Institutions are molded to the requirements of the neoliberal agenda, including that of education. Olssen and Peters (2005) define the neoliberal approach as an input-output system that can be reduced to an economic function (p. 324). "In neoliberalism the patterning of power is established on contract, which in turn is premised upon a need for compliance, monitoring, and accountability organized in a management line and established through a purchase contract based upon measurable outputs" (p. 325). Applying these principles of neoliberalism to education, the purpose of learning becomes that of creating consumers, and education becomes a product rather than a process of unfolding or expansion that the root of the word implies. For the reproduction of this system, the educational imperative of the neoliberal agenda is that today's youth be indoctrinated into these ideas. This impacts the understanding and view of education, learning, and their relation to work. As Miller (2011) says, "conventional education imparts a disconnected, amoral curriculum that enables us to become

efficient technicians and ambitious careerists, but not wise human beings” (pp. 210-211). To this end, neoliberalism promotes mass schooling, standardized testing, and increasing influence of the private sector over educational policies. Education policy and learning goals become aligned with business requirements. The autonomy of the teaching profession is compromised by requirements of accountability and conformity, where the act of teaching becomes one of management rather than that of a trusted public servant (Giroux, 2013). There is an underlying assumption in neoliberalism that economic growth and higher incomes will lead to increased well-being (Hayward, PannoZZo & Colman, 2009). In their review of the literature for the *Educating for Gross National Happiness in Bhutan* conference (Hayward, PannoZZo & Colman, 2009), the authors sum up their findings in the following way:

The call from almost all sectors is to create a new ‘knowledge economy’ or ‘information society’ by upgrading the technical skills and proficiencies of the workforce to meet the new challenges of competition and technological innovations. . . . Central to this is the stated need for education to prepare students to fit into the new workforce. High school grades, participation in post-secondary education, and attainment of a lucrative career are assumed to increase personal benefit and also strengthen and grow the economy. (p. 24)

Twenty years ago, in *Education Week*, Jeremy Rifkin (1996) pointed out that education reformers were failing to recognize that with the rise of technology and the automation of industry there would be progressively fewer jobs for graduates. Those that remained would be in the hands of an elite management as well as highly skilled technicians. As he foresaw, more and more young people would be out of work and have fewer prospects, especially not prospects in line with their expectations. This prediction has been borne out by the situation faced today by many young people, with college graduates in the West working in supermarkets and taking unpaid internships. In Bhutan youth unemployment is becoming increasingly common as young people aspire to a limited number of jobs in Thimphu. Youth unemployment in Bhutan reached 28% in 2015 (World Bank, n.d.). Sweatshops in Bangladesh, Columbia and other “developing” nations provide massive profits for corporate companies at subsistence wages for the workers, most of whom are migrants from the countryside (Wong, 2013). Rifkin (1996) also predicted that educators would have to rethink the assumptions upon which they based their policies. For the

most part, this has not happened. Growth, technology, economic progress, students as products and future workers and consumers—these continue to predominate over the view of public education in the West and despite the aspirations of GNH for an alternative in education, also in Bhutan. With computer literacy and information technology becoming the new mantras of educators Rifkin (1996) saw that “underlying the new missionary zeal lies a kind of desperate frenzy, driven by the universally accepted assumption that competitive success in the cyberspace economy of the 21st century requires a new kind of mind able to traverse the virtual corridors of the information superhighway” (Rifkin, 1996, first paragraph).

It is unsettling to see such viewpoints manifest in such diverse places as Bhutan^{xxi} and Nova Scotia,^{xxii} where the most recent education policy documents reflect the concerns expressed by Rifkin. Bowers (2001) points out that despite the good intentions of many educational policy makers in the present day, reforms that are proposed in education embody the root metaphors of change and linear progress (also termed “growth”), and the economic motive (p. 3). While the goals might be defined somewhat differently in the present, mainstream education today, as in the nineteenth century, is designed to create a compliant workforce which fulfills the objectives of the global economy.

The means by which the knowledge economy is linked to technology, and to the ecological crisis was spelled out by Bowers (1993), who warned educators to be aware of the uncritical use of computers in schools. His concern was that computers would reinforce an individuality based on an anthropomorphic and mechanistic understanding of the ecological crisis. He describes how the Cartesian view of a mechanistic universe is reinforced by the individualistic language and thinking we adopt around computers. The role of language, in using metaphors which support a mechanistic view of the universe, exacerbates the separation between individuals and their perception of the world, and hides the deeper cultural level of the ecological crisis. He warned that a “fix it” attitude that relies on amassing data on computers to model solutions, and ignorance of the cultural aspects of the environmental degradation, creates the illusion of power in the hands of the individual and downplays responsibility for the real causes and solutions to environmental problems. When cultural orientations are reinforced by technology, he asks, is technology therefore part of the solution or part of the problem? This appeal to educators,

twenty-five years ago, to give a central place to the consideration of the educational use of technology and its influence on social change (p. 81), is one that has largely been ignored.

Neoliberal beliefs have had an impact the world over, due to the pervasiveness of its metaphors and the culture of globalization. It is not hard to see how this view runs counter to the view of sacred world. Competition and individualism fundamentally buy into the egotistical and territorial aspects of being. True, unconditional, compassion is seen as a weakness, and hand-outs in the form of aid or charity usually have some kind of conditions attached (Funso & Arowolo, 2010). The idea that survival depends on competing and winning at the expense of the other, which is at the heart of the neoliberal worldview, goes against the premise that basic goodness exists in everyone and that the world is sacred and an expression of basic goodness.

Returning from Bhutan in July, 2012, I had a stopover in Delhi for the best part of a day. I was keen to see some of the sights of the city and decided to hire a driver to take me around. The temperature was in the low 40s, unbearable to be out in for more than 30 minutes at a time, and I was thankful to have an airconditioned taxi to retreat to, out of the heat and polluted air. It was the eve of a huge festival in celebration of the Hindu deity, Shiva. Traffic in Delhi is notorious, but on that day it was especially bad. There was so much traffic that getting into the old part of the city was impossible, and we often were stuck in traffic on the tour. Whenever we were stopped, children would wend their way between the cars, knocking on the windows to try and get us to buy magazines, candy, or gadgets of various kinds. They invariably looked malnourished and ragged. The most painful to see were the beggars whose bodies were twisted and bent and the women with babies in their arms.

At one point, we were stopped for at least ten minutes, only moving by inches around a roundabout, drivers blaring their horns with frustration. In the bushes and shrubs in the centre of the roundabout lived a family whose makeshift home of fabric and plastic was draped over the bushes. I watched as a young woman, dressed in a beautiful green sari trimmed with gold, carefully applied eye makeup using a scrap of broken mirror. A small child, maybe two years old, was playing in the dirt at her feet. As I watched, a young man, painfully thin, wove through the stopped cars to the centre area. He was obviously her husband, returning from work. He stripped off his dirty T-shirt and splashed water on his torso, dried himself and put on a clean shirt. It seemed that they were getting ready to go and join the Shiva celebrations that evening.

For me, a Westerner, I was amazed at the ability of this family, to live, not only with zero privacy, but to tolerate living in such a place. The fumes, noise, and the heat must have been constant and oppressive—at least that's how I perceived it. But there was something so humbling in seeing them put on their best clothes and participate in the celebration of Shiva. Even in the midst of terrible, and what I saw as degrading poverty, it appeared that they had not lost their conviction in the possibility of transcendence, or at least the connection to the sacred.

Education for All. For myself, I feel that one of the most tragic social costs that has accompanied the spread of neoliberal ideas is the destruction of traditional communities and the way of life that goes with them. The world in its entirety has been affected by the global economy and the culture of globalization, and possibly one of the most powerful tools that enables the spread of the neoliberal corporate culture is education. In the same way that colonialists used education to establish the hegemony of the colonizing country over the Indigenous population, the neoliberal approach seeks to educate students into having the language (usually English) and necessary skills to be consumers in the world market, and workers in factories and businesses. Not only is education for globalization an obstacle to sacred world, but it is an agent of the destruction of traditional communities that are founded on the values of sacred world. Indigenous communities in “developing” countries are being pulled apart by the demands of an education system that primarily serves the interests of the global economy (Hurst & Black, 2010).

In Bhutan, the current education system still subscribes to the basic concepts and values of the colonial system, reworked to reflect modern requirements: standardized testing, rote learning, competition, individual success and discouragement of Indigenous languages in favour of English and Dzongkha, the national language. Children mostly have to leave their communities as they reach middle school age, and they travel long distances or board at the school. The result is the weakening of community ties, a loss of fluency and nuance in the children's mother tongue, and a perception of the old ways as “backward.” The loss of Indigenous knowledge in a generation is a tangible threat in Bhutan.

The documentary *Schooling the World: The White Man's Last Burden* (Hurst & Black, 2010)^{xxiii} is an articulate and powerful exposure of the damage that had been caused to traditional societies and their cultures by mainstream Western style education that uses English, promotes

competition, and undermines local and Indigenous traditions of education. It asks the question, “If you wanted to change a culture in a single generation, how would you do it?” The film answers itself, “You would change the way it educates its children.” It looks at the way schooling has been used by colonial countries, particularly the USA in its relationship with Indigenous cultures, and Britain during its imperial rule of India. It then examines present day Ladakh, as an example of a traditional Buddhist culture with many similarities to Bhutan, and how its way of life is being eroded by the children being sent off to school in Leh, the capital. Helena Norbert-Hodge of the International Society for Ecology and Culture,^{xxiv} interviewed in the documentary says, “Western schooling is responsible for introducing a human monoculture across the entire world. Essentially the same curriculum is being taught and is training people for jobs—very scarce jobs—in urban consumer culture.” She goes on to say, “There is a widely held belief today that it is through modern education that we are going to raise people out of poverty, but if we look honestly at what’s been happening we will see that it is the advent of colonialism, development and aid that have created poverty” (Norbert-Hodge in Hurst & Black, 2010). The modern view of poverty is associated with traditional economies which were not moneyed economies, but which were basically sustainable, economically and ecologically. By defining them as backward, those cultures devalue their own traditions and ways of educating their children in the practices that can maintain their societies. Norbert-Hodge says, “When modern education is introduced into traditional cultures around the world it creates a huge sense of inferiority. . . . The culture, language and way of doing things is [seen as] backward, primitive and shameful” (Norbert-Hodge, in Hurst & Black, 2010). Shiva (1988), applies a feminist analysis to similar conditions in India. While it is beyond the scope of this inquiry to investigate the feminist critique of neoliberalism, I include the following as being pertinent to the discussion:

Economies based on indigenous technologies [are] viewed as ‘backward’ and ‘unproductive.’ Poverty, as the denial of basic needs, is not necessarily associated with the existence of traditional technologies, and its removal is not necessarily an outcome of the growth of modern ones. On the contrary, the destruction of ecologically sound traditional technologies, often created and used by women, along with the destruction of their material base is generally believed to be responsible for the ‘feminisation’ of poverty in societies which have had to bear the cross of resource destruction. (p. 12)

Particularly criticized in the film is the Education For All (EFA) program, which was an initiative of the United Nations in 1990, then taken up by the World Bank in 2003 (Spring, 2010, p. 58), which has since been adopted by global corporations such as McDonalds. The program's initial objective was to achieve social equality in education between nations, but in *Schooling the World*, Manish Jain^{xxv} draws our attention to the lack of questioning of the agenda of the World Bank and other aid programs that support EFA. For nations whose aim is to put every child into school he says, "is very much tied to a very clear agenda of becoming part of the global economy and shifting one's own local economy, one's own local culture, one's own local resources—both personal as well as collective—into the service of the global economy" (Jain in Hurst & Black, 2010). That the interests of the corporate global culture are being served by EFA is clearly stated by Julian Schweitzer, director of Human Development for the South Asia Region of the World Bank. In his own words: "We see education as crucial. It is an absolutely necessary condition for sustained poverty reduction. . . . The demand for education is not coming from people like the World Bank, from outsiders, it is coming from businessmen who are discovering that they can't grow their factories because they can't grow their businesses because there is a shortage of skilled workers" (Sweitzer, in Hurst & Black, 2010). The World Bank website shows that it is financing 3,811 education projects in 2017, to the tune of five billion US dollars, in "developing" countries all over the world (World Bank Group, 2017). The World Bank has given aid to Bhutan extensively: \$123 million in the last five years (World Bank, Bhutan overview), but has not funded education reform. While Bhutan is keeping the education of its citizens in its own hands, it is not immune to the ideological impact of development programs. Dozens of aid agencies have offices in Thimphu, the capital, and Bhutan has partnered with Global Partnerships for Education^{xxvi} which is co-ordinated in Bhutan by the World Bank and Unicef (Global Partnership for Education, 2017, title page).

The 2009 *Educating for Gross National Happiness in Bhutan* conference was a concerted effort to counter the neoliberal agenda in education and to bring Bhutanese education into line with the aspirations of the Gross National Happiness policies of the country. The concepts of Gross National Happiness are embedded in the constitution of Bhutan and are thoroughly influenced by Buddhist thought and the ethos of sacred world which is so tangible in Bhutan. The Prime Minister at the time, Jigmi Thinley, recognized that a radically different approach to education than that which was currently existing in Bhutan would need to be formulated if Bhutanese youth

were to recognize and value their heritage and the wisdom it preserves. In his keynote address to the conference he addressed the role of education in making GNH a lived reality:

To address the greed, materialism, and consumerist fallacy that have turned us into mindless economic animals, and are destroying the planet, requires nothing less than a change of consciousness and hence of lifestyle. Education is the key. . . . and I am absolutely convinced that there is no more effective, comprehensive, and far-reaching way to put GNH fully into practice and to realize our shared vision and goals—not in a frustratingly piecemeal way but so that our collective national consciousness naturally translates into enlightened action—than to infuse our education system fully and properly with the humane and ecological principles and values of Gross National Happiness.
(Thinley as cited in Hayward & Colman, 2010)

For this reason, he took the initiative to bring international educators, innovators in their field and educators from Bhutan together to devise the way forward for GNH education.^{xxvii} Despite the energy and enthusiasm at the conference, and the continued desire among many educators for GNH to be a living practice rather than a mere concept, the primary mode of education continues to be driven by standardized testing and rote learning. The Lhomon Education^{xxviii} project at the Chökyi Gyatso Institute,^{xxix} with which I am involved, aspires to bring GNH principles into education through an approach which combines a contemplative and ecological perspective with a high standard of academics. This includes mathematics, science, English, social studies and the arts, albeit delivered in an integrated and discovery-based approach in which the Indigenous knowledge of Bhutan and the wisdom of local Elders and knowledge holders plays an important role. In this way, we hope that the students will maintain and expand their intrinsic connection to sacred world and continue to value the traditions with which they have been surrounded since birth. That they should be educated and able to operate in a modern Bhutan is also a primary goal of the program. Modernization in Bhutan has only existed over the course of one generation. There is still hope!

In this chapter, my goal has been to establish the view of sacred world outlook in order to illuminate and articulate an alternative to education models that are perpetuating materialism, greed, and the destruction of the environment. I have discussed current impediments to sacred world outlook: in particular, the scientific rationalism that dominates mainstream Western

thought and worldview; the role language plays in reinforcing a dualistic mindset; the impact of the neoliberal agenda, and its consequences for Bhutan and the world; and the role of education, and in particular, the Education For All movement, in undermining traditional societies and the relationship that they have to sacred world. Many Eastern cultures and pre-urban Indigenous cultures, on the other hand, provide us with examples of sacred world outlook and ways to live harmoniously and sustainably on the Earth. In Bhutan, I experienced living in a culture that is founded upon sacred world outlook, with so much wisdom at its heart, but I also witnessed the impacts of modernization, and how sacred world is being challenged and undermined by the global economy and culture. GNH, as a development policy founded on the understanding of the interconnectedness of all aspects of society, including the spiritual, provides a model for the world,^{xxx} and for the education program at LME that I have been working with. The practice of meditation and contemplation, introduced to me by my teacher, Chögyam Trungpa, I believe opens the possibility of reconnecting to sacred world and to basic goodness, in the face of pressures that weaken that connection. By practicing in this way, both formally as meditation, and by extending the view into everyday life, it is possible to nurture sacred world outlook in ourselves and in relationship to others and to the world. Sacred world is the ground out of which compassion, creativity and wisdom can grow, a view that offers a possibility of proceeding into the future in a less disastrous way than the majority of people in the world are at present. The application of meditation and a contemplative approach as pedagogical practice is the subject of the following chapter.

Chapter 3

Meditation – Contemplative Practice

Do kids know we have something called mind? That's a very big question and we keep missing it. Do the American schools teach that? Do the Chinese schools teach that? Kids study biology and anatomy and are taught that most people have two feet, one nose, and two hands and that each hand has five fingers. But there is something called mind that's actually the most important and most powerful. (Khyentse, n.d.)

I see my role as a teacher as having a circulating quality. I have information and concepts that I want the students to learn so I am in the position of transmitting information, but I also want the children to bring their own knowledge and understanding to light in relation to those concepts. So, I am feeding in and drawing out constantly in an ever-expanding spiral. As they make the information their own I am privy to their understanding and my own understanding evolves, not only about the topic in question but also about the child herself. The story is the medium, the point where we interact and from which we grow. Through the telling of stories, a community is built in the classroom in which we all participate.

When I tell a story, I stand in front of the class with a few notes, or sometimes without notes, and tell the story as far as possible from memory. There is a different quality to telling a story as opposed to reading it, albeit a subtle difference. When reading, the listeners' experience is mediated through the text, the language of the writer. In telling a story, I am bringing my own language to the story and communicating directly with the listeners. The more I can embody the story, through my connection to the images that arise and gestures that punctuate the narrative, the more engaged the children become. And, the more I can communicate through gesture and image, the more the children remember and connect, not only to the heart of the story, but also to the details and the underlying message contained therein. Stories are the ground from which all learning arises. The beauty of the story is that it appeals directly to the imagination, which is in itself made up of what is known and familiar to the child. Thus, the information in the story has a place in the child's world, rather than being imposed as an abstract concept from above.

There is always excitement when I propose that we listen to a story, the high point of the children's day. They settle into a listening mode of attention—wide-eyed, absorbed, still. When

the story is over there is a moment or two of coming back into the present time and place, often followed by silence and sometimes comments or questions. We wait until the following day to recall the story, which gives the children a chance to absorb and percolate the information contained in the story, and to make their own relationship to it. Recall is not a series of questions posed by me and answered by the students, but a collective re-telling of the story in its entirety. Following this the children draw a picture from the story in their books, which is the first step of reflecting on the information that comes in the story. I ask them, “What is the main point of this story? What is important to remember about it?” and from there we compose what needs to be in the picture to represent the story. Writing, modelling, or a project follows, a process through which the concepts that are contained in the story are worked with and brought to the foreground in a known context.

In the previous chapter I described the view of sacred world and the elements that pertain to it. In this chapter, I elaborate on the meditation aspect of sacred world outlook as the path to reawakening that sensibility in ourselves as human beings and as teachers. I make particular reference to how this relates to personal and classroom practice through contemplative pedagogical approaches. For this I draw heavily on my personal experience as well as on the Enki curriculum theory and methodology (Sutton 1998, 2005.) My understanding of contemplative pedagogy and practice has evolved from on-going reflection and discussion among teachers at the Shambhala School around the Enki curriculum and other contemplative approaches, my experience in the classroom, and my practice as a meditator and Shambhala Buddhist practitioner for many years.

The Ground of Contemplative Practice and Pedagogy

Personal practice and teacher practice. As described in the introductory chapter I first began meditating in my mid-twenties. My relationship to practice as a personal discipline has gone through many different phases. During some periods I was practicing intensely, while at other times I felt as if I had fallen off the wagon completely. However, throughout all those phases I never lost my conviction that meditation and mindfulness practice were the most valuable gift I had ever received besides, perhaps, the gift of life itself. I am continuously grateful to Chögyam Trungpa, my first teacher, for making Buddhism available to Westerners, for the secular teachings of Shambhala and for waking us up to the possibility of reconnecting to

sacred world through meditation practice. The influence of Dzongsar Jamyang Khyentse Rinpoche in my life as a brilliant and compassionate teacher has reinforced that commitment. Beth Sutton, too, my mentor and teacher in the realm of education, taught that mindfulness practice is essential to the practice of teaching; she understands its importance in making education a sacred endeavor. Life itself also brings me back to the cushion. Obstacles, upsets, depression, stress, and inspiration have all been incentives to resume my practice. I am reminded once again how thankful I am for having meditation as a resource and reference point for sanity and sacredness in the world.

Meditation in the Shambhala sense is not just about peacefulness, beauty and relaxation. It is also about appreciating the mundane world that we experience every day. As already discussed, Trungpa taught that it is about waking up to our perceptions of our environment in a very ordinary way, but the ordinariness of it is also the magical quality. It is about waking up to our humanness and our basic goodness. In the Shambhala teachings mindfulness practice is the foundation for all activity, from the mundane to the extraordinary. The word *practice* suggests this. Meditation is not an end in itself, but a means to a greater appreciation of life, and relationship with the world, enabling us, as Sutton (2005) puts it to “step off the treadmill” (p. 131). It creates a gap in the solidity of preconceived ideas or the heat of emotions and so opens the possibility of relating to things as they are, however uncomfortable that might be. It gives us an opportunity to appreciate ourselves, rather than beat ourselves up or dwell on negative feelings, which holds us back from experiencing our full potential as human beings. “When you don’t punish yourself, when you relax more and appreciate your body and mind, you begin to contact the fundamental notion of basic goodness in yourself” (Trungpa, 2004c, p. 25).

In *Shambhala: The Sacred Path of the Warrior* (2004c), Trungpa describes mindfulness meditation in the following way: “By meditation here we mean something very basic and simple that is not tied to one culture. We are talking about a very basic act: sitting on the ground, assuming a good posture, and developing a sense of our spot, our place on this earth” (p. 26). He goes on to say that “[In] the Shambhala tradition meditation is simply training our state of being so that our mind and body can be synchronized” (p. 26). Having taken a good, upright posture, the next thing is to pay attention to the breath, particularly the out-breath. “As you breathe out, you dissolve, you diffuse. Then your in-breath occurs naturally; you don’t have to follow it in”

(p. 29). That process will inevitably be disrupted by thoughts which will distract us from the practice. At that point he instructs the practitioner to label them as thinking. “It doesn’t really matter what thoughts you have. In the sitting practice of meditation, whether you have monstrous thoughts or benevolent thoughts, all of them are regarded purely as thinking” (p. 29). Having become aware of thoughts the practice is to come back to the breath and to posture. In this way he says, “You have mind working with breath, but you always maintain body as a reference point. You are not working with your mind alone. You are working with your mind and body, and when the two work together, you never leave reality” (p. 30). This process is repeated again and again, and in that way the mind and body begin to be synchronized, allowing the experience of well-being, appreciation of ourselves and of our basic goodness to arise. Sitting on the ground connects us to the Earth very directly, giving a sense of body as being part of, and connected to the Earth. The breath acts as a medium by which inner and outer worlds are connected, and as thoughts come and go there is a tangible sense of the surrounding space: empty and at the same time full, forgiving but energetic. The barriers between “this here” and “that there” begin to dissolve, and the experience arises of participating in a bigger world that includes the surrounding space as an integral part of it. As the experience of, and a relationship with basic goodness grows in ourselves, greater compassion towards the world begins to develop.

Through the process of synchronizing body and mind, greater appreciation of the environment and those who live in it naturally occurs. As discussed earlier, language and the way perceptions are filtered through words and internal chatter can be an obstacle to experiencing sacred world outlook. By synchronizing body and mind, however, we can perceive the world directly.

Habitual aversion to uncomfortable thoughts, and attachment to those deemed as “good,” becomes worn down by returning over and over again to the breath in the practice. The internal chatter of our minds, all those thoughts that have previously gone by unnoticed, enter into awareness as mind and body synchronize.

In my experience, relating to feelings and emotions as mere thoughts takes a lot of the sting out of them. There is a sense of aerating my mind and relaxing with what arises. Of course, there are numerous times when I have become totally caught up in them, forgetting to return to the breath and becoming engulfed. But there is always a point when the sharpness of the emotion or the boredom of being in a fog will wake me up to the fact that I have forgotten. At that point, I have

a sense of synchronizing mind and body, even if it is only for that instant as I return to the practice. I am back in the present place and time, not shopping for groceries or engaged in discussion or wherever I have been in my thoughts. Over the years, I have developed certainty in the possibility of not being constantly at the mercy of my thoughts and feelings. To refer to an analogy that is often used in Buddhist teachings, I am learning to ride the horse of my mind, rather than being dragged along by it.

Contemplative pedagogy, therefore, rests on synchronizing mind and body. This is the ground through which personal practice and contemplative teacher practice are brought together. In Buddhism and Shambhala, that is achieved through mindfulness meditation. In the Enki approach, this is also the case. Sutton elucidates on the Enki approach in which “mindfulness practice is an integral aspect of the Enki teacher’s on-going preparation. While formal meditation practice is specifically and intentionally not part of the children’s world, the *experience* of mindfulness is built into every aspect of the curriculum and methodology. This creates a supportive loop that enhances contemplative practice and mindfulness in action for the teacher, and creates a contemplative environment and experience for the children” (B. Sutton, personal communication, December 19, 2017).

In mindfulness meditation, unlike the other disciplines, the attention is on the movement of our own hearts and minds. We are not focused on a particular pose or movement. We are not focused on heart rate, or color or a shape. We are not focused on wind or sun or trees. And we are not looking for a state of bliss or transcendence. Rather, in this particular practice we are looking to know ourselves more deeply. We are learning to watch the ebb and flow of our thoughts, feelings and bodily sensations, to come back again and again to the simple experience of being here, in this moment, this day, this place. (p. 131)

At the Shambhala School, most of the faculty have a practice by which they are working with the mind and the body. Having that shared experience of working with synchronizing mind and body is an important aspect of the school’s daily life and the atmosphere.

Synchronizing mind and body through mindfulness practice gives rise to a sense of well-being and the discovery of basic goodness in ourselves. This is the ground, as discussed earlier, for the

rediscovery of sacred world. It is also the ground of compassion as the attachment to ego and the territoriality of that mindset is worn down, and sensitivity and openness to the well-being, or not, of others grows. Trungpa talks about a sense of tenderness that develops in ourselves and towards others as we make a relationship with basic goodness (Trungpa, 2004c, p. 37). An initial sense of awkwardness gives way to a willingness to relate to fear and also to open to our own experience and to those of others.

You would like to extend yourself to others and communicate with them. When tenderness evolves in that direction you can truly communicate with the world around you. Sense perceptions become very interesting things. You are so tender and open already that you cannot help opening yourself to what takes place around you. . . . Fear evolves into fearlessness naturally, very simply and quite straightforwardly. (Trungpa, 2004c, p. 37)

Awareness. In Buddhist and Shambhala teachings mindfulness and awareness are talked about as intimately linked aspects of meditation practice. Hayward describes the distinction, saying,

Mindfulness is the attention to detail and settling of the mind that you need in order to begin practice. *Awareness* is the more global sense of space, openness and clarity that develops out of mindfulness as your practice strengthens. . . . Mindfulness, with its precision, and awareness, with its openness and clear insight, are both necessary aspects of practice in action, like two wings of a bird. (Hayward, 1995, p. 104, italics in original)

Awareness of our surroundings and the environment is a natural outcome of letting go of struggle and with it can come “a sudden feeling of freshness . . . humour and perspective” (p. 105). When the inner world becomes less threatening and dominant, then responding to other people and events with more compassion and understanding becomes possible as we allow our awareness to inform us of what is below the surface of an emotionally laden word or event. Awareness of the surrounding space is accompanied by feeling a part of it, tuning into the atmosphere of the situation in which we find ourselves. It is something we all tune into all the time. Cooking a meal, we are not solely focused on chopping the carrots while the onions burn on the stove—unless of course we are completely immersed in our inner chatter. Walking down

the street, our awareness keeps us from bumping into other pedestrians even if we are engaged in deep conversation with a friend. Mindfulness and awareness operate together all the time, and together they make up the totality of our being in the world. Zen master, Suzuki Roshi says, “The inner world is limitless, and the outer world is also limitless. We say ‘inner world’ and ‘outer world’ but actually there is just one whole world” (as cited in Hayward, 1995, p. 108). This is another expression of sacred world outlook which can be rediscovered through the practice of mindfulness and awareness meditation. Trungpa says:

According to the Buddhist tradition, how you work with details is a two-fold process. The first part is *the mindfulness of things as they are*. You have a pot or a teacup—whatever object you have. Mindfulness is how to work properly with those things. The second aspect is *awareness*, which is the totality of the situation. It is how your mindfulness is reflected in what you’ve done. Together, mindfulness and awareness are the first category or principle of letting go. (Trungpa, 2004d, p. 256, italics in original)

Extending mindfulness and awareness practice and the conviction in basic goodness into the realm of teacher practice is the foundation of contemplative education and a pedagogical approach that supports it. It is also at the heart of the Enki curriculum and an integral aspect of the curriculum that is being designed for the young monks at CGI. In my experience as a teacher and in life, being able to relate to oneself and the world as basically good makes it easier to extend that awareness to the students one is teaching. The challenges that teachers face day to day can be wearing and frustrating. But, when basic goodness is a given in a classroom, having evolved out of the teacher’s personal practice and a commitment to sacred world outlook, it is easier to forgive ourselves and others, and to extend that mindfulness and awareness into seeing a situation more clearly. There is the possibility of letting go that Trungpa describes above, rather than getting stuck in the feeling of “badness” and beating ourselves up. The discipline of coming back again and again to the breath is like returning to the sense of wholeness and goodness of the environment and the class. By bringing one’s personal practice into one’s teacher practice, reconnecting to the students and the atmosphere of the classroom can happen more quickly and more openly than by holding on to the upsets.

In the early days of my life as a teacher, my personal life became very difficult. Mornings were especially hard. Sleeplessness, getting the children ready for school, gathering my own work and

lunch, and dealing with the traffic exacerbated a sense of hopelessness that often overcame me at that time of day. Sometimes I wished that I could just get a coffee and retreat behind a computer at a desk and not have to relate to my life or anyone in it, especially my class. As the children entered the classroom, I had to consciously make myself relate to my routine and the rituals that they expected every morning. I would get up and greet them as they came in, with a handshake and a few words. Sometimes I would ask them to help me with getting a project ready or to run to the office with a message. There were times, too, when I felt as if I was being dismissive or even cold, and I felt terrible about that. By this time in my life, however, my practice was too deeply engrained in me to allow myself to get away with indulging my misery for too long, especially when it was so inappropriate and causing confusion in my students or in my family. Even though I felt like an automaton, that everything was false and lacking heart, I was also able to stand back and see myself acting in this way, and come back to the present moment. A look of perplexity from a student in response to my shortness, or annoyance at my heavy handedness that too often accompanied this state of mind, would wake me up to the effect my state of mind was having on my students. I knew I had to apply the discipline I had been practicing, even though it was hard. The desire to be self-indulgent, even in misery, is so strong! The routine of the classroom helped me regain a sense of balance too, and by the time we had sung our morning verse, moved the desks and gathered in a circle for our movement time, I had checked in with myself, and with the class, and I could feel that the cloud had lifted a bit. Moving, singing, and playing games with the children gave me the chance to forget about myself for minutes at a time and be fully engaged with the class. Even though my problems continued to assail me off and on during the day, I found that I could let go of the mess of my thoughts, be present in the moment, and actually feel happy as I interacted with the class and allowed myself to experience the wholehearted energy with which they engaged in life, learning and play.

Meditation in action. Meditation is often referred to as a practice. But a practice for what? The short answer is that it is a practice for living—living mindfully, compassionately, with awareness. Trungpa (1996) describes how meditation goes beyond mindfulness practice on the cushion, to being a discipline that can be worked with in the course of daily life. The technique of meditation as I have described it here is, in a sense, a training for living life to the fullest, that wakes us up to sacred world and the beauty of the details of life, to basic goodness and wisdom, in ourselves and in others. It is a way of developing habits of mind that can be called upon in

everyday situations. In meditation practice, emotions and all thoughts are treated equally, by noticing them and returning to the discipline of breath. In this way, instead of reacting to thoughts it is possible to become gentle towards oneself, and curious rather than judgmental. Similarly, these habits of mind cut through the tendency to react to situations in daily life that have an emotional content to them, thereby avoiding the escalation of a difficult situation. Applying these habits of mind is a way of cutting through the predisposition of ego to assert itself as being “right,” and to allow freshness and openness in dealing with problems that confront us daily. For teachers, applying the practice of meditation in action in the busy, and sometimes trying, environment of the classroom is a way of developing the skillful means for dealing with those difficulties. In my own experience, meditation in action is the touchstone of how I understand contemplative education and pedagogy, and how I have applied my meditation practice to teacher practice. Applying the principles of meditation in action, to the best of my ability, has allowed a sense of flow in my practice in the classroom, as well as flexibility. From this perspective, a discipline problem can be approached with an open mind, and the basic goodness of the child is never called into question. Basic goodness is always the reference point, the foundation of a flexible response, rather than a thoughtless reaction. It helped me to remember that every circumstance is different, avoiding the tendency to pigeonhole a child and approaching every incident with a fresh mind. There were also times when I forgot, of course, and reacted in an unskillful manner. But the principles of meditation in action apply here too. On the spot, having recognized a reaction, one can do what needs to be done in remedy and then move ahead without self-recrimination. Recognizing, responding skillfully with whatever means are available, and moving on, helps keep things flowing in the classroom, as well as in life.

Trusting intuition. Trungpa Rinpoche founded Naropa University as a venue to integrate the wisdom of the East and Buddhist thought with the Western academic world through dialogue and exploration. The phrase that expressed its mission and its vision is “Joining Intellect and Intuition.” The introductory Enki weekend that Beth Sutton offers is called “Rousing Intuition.” In the context of meditation and sacred world, intuition is not considered to be haphazard or something that is disconnected from intellect. It is, on the contrary, a well-spring of intelligence that can be relied upon to guide us when faced with situations that do not lend themselves to a straightforward or familiar analysis. Rousing confidence in our capacity for this kind of insight, where intelligence of this kind is brought to the fore, requires a certain level of trust in ourselves

and in our ability to “read” a situation. There is increasing interest in the role that intuition plays in our lives, and studies have been done on the role that intuition plays in psychology, medicine and nursing (Burton, 2016; Chilcote, 2017; Ruth-Sahd, 2003), and to a lesser extent in education (Gobet, 2017; Vokey & Kerr, 2011). At Naropa, and in the Enki program, meditation is the skill through which intuition is recognized and reinforced as a valuable—indispensable even—aspect of our being. Sitting in stillness as thoughts come and go, insights arise into what might otherwise be obscured by the busy-ness of our lives. For teachers, the demands of children and administration follow in quick succession. It is easy to react, acting out of habitual patterns of behavior, rather than responding intelligently, bringing both intuition and intellect to bear on the circumstances. Through meditation there is the opportunity to train ourselves to trust our intuitive capacity and our full intelligence. Trusting intuition is another way of understanding innate intelligence and basic goodness, our own and that of our students.

The slogans. Out of Trungpa’s teachings several slogans evolved which remind me of Shambhala principles and support me in bringing mindfulness and awareness practice into life on a daily basis. They are pithy and direct, as relevant to the teaching situation as any other. Below I explore how some of them have been helpful to me in bringing my personal practice into my teacher practice.

If you lose your mind, come back. This slogan describes and encapsulates what I described above. There is no state of perfection to which we are aspiring. The slogan acknowledges that thoughts, emotions, and feelings constantly interrupt our mindfulness, and that this is what it means to be human. We can’t get rid of them, but we can come back to the practice over and over and re-establish our connection to our sense of well-being and basic goodness, integrating our body and mind in the process. In the same way, in the classroom we can always come back to the sense of being “in synch” with our students and their basic goodness. Just knowing that we can start fresh at any minute brings relief and relaxation. And just as on the cushion, we have to do it again and again and again. . . .

Not too tight, not too loose. Meditating, especially at first, can be demanding on both body and mind. This slogan instructs us how to relate to both in our practice. Taking a hard-nosed approach to the discipline of coming back to the breath and the posture, or beating ourselves up for having too many thoughts, tends to result in resistance and exhaustion. Holding

our body very stiffly, going for perfect posture and ignoring pain and pins and needles is also exhausting, and the two reinforce each other so that meditation becomes a chore. On the other hand, if we indulge in daydreams and fantasies and flop around on the cushion, giving into every little discomfort whether it manifests in the body or the mind, that too, is missing the point. The point is to be gentle, but firm. I see these instructions on personal discipline in meditation practice translating into teacher practice as an attitude towards classroom discipline. If we are too tight and demanding of our students, requiring from them some kind of performance, then they will start to resist, act up and be disruptive. Having loose or inconsistent boundaries is equally disruptive and disintegrating to the classroom environment. The reference point of what to come back to is lost, and the integrity of the classroom as a whole is undermined. Finding the balance between being too tight and being too loose in the area of discipline is a skill that comes with practice in my experience, and the discipline of meditation has been most helpful. When the balance is achieved, a very lively classroom environment can ensue. When the boundaries are clear and precise, then chaos is not a problem. If the discipline of coming back is established in the classroom and the teacher's discipline is not too tight and not too loose, the class can move as a harmonious and integrated entity, flowing between chaos and concentration throughout the day.

This slogan can also be helpful when we feel that we are falling short of expectations of what we “should” be teaching. Sometimes the response to that feeling is to push the agenda, tighten up and make demands of the children. The children will inevitably respond with their own push back in whatever form that takes. Giving up, being too loose, and cutting corners to get to the same end is also unsatisfying for teacher and student. It compromises the integrity of the learning process. Finding the middle way between the two is an on-going practice and one which, like the meditation practice which supports it, requires commitment and reflection, rather than self-blame or heavy handedness with the students. Sometimes, as teachers, we have to be better organized or better prepared. And sometimes we have to be willing to let go of the fixed agenda for the sake of some bigger intrinsic learning which might be happening. Being too tight or too loose will obscure this important aspect of children's experience—and our own.

Touch and go. This slogan refers to the practice of labelling thoughts, feelings and emotions with a light touch and then returning to the out-breath. As we go out with the breath we

regain an awareness of our environment and the context within which we find ourselves. This extends to our daily life as well, in that we can touch on whatever thoughts are crowding our mind, reconnect to the present moment, and expand our awareness to the situation at hand. In the classroom environment, we can take a moment many times in a day to touch in with ourselves and then extend our awareness out to what is going on with the students and the class as a whole. Even something as simple as tuning into the noise level, or its quality, can alert us to what is happening in the class, something that I expect most teachers do intuitively. Conversely, tuning into the atmosphere in the classroom might wake us up to what is going on in our inner world. There have been times when I have picked up an undercurrent of anxiety in the class as a whole. I have had to ask myself: Am I pushing them too hard? What am I trying to achieve? How am I contributing to this atmosphere? As we have seen, inner world and outer world are not separate, and waking up to the totality of our experience at any time is connecting to sacred world and the freshness and brilliance of basic goodness. Extending our mindfulness and awareness practice to teacher practice in this way can be very restorative to a teacher's sense of sanity and well-being as well as to the atmosphere of the classroom.

Contemplative Pedagogy as Path

Connecting to sacred world outlook in the classroom is, for me, the heart of contemplative education for both teachers and students. As I have described, mindfulness meditation as a personal practice extends into teacher practice. Mindfulness practice lays the foundation for a pedagogical approach in which basic goodness and sacred world outlook can be rediscovered. The path by which sacred world outlook can be brought alive in the classroom happens through the interplay of curriculum and pedagogy, sacred world outlook being the view of curriculum, and contemplative pedagogy being the practice. In the Buddhist sense, the meaning of path is a commitment to the practice and to the teachings. Another slogan, "Bring everything to the path," implies that there is nothing that is not relevant to the spiritual journey. If we apply this to the practice of being a teacher then everything that we encounter has value and the potential to wake us up to sacred world, no matter where we find ourselves. Curriculum and pedagogy, in all educational approaches, describe the goal and the means to achieve that goal. Together, curriculum and pedagogy provide a map of where to go and instructions on how to get there. Taking the contemplative view, the goal and the journey become one. At every moment,

possibilities of discovery, transformation, and deep learning open up, even in the mundane aspects of daily classroom routine. And even just noticing a missed opportunity is an aspect of the journey, bringing the experience of on-going practice and engagement into the realm of teaching and learning.

In frustration, I sent the child out of the classroom. She had been persistent in her oppositional behavior, but was a charming and creative child when engaged, and I was tired of the struggle. I took a few deep breaths and went out to talk to her. My first words were, “You know, I really care about you; I don’t know what’s going on, but this has to stop,” at which point she burst into tears. My heart melted, and I put my arm around her, all my irritation dissolving on the spot. It turned out that there were health problems in the family of which I was unaware. I realized that this child needed to express all her pent-up anxiety and it was coming out in the form of misbehavior. I comforted her the best I could. We established an understanding between us in the course of those few minutes, and after that there were fewer confrontations. For me it was a lesson that although my interpretations of the situation were misguided, addressing them with genuine caring was more effective than harsh words.

A contemplative pedagogical approach is, on the one hand, very personal and nuanced. On the other hand, a supportive environment and articulated allegiance to contemplative pedagogy is, I believe, necessary in order to discover and embody sacred world outlook in the educational setting. The pressures of school life, the segregation of academic subjects, the demands of achieving outcomes and documenting them, all promote fragmentation and a dis-integrated environment and population. A coherence between what is taught and how it is taught, is central to sacred world outlook which supports the integration of all aspects of education. Everything matters, from the classroom set-up, to the way we speak to each other, to the plans we make for our lessons. The Enki curriculum and methodology is an approach to contemplative pedagogy as path, founded on the view of sacred world outlook.

So, what is meant by contemplative pedagogy? For me, the practice of contemplative pedagogy is engaging in methods and approaches that give rise to the recognition of basic goodness in ourselves and others, and the recognition that our existence and well-being is intimately connected to the well-being of the world we live in. This can take the form of a shift in perspective and approach. For instance, a study of trees can take place in the city at a local park.

Even before naming and identifying the kinds of trees that are there, the children can be asked to choose a tree to describe in detail. After just sitting and observing it for a minute or so, they can investigate the tree, from its bark, leaves and branches, to its size and shape, bringing their senses to bear in the investigation. What is the texture and smell of the tree's bark? What kind of sound do the leaves make as the wind stirs them? What creatures live in or on it? This information can be recorded as drawings, bark rubbings, or in a story about the animals that live in the tree. Students can adopt a tree to observe throughout the school year to watch for changes and keep a journal of their observations. Back in the classroom, the students can do some research to identify their tree.

From this there are many integrated ways to extend the study.^{xxxii} In the context of a unit on Mi'kmaw culture I have investigated the traditional uses of the wood from native Nova Scotian trees with the class. We even tried to make traditional snowshoes one year from ash with limited success, but much enthusiasm, and a lot of learning about the qualities of ash wood. From a math perspective, we could group the trees in various ways, and find the height of the tree through triangulation. Grouping can also be an introduction to classification. As an extension, we identified and counted the different trees on the streets surrounding the school and made a map of their locations. From the language arts perspective there are poems, songs, and verses about trees that we worked with, some of which became movement exercises. This is an example of integration of body, speech, and mind, which was briefly described in Chapter 1 and which I discuss in more detail later in this chapter. The body is engaged through the senses and the physical aspects of the study of trees. The speech aspect is nourished through drawing, singing and imagination, as well as by creating a relationship with a tree. The mind makes connections and through the natural curiosity of the child; discoveries are made. As I note above, I did this project within the context of the larger culture that we were studying. Having gone in depth into the study of trees in the context of Nova Scotia, we establish the ground for understanding the role of trees in other cultures and places.

This example from my teaching experience shows how a discovery learning project that is done in many schools can be brought into a contemplative framework. It demonstrates one way that curriculum and methodology can be integrated holistically, bringing body, speech, and mind to bear in the process of learning, with attention to the environment and the interconnectedness of

its various aspects. This example is from the standpoint of the elementary experience, but the same principles apply in middle and high school albeit via different forms: attention to body, speech and mind in the learning process, recognition of the interdependence and relationship of the elements that make up the whole, and creating opportunities for contemplation and reflection in a direct and non-dualistic way remain constant guidelines at all grade levels.

My favourite letter to teach, as the students were learning to read in Grade 1 was the letter F. The Russian story, The Firebird, was the story I chose to give the letter life and meaning. Keeping alive the magic and mystery of language is at the heart of the Enki reading approach, so a story is attached to the learning of each of the consonants. Having told the story and recalled it the next day, I drew a picture from the story on the board using coloured chalk. The firebird's tail was reminiscent of the letter F. This was the "secret letter" that students very soon learned to look for in each of the drawings. In circle, we would do an F verse or phrase with lots of alliteration, such as, "The firebird's firey finery flashed from afar," accompanied by a gesture that went with the sound of F. Students made their own book of the alphabet with the consonant pictures and the verse. If, when we practiced reading they got stuck at the letter F, I would first show them the gesture and often that would help them recall the sound of F. Even though this process is time consuming, it is tremendously satisfying for both teacher and student. I found that by the time the students were in Grade 3 they were usually keen readers, who looked forward to our reading time every day.

Contemplative pedagogy in the literature. Contemplative pedagogy has been defined in different ways over the years. Even so, writers and practitioners agree that it requires introspection, focus and attention, and that it seeks to redress or balance the rational-material approach to learning and the attendant stresses suffered by students and teachers. Hart (2004) defines contemplative pedagogy as "deepened awareness, concentration, and insight" (p. 29) and states that "the cardinal aspect of contemplative practice is nourishing the quality of one's attention" (p. 32). For Zajonc (2013) "'contemplative pedagogy' . . . offers to its practitioners a wide range of educational methods that support the development of student attention, emotional balance, empathetic connection, compassion, and altruistic behavior, while also providing new pedagogical techniques that support creativity and the learning of course content" (p. 83). Kesson, Traugh and Perez (2006) describe their approach of Descriptive Inquiry in the

teaching/learning environment as a contemplative exercise that leads to “the deconstruction of habitual patterns of perception and action” (p. 1862). Miller and Irwin (2016) found that teachers who engaged in meditation noticed the effect of “reducing stress, increasing awareness of oneself and others, and promoting healthier interpersonal communication” (p. 86).

While all approaches to contemplative education and pedagogy have the well-being of the students at heart, there are differences in the motivation of the researchers, as pointed out by Ergas (2015). He identifies two distinct approaches to the mindfulness/contemplative movement. One approach investigates, from a scientific standpoint, the benefits to students and teachers of mindfulness in schools as a tool to cope with the stress and demands that are everywhere in the mainstream educational system through developing a greater awareness of their inner lives. The other involves an investigation into the roots of contemplative practice, primarily Buddhism, and the potential for transformation that the wisdom traditions offer, not only to the students but to the philosophy and practice of education. It is within this latter that I place the Enki approach and the view of sacred world outlook that I am presenting in this study.

In the former, within the scope of scientific investigation, studies such as that by Waters, Barsky, Ridd and Allen (2015) investigate to what extent mindfulness practice or other mediation techniques increase well-being, social competence, and academic achievement. The development of key self-regulation skills required for academic achievement and emotional well-being is the focus of a similar review of contemplative practices in schools (Shapiro, Lyons, Miller, Butler, Vieten & Zelazo, 2015). In an attempt to quantify the benefits of introducing contemplative practices in schools, these papers investigate studies that have been done in relation to programs which cover different approaches to contemplation ranging from yoga to transcendental meditation, and from mindfulness practice to guided contemplation using physical props. The outcome of these practices is considered to be positive overall in that students and teachers report more rather than less benefit from them. However, O’Donnell (2015) critiques those who attempt to quantify the mindfulness movement as it is being adopted in schools, businesses, and even the military, as being motivated by the needs of business and corporate interests. These approaches to mindfulness practice, O’Donnell says, ignore the philosophical and spiritual roots of these practices, as well as ignoring the crucial importance of the individual and his or her personal process.

Following Berardi (2009), O'Donnell attributes the rise in interest in mindfulness and contemplative practices to be “a coping technique in a world of information and sensory overload” (p. 188). She expresses concern that these programs are bound up with their relationship to capitalism and commodification through the colonization of the inner psychic life which she describes as being the increasing subjectification and exposure of individuals, and especially youth, to media and to the burgeoning technology to which we are all exposed in the present day. She goes on to say:

Critics argue that: mindfulness has been uprooted from rich wisdom traditions and has thus lost sight of its ethical orientation becoming a programmatic rather than pedagogical practice; it is simply another element in a very profitable self-help industry; or that when uncoupled from an ethical framework and philosophical investigation, it engages solely with symptoms rather than causes of suffering. (2015, p. 188)

O'Donnell's concern is that addressing symptoms such as stress, depression and anxiety, through the introduction of mindfulness and contemplative practices into schools and workplaces, while bringing some benefit to those who engage with them, obscures the conditions which produce these symptoms, namely the sensory overload and accelerated pace of life, and consequently the diminished capacity for attention, in the contemporary capitalist environment. “Attention deficit,” she argues, “is not, then, simply a psychological disorder but a feature of contemporary life when the organism develops in an info-saturated environment” (p. 191). Approaching these problems through mindfulness practice focused entirely on self-improvement and divorced from the Buddhist ethics and wisdom of the original practice, she feels is a “band-aid” solution and one which ultimately benefits the status quo. The efforts to secularize, quantify and provide scientific evidence to demonstrate its effectiveness has led to “the impoverishment of the ways in which the practice is communicated and its value explained, in particular when it is instrumentalised as a technique primarily focused on the self rather than part of an ethical practice and way of life” (p. 195).

Recent studies in contemplative education have made connections between engaging in social justice and environmental issues and spiritual practice as a path to transformation in the

individual as well as in society. Writers whose work investigates this transformational aspect of contemplative education, in a similar vein to O'Donnell, give more weight to the origins of these practices coming from the wisdom traditions such as Buddhism. Kaufman (2017) outlines a proposal for what he calls “critical contemplative pedagogy,” bringing together the work of Freire (1970) in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and contemporary work on contemplative pedagogy. The hybrid approach of critical contemplative pedagogy, “establishes a foundation of nonduality; . . . promotes an awareness of interdependence; . . . encourages us to embrace impermanence; . . . fosters intentionality; . . . [and] grounds the political with the personal” (p. 1). The concepts of nonduality, interdependence and impermanence are all central to Buddhism and when practiced and understood, even at the beginning level, bring about a transformation in how one views the world. As described in Eppert, Vokey, Nguyen and Bai (2015), by engaging the worldview of basic goodness we are slowly but surely undercutting an ego-centric and dualistic view of the world. In so doing, we begin to see that all things exist interdependently and that nothing stays the same or can be understood as permanent. This leads to a shift in the way we view the world, from that which is based on the idea of materialism and competition as the foundational motivations of our existence, to one of relatedness and cooperation as the solution to redressing social inequality and environmental degradation.

O'Donnell (2015) asks, what is the value of mindfulness if we do not question the policies of school and education that are the causes of this stress? She argues that “it is near futile to persist in ‘add-on’ interventions if the broader systemic, cultural and organizational changes do not accompany efforts to develop mindfulness among students” (p. 197). She advocates an “on-going, permeated approach” (p. 198) to mindfulness in schools and curricula and pedagogical practices that recognize and acknowledge the ethical roots and vision of the practices.

Teaching is seldom served well by generic and formulaic methodologies or by pedagogies divorced from philosophical and ethical principles, and so it may be that the problem lies in those ‘ready-made’ or ‘generic’ approaches to mindfulness teaching that are not attuned to the dynamics and potentials of a singular class, that seek proscribed outcomes, that seek to be ‘neutral’ rather than honest about the ethical and spiritual

origins of the practice, and that fail to intuit those unpredictable moments that can invite insight and transformation. (p. 198)

O'Donnell's (2015) appeal for an "on-going, more permeated approach" (p. 198) to contemplative practices in schools resonates with the central question of this chapter. Her concern is that fragmented approaches to contemplative practice, while probably not harmful, can reinforce individualism and thus the ethos of the capitalist consumer economy. While I agree with O'Donnell that permeating the curriculum with contemplative practice is the ideal, it is also the case that introducing an awareness of mind can open the door to a deeper understanding of how we relate to others in the world, to our humanity, and to the potential for waking up to basic goodness.

Contemplative practice as a way of life, within the school context and beyond, is the intent and aspiration of sacred world outlook and the Enki curriculum and a contemplative approach to pedagogy. It is in the spirit of bringing a transformative outlook to education through an alternative worldview and positioning myself within the growing tradition of contemplative education that espouses this approach, that I offer a description of some aspects of Enki methodology that stand out for me in the context of contemplative education.

Some Fruitional Aspects of Contemplative Pedagogy^{xxxii}

Contemplative pedagogy and the Enki curriculum. The Enki approach seeks to integrate the methods of teaching with the content of what is taught and to create the space of sacred world outlook in the school and in the classroom. As such, mindfulness practice is at the heart of the curriculum and the pedagogical methods it puts forward. Mindfulness practice has been an inspiration to me throughout my teaching career and informs to a large extent the curriculum that I am designing for the young monks in Bhutan. As the Shambhala School in Halifax evolved, the demands of the real world necessitated some deviation from Enki approach as it was originally described by Sutton (1998, 2005). I believe, however, that the school's curriculum as it is practiced in the elementary classes, embodies the core values and teachings of the Enki contemplative approach. The interdependence of all aspects of life, not least in the

school where so much of children's and teachers' waking lives are spent, is described by Sutton (1998, 2005) as an ecosystem, which I go into further in Chapter 4. This draws upon the principles of ecological balance found in the natural world and the teachings of basic goodness and sacred world outlook.^{xxxiii} Below, I describe some of the key concepts that stand out for me, and that offer a way of approaching curriculum and pedagogy that is transformative for both teachers and students, those being: the integration of body, speech, and mind in the curriculum; culture in the contemplative approach to pedagogy; rhythm and ritual in the classroom and the curriculum; and creating community.

If you had walked into my classroom at the Shambhala School, the first thing that would strike you would be the colours and the light. I was fortunate to be in an old building which had large windows, and my room had windows on two sides, so there was always plenty of daylight, and I was able to keep the fluorescent light to a minimum. The windows were softened with fabric draped over rods at the top of the window. Plants adorned the window sills, and children's paintings were on the walls, which were painted a warm apricot. The desks, chairs and furniture were all wood. I avoided plastic as far as possible, preferring the look and feel of natural materials. The desks could be pushed to the side to make room for movement activities, or grouped together for small group work. In one corner, there was a large table where a group of students could work together. In another there was a carpeted area with bookshelves and a book display rack where the children would take their books and cushions for reading time. The original blackboards covered the length of one wall and half of another. A display of the letters in cursive script ran above the length of one board. At the start of each thematic unit I would do a board drawing using coloured chalk that would set the tone for the culture we were studying, something that stayed up for the duration of the term. As we went through the story cycles, I would draw pictures on the board for each story using coloured chalk, but these would be erased when I had to make space for the writing. Every child had a set of beeswax crayons and colour pencils. Sometimes the children copied the drawings into their books, adding their own flourishes and interpretation, and other times they did one from their imagination.

Integration of body, speech, and mind. Body, speech, and mind are three fundamental aspects of human existence that take a central place in the way Enki curriculum is structured and how it manifests in the classroom. They are: the body, which includes the physical aspects of the

world we live in; the speech or heart aspect, which includes communication, relationships, the breath, and a sense of connectedness; and mind, which includes the vitality and energetic qualities we possess as well as the inherent wisdom, intelligence, and insight that are the birthright of all human beings. Whether we are playing soccer, singing, or practicing meditation, all three are working together in order that we function and can be effective in our lives. The extent to which these functions are synchronized, or integrated, will determine the level of effectiveness and performance. These are the three basic functions that sports psychologists are working with when they coach their clients. In education, too, these are our base “materials.” The stress on integration of body, speech, and mind is therefore central to the practice of a contemplative pedagogy. Weaving these together in the daily life of students offers many avenues for them to connect to their learning, make discoveries, as well as meet the needs of different learning capacities.^{xxxiv} When these three aspects are integrated and working well together, there is an experience of health and well-being and education becomes a nourishing and joyful experience.

Body, in the Enki sense, is not just the physical body, but includes the environment within which learning happens. Within the school environment, the physical location of the school, the classroom, and the play areas all play an important role in supporting the educational task. Putting effort into making the classroom beautiful and inviting was, for me, an important first step in creating a safe and harmonious place for the children to be. Engaging the body through kinesthetic learning is fundamental to the Enki curriculum. Morning circle is a time for games and activities that introduce and reinforce various aspects of learning, including math and language skills. Addition, subtraction, the times tables, grammar and parts of speech are just some of the skills that can be conveyed through movement, games, rhythm and rhyme. Learning the times tables through movement and rhythm, using beanbags or various games becomes far less of a chore. Large muscle activities as well as more refined movement such as balancing, juggling and spinning all serve to integrate learning. Movement that crosses the mid-lines of the body—left and right, up and down, and forward and back—sets up neuro-muscular pathways that promote balanced development and integration (Ayres, 1972). In morning circle, we did exercises using beanbags, copper rods and balls, usually accompanied by a verse or a song, that involve moving through these mid-lines. As well, I would always have students switch from their dominant to the non-dominant side in performing these exercises, in order to balance left and

right and to promote more flexibility and integration in the children's movement. Folk dances, usually drawn from the culture we were studying, also served the purpose of neuro-muscular integration and were fun for the children. These kinds of exercises provide a much-needed balance to the linear, hand-eye pathways that are set up and reinforced through the use of technology to which most children are (over) exposed these days. For both teachers and students, bringing the experience of learning into the body counters the tendency to make learning an accumulation of information, and deepens and enriches the learning experience.

In the Enki approach, when children are integrated at the level of speech, they experience a sense of connection to their teachers and fellow students, as well as to the material that they are working with. Speech, in this context, is the part of our being that communicates, not only through the medium of speech, but through art and other expressions that come from the non-conceptual aspect of being. Thus, imagination, emotion and relationship in general are also qualities of speech. Breath, in the practice of mindfulness, is the speech element, connecting the mind and body, the inner and the outer. The emphasis on integrating the arts, as the avenue to integrating speech, is a vital part of the Enki curriculum. Drawing, painting, music, dance, drama, modelling and sculpting are all part of the activities in which children engage throughout the course of a unit. Storytelling is a fundamental part of the curriculum and is emphasized as a means to communicate information and the integration of the arts into all areas of the curriculum. In the course of listening to a story, the child's imagination is activated, and information is taken in within the context of the child's own experience. As I have previously described, in telling, as opposed to reading, a story a connection arises between the teller and the listener which allows the child to relax into the realm of imagination. The child takes in the information without judgment or analysis, making her own relationship to the material and providing a context for understanding and future study. In lower elementary, stories also provide a framework of reference for math and science concepts and ideas, and are not confined to the realm of social studies and language arts.

The artistic component associated with the story is a further means for the child to make the information her own and thus integrate the concepts and information. After hearing a story, the students do drawings from the story, painting, modelling or projects. Verses, games or movement activities that relate to the story are often part of morning circle, providing a

kinesthetic and non-conceptual avenue for integration of body, speech, and mind in the process of learning. An artistically arranged and inviting classroom, while being an aspect of the physical environment, also communicates caring, by providing emotional and physical safety. It also acknowledges the children's effort in small ways, such as displaying their work on the walls. It contributes to the overall sense of basic goodness in the environment.

Every week we painted a scene from a story that we had worked with during the week, interspersed with weeks when the children did "free paints." During the first weeks of the year, every student would be assigned a job to help prepare for painting. I sang a song which the students associated with painting, while students filled the water jars, set out the painting boards, organized the paint jars, or moved the desks into groups of four. The technique we used mostly was wet-on-wet, using watercolour paper, which was soaked for a short time in water, and high-quality watercolour paints, diluted but still vibrant. When the room was set up, the children gathered around as I did a demonstration of the painting for the week, telling the part of the story that went with the painting as I went along, and modelling the mixing of colours and brush techniques. We mainly used just the three primary colours—deep red, lemon yellow and ultramarine blue which we mixed to get different shades and the complementary colours. Occasionally we added gold, an orange red and a dark Prussian blue. Students then proceeded to do their own version of the painting. Despite everyone ostensibly doing the same painting, there was always a wide variety and personal interpretation that came through in the paintings. As students became more absorbed in the process, chatter gradually ceased until they sank into total silence. The feeling in the room was one of deep concentration and connection, which for me was an opportunity to observe my students, breathe, and relax into the atmosphere of the room. For us all it was deeply satisfying and nurturing. Even though the paper was sponged off before paint was applied, the medium remained very fluid, and the effect and end results could be surprising, but often beautiful. This was sometimes hard for those who were new to the technique. I had a new student burst into tears because her painting did not look like she wanted it to. There is learning here, in that letting go of the product and engaging in the process of the painting is a big part of the experience of wet-on-wet painting. It did not take long for students to learn this, and there have only been a few students I can think of over the years who did not connect with the process.

Mind, in the Enki curriculum, is the development of insight and intelligence, as well as how concepts and knowledge are integrated and expressed. In an artistic/holistic approach, different curriculum elements can be integrated and related to each other providing a context for concepts and information. By grounding concepts and knowledge in experience through storytelling, and integrating them through the process of artistic expression, what children learn is rooted in their experience. This is consolidated through writing, the construction of models, or projects. Writing assignments could be a summary of the story, a description of an experiment or project, a poem, or other creative writing, among many possibilities. In this way, what the children have learned is brought to a more conceptual level, but rooted in their experience. As discussed earlier, insight based on perception and experience has deeper roots than information that is received without experiential understanding, as both Abram (1997) and Trungpa (2004b) suggest. In the Enki approach, the fundamental principle is that knowledge that is connected, holistic and developmentally appropriate fosters a love of learning and the natural curiosity and intelligence of the child. When knowledge and concepts are not separated from context and environment, then the child experiences wholeness and integration and learning becomes a joyful endeavour. Having this experience of the whole is what leads to the ability to analyze and examine component parts with our minds.

Mindfulness meditation and yoga is part of every morning's routine starting at Grade 6 in the Shambhala School. In the elementary grades, I worked with mindfulness and awareness primarily through movement exercises and walking meditation. We also did body awareness exercises, usually sitting but sometimes lying down. I also practiced "listening" with my class, just sitting still and focusing on the sounds in the environment. Interestingly, when I asked them if they had any thoughts, it was very rare for a child to talk about something conceptual or abstract. The thoughts they were aware of related primarily to their sense perceptions, such as "I heard So-and-so breathing," or "The siren sounded really loud." For me, this highlights the direct relationship between the sense perceptions and the body, and the awareness of mind, especially as this is experienced by the younger child.

Integration of body, speech, and mind is, I feel, of vital importance to the development of holistic ways of teaching that are fundamentally contemplative. When body, speech, and mind are integrated, the whole person is engaged in the process of learning which makes learning

personal, vital, and memorable. In this way the student avoids piling facts and information into the students' heads, and instead aims for meaning, depth and connection, through the paths of artistic expression, discovery and embodiment. Children experience aspects of their being that would not be served by sitting in desks and doing "busy" work. The integration of body, speech and mind provides opportunities to meet children's needs in a variety of ways, and when children feel that their needs are met, it is my experience that they relax. Relaxation in the context of education, is not only beneficial to the learning process, but it is also connects the children to their basic goodness, which, in this perspective, is the purpose of the contemplative approach.

Culture and curriculum. The Enki approach is one that espouses multiculturalism, in the sense that it aspires to expose students to many different ways of seeing the world. Coming from a Western background and upbringing, I am aware of the inherent limitations to my ability to fully understand and communicate the essence of non-Western cultures, and there is always the question in the back of my mind as to the appropriateness of what I am teaching and bringing to the students. On the other hand, I feel it is important to bring the wisdom that is available in non-Western and Indigenous cultures to my students and to offer alternative ways of understanding the world—ways that come from the point of view of wholeness, community, and harmonious living on the Earth. With this in mind, I have always made every effort to relate respectfully to the culture that I am teaching. By inviting individuals from the culture in question into the classroom, and offering many aspects of the culture to the students, I have aspired to create an atmosphere of connection to the culture, rather than one of "them and us." Telling a series of stories from a culture, not just one story in isolation, helps to avoid fragmentation in the students' perception of the culture, as does the attention paid to bringing the artistic elements into the classroom through dance, music, art and design. At the Shambhala School, the choice of cultures that are taught thematically throughout a number of weeks is related to the age and developmental stage of the children which, in the Enki curriculum, are quite specific.^{xxxv} The inherent wisdom and values of a culture that are expressed in its stories, art and music, offer alternative worldviews to the children and often challenge the assumptions we have about "reality." From the contemplative point of view, this is an important step in loosening up preconceived notions that come with the dualistic perspective of scientific rationalism.

In Mi'kmaw and other Indigenous traditions, the main character of a story will often shapeshift. Even my young students had incorporated a view of reality as fixed and unchanging into their understanding. They would ask, "Is that a true story?" and discuss amongst themselves what they thought, usually concluding that it couldn't be true. I would resist saying much, but I also saw it as an opportunity to present them with another version of reality. I didn't want to lecture them on worldview, but in our movement time in the morning I would ask them to take on the character of the protagonist in the story and then shift into being the animal or animals in the story. Whether or not this had any effect was hard to gauge, but they gave vivid descriptions of what it felt like to change from one shape to another. Through this activity I felt as if the ground was being laid for a different understanding, loosening the hold of the dualistic mindset of Eurocentric culture.

Unity and diversity is celebrated in the philosophy of the Enki approach. Each child is understood to be sacred and unique, imbued with the qualities of basic goodness and inherent wisdom. The multicultural curriculum is both supportive of, and central to, this view. While appreciating the differences amongst different cultures, attention is drawn to the similarities of the aspirations, suffering, and wisdom that exist among all people. In this way, the child is exposed to diverse cultural views which helps overcome prejudice and fosters compassion. Working with children in the group setting and educating them in social skills also cultivates an appreciation of diversity among their fellow students as well as tolerance for differences among their group. It counters the tendency that exists in our mainstream Western culture to chase individuality as a goal and instead supports the importance of community.

Rhythm and ritual. An awareness of the rhythms of the natural world in the environment and in teaching, is a reference point for all activities in the Enki approach, particularly in the elementary years. The schedule is organized to honour the daily, weekly, monthly and seasonal rhythms and to keep an awareness of their function, and their place in our lives. From the perspective of contemplative pedagogy, awareness of the rhythms that exist in the natural world creates a connection to the world as sacred and dependable. Natural rhythms, and the rituals associated them, create a strong sense of unity within the community and the classroom that can foster appreciation for the sacredness of our world. They also provide predictability for children, which is important, especially for young children, in creating a feeling of safety and relaxation in

the classroom. These rituals can be as mundane as lighting a candle and singing a verse before lunch, or they can be more elaborate, such as celebrations that mark the solstice which include particular activities and songs and that invite in the wider community of parents, grandparents and friends.

Attention to rhythm and ritual is very literally a connection to the Earth. In my experience, young children are still very much in tune with the cycles of the natural world. Supporting their wonder and reverence for the natural world is also supporting their integration and connection to their potential for wisdom. By paying attention to the rhythms of breathing, waking, and sleeping, the sun and the moon and the seasons, they can connect to the energetic qualities of the natural world to which we are all inextricably linked. In the Enki approach, it is understood that when the child grows up with an awareness of herself in the world and can tune into these rhythms, she has a ground by which she can make choices that are not only healthy for herself, but also for the world. Respect for life, caring for the Earth and compassion are natural extensions of such a view. On a mundane level, activities such as recycling and composting become second nature, but are also an expression of a deeper understanding and the internalization of this sacred view of the world in which all aspects of life are related.

In the formation of the daily schedule, the rhythms of the body and in particular the breath, is an underlying reference point. There are times of day when the child focuses intently, metaphorically breathing in. Then there are the times of day when the child is putting out a lot of energy, such as at recess, which can be corresponded with the out breath. The gap between the two is the time for rest and relaxation—"down time." Most schedules will incorporate the rhythm of the in breath and the out breath, but it is harder to schedule the gap which is an essential aspect of this rhythm. Without it, in my experience, the children's energy can become rather frenetic and discipline problems may occur. For the teacher, too, an absence of gap becomes tiring, and she will feel as if she is dragging the class along, rather than directing with a light touch. Attention to this rhythm, the rhythm of the breath, supports the healthy integration of body, speech, and mind. A successful schedule will attend to the balance of in breath, out breath, and gap.

In the Enki approach the weekly rhythm of teaching happens through the three-fold learning cycle (p. 143) of open *intake*, such as in listening to a story; *digestion*, as in the imaginative

response to the information; and *output*, as in the drawing and writing that follows. This happens over the course of a few days to allow sleep to be part of the digestion process. Rather than sticking to a set schedule throughout the year, the main focus of study shifts from humanities to science (and sometimes math) for a period of time which loosely corresponds to the rhythm of the months. Language arts and art are integrated throughout. The cycles of the moon are acknowledged by making changes in the seating arrangements of the classroom, which promotes a fresh start and allows for new social bonds to form among the students. Festivals are held on a seasonal basis and are not only a way to mark the passage of time and the seasons, but also an opportunity for the classes to show what they have learned to the larger community of parents and friends. Festivals are an opportunity to celebrate together as a community and to share the mutual vision and delight in the school and the growth of the children.

Attention to rhythm and ritual in the classroom, and in the wider school environment, is important in terms of creating opportunities for experiencing sacred world, but it is also, I believe, important for the practice of contemplative pedagogy. For teachers and students, these routines, both small and large, contribute to a sense of wholeness and consistency that promotes well-being and relaxation. Just as in a personal meditation practice where it is beneficial to have a routine, these rituals in the daily, weekly, monthly, and seasonal aspects of school life are a reference point for students and teachers. Knowing what to expect in the environment and the routine frees up the capacity for imagination and exploration, particularly for the younger child. For the older child, the routines and schedules can be adapted to what is appropriate for their needs. However, the fundamental aspects of connecting to the natural rhythms of the breath, the body and the natural world remain constant.

I greeted every child every morning with a handshake, making eye contact and checking in. The children knew the routine, and when they had put away their lunchboxes, they played on the carpet until it was time to start the day. I played a tune on the recorder to indicate that it was time to start class, and they put away the toys and books and went to their desks. I welcomed them, and had some conversations about what was going to happen or what had happened previously. A song signaled them to push the desks aside and make a circle. Circle was the heart of the day, when we all became fully present, myself included, and set the tone for the day. Having moved, sung, and played, they were ready to settle into their desks and do some

concentrated work. The Morning Lesson went until it was time for snack; it often included drawing, writing, listening to, or recalling a story, or work on a project. They ate snack at their desks, and another recorder song announced that it was time to go outside. Lunch, too, was eaten in the classroom with the desks in groups of four, followed by a half hour outside time. Math, gym, French, handwork, recorder, and painting were late morning and afternoon subjects. The day ended with a short circle, and as they went out to the coatroom I shook their hands at the door.

Creating community. Rhythm and ritual are one facet of creating community. Another from the Enki perspective, is group forming. This is fundamental to the art of teaching, in that it lays the foundation for all activities, for discipline and classroom management, and for a healthy, wholesome, and happy interaction between students, and between students and teacher. Group forming creates a strong container within which individuals can express themselves without fear of reprisal from either the teacher or their fellow students. A cohesive sense of group consciousness is the corollary of the strong container and is vital to being able to exercise a caring discipline in the classroom.

The Enki approach stresses the importance of group forming and social skill development alongside individual academic progress. Through circle activities in the morning, eating lunch and snack as a group in the classroom, group teaching, and projects and dramatic performances, the class develops a group consciousness and becomes an entity in itself. These are balanced with individual, partner and small group work. Communicating values that encourage compassionate action, and modelling problem solving and conflict resolution on the part of the teacher reinforces the cohesion of the group. This does not mean that the needs of the individual child are ignored. In my experience, when children feel comfortable within the group, they are more willing to express themselves, take risks, problem solve and be creative in unexpected ways. The successful formation of a group provides a safe container for the child to experience their individuality and allows for greater flexibility and creativity in the curriculum. It is also the expression of the children's integration of body, speech, and mind.

Group forming starts with the teacher and her reflection of, and absolute conviction in, the basic goodness of each child. This is fundamental to the creation of a strong group and a sense of community in the classroom. Being able to maintain this conviction is supported by meditation

practice that enables one to come back repeatedly to this understanding, despite the run-in with the difficult child, the irritations and all the vicissitudes of teaching. The path of loving kindness and basic goodness does not discriminate, however hard that might be, because there will always be those to whom one is drawn more than to others. However, if through reflection and meditation we can take responsibility for, and come to understand, the irritations and upsets as a mirror of one's own state of mind and our way of dealing with them, then it becomes easier to generate compassion for the situation or the child in question and re-establish the ground of basic goodness.

Where the container will often fall apart is in transitions between one activity and the next. Being able to let chaos reign, knowing that one can redirect the class at the appropriate time, comes from experience and is an essential classroom management skill. Reestablishing the container comes from knowing one's students, as well as having techniques that help keep order in the chaos. It is similar to coming back to the breath in meditation when thoughts have been racing out of control, and is an aspect of the gap experience. In the Enki training, we were taught to play the recorder to signal transitions. Once students know what a tune indicates—such as time to put away books or to go to their desks—there is a quick response time, which I found contrasted sharply with the times I used my voice, when I often had to repeat myself.

I believe that the intensified and pervasive individualism which permeates mainstream Western society is one of the chief causes for the undermining of discipline and self-regulating behavior in classrooms today, and consequently the breakdown of the sense of community within the classroom, the school and ultimately in society. In the previous chapter I quote Hall et al (2013) who identify the so-called “common sense” beliefs that are embedded in the neoliberal agenda and in the dominant creed of mainstream educational policies. One of these beliefs is the primacy of the competitive individual, something which is thoroughly integrated into mainstream Western education systems with its standardized testing, and the homogeneity of curricula geared towards market needs. In the Enki approach, and contemplative education as I understand it, a distinction is made between *individualism* and *individuality*. Sutton (2005) points out:

The modern west has held individuality in its highest value without regard for the developmental principles of connection. In so doing we have become focused on a false or superficial individuality that pulls us apart and leaves us lonely, unfulfilled, and

aggressive—threatening our well-being as a culture and leaving us blind to our deep individuality. (p. 476)

In the contemplative approach, the goal of the educational journey for each and every child would ideally be the unfolding of a strong sense of their individuality. This can only happen if the child, whatever their age, feels a sense of safety within the group, whether that be the family, the classroom or in extracurricular social activities. It is the role of the teacher and adult to generate that sense of safety by creating a strong container, setting clear boundaries and being willing to act when they are breached. What constitutes the boundaries will differ for each age group, but the first objective has to be the safety of each individual, and the second to protect the harmonious workings of the group in which every student has the right to express themselves without fear of ridicule, reprisal or shame.

In my experience, the result of the successful establishment of a container as well as the emphasis on group-forming is the joyful pursuit of learning. At the heart of joyful learning is, paradoxically, the approach to discipline. In Buddhism, the outcome of engaging wholeheartedly in the discipline of practice is the experience of joy. Taking up a discipline as an adult is usually inspired by an inner need to connect to ourselves. As Sutton (2005) points out, “Whether we are exercising for physical well-being, engaging with artistic disciplines, or meditating for clarity of mind, one common thread stands out: connection to life” (p. 457). Discipline is the path to connecting to the sense of basic goodness, and to cultivating the integration of body, speech, and mind. This creates a space of relaxation by which we can open up and connect to the sacredness of our existence and our world. Discipline is caring for oneself and caring for others and for the world. Joy is the experience of relating directly and care-fully to the world and having that care reflected back to us.

Discipline and classroom management are subjects that arouse a lot of emotion and heart-searching in teachers. More than anything, one’s ability to manage a group of children will determine one’s sense of fulfillment and success, or not, as a teacher. In the challenging classroom environment, which is the lot of so many teachers in the West, management requires skill and flexibility, as well as energy and commitment. In the Enki approach, Sutton (2005) puts a strong emphasis on boundaries being natural consequences. She uses the image of a stream to convey what she means by this—if you put your foot in the stream it will get wet. “It is a very

solid, simple sense of boundary. It is neither punitive or degrading; it is not a judgement, nor is it personal. The stream is certainly not apologetic or wondering if it has the right to make you wet. It does not fear rejection or humiliation. It just is what it is” (p. 459). Admittedly, boundary setting in this way is not easy to do and only comes with practice over time. It straightforwardly redresses a wrong which has been committed against an individual, such as lack of respect for their person or for their belongings. From the perspective of the group consciousness, a detrimental action against an individual is also detrimental to the group.

There are so many theories about how discipline should happen, from behavior modification (Skinner, 1971) to the democratic Free School approach (Neill, 1960), that it is easy to get lost and find oneself bouncing between one theory and the next as, all around you, chaos reigns. Being able to respond to a situation and set a boundary with a natural consequence depends on having trust in oneself and being able to access one’s own basic goodness as well as the child’s in the heat of the moment. If an individual has “punctured” the group’s cohesion through verbal or physical means, or by being disrespectful of the environment, it may be necessary to discipline that individual. For example, if the child was messing around during painting, after clear expectations were agreed upon, and as a result their paint or their water spilled over onto another student’s painting or even their own, then the child would be asked to remove themselves and read a book. In my experience, usually the child in question participated the following week with no problems. The establishment of boundaries became easier over time, which is not to say that at times I didn’t make mistakes in making a call and setting a consequence. Having the practice of meditation as a ground helped in avoiding the trap of habitual self-blame—most of the time, but not always. However, I also strongly believe that it is important for the teacher to model the ability to apologize straightforwardly and re-establish the ground for respect and connection between herself and the student and the student and the group. By modelling her commitment to the well-being of the student, the group, as well as herself, she is modelling what is, I believe, at the heart of discipline from the contemplative perspective.

For me, setting appropriate boundaries was a challenge that I had to face when I started teaching and continued to grapple with throughout my career. I had to learn by trial and error that being easy-going and accommodating would usually cause more problems than if I was clear about the boundaries from the start. I wanted to be friends with my students, but I had to

go through a painful process of realizing that the friendship between teacher and student has to have limits and boundaries. Being unclear as to my own limits and boundaries served no one, and it was not until I understood this, that I was able to feel that I was running the class, rather than having it run me. There was a difficult learning time when I would feel that a student hated me because I had been firm and clear, but over time I realized that if I kept the basic goodness of a student in my heart and mind, even though she was difficult or demanding, our relationship could almost always be repaired and made whole again. Making the commitment to the basic goodness of the children, and remembering that on the spot, however challenging that might have been at times, helped me to find my way as a teacher and to gain their respect and my sanity.

The purpose of disciplinary measures, from the point of view of a contemplative approach is to reinforce what a child *can* do, rather than what he or she cannot, to rouse their sense of responsibility and empathy, as well as self-respect and respect for others. A phrase that a colleague of mine frequently used was “Catch them being good.” Discipline tends to be associated with consequences for bad behavior, but in reinforcing spontaneous acts of kindness or helpfulness by a difficult student, or even for doing what is expected of her, an acknowledgment on the part of the teacher goes a long way. This addresses basic goodness, and acknowledges that as the teacher I am aware of its existence in the child. In reference to the discipline and its relationship to group consciousness in Aboriginal societies, Little Bear (2000) says:

Kindness is a value that revolves around notions of love, easy-goingness, praise, and gratefulness. . . . This is a positive rather than a negative approach to social control. If individuals are appropriately and immediately given recognition for upholding strength, honesty, and kindness, then a “good” order will be maintained, and the good of the group will continue to be the goal of all members of society. (p. 80)

He goes on to say that “education and socialization are achieved through praise, reward, recognition, and renewal ceremonies and by example, actual experience, and storytelling” (p. 81). These are values that I aspire to in a contemplative approach to discipline and group formation—values that not only benefit the individual but also the group to which they belong, the community, and in the long run, society.

From this approach to discipline and group consciousness, a true sense of individuality, rather than one that is a response to the trends of the day, can grow and emerge. What, after all, is the point of discipline, if it is not to generate a sense of self-regulation, self-respect, and responsibility towards others and the world around us? Is this not what we wish for every student as they go through their educational journey, to say nothing of the teachers who hold their well-being in their hands?

As a teacher, having the reference point of meditation in the contemplative approach provides me with the ground out of which community can grow and flourish. It gives rise to warmth and compassion as well as clarity around boundaries and issues of discipline. It helps establish what Irwin and Miller (2016) refer to as “teacher presence” (p. 88). They say that:

Presence and being in the moment means there is less chance we will teach from the ego. If teaching is ego based, it can become a frustrating series of mini battles with students. The classroom becomes focused around the issue of control. If we teach from that place where we are present and attentive, teaching can become a more fulfilling and enriching experience. . . . Meditation encourages being in the moment and thus facilitates our presence as teachers. (p. 88)

Meditation underpins and informs all aspects of teacher practice and the exercise of a contemplative pedagogical approach which supports the basic goodness of the child and sacred world outlook. Meditation is the integration of body, speech, and mind at the most personal level, and from that experience and understanding it can expand to include our students, our colleagues, and the community at large. Contemplative practices and meditation, permeated through the curriculum and classroom practices, offer a radical alternative to mainstream education, in the West and beyond. The latter are the principles upon which I have approached the curriculum design project in Bhutan, which is the main subject of the next chapter.

Chapter 4

Action – Ecological Perspectives

If I ever have the opportunity to create a school for children, I want them to learn what it is to be human. . . . I want to teach children how to make a fire, and that the source of water does not come from the tap. . . . The aim is . . . to refine ourselves so that we will see the world in a different way, so that we can help others, and through helping others make ourselves happy and content. Therefore what we are learning is not to get jobs, but to refine and make ourselves elegant both outwardly and inwardly. To do that, I would like to create an atmosphere at the school, so that classes can be taught under a big tree, by the bank of a river, or in the paddy field, and so that lessons could involve getting up at three in the morning and watching the colour of the sky and listening to the sound of silence. (Khyentse, n.d.)

At the time of writing this I have recently returned from Bhutan, where I spent four months in the remote southeastern province of Samdrup Jongkhar. Unlike the more northerly and higher parts of Bhutan, SJ, as it is known locally, is in the foothills of the Himalayas, and has a semi-tropical climate. Being right in the path of the monsoon as it hits the mountains, the province gets a phenomenal five metres of rain a year, most of which falls in the summer months of June through August. For my previous two visits of three weeks each to the area and to the Chokyi Gyatso Institute of Buddhist Studies (CGI) monastery where I was working, I had stayed in the guest house at the monastery. This time I was responsible for my own food and living situation, which gave me the opportunity to observe and participate to some extent in village life. I rented a room in a house near the monastery. I shared a miniscule kitchen that had one gas burner, and an equally small bathroom which was nothing but a toilet. The only running water was from a cold tap on the outside landing at the top of the stairs. The moo-ing of the cow and the thump-thump of the looms was a constant background refrain. The knowledge of weaving is common among the older women here, inherited from their mothers and generations of women before them. Sadly, this knowledge is not so common among young women these days, although I met a few young women weavers.

From my room, I had a view of the hills and valleys as they fell away to the plains of India in the distance which were probably only about 5 or 6 km as the crow flies, but was 18 km by road. On the less hazy days I could see a river meandering across the plains to join the Brahmaputra River as it flowed through the state of Assam to the Bay of Bengal. When I first arrived it was January, the height of the dry season. Everything was very dry and dusty, but as the months



Figure 3. House landing. (J. Mitchell, Dewathang, Bhutan, 2017)

passed and there was more rain, the hills became a palette of shades of green, interspersed here and there with glorious scarlet or white flowering trees. Small farms dotted the landscape, but where the mountains were too steep to farm, which is much of the land there, the jungle took over. Bamboo and banana were the only plants I recognized, but the variety of sizes, shapes and colours of the vegetation was stunning. Wild boar, elephants, monkeys and langurs were quite common and the bane of the farmers as they destroyed their crops. Even tigers had occasionally been spotted in the area. Much of this was due to the enlightened forestry and wildlife

conservation policies of the Bhutanese government, which provides a safe haven in the area for animals that have been driven out of neighbouring India through loss of their habitat.^{xxvii}

In this chapter, I look at the role of education and what I believe to be the imperative of taking an ecological standpoint which engages youth—body, speech, and mind—in caring for the world. Too often, education reinforces an approach to being on the Earth which justifies, at the worst, but mostly ignores, the ecological crisis we face. I offer an alternative educational paradigm in which the interdependence of all aspects of existence is understood as central to both the curriculum and its implementation through holistic and contemplative pedagogy. This approach takes the view of sacred world outlook, as previously described, and is founded on the understanding that the well-being of the environment and our own well-being are inseparable. In my experience, meditation and contemplation serve to wake us up to the truth of this, and from the point of view of education, I feel that a contemplative approach must necessarily include an ecological understanding of interdependence, in the sense described previously as “everything matters.” This gives rise to an ecological perspective that is at the heart of the Enki curriculum, which I have attempted to bring into the Lhomon Education (LME) curriculum that I have been designing for the young monks in Bhutan.

This chapter describes from the perspective of being a Westerner and an outsider, my understanding of the action aspect of View, Meditation and Action. In this context, action is how my theoretical approach meets practical application, within the context of the project in Bhutan, and through the integration of my experience in life and as a teacher. The curriculum offers a framework for education where contemplative practice and ecological perspectives can flourish as sacred world outlook in the students and in the teachers. It aspires to nurture care and compassion towards the Earth and its inhabitants, just as GNH aspires to do. Here I describe the LME program and the ground out of which it came into being, both from the perspective of my experience and that of its implementation in the Bhutanese context. I begin with an extensive discussion about the literature related to education, the environment and ecology.

Education, Environment and Ecology in the Literature

Environmental education has been integrated into the curriculum in Bhutan in recent years, and reforms have promoted the teaching of science based on Bhutan’s natural and social environment

for the elementary and middle school grades. However, as Childs, Tenzin, Johnson and Ramachandran (2012) discuss, the impact of these reforms is limited because of lack of teacher education around how to integrate these topics.^{xxxvii}

In the West, environmental and ecological education are not new concepts, but their implementation has had strikingly little success in stemming the relentless pursuit of growth and the violation of the Earth's resources and the biosphere, despite numerous warnings and studies. The style and purpose of mainstream education in the West is based on a nineteenth century industrial model, in which the efficiency of the assembly line is applied to education (Steel & Craig, 2006). Steele and Craig write, "As a society, we came to believe that students could be placed on a metaphorical conveyor belt at the start of their school years and, provided the machine was properly constructed, would step off at the end with all the necessary skills and knowledge to enter adulthood" (pp. 676-677). This model, adapted to the twenty-first century, has been adopted widely in the "developing" world. It has resulted in highly structured, scripted curriculum materials for use in classrooms, along with systems of districtwide assessment and accountability procedures for teachers (p. 677). Further, rote learning, standardized testing, and textbooks are the norm for students. As a system that was first imposed by the process of colonization, this educational model continues to dominate education systems through the spread of the global economy and aid programs to "developing" countries, including Bhutan. The United Nations Education for All program which is supported by the World Bank (Spring 2010, p. 59) as discussed previously, was established in the year 2000 in 164 countries throughout the "developing" world and the number continues to grow (UNESCO, n.d.). Thus, education has become a tool for creating future consumers and cheap labour that devalues the knowledge and wisdom residing in traditional forms of education that can be found in traditional communities worldwide.

The view, meditation and action of sacred world outlook and the curriculum I have been working on in Bhutan offers an alternative way of looking at education, and environmental education in particular. Below, I examine how Orr (2004), Bai (2009), and Bonnett (2002, 2012, 2013) in their writing on environmental education, address the role of formal education in disseminating the values of materialism and the global economy, and I review the criteria they present for educational alternatives to counter those values. This discussion is expanded by the work of

Cajete (1994) and Bowers (1993) on Indigenous education and the importance of culture and place-based education. I discuss how these writers address the role of contemplative pedagogy, mindfulness, and those aspects of being that manifest beyond the rational, either explicitly or implicitly, and how the latter contribute to the educational experience. I go on to discuss how the LME curriculum and the view of sacred world outlook meshes with the criteria that are identified in the literature.

David Orr (1992, 2004)^{xxxviii} has written extensively on education and the environment. His analysis of the dangers of formal education (2004) identifies three parts. Firstly, the emphasis on careers which are divorced from a sense of a calling, has the effect of channelling students into specialization and career paths (p. 22). Secondly, the imprinting of that which he calls a “disciplinary template” (p. 23) on the minds of students divorces the relationship of economics to ecology, or politics to physics. Thirdly, he warns of the danger by which formal education damages the “sense of wonder—the sheer joy in the created world” (p. 23) through routines, memorization, abstractions, boring curricula, rules, stress around grades, computers and television, as well as too much learning indoors, that cuts students off from a direct experience of nature. “As our sense of wonder in nature diminishes, so too does our sense of the sacred, our pleasure in the created world and the impulse behind a great deal of our best thinking” (p. 24). He then throws out the challenge: “Where [the sense of wonder] is kept intact and growing, teachers need not worry about whether students learn reading, writing, and arithmetic” (p. 24). His concern for environmental education is to create the conditions by which “biophilia” (p. 132) can be nurtured, which he says, “is inscribed in the brain itself, expressing tens of thousands of years of evolutionary experience” (p. 138). The ecological crisis puts more at risk than just physical survival: it erodes our “qualities of heart and mind that constitute the essence of our humanity” (p. 140). He calls for the cultivation of biophilia through the recovery of childhood and “the establishment of more natural places, places of mystery and adventure where children can roam, explore, and imagine. . . . For biophilia to take root we must take our children seriously enough to preserve their natural childhood” (p. 146). As well, for biophilia to become established, we need to recover of a sense of place where the heart and soul of being human is rooted. Biophilia is “the will to rediscover and reinhabit our places and regions, finding in them sources of food, livelihood, energy, healing, recreation, and celebration” (p. 147).

Bai (2009) also takes issue with formal education, which she asserts is responsible for inculcating a mechanistic and quantitative worldview in our children. This grew out of the Cartesian separation of mind and matter, and the Platonic ideal which puts rational, discursive consciousness above sensuous and poetic consciousness. “Our consciousness is dominated by the spell of the discursive, and by the time we are out of childhood and through formal schooling, most of us have largely disposed of the animated, sensuous perception of the world” (p. 141). The mechanistic worldview, she says, asserts its dominance in thinking styles, and hence informs and justifies actions that do nothing to mitigate the ecological crisis and much to increase it. To counter this worldview, she appeals for a “sensuous perception wherein we do not just conceptually process but attentionally engage with the sensory input” (p. 144) which she terms a “participatory consciousness” (p. 5). Like Orr, she too believes that humans have “a native capacity for animism, that is, the capacity to be fully alive in the way we sensuously participate in the phenomenological world of biotic communities” (p. 146). The implications of taking this to heart in education is that “we should think of education first and foremost in terms of not doing harm” (p. 146). She makes a plea that we “do not compromise and destroy children’s native capacity for participatory consciousness—some call it ‘aboriginal mind’—by forcing on them early, in the name of modern science education or progressive education, the mechanical worldview that objectifies the world and sees it in mechanistic and quantitative terms” (p. 146).

Bonnett (2013) writes of “a need for education to encourage a radical questioning of the status quo—to break the spell of things that are present by naming things that are absent” (p. 191). In his work (2002, 2012, 2013), he addresses the underlying assumptions that are present in approaches to education for sustainable development. His critique of “scientism” reveals the “metaphysics of mastery” (2013) as being fundamental to the inability of sustainable development policies in the West to avert the catastrophic course that we are on in relation to the environment. The metaphysics of mastery, expressed in the “techno-scientific paradigm” (p. 188), is a present-day expression of classical scientific thinking of Descartes and others. It is the “ascendance of an aggressive anthropocentric interrogating, designing, accounting, and managing articulated by generalizing reason” (p. 192). Anthropocentrism, he argues, is at the heart of many programs for environmental education by making human concerns central, either explicitly or implicitly, through a lack of awareness of the language and metaphysics of mastery that constitute the dominant scientific-rational worldview. These programs do nothing to

challenge the on-going destruction of the environment or to bring awareness of the problem into consciousness in a way that promotes real change. What is needed is that “ultimately we must address the underlying character of our perception and thinking . . . to (re-)establish the legitimacy of modes of thinking and being that the metaphysics of mastery occludes” (p.191). In an earlier paper (2002) he argues that sustainability is a frame of mind, not a policy which can be subverted to support the idea of “progress” within the current framework of scientific rationality. Instead he proposes the view that, “To be deeply affected by the sheer otherness of non-human things . . . is to reassert the significance of a poetic dimension to human awareness” (p. 18). He calls for “a broader, and more demanding, conception of the contribution that curriculum can make to environmental education” (p. 18).

Bowers (1993), Cajete (1994) and Spring (2010) have suggested detailed curricula for environmental education that go beyond the science curriculum and investigate the relationship between environmental education, the ecological crisis, globalization, political power, and social justice. These writers, and those discussed above, each in their own way, appeal for a radical transformation of the way we approach curriculum that would rouse students and their teachers to not only critique current practices and disseminate information on the environmental crisis, but also to instill a deep connection and concern for the Earth. Later in this chapter I describe how the LME curriculum approaches these concerns and encourages students’ connection to the Earth and an ecological sensitivity through contemplative practices and an emphasis on the interdependent nature of all phenomena. As Bai (2009) points out, moralizing, urging, or scolding (p. 145) is not the point, nor is it the way to inspire students into caring. For her, environmental education, and indeed education altogether, needs to reconnect to soil, soul and sole: soil, of course, being the Earth; soul being our sensitive, empathetic quality; and sole being the connection to body and the senses through the soles of the feet on the Earth (p. 146). “If we were to take the contact and connection with soil very seriously, we would. . . be changing the whole paradigm of schooling from the current goal. . . of producing workers who will perpetuate the current commodity consumption-based, corporatist, capitalist industrial civilization that is so destructive to the earth” (p. 147). Reconnecting to our participatory consciousness through mindfulness, walking mindfully, sole-fully, on the Earth (p. 147), is her prescription for education which wakes us up to the need to care for the Earth. “Mindfulness means participatory

consciousness of receptivity, embodied sensitivity, openness, and fully being present to what is here and now” (p. 148).

Bai’s concerns are echoed in Orr’s description for “biophilia,” and Bonnett’s appeal for an appreciation of the “sheer otherness of non-human things,” both of which I feel are an aspect of the contemplative mind and an expression of its role in the curriculum and pedagogy. A deep ecological approach requires that there is a sense of continuity and connection between all aspects of our existence and that comes from the joining of our heads with our hearts, mindful and care-full of how we tread on this Earth. I feel that this has to come out of, and gives rise to, a sense of joy, which is integral to an ecological perspective, despite the awfulness of the ecological crisis and the seeming impossibility of making a difference as an individual. Challenging the mindset and assumptions of scientific rationalism, consumer culture, and the homogeneity of mainstream education is part of the picture. Providing our students with an alternative framework and a vision for a different kind of future is also of vital importance. Without a vision of where we want to go, even if the end point is not presently visible in all its details, it is hard to find the path that will take us there.

The young monks have been involved in a 9-day intensive ritual at the monastery, and we decide that we will take them on a nature hike down to the river as a way to let off steam and relax as well as reinforce some of the environmental learning we have been doing.

We gather in the morning and set off down the road from the monastery to the main road. The river is a silver thread in the valley far below. For me it is my first time so far into the forest, and I am excited, too, to be going on this trip, if a little daunted at the distance and steepness of the descent. We carry our lunch with us—cooked rice and curry in big pails, which two boys carry in baskets slung on bamboo poles between them. At the main road, we take a path that goes steeply down to a farmstead. We pass a farmer’s garden full of corn, beans, and the ubiquitous chilli, then a large field full of newly sprouting corn plants, and descend into an orange grove. It hums with insects, butterflies, and birds, all feeding off the nectar from the flowers giving off a sweet fragrance. Wild orchids grow on dead stumps, and new fern leaves and a low white flowering shrub cover the ground.

Finally, after about an hour of hiking steeply downhill, the jungle opens out at the river. The water is blueish, almost turquoise, and big boulders line the bank and protrude from the water. The vegetation of the jungle rises like a green wall on either side of the river but not close enough to be oppressive. The boys can't contain themselves and throw off their robes, strip down to their shorts, and dive into the water. Shortly, however, their teacher calls them out to rest and have a few minutes of meditation before we clamber over the boulders, wading at one point, to a good place to picnic and swim. By this time I am feeling very hot and exhausted, and it is a relief to feel the cool water on my feet. The boys are very attentive and help me scramble over the rocks which are slippery and quite treacherous in places. A three-legged dog has valiantly accompanied us, and one of the monks picks it up and carries it over the river and through the boulders. We reach a suitable spot with a good swimming hole and everyone, myself included, takes to the water. I have a dilemma as to what to wear for swimming. These are monks after all, and stripping down to my bra and underwear may not be culturally acceptable, but is also, I feel, inappropriate, as many of them are young adolescent boys. I decide to go in in my clothes. I have a spare t-shirt with me, and the weather is warm, cloudy, and sunny by turns, so my clothes will dry on me quite fast.

Indigenous and Traditional Wisdom and the Curriculum

The contribution of Indigenous and traditional ecological knowledge offers an invaluable and indispensable contribution to the present predicament in which we find ourselves in education. The authors in the previous section address the co-opting of education by the neoliberal agenda, which obscures the role of education in perpetuating the ecological crisis. The result is the loss of a true connection to the Earth in both Indigenous communities and in mainstream Western culture. The need to listen to, and learn from, Indigenous peoples is highlighted in the writing of several authors (Bonnett, 2002, 2012, 2013; Bowers, 1993, 2001, 2003; Cajete 1994; Shiva 1988) on environmental education. They articulate the position that concerned educators have much to learn from the way that Indigenous communities were, and are, able to live sustainably on the land, and preserve it for future generations. The inseparability of the effect of our actions on the environment and our well-being as individuals within a community is essential to this worldview. The need to nurture the innate relationship to sacred world and to basic goodness, the participatory consciousness that Bai (2009) talks about, is inherent in the worldview of many

Indigenous peoples and offers much of value to counter the Western scientific mindset. Coming from North American Indigenous roots himself, Cajete (1994)^{xxxix} writes in detail on Indigenous education, aimed primarily at Indigenous educators. He emphasizes the role of story and language, as well as a deep connection to a sense of place in traditional Indigenous education. Living and learning are fully integrated (p. 33) giving rise to “an interaction between the people’s inner and outer realities that comes into play as we live in a place for an extended time” (p. 84). He stresses “the ability to use language through storytelling, oratory, and song [as]. . . a primary tool for teaching and learning. . . because the spoken or sung word expressed the spirit and breath of life of the speaker, and thus was considered sacred. . . Learning how to listen, observe, and experience holistically by creative exploration was highly valued” (p. 33). To counter the hidden curriculum in mainstream American education he says we need to recognise that “mechanistic knowledge is not the only legitimate knowledge” and that our perceptions have been colonized by mechanistic knowledge (p. 78). Indigenous knowledge represents a “storehouse of environmental wisdom [which can] form the basis for evolving the cosmological reorientation so desperately needed” (p. 78).

In mainstream Western education, and in the neoliberal approach, as Bowers (1993) points out, the curriculum reinforces the dominant cultural orientation which represents the environment as a resource for humans which is infinitely exploitable (p. 180), and not the source of all life on the planet. Taking inspiration from Orr’s (1992) description of “ecological literacy,” he proposes that “a deep cultural approach to environmental education be based on presenting students (and others) with analogs that can become the basis of an ecologically sustainable form of existence” (p. 181). These analogs, he suggests, can be found in the mythopoetic narratives of ecologically oriented cultures that:

frame how time, space, origins, and relationships with Other are to be understood. . . .
Ways of knowing, relationships with others, self-definition, uses of technology, aesthetic expression, ways of organizing time and space, and attitudes towards death—all are part of a coherent whole whose authority is rooted in the natural attitude that goes with membership in a language/epistemological community and all have been tested against the challenges nature has thrown up over past centuries. (p. 183)

The lessons to be learned from these mythopoetic narratives of preurban cultures is “a sense of moral coherence” (p. 186) that integrates all aspects of life into a whole and respects “that every aspect of cultural life is based on sensitivity and respect for life-sustaining traditions” (p. 187). He points out that the current dominant cultural narrative, of materialism and unsustainable economic growth, presents difficulty for teachers who aspire to educate their students in the deep ecological approach that he advocates. “This is where knowledge of ecologically sustainable cultures becomes critically important to the teacher who takes the discussion to the next step beyond presenting information about the condition of the environment” (p. 196). When translated into actual pedagogical practice, the way that the stories and narratives are communicated have what he terms a liminal importance (p. 200). Learning how to speak and listen, so important in oral cultures where patterns and knowledge of the local ecosystem are transmitted through the spoken word, provides context and, he suggests, “reinforces micropatterns that will be consistent with macropatterns of an ecologically sustainable culture” (p. 200). Learning to listen, to attend fully is, in my experience, one of the consequences of storytelling (as opposed to reading stories or watching movies) when it is an on-going feature of a contemplative pedagogical approach. It appears that children learn this ability through repeated engagement of their imagination without external aids, such as pictures or other images, and when the images are solely of their own making. The absorption of listening to a story, sometimes twenty minutes or more in duration, seems to extend into their ability to listen attentively in other situations.

Cajete (1994) suggests that the role of art and design in a culture can be explored, enhancing imagination and connections between use and beauty which are so often separated in the modern definition of art. Dance and music as well are intimately connected to the spiritual language and wisdom of a culture and engaging students with these, in my experience, brings the subtle connections that are communicated in their practice into the hearts and minds of the students. When my class was learning about the Mi'kmaq^{xl} of Nova Scotia, I invited a Mi'kmaw drummer to come to the class. He taught us the Mi'kmaw “Friendship Song” which we learned as we danced in a circle. He told us that traditionally this song would be sung by people who were approaching a camp to indicate that they came in friendship. Sometimes, he said, it would take some time for the people in the camp to invite the visitors to come in, but the visitors would continue to sing the song as they waited. This appealed to the imagination of my eight- and nine-

year-olds, and I would hear them after that, singing the song as they worked. In the stories, there are many instances of groups of Mi'kmaq entering into another camp. Movement, voice, and imagination interwove with each other, came alive and resonated for the students as a totality. By connecting story, art, music, and dance to the ecological perspectives and wisdom of a cultural group, the danger of taking bits and pieces of a culture's worldview, and thus degrading and fragmenting it, might be mitigated. This is the impetus behind the Enki curriculum in which the cultures of the world's wisdom traditions are the heart.

Little Bear (2000) voices the importance of understanding Indigenous knowledge as a totality when he says, "the value of wholeness speaks to the totality of creation, the group as opposed to the individual, the forest as opposed to the individual trees" (p. 79).^{xii} Over the years I have learned that when it comes to environmental issues, it is important to understand that education needs to go beyond just communicating information about the problems that exist. The context of the totality of existence needs first to be established—the environment with those who inhabit it, and their relationship to it and to each other—so that there is a heartfelt response. Writing about Indigenous worldview and the inseparable relationship between the people and the Earth, Little Bear (2000) says, "All things are animate, imbued with spirit and in constant motion. In this realm of spirit, interrelationships between all entities are of paramount importance" (p. 77).

Earth is our Mother. . . . The earth cannot be separated from the actual being of Indians. The Earth is where the continuous and/or repetitive process of creation occurs. It is on the Earth, and from the Earth that cycles, phases, patterns—in other words, the constant motion or flux—can be observed. (p. 78)

Writing from a Christian perspective, Berry (1991) eloquently expresses the need to learn from Indigenous peoples about our place in the universe, and especially how to listen:

One of the first things we learn from [Indigenous] peoples is that the universe is a community of subjects, not a collection of objects. We have been treating the universe as a collection of objects. No matter how these are interrelated with each other, if we do not hear the voices of the trees, the birds, the animals, the fish, the mountains and the rivers, then we are in trouble. I think that it is one of the most important things we are learning

from the tribal peoples of the world. We are learning to address the river and be addressed by the river. (p. 20)

Taking the perspective of the “developing” world and the Hindu tradition, Vandana Shiva (1988)^{xlii} writing on the women’s ecological movement in India, also refers to the spiritual affinity that ties the Indigenous people of India to their environment as intimate participants in the ecosphere:

In Indian cosmology . . . person and nature . . . are a duality in unity. They are inseparable complements of one another in nature, in woman, in man. Every form of creation bears the sign of this dialectical unity, of diversity within a unifying principle, and this dialectical harmony between the male and female principles and between nature and man, becomes the basis of ecological thought and action in India. (p. 40)

Stories and the wisdom of those Indigenous cultures that express a sacred world view teach invaluable lessons about the communality of humans with their surroundings and ways to live sustainably on the Earth. In my teaching, I found the Mi’kmaq and Hopi stories, for example, provided a powerful vision of another way of being in the world, that communicated the values of sustainable living, community, and respect for life, when studied in connection to the culture itself. Being British, and a white, middle class woman, I was mostly unfamiliar with Indigenous literature and traditions before I came to North America. My mentor, Beth Sutton, was sensitive to the issues surrounding the use of Indigenous stories, and insisted on them being told in context of the relevant culture and not as used as “add-ons.” She meticulously checked with an Indigenous person of each culture to make sure that the material she was working with was authentic and properly presented. I have done my best to follow in her footsteps, in terms of seeking consultation and guidance from Indigenous persons as well as seeking authentic sources for stories and information.^{xliii} I have found materials from Indigenous traditions, as they are located within the cultural context of time and place, to be eloquent and compelling in communicating values, and a way of life that is harmonious with nature. For example, the stories of the Mi’kmaq were a time-honoured way to teach the values and of community, resourcefulness, and respect for the world and its inhabitants.

In Bhutan, there are stories that communicate similar values that are familiar to the older people, but are fast being forgotten as children move away and engage in modern Western-style education. I encouraged the teachers at LME to seek out those stories and storytellers in order to create context for further studies and bring the values and wisdom contained in these stories into their work with the children.^{xliv} The wisdom of the stories, experienced in the realm of imagination, offered possibilities for ways of being that could be examined in the light of present day conditions, and acted upon in the spirit of sustainability, mindfulness and connectedness. Consequently, as part of a unit on trade, the monks wrote and acted a play based on the classic and well-known Bhutanese folktale *Meme [grandfather] Haylay Haylay and his Turquoise*, a story that communicates an idea of *human* value above and beyond that of the material. In this story, Meme Haylay Haylay finds a turquoise which he exchanges for increasingly less valuable items, and is finally left with a song, much to his delight, as the value of the song surpasses any of the other items for which the turquoise was exchanged in his estimation. In his discussion of the oral tradition in Bhutan in which this story is mentioned, Evans (2006) says

The words of Buddhist master Shantideva summarize this story well: “The goal of every act is happiness itself, though, even with great wealth, it’s rarely found.” It is through the intentional and spontaneous telling and retelling of such stories that allows them to accomplish what they are inherently able to do—touch lives at the heart level, affecting worldview and becoming catalysts for life transformation. (Evans, 2006, p. 136)

While the value of the folktale and the oral tradition is recognized and supported in some circles in Bhutan (Choden,1994; Dorji 2002; Evans 2006) the appreciation of their role in education as “catalysts for life transformation” (Evans, 2006, p.136) does not seem to be widespread.

The indivisibility of human existence from the Earth upon which we live, the power of story, and the interrelatedness of all aspects of existence, are common to all the writers mentioned. This is powerfully expressed in the following speech attributed to Chief Seattle in 1854:

This we know—the earth does not belong to [humans], [humans] belong to the earth. All things are connected like the blood that unites one family. Whatever befalls the earth, befalls the [children] of the earth. [Humans] did not weave the web of life, [they are]

merely a strand in it. Whatever [they do] to the web [they do] to [themselves]. (Chief Seattle, quoted in Shiva, 1988, p19)

Such a conviction supports and informs the requirements for the kind of education, and way of being, that will prevent further erosion of the gifts of Mother Earth to us and heal the wounds we have inflicted upon her. These are the lessons and the inspiration we can take from Indigenous knowledge and wisdom. The indivisibility of place and the culture and traditions which have evolved from that place form the basis for a curriculum which will at least offer alternatives to the materialistic and reductionist way of looking at reality.

The warble of the bamboo flutes that the young monks have been making permeates the monastery between classes. My colleague remarks, “Summer has really come now with the sound of the bamboo flutes.” I wonder what he means. “Traditionally, we do not play bamboo flutes in the winter, only when the weather has warmed up. Otherwise all the insects who live underground, in the lhu [underground] realms, will be tricked into thinking it is warm and time to come out. Then it would be a riot of insects.”

Lhomon Education (LME) at the Chokyi Gyatso Institute (CGI)

In this section I describe the program and curriculum that I was working on in Bhutan and give some historical background in order to locate the LME project in the context of the education system in Bhutan. From the perspective of the Action element in this thesis—the focus of this chapter—the chapter goes into how my ideas and experience as an educator, and as a curriculum designer, evolved in the context of the Lhomon Education project.

The Lhomon Education project on which I have been working since 2015 was originally designed to offer a secular education program to young monks who were pursuing a nine-year course of Buddhist studies at the Chokyi Gyatso Institute (CGI). My mandate was to design an integrated course of study that would allow the monks to gain an education in mathematics, English, science, social studies, and the humanities. I was also asked to align the curriculum with the values of Gross National Happiness (GNH), the philosophy for sustainable and equitable development that guides policy development in Bhutan, as I discussed previously in the context of the chapter on sacred world outlook (Chapter 2). The vision was that the values of GNH would take root in the students, and also provide a model for an approach that could be offered to

schools in the area. GNH, as a holistic way of understanding “development,” comes out of a commitment to the Buddhist tradition of Bhutan, and as the whole ethos of Buddhism is to view the world as sacred and an integrated whole, it made sense to approach the curriculum in this way, given my background in creating integrated curricula in a contemplative context.

At the Chokyi Gyatso Institute (CGI), in 2016, a group of around 50 students, aged between 6 and 20 years old, entered the program known as Lhomon Education, or LME. Most of the students had received schooling in the public system between grades 3 and 6, but some had had little or no schooling. The challenge for me, and for the teachers, was how to span the age groups given their differing abilities in English, as well as all other subject areas. The program had been in existence since 2013 and one group of monks had completed two years of an integrated program of study which was designed by another curriculum designer. The focus of that curriculum had been mostly on a program for use in the monastic setting, but I was asked to combine that with a broader approach which explicitly encompassed GNH. As CGI was not tied into the Bhutanese education system, it offered a unique opportunity for experimenting with alternative methods and approaches. It could therefore provide an example of a holistic and integrated alternative education for the Bhutanese context based on the values of GNH. In offering his monastery as a “laboratory” for this program, Dzongsar Khyentse also wanted to offer an alternative approach to the *way* education happened in Bhutan (Khyentse Foundation n.d.).

Until the 1950s, the only education that existed in Bhutan was the monastic system. Bhutan, sandwiched between China and India in the Himalayas, was isolated from the world and, remarkably, had never been colonized. It maintained its feudal social structure, with the king ruling as an absolute monarch until 2008 when democracy was imposed by the king on his people, who, by all accounts, reluctantly accepted the change. The present king, Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck, the fifth in a dynasty which began in 1907, is a constitutional monarch. Political decisions are made in Parliament, and his role is mainly ceremonial. He is greatly loved by his people whose attitude towards him is equal to that which they show to the highest Buddhist teachers. With the opening of Bhutan to the world in the late 1950s, a Western style of education was introduced to the country as it sought to modernize and develop economically (Childs, Tenzin, Johnson & Ramachandran, 2012). The monastic education system continues to

attract students, but the two systems of education that exist in Bhutan have very different aims, as Phuntsho (2000) describes.

In the case of traditional learning. . . education is to be viewed as a process of edification and knowledge as a tool for benefiting the world. . . . In contrast, modern education is generally aimed at human development and improving living conditions in this world. . . . Unlike the traditionalists, who view learning as spiritual training which can culminate in the omniscient wisdom of the Buddha, modernists consider education as a means of acquiring knowledge and skills which in turn can contribute towards the development of individual or communal standards of life. (Phuntsho, 2000, pp. 100-101)

The predominant style of Western education (that Phuntsho calls “modernist”) and its curriculum was modelled on the Indian curriculum. It was a version of that which the British had introduced to India during colonization, and most of the teachers were imported from India. Dzongsar Khyentse, himself a Bhutanese national, said about the education system in Bhutan: “Bhutan has one of the worst education system[s]. It is sort of leftover of the leftover of the British 1940s system. . . . British left [it] for Indians and the Indians give it to Bhutanese” (Khyentse, 2014). To begin with, this system was not welcomed and was only available to the children of wealthy aristocrats (Phuntsho, 2000). With the majority of the population living in rural areas and practicing subsistence farming, schooling in the newly introduced educational approach was not understood or seen to be a priority when children were needed for their labour on the farm. Some families would send a child off to the monasteries to be educated, not just for the benefit of the child but because of the merit^{xlv} that would thereby be acquired. Since the first schools were introduced in 1961, school enrolment has risen from 400 to around 170,000 in 2016 (Annual Education Statistics, 2016, p. 2) which represents about 96% of children of school age, in classes pre-primary to 10 (p. viii). These figures do not include children in monastic schools such as CGI, which number about 12,500 (p. 2). Youth literacy rates in Bhutan in 2012, which has a population of 784,000, were 86.1% (p. 4).

Dzongsar Khyentse, the abbot of the Chokyi Gyatso Institute, introduced the Lhomon Education program at the Institute in order to bridge the divide between the two modes of education. Alongside their Buddhist curriculum, the monks are receiving an integrated education in social

studies, mathematics, and science, imbued with the Buddhist perspective and the arts. On the CGI website his approach is described to as follows:

While adhering to a time-tested traditional program, the monastery is a testing ground for some of Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche's most forward-thinking innovations in monastic education. Rinpoche's vision is to have a body of socially engaged, educated monks who are informed and involved in the world around them. Young monks at the shedra [an institute of advanced Buddhist studies] are participating in a pilot project to develop alternative, holistic curricula, integrating art and the environment into the classroom. (Khyentse Foundation, n.d.)

In the face of an increased availability and popularity of public education, the number of monks enrolling in the monastic institutions is declining. It is hoped that LME will attract more monks to the monastery. During my stay at CGI, a quite lively debate ensued as to the value of the LME program for the monks. The main issues were the duration of the program, currently envisaged as a four-year program, and how to integrate the program into the monastic curriculum and schedule. Some senior monks felt that LME was interfering with the monks' Buddhist education, and rightly questioned the worth of the students studying modern education for four years and then dropping it. This was a reflection of a wider debate in the country, and of the clash between two widely differing educational systems (Phuntso, 2000). As it was, the LME team was obliged to review its schedule, not only to accommodate the Buddhist classes but also for the sake of the young monks who had virtually no free time anymore. For their first year, the students had mainly been following the LME program and doing an introductory course of Buddhist studies, giving them plenty of time to pursue their first love—soccer. But in the second month of the second year, during my stay there, the LME students began their formal monastic schooling. Along with the schedule being extremely full, with the children engaged in classes from 6 am to 9 pm with breaks for meals and tea, they were now fully participating in the major rituals at the monastery which happen every couple of months. During such periods, there were no classes of any kind.

Things can happen unexpectedly here. The monastic schedule takes precedence over the schedule for the monks' secular education, and we were informed one day that the students would all be participating in the nine-day ritual that was to be performed the following week.

Besides the recitation of the liturgy, which happened throughout the day, a mantra was repeated continuously over the nine days, day and night. The boys were involved in all aspects of the program, including the night time recitation of the mantra and drumming during the day. The liturgy was often accompanied by music which is performed on drums, oboe-like reed instruments, horns which play the bass notes, conches, and cymbals. The young monks' main job, however, was to serve the food and drink at the feast offering times in the liturgy. There are usually three of these each day, the most elaborate being at the end of the day's session. In between and in the early morning, tea and rice, snacks or porridge was served. There was a zero-waste policy at the monastery which meant that the food that was served at the feast was all cooked on the premises or contributed by people from the community. In addition, the food was eaten with the fingers and served on banana leaves which were then composted.

The students took the responsibilities of their work seriously and performed it graciously. I could tell that they were proud to be part of the monastic tradition and to participate fully in the ritual. The mother in me wondered how they would cope, but I didn't see any signs of stress. Sometimes I would catch one of them taking a cat nap on the cushion, but I wasn't the only one who noticed, and a few well aimed grains of rice brought him back to the present moment.

The Samdrup Jongkhar Initiative and Gross National Happiness

Lhomon Education is a branch of the Youth and Education program of a Bhutanese civil service organization (CSO) called the Samdrup Jongkhar Initiative (SJI)^{xlvi} which was set up in 2010 by Dzongsar Khyentse, with the intention of creating a grassroots movement that would demonstrate GNH in action on a small scale in the province of Samdrup Jongkhar. Besides the Youth and Education program, other programs are Organic Agriculture, Waste Management with Zero Waste objectives, and Appropriate Technology. SJI promoted self-sufficiency among the population which was struggling with poverty and attendant problems of alcoholism, high infant mortality rates and low literacy. Villagers were educated in health, sanitation, entrepreneurial skills, and organic agriculture with a view to demonstrating how GNH might look in practice. In keeping with the Bhutanese attitude that puts the sacred into everyday life, the first activity the villagers did together was to build a temple, which acted as a community centre as well as a place of practice. Building a road has connected villages to the outside world more readily, whereas before there was a steep walk up to the main road. The resources,

therefore, that SJI offers LME are extensive. The emphasis on local resources and local wisdom in the LME program is well served by the extended community of SJI.

A consequence of public education, and one that was probably not foreseen when it was first introduced, has been for Bhutanese youth to migrate away from their villages to the urban centres of Bhutan, leaving the villages in the hands of the elderly, and threatening to undermine Bhutan's rural economy which is already severely taxed. The outcome of this is the decrease in traditional crops being grown, a decline in the practice of established forms of agriculture, the importation of huge amounts of food from India, and potential food insecurity in Bhutan as a whole. For the young people themselves, leaving their communities is often far from the dream that they had envisioned. Many end up unemployed, and in the worst cases, on the streets with addiction problems. The World Bank reported youth unemployment to be at 28% in 2015 (World Bank, 2017) which is at odds with the figure that Bhutan's Ministry of Education reports of 10.7% in 2016 (Annual Education Statistics, 2016, p. 4). Either way, there is a problem. Failure to pass the Class 10 exams labels a student as a drop-out, and the dropout label follows an individual for years. For those who do not make it past class 10, the stigma follows them through their lives, and is dragged up at job interviews as I witnessed. The Annual Education Statistics for 2016 (Annual Education Statistics, 2016, p. 5) show that only 72% of students who pass the class 10 exam go on to upper secondary school. The Bhutan Council for Examination and Assessment figures for 2016 show that only 51% of the 96% who passed the class 10 exam qualified for funding at higher secondary government schools (Tshering, 2017). Some of those who do not qualify go to technical and vocational colleges, private colleges or diploma programs, but many become the so-called "class 10 dropouts," and represent a large proportion of the country's young people. Many go to the urban centres to look for work in menial jobs to earn some cash rather than return to the village. Sadly, the drift away from the villages starts with their schooling, when even young children are required to leave home to attend school if there is none in their village. Many secondary school students, as well as elementary students, board at their schools, and so the rift between home and village and the school is further exacerbated. In addition, since 1999, youth are exposed to media and American and Indian television which relentlessly propagates consumer culture and the notion that success and happiness are based on material wealth and academic success, despite a very conservative and non-consumer oriented national Bhutan Broadcasting Service. Ownership of cell phones among

youth is widespread. As a result of the influence of media and their education, young people seldom return to the village when they have finished school. Understandably, when they have been thoroughly indoctrinated in the dominant Western ideology, they feel that there is nothing there for them. They equate manual labour with being “backward” and uneducated. They dream of a government office job with a large salary and not too many demands (Rinchen, 2008). Those left behind in the villages, the old people and the parents, tend to adopt the view that they themselves are not “educated.” Consequently, the knowledge which is rooted in the land and the traditions of Bhutan for generations is becoming devalued.

It is one of the aims of SJI, and of LME through its education program, to reverse the value orientation that has overtaken the youth of Bhutan in the Samdrup Jongkhar area and beyond, so that they gain an real appreciation for the traditional ways of their people, ways that go beyond wearing national dress and attending festivals. The wisdom and knowledge that has evolved through the centuries has allowed the people to survive through their understanding of the climate and the land on which they live. When enhanced with new techniques and ideas, this traditional knowledge has great potential to establish personal well-being and security which then extends to the security and well-being of Bhutan as a whole, through self-sufficiency in the rural areas which is where the majority of the population still live. By extending entrepreneurial education and opportunities to the villagers, SJI is hoping to create a climate that attracts young people back to the villages. At the same time, SJI educates and promotes the values of GNH in an active and hands-on way, giving youth an understanding of the ideal which is not purely theoretical—a slogan with little meaning or personal relevance. For many villagers, life is as it always was, and the lure of education and all the promises of consumerism are a more attractive alternative for young people, as well as to their parents who aspire not only to material comfort and wealth for their children, but for their children to get good grades at school, a good job in government, and provide for their parents in their old age (Walcott, 2011). Ironically, despite the migration of youth away from the villages, most Bhutanese know which village they come from, and these roots remain the focus of their sense of belonging. At birth, a child is named by a Buddhist monk or teacher, so there are no family surnames in Bhutan, and family history is tied up with the village. The young monks in the monastery all knew which village they were from and had a strong connection to it, despite the fact that some parents now reside in the nearby army camp. The displacement of people from the land has only been happening for one

generation, which gives hope to Dzongsar Khyentse's and SJI's aspiration to reverse the trend where youth leave the area for the urban centres.

The monks are mad about football, as they call soccer, and not only the young ones. They have developed a high degree of skill, and it is a pleasure to watch their play. Any spare time they have, young or old, they spend on the soccer pitch which is a terrifying expanse of rock hard concrete surrounded by high netting to keep the ball from disappearing down the mountain. The view is amazing, over the foothills to the plains of India in the distance. The fence is not foolproof, however, and the youngest monks aspiring to play are frequently sent clambering down the steep slope to retrieve the ball which sometimes disappears altogether. There is not the luxury of specialized footwear in these parts, at least not among the younger monks, but that does not prevent them from throwing their hearts and souls into their game. An amazing variety of footwear appears on the pitch, including rubber flip flops, often too big or mismatched, tennis shoes with the toes missing and the occasional "cool" pair of running shoes, obviously the envy of the others. It is not unusual to see a slipper, as they call flip flops, fly off after the ball, and for that person to continue playing with one shoe on and one off, until it is convenient to retrieve it. The technique of using the side of the foot becomes a habit quickly learned. I, however, did see some nasty split big toenails.

Over the Bhutanese new year, there was a two-day soccer tournament. Several of the senior monks joined in and played friendly games before the tournament started. A senior monk handed out prizes to the winning teams, and despite the anti-competition ethos of Buddhist philosophy, it was obvious that the monks were playing to win. I saw some very disappointed players who lost in the final.

Educating for Gross National Happiness

In 1972, the Fourth King made the declaration that Gross National Happiness was more important than Gross National Product (Gordon, 2013). His concern was that the welfare of his people should always be central to policy making as the country opened up and began the process of modernization. The word "happiness" can be a bit misleading, and is not the best translation of the original word in Dzongkha which is closer to "contentment." GNH is comprised of four parts, the four pillars, which are protection of the environment, preservation

and promotion of the national culture, equitable and sustainable development and good governance. In the ideal world, and in theory, these four aspects are inseparable in that when they work together, they represent the aspects of society which benefits people and the environment, rather than the economic aspirations of global corporations. There is a danger that GNH will be co-opted into the more individualist meaning of the word “happiness,” and its originally intended meaning will be lost as consumer culture takes hold in the youth and the people of Bhutan. As McDonald (2008) says, in an article on Educating for Happiness, aimed at Bhutanese educators, “If happiness is seen as a personal attribute only, we immediately de-emphasize the reality of its interconnectedness. In truth, happiness depends on interconnection and any individual experience of it is impacted by our relationships to the social and non-social worlds around us” (p. 43).

Recognizing the environmental destruction and the human hardship that is the consequence of development in the world as resources from the “developing” nations are funnelled to the wealthy nations, the King announced the vision of GNH. His intention was to promote development that valued the people and the environment, as well as upholding the Buddhist traditions of the country which go back 1300 years. GNH comes out of, and is an articulation of, Buddhist wisdom and the inseparability and interdependence of all aspects of existence, and is therefore an expression of sacred world outlook. It provides guidance to policy makers as Bhutan enters the modern world and is a reminder and—since it came from the King—a Royal Command, to keep human values at the heart of development and a sustainable future for the people of Bhutan. The current King, Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck restated the importance of GNH in the following way:

Thus, for my nation, today GNH is the bridge between the fundamental values of Kindness, Equality and Humanity and the necessary pursuit of economic growth. It ensures that no matter what our nation may seek to achieve, the human dimension, the individual’s place in the nation, is never forgotten. It is a constant reminder that we must strive for a caring leadership so that as the world and country changes, as our nation’s goals change, our foremost priority will always remain the happiness and wellbeing of our people—including the generations to come after us. (Wangchuk, as cited in Gordon, 2013, p. 287)

Education was of the highest priority for the new democratic government in 2008 who recognized that the current education system in Bhutan was a heavily standardized, colonial British/Indian system, relying on rote learning and exams. As such, it recognized that this system did not reflect the aspirations of GNH, nor would it produce graduates who would carry out those aspirations. The Royal Education Council (REC), established in 2007, was tasked with the design of curricula that would reflect GNH values. Then in 2009, an international conference was organized which gathered some of the top progressive educators in the world as well as many Bhutanese educators, academics, business people, and politicians.^{xlvii} The Prime Minister of Bhutan at the time, Jigmi Thinley, in his opening address to the conference expressed his concern over the erosion of traditional values in Bhutanese youth, the creeping influence of consumerism and what he calls “modern education systems”

that unwittingly undermine values like honour, valour, loyalty, allegiance, and devotion may also fray the basic fibre of good character, subtly denigrate ethics, and thereby serve to produce consumers driven by personal success and ambition. . . . A genuinely GNH-inspired educational system would ensure that these values are so deeply felt and internalized that they manifest simply and naturally in all situations—in and out of school (Thinley as cited in Hayward & Colman, 2010, p. 18).

At the conclusion of the conference, Thinley described his vision for a GNH education system and its graduates as

nothing less than transformative—graduates who are genuine human beings, realizing their full and true potential, caring for others—including other species, ecologically literate, contemplative as well as analytical in their understanding of the world, free of greed and without excessive desires—knowing, understanding, and appreciating completely that they are not separate from the natural world and from others—in sum manifesting their humanity fully (p. 215).

He went on to say that “there is nothing in the principles of Gross National Happiness that is not fundamentally universal. I firmly believe that if we succeed in our shared endeavour this week, and if we bring GNH effectively into our educational system here, then whatever we do is

entirely applicable to educational systems in your own countries and throughout the world” (p. 17).

Following the conference, workshops were held for all school principals on infusing GNH principles and values into the curriculum. In addition, the REC had been “tasked with the responsibility of designing and implementing an innovative curricular reform based on experiences and examples grounded in the local context while simultaneously providing the skills and predispositions for teachers and students to face a dynamic and uncertain future” (Gordon, 2013, p. 287). In 2010, the REC carried out an assessment of the adoption of the curricular reforms in nine designated Beacon Schools. Gordon,^{xlvi} who interviewed teachers and principals at the Beacon schools found that, quite apart from the physical challenges of providing education in a mountainous, impoverished and “developing” nation, with poor or non-existent roads to the communities, there are issues of teacher morale, lack of supplies and even electricity in the classrooms, as well as of Internet access, and provision for special needs children. Lack of family funds, alcoholism and broken homes restricted the engagement of many children in school. Also, many students are the children of migrant road workers. Many children walked hours a day to and from school. These issues posed extensive challenges to developing a coherent system (p. 297). Gordon concludes that Bhutan is “a nation confused as to how education will contribute to the goal of retaining a distinctive cultural identity while providing the skills to not only survive in the modern age but also hold on to its young people by providing them with work that contributes to the building of a civil society” (p. 287). From conversations I had, I believe that similar challenges and social problems affect the LME student body. From my limited perspective, however, I sensed that the students benefitted from the warmth and caring that was marked in the monastery, and the strong container that that environment provided.

Drukpa (2016) is more optimistic, and reports more positive feedback from teachers and principals in his study of the effects of *Educating for GNH* initiatives. However, he cites a report in *Kuensel* (Pelden, 2014), the national newspaper of Bhutan, which says that as many as 33% of teachers are dissatisfied and looking for other occupations, which would support the findings of Gordon. In my informal conversations with teachers and young people, my impression was that the schools remain primarily teacher centred in terms of pedagogical approach, and that the continued emphasis on standardized testing breeds an atmosphere of competition. I observed that

Bhutanese students from outside the monastery did not engage in criticism and debate, challenge the status quo, or even ask many questions. I attribute this to the strong sense of hierarchy that regulates social interaction in Bhutan, including student-teacher relations. I found that the monks at CGI were more likely to make jokes, ask questions, and engage their teachers verbally, albeit quite respectfully, in a way that is not “proper” for the average Bhutanese student. For some of the teachers, and some senior monks, this was frowned upon. For myself, I felt it was an expression of the students’ engagement in their education and not something that needed to be repressed.

Lhomon Education was born following the 2009 Educating for GNH conference with the aim to create a GNH based system of education that would be free of the current standardized education system, and offer alternatives to the system in methods and approach. Over the next few years, the first Lhomon Education curriculum framework was elaborated, and as part of that process, a workshop for the REC, teachers and educators in other agencies on integrated curricula and education was held to which I was invited.^{xlix} This was my first visit to Bhutan, and at that time, I had no idea that I would be involved so closely with the LME project in the future. In February 2013, the start of the Bhutanese school year, a teacher was hired, and LME integrated education courses were taught to the first group of monks at CGI. In 2015, I was invited to take up the task of continuing curriculum design for LME. The idea that LME would be able to provide a model for transforming Bhutanese mainstream education has since been somewhat revised, in favour of reaching out to schools in the locality and forging active relationships with them. There is widespread support for the LME program among senior educators in the country as we found at a Brainstorming Workshop in April 2017 that was hosted by LME during my stay. By bringing together innovative educators from India with Bhutanese teachers, lecturers, and others involved in education locally and nationally, including the teacher education colleges, we had a lively debate around the future of LME and its role in the Bhutanese educational picture.¹

I had not anticipated how hard and heavy the rain would be in Bhutan, and the umbrella I had taken with me was not up to the task of keeping me dry. It collapsed fairly soon after I arrived, and in the presence of some of the young monks I expressed that I would have to go to the village and buy another one. A couple of them looked at me with disapproval, and one of them said, “Madam, think of the environment. That is wasting, and it can be mended.” I was chastened by

this remark, but also somewhat doubtful that the umbrella was redeemable, and parted from them feeling torn between wanting to support their commitment to zero-waste and my desire to stay dry.

That evening, I was reading in my room in the guesthouse, when there was a knock on the door. When I opened it, the two young monks who had previously scolded me were there, and they announced they had come to mend my umbrella. From the folds of their robes they pulled out needle and thread that they had saved from a shoe repair workshop they had been attending the previous week. They sat on the floor and set about pulling the pieces of the umbrella into shape and sewing the spokes onto the fabric. One of them ran off to find sticky tape, because they needed to reinforce the spokes. They worked hard for an hour and presented me with the umbrella which was generously taped and which more or less held its shape when opened. I had grave doubts about its ability to stand up to the gusts that came with the rain, but even so I tried it out next time it rained. Sadly, my prediction was correct, and the umbrella, so lovingly repaired, was of no use when it came to staying dry. I solved the problem, somewhat to my satisfaction, but not to that of the monks, by telling them that this umbrella would be for the sun, and I would get another one for the rain.

The Ecological Perspective and LME

The action element of the LME curriculum is centred around an ecological perspective. Just as in the natural world, the relationships between the different elements and the links that bind them together are as important as the elements themselves, is, I believe, also true for education. Taken as a model, an ecological approach to education means paying attention to the details of the relationships between the different elements, integrating them into a cohesive whole. Everything is impacted by how all the parts operate together, and the outcome is manifest in the details. In short, everything matters. Paying attention to the details means we are not making a separation between vision and practicality, heaven and earth, the mundane and the sacred. It is about developing sacred world outlook, a reverence for all aspects of life, recognizing the interdependence of all phenomena. The LME curriculum for the young monks, therefore, is founded on the need to bring education into a context of place and language that is relevant and ecologically coherent. The aim is to encourage students and their teachers to see themselves as part of an integrated whole, valuing the wealth of knowledge that exists in the traditions of the

locality. The ecological perspective aspires to generate in the students a heartfelt respect and love for nature and the knowledge that they themselves are part of the whole, which extends from the local context to the larger context of the world beyond their community to the nation. In this approach I am influenced by the Enki view and methods (Sutton, 2005) as well as by the Buddhist view of interdependence. It arises from my experience and is, I feel, supported in the literature that I have discussed above.

The framework that I have designed for the curriculum is structured around the four pillars of GNH. As discussed previously, the four pillars of GNH reflect the view of inherent sacredness and the interdependence of all phenomena, which is in itself a profoundly ecological perspective. Referencing the 2009 conference materials (Hayward, PannoZZo & Colman, 2009; Hayward & Colman, 2010), I have created thematic units which concentrate on each of the four pillars as a starting point, covering most of the 12 literacies in the units.^{li} The integrated approach to curriculum and pedagogy is an expression of this ecological approach.

In the first year, for example, the environmental pillar is addressed by an in-depth examination of the monks' immediate environment and their place in it, that being the monastery and the local community, and the surrounding plant and animal life. This is extended to an exploration their own villages in the context of the district and of Bhutan as whole. It is also an opportunity for the teacher to get to know the students, their backgrounds and their abilities. The cultural pillar is introduced through tracing the evolution of human culture from hunter-gatherers to farming, comparing the latter with present day agriculture in Bhutan, and integrating local customs and traditions. Also, students look at similarities and differences between Bhutan's culture and that of neighbouring India. For the focus on sustainable development, the monks make an organic vegetable garden, with the help of local farmers, and all subject areas are related and integrated with that activity. For the governance unit, they learned about the Buddhist king, Ashoka, in the third century BC, who has been dubbed "the first environmentalist" by some for his work planting trees, digging wells and protecting wildlife. From a violent start in life, Ashoka had a change of heart and from then on worked to bring peace, prosperity, and equality to all his subjects, including women, prisoners and animals. Buddhism and Buddhist values, as the root of Bhutanese culture, are addressed in all units throughout the curriculum. The curriculum

framework document I have developed during my work in the Bhutanese context, *Lhomon Education Gross National Happiness Curriculum*, is included as an Appendix^{lii} to this thesis.

Given the integrated and interdependent nature of GNH as a philosophical standpoint, one cannot talk about one pillar without referring to the others. Through activities, exploration, and field trips, the environmental, cultural, and policy issues around development and sustainability are addressed through the experience of the students and on the local level, and extended to examine how they are played out on the national and international levels. The curriculum, while adaptable to other environments, strongly emphasises the importance of becoming familiar with the local environment and the traditional ecological knowledge of the local people. By starting at the point of students' experience, the context for future learning is established. Stories from Bhutan, as well as from other cultures which address the topic being studied, create the ground for understanding how ecological knowledge is rooted in the culture and is not just an abstract concept. During the topic on fire in the environmental pillar, students heard a story of how fire came to humans. This was followed by students' stories of fire that they had experienced. The story talks about making fire from friction so the students made bow drills from materials they found in the locality and had some success in using them to make fire. On a field trip, we took a bow drill, and a local farmer and his wife, both old, whom we happened to meet on the way, told the students about how they had had to use sticks to make fire in the olden days. A senior monk addressed the class on the significance of offering butter lamps and smoke offerings in Buddhist ritual. We made a sun dial and solar cookers. We discussed forest fire prevention, and adopting solar technology on a grand scale and how that would impact the dependence on fossil fuels. The interweaving of the aspects of environment, culture, sustainability and national policy was achieved and presented as an integrated whole in order to ground the students' learning. Writing, drawing and reading as well as various related math projects were part of the whole.

One day when we were walking back from an afternoon in the garden, the monks saw a group of children from the local school who were walking up the road on their way home. The children were lighting matches and tossing them into a ditch full of dry leaves. It was the end of winter, everything was tinder dry, and forest fires were a real threat to farms and villages. The monks were shocked to see the children doing such a thing and scolded them, asking, "Don't your teachers talk to you about forest fires and how they start?"

Indigenous and Traditional Ecological Knowledge

One of the challenges for a curriculum in this context is how to address science and math from the view of sacred world. In this section, I refer to the work that has been done around Indigenous worldview in relation to the science curriculum (Aikenhead & Jegede, 1999; Bartlett, Marshall & Marshall, 2012; Kulnieks, Longboat & Young, 2010; Metallic & Seiler, 2009; Snively & Williams, 2006). In Saskatchewan, Canada, Aboriginal^{liii} teachers and Elders were instrumental in the creation of a science curriculum called *Rekindling the Fire* through the University of Saskatchewan under the direction of Aikenhead (2002). Much of the learning was done outdoors. Local Elders and knowledge holders were engaged in the process. Referring to the Aboriginal students in the class, Aikenhead says, “The first strategy that made a world of difference was teaching outdoors. Students reacted very positively when immersed in nature away from the school building, even when this was the case for only one or two lessons in a unit. It was as if these students were sensing their natural place in the World” (p. 293). The studies mentioned have focused on the science curriculum in schools in order to bring a greater sensitivity to the needs of Indigenous students and their implicit cultural worldview, as well as to create the awareness in non-Indigenous students that other worldviews besides the dominant Western scientific-rationalism exist.

In my work in Bhutan, and teaching in Canada using story cycles from Indigenous cultures, I have become aware of the issues around the use of Indigenous materials by non-Indigenous people. As I bump up against my own preconceptions born out of my education and background I have continued to deepen my understanding of the issues. Citing Battiste (2002), the term “Indigenous” is used in the Educating for GNH Literature Review (Hayward, Pannozzo & Colman, 2009), which states that “the cultural knowledge of the Bhutanese people that has been transferred from generation to generation can be considered to be Indigenous knowledge” (p.73). It is from this perspective that I have used the term “Indigenous knowledge” in the Bhutanese context, as well as the term “traditional ecological knowledge” (see Endnote *xii*).

As I mentioned previously, I was introduced early on in my teaching career to local Mi’kmaw stories by Sable (1996) and Holmes Whitehead (2013), both non-Indigenous scholars who worked closely with Mi’kmaw Elders and scholars in researching their material. Sable’s (1996)

work with using stories of the Mi'kmaq to create science curricula for Mi'kmaw children, extends into the geography and natural history of Nova Scotia, all of which are inextricably bound together in the culture and worldview of the Mi'kmaq. As resources became available online, and I made connections with local Mi'kmaw individuals, I was able to expand and refine my understanding of the differences between Western scientific worldview and that of the Mi'kmaq and other Indigenous cultures. It was fairly straightforward to make science connections to the stories, and some lend themselves to math as it is in everyday life. During a study of native Nova Scotia animals, stories about moose, beaver, eagles, and other creatures brought life and character as well as conveying the qualities with which the Mi'kmaq imbued these animals. A story which mentioned geographical positions in Nova Scotia lent itself to measurement of distance, enriching and contextualizing a math lesson.

As discussed previously, the Mi'kmaw language is verb-based, and Borden (2011), in her work teaching mathematics to Mi'kmaw students, draws attention to the role of language. She advocates for the “verbification” of the language used in the teaching of maths because the noun-based terms commonly used in English are inadequate or lost on Mi'kmaw speaking children. Her experience was that:

This pervasiveness of nominalisation in mathematics stands in direct contrast to ways of thinking about and doing mathematics in Mi'kmaq. . . . As I transitioned from asking noun-based questions such as "What is the slope?" to asking verb-based questions such as "How is the graph changing?" I found that students often understood better. I came to this notion of *verbification* by listening to the way students were talking and modelling my language with similar grammar structures. (p. 12)

The LME program and the curriculum strongly emphasises the wisdom and knowledge of the local Elders and community members. Wherever possible, the Elders and knowledge holders in the community are invited into the classroom, and the students are taken out to visit these people in their own settings. Local farmers instruct them on making compost for the garden they grow at the monastery, and on the care of an orchard and the young plants; they also teach the monks the signs in nature that have traditionally indicated when to sow and harvest. There are songs and rituals bound up with all these practices which the monks learn too. Breaking new ground is

always determined by the astrological calendar and accompanied by prayers and offerings to the local deities. Besides the spiritual and contemplative benefits of practices in which people engage in the natural setting, being outdoors gives rise to an ecological understanding which is born of direct connection and engagement with the Earth, the plants, and the animals. It also offers multiple opportunities for integrated learning. Plant biology, the symbiotic relationship of insects and animals to plants, the chemical components of compost, the role of micro-organisms and decomposers, photosynthesis, and the carbon cycle, measurement—the list of learning opportunities that arise out of creating a garden is extensive.

I found that the monks manifested a keen awareness of their environment and what occurred within it. They enthusiastically shared their knowledge with me and attempted to teach me the Sharchop names for all the flowers, insects and birds we encountered, demonstrating a knowledge of the way the animals and birds adapted to their environment, as well as knowledge of their habits and habitats. I had the sense that these young monks, generally sheltered as they are from the pressures of media and modernity, had a relationship to sacred world outlook which was not only born of their circumstances in the monastery, or even from their rural backgrounds. The extent of the connections they made, their wonder and delight in what they experienced and their enthusiasm around projects, whether in school, the garden, or community work in the monastery, was due in large part to their teachers' ability to interpret and engage them in the curriculum and extend that out into their environment. It was also, I felt, an expression of their inherent connection to sacred world.

The area of Samdrup Jongkhar is known as a haven for wildlife, and all kinds of birds in an exotic range of colours and sizes flit through the dense vegetation. Birdsong pervades the surroundings, particularly in the early morning when the birds are especially tuneful and garrulous. On my first visit to CGI, I had the opportunity to learn about the birds from another foreigner who was also an avid bird watcher. His enthusiasm for the activity infected me, the teachers, and many of the monks.

In one hour, on one early morning outing with my colleagues, we saw fifteen different varieties of birds, in a range of striking colours. I had joined them on a couple of early Sunday morning birding outings, which woke me up to the abundance and variety of birdlife in the area.

Thereafter I was always on the lookout for interesting birds and enjoyed sharing my sightings with my colleagues and learning the local names for the birds.

The most common bird is the red-vented bubul, known as pinkaloo in the local language because of the sound it makes. These birds flit in amongst the bamboo and love to gather on the scarlet-flowering trees, chattering to each other as they feed on the nectar. Black eagles soar on the thermals, and on occasions swoop low over the valley in pursuit of prey. Varieties of odd-looking hornbill can be seen, including the endangered rufous-necked hornbill which draws birding enthusiasts from all over the world. I was fortunate to see a pair and a juvenile who perched on a tree close to my house.



Figure 4. The more common Greater Hornbill (J. Mitchell, Dewathang, 2015)

At the request of the teacher, I gathered donations of binoculars before I went to Bhutan the last time. The local bird watching organisation in the UK, where I was visiting, put a call out to its members who donated their surplus pairs for me to take to the monks. I went with six pairs which added considerably to the weight of my luggage. It was worth it, though. The monks were delighted, and in their free time would often come to the office to borrow a pair to go off and do some bird-watching on their own. They also borrowed them to watch activities that were happening on the parade ground of the army camp, far below in the valley, especially at the time of the “mela” festival when dancing, marching and games were in progress!

Indigenous language. In the specific Bhutanese context where I have been working, the Indigenous language group is that of Eastern Bhutan, known as Sharchop, or Tshangla.^{liv} There is a rich oral culture, as this language has never been written down, and stories, customs, music and dances, as well as agricultural, healing and religious traditions have been passed down orally through the generations. It is these that are in danger of being lost, and which the LME program hopes to integrate into the educational program. Statistics vary, but Sharchop is spoken by about 50% of the population. An emphasis on Indigenous language puts LME apart from the mainstream approach to education in Bhutan and places it in the context of Bhutanese traditional knowledge. There are many languages in Bhutan which have evolved in small communities isolated from each other geographically. As an Indigenous language, Sharchop has the feeling of being very earthy, connecting the speaker to the environment and the wisdom that is bound up with it. Interestingly, it does not have words that relate easily to time as we understand it in the West, and conversations are interspersed with English words and phrases such as “Thursday at three o’clock.” Given the importance attributed to local and traditional wisdom in the LME program, Sharchop, which is the language of almost all the young monks, is actively encouraged. At the same time, English, with extensive Sharchop translation, is the language of instruction because the huge majority of materials, the Internet, and the much of the media is in English. On the premise that the knowledge that is bound up in a language will be lost if the language itself is lost, the program encourages the students to record words and phrases in Sharchop in their dictionary, gathering a record of the names of local plants, animals and practices. These transcriptions are phonetic because there are no formal rules for transcription. Classes at LME are therefore conducted in a mixture of English and Sharchop.

English and Dzongkha are the languages that are taught in the schools and the use of Sharchop and the local dialects is discouraged in school. Until recently, teachers punished children for speaking their mother tongue. Dzongkha, closely related to Tibetan and with a Tibetan script, is spoken in the west of the country and has been designated the national language. The monks at LME are learning the ancient language and script of Chöeke, in which the Buddhist texts that they study in their Buddhist classes are written. Most children and adults also understand and speak Hindi, mainly because of watching Indian television, and Nepali is also commonly spoken because of extensive immigration of Nepalis to Bhutan in the 1950s and 60s. Most young and some older Bhutanese who have at least an elementary education speak several languages. I found, however, that many people seem to avoid reading anything more complex than newspaper and online articles. Access to books is challenging and beyond a small selection, books are only available in the urban centres or in India. Neither Amazon, nor a reliable postal service has yet reached this part of Bhutan. With an education system so focused on standardized testing, students read textbooks to memorize material for tests. According to a teacher that I met, reading is considered by many to be a chore. Happily, a large number of the LME students seem to have a positive attitude to reading.

Contemplative practice. As described previously, there is a ubiquitous relationship to the sacred in everyday life in the part of Bhutan where I was. This obviously impacted the students and, combined with the fact that the setting was monastic, the way that the curriculum unfolded. It is human, however, to become busy, distracted, goal oriented and preoccupied, and none of us, students or teachers were immune to that. Mindfulness practice is therefore an important aspect of the LME curriculum. The day starts with Buddhist prayers and several minutes of meditation and ends with a dedication. To me it seemed that the monks, in contrast perhaps to their Western counterparts, settled into the practice with amazing ease. Sometimes, we would practice a few minutes of mindfulness in the context of a lesson if we were outside, so that we could tune into the environment. Students would sometimes just be given the instruction to be quiet and listen, opening their senses to the world around them. The monks also practiced contemplative practices in the form of art projects. Frequently they were given projects such as imagining how hunter-gatherers would have lived in the area, and that was followed by writing stories and an art project. In one case, the students made their own paints from ground rocks and charcoal for their interpretation of cave art. The agrarian lifestyle that evolved in Bhutan was

brought to life through the stories associated with the origins of crops that were traditionally grown.^{lv}

What makes the learning of the LME program contemplative is the integration of body, speech and mind in the teaching and learning process. When these three are synchronized and addressed in the curriculum and put into the context of an ecological approach to pedagogy which is culturally relevant and place-based, the interdependent nature of reality is less of a concept and more experiential. Bringing body, speech and mind into coherence is the ground for action which works with and through the world as the source of all life. A fragmented consciousness and dis-integrated body, speech and mind is the recipe for a piecemeal approach to the ecological crisis. This piecemeal approach serves the status quo and justifies the course of destruction through the logics of globalization and the growth economy. Unfortunately, and often unwittingly, mainstream education becomes the means by which corporate business interests and the assumptions around those logics are transmitted. A case in point is the recent curriculum reforms in Nova Scotia, Canada, (Nova Scotia Department of Education, 2015) in which the focus is on making education fit the needs of the business community, with little attention to the arts, and no mention of environmental concerns and the need for education around global issues of climate change, resource management and related concerns.^{lvi} Shifting the paradigm in education from one that implicitly supports materialism, individualism and human and environmental chaos, to one that acts on behalf of community, ecological sustainability and wisdom in whatever form that appears, is the long-term view of sacred world outlook in the context of education. Schools such as the Shambhala School in Halifax, Nova Scotia, and the LME program in Bhutan and other similar initiatives around the world, offer alternatives to the worldview of neoliberalism that underpins much of education globally, not only to the detriment of those it purports to serve, but also to that of the planet. The need for such schools is apparent in the literature to which I have referred in this chapter. My aspiration is that this thesis contributes to the call for reforms in education which shift the paradigm in favour of life and wisdom, and the celebration of the vast variety of its manifestations in the world.

Chapter 5

Concluding Thoughts

Deep awareness of our interconnectedness can change our lives and change the world. It can reorient our lives individually, and collectively. It is a project of living in accordance with reality. It moves us from understanding, to feeling, and in the end becomes a springboard to action. *His Holiness Orgyen Trinley Dorje, the VIIth Karmapa* (Dorje, 2017)

As we approach Bhutan by car from India, leaving the polluted atmosphere of industrial Guwahati behind us and crossing the bridge which spans the magnificent Brahmaputra River, the foothills of the Himalayas beckon in the distance. The closer we get, the higher they appear and the more dramatic, folding back upon themselves, hazy and mysterious. The contrast with the flatness of the Indian plains is startling. It is December, and the plains, stretching as far as the eye can see to the east and west, are dry, the rice having been harvested and the coconuts and banana trees dusty and bare of fruit. The highway runs directly north in a straight line from Guwahati in Assam to the southeastern Bhutanese border. It is paved, and remarkably there are two lanes in each direction with a median for much of it. Even more remarkable is the complete disregard for the rules of the road as I understand them. Vehicles enter the highway and proceed in the direction they intend to go, whether or not they are on the right side of the road, until there is a place to cross the median, and they can continue their journey on the other side of the road. Luckily, the traffic is light. Taxis like mine, decorated trucks, bicycles and motor rickshaws make up most of the vehicular traffic. The rest of the traffic is made up of people, cows, goats and dogs around which we weave as they make their way across the highway or take a mid-day nap in the middle of the road. A hierarchy of sound is the dominant rule of the road as far as I can tell. The loudness of a vehicle's horn determines whether you move left out of the way of the overtaking vehicle, or stay put with the people and animals deftly wending their way between all the moving obstacles. We pass hamlets surrounding small reservoirs, roadside cafés, brickworks, and in the more populated areas, many unfinished concrete structures with rebar extending from the exposed surfaces like tentacles.

As we get close to the border there are the inevitable bureaucratic stops for passport and visa checks. My driver takes the photocopy of my passport and disappears into a small hut. The Indian authorities seemingly are not concerned with whether the document they are filing matches the person with whom they are dealing. No one comes out to look. We set off again and imperceptibly the elevation increases although we are not in the foothills yet. The tea plantations of Assam stretch on either side of us, low bushes at about waist height being picked by women with baskets strapped to their backs in the shade of large oak-like trees. On the other side of the tea plantations we go through a large arch which spans the road decorated in the Bhutanese style. This is the border, and we are in Bhutan. Almost immediately we start to climb, and in few minutes we are at the Bhutanese checkpoint where we stop for more checks. This is the town of Samdrup Jongkhar where I am met by a member of the Samdrup Jongkhar Initiative staff and driven in another taxi up to the village of Dewathang and the monastery where I am to spend the next three weeks.

As soon as we leave the town the road starts to climb, twisting and turning around hairpin bends. We follow a river which runs, sedately at this time of year, through steep gorges crossed at intervals by bridges, most of which seem to be under construction at the hands of Indian male and female labourers. The slopes that rise up high on either side of the road are covered in a dense jungle of vegetation, of which only the banana and the bamboo are familiar. Tall trees hung with creepers create a canopy under which shrubs and thick undergrowth vie for space and light. As we climb the pressure changes, and I feel my ears pop at intervals. It is cooler too, and I wrap a shawl around my shoulders.

Not only is the landscape a dramatic change from India, but the pressure of people and animals is completely absent. What is immediately apparent is that I have entered a different world, one that is much slower and much emptier of people. There are quite a few Indians in the border town of Samdrup Jongkhar, but there is a checkpoint past which they cannot go. After that point the people are all Bhutanese. They look different to me, being more reminiscent of Tibetans than Indians, and they almost all wear the traditional dress: the gho for men which is rather like a voluminous bathrobe reaching to the knees, which also acts as a massive pocket, and for women the kira, which is a long piece of traditionally woven cloth wrapped around the waist and folded,

tied with a belt and topped with a short jacket with a blouse underneath it. The simple elegance of the people is striking.

After half an hour of winding further uphill, we arrive at the village. The monastery where I am to stay is another ten minutes climb up the mountain. We have to drive around the village because the way through is now part of the army camp. Civilian cars are not allowed, although it appears that people are not restricted in their movements through the village. There are a couple of soldiers in uniform at the gate, but all seems pretty relaxed, and if it were not for the barbed wire fences, I might not have been aware that it was an army camp.

We continue climbing for another five minutes, farms and traditional houses on either side of the road and blue mountains receding into the distance beyond the valley. We pass a sign that says "Chokyi Gyatso Institute of Buddhist Studies," and shortly after we drive through another archway into the monastery. I am greeted by the familiar faces of people I have met previously, some Bhutanese and some other Westerners who were visiting the monastery. There are hugs with all of them, Western style, and, from those who I have not met before, half bows with a warm handshake that encompasses my hand in both of theirs. They usher me into the guesthouse reception room which is spacious and elegantly furnished where we are served sweet milky tea by two young monks. It feels like an auspicious beginning indeed to whatever the future holds for me at the Chokyi Gyatso Institute in the magical and welcoming land of Bhutan.

It is almost two years since I first arrived in southeastern Bhutan, and I have been back twice more since that first visit. I arrived with many expectations, hopes, and trepidation. In this concluding chapter, I revisit my experience of living and working in Bhutan in the light of the parameters that I have set out for myself in this thesis. My inspiration in writing this thesis is to communicate my heartfelt commitment to an alternative approach to education, one which shifts the current mainstream model, based on a scientific and rational-materialist approach to life and education, to one that is founded on cultural sensitivity and ecological awareness. For the sake of the Earth and for the sake of future generations I am proposing that sacred world outlook provides an alternate way of understanding curriculum, and education in general. Sacred world outlook is founded on the conviction that human consciousness is more than just intellect; it encompasses the capacity for knowing in ways that go far beyond the rational and conceptual which is the focus of most formal schooling. I suggest that this view offers a path and a rationale

for a curriculum that nurtures and supports a child’s physical, emotional, spiritual and intellectual well-being, and ultimately the well-being of our world. Sacred world outlook is based on the recognition of basic goodness as the nature of the reality that we experience on a daily basis—what has been called “ordinary magic” by Hayward (1984). It means waking up to the interdependence of all aspects of our existence and taking to heart a worldview that can prevent further harm and bring about the healing of the Earth. This is what I have called an ecological perspective, which is in turn grounded in a commitment to a contemplative practice. Through immersion in the natural world, the local culture, imagination, and the arts, the curriculum draws from and extends out to the community, be it local, national, or global.

View, Mediation, and Action revisited

I have organised this thesis around the framework of View, Meditation, and Action, drawn from Buddhist tradition and practice, as a way to reflect on my ideas as well as my experience of putting them into practice. My thinking and my work with implementing sacred world outlook in the curriculum has been impacted inevitably by the challenges, but also the opportunities and insights, that I encountered living in Bhutan, and also through the reading and research I have done in the course of writing this thesis. In the following sections I reflect on what has shifted in my understanding and what has remained constant in relation to my research questions.

In Chapters 2 and 3, I elaborated my thoughts as they emerged from the first two of my research questions: In the context of curriculum, what does sacred world outlook as an alternative worldview offer to educators and their students, and how is the sacred world outlook in the curriculum informed by an ecological perspective and supported by contemplative practice? In Chapter 4, I elaborate on an educational approach that is culturally relevant and place-based, integrating the wisdom of Indigenous and traditional ecological knowledge into the curriculum, and reflecting upon my work in Bhutan. In this chapter I address the last of my research questions: How has my understanding of the role of place and culture in education been shaped by my experience as an educator in various contexts and as a long time Buddhist practitioner?

Reflections on the view, sacred world outlook. In Chapter 2, the View, I described in detail what I meant by sacred world outlook. Based on the Shambhala teachings of Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, sacred world outlook is understood to mean the ability to experience the

magical qualities of the world we live in, to appreciate its richness and diversity and to rouse care and compassion for all life in the millions of manifestations in which it exists. A corollary of this is that we need to recognise our basic goodness, our sense of basic worth and the workability of all experience and phenomena. Trungpa teaches that meditation practice is the path to experiencing basic goodness. In that chapter, I also examine obstacles to experiencing our basic goodness and sacred world outlook in the West, based on an understanding that looks at the world through the lens of dualism. I look at the role of language that supports dualistic thinking, as well as the hegemony of the metaphors that underlie the neoliberal agenda and mainstream formal education. The pervasive nature of dualistic thinking, manifesting in various ways, steers us towards materialist and self-serving ways of understanding the world. The work of Bowers (2001), Bonnett (2013) and Bai (2001) have been elucidating in this respect.

My commitment to the view of sacred world outlook, and my conviction that there is some basis for believing that it is a valid basis for curriculum, is founded on my experience as a teacher guided by a curriculum that supports the integrated development of the child's body, speech and mind. I feel that as teachers, we owe it to our children to change the way we think about education, to stop immersing them in the thinly-veiled materialist and consumerist agendas of neoliberalism and to offer them opportunities for experiencing the world as a sacred and magical place. In this I am not alone. A similar spirit is present in the writing of Bai (2009), Orr (2004), Macy (1995), Bowers (2003) and many others. We cannot continue on the present path; education needs to take a central role in shifting awareness from one that is self-oriented and materialist, to one that includes others and is ecologically sustainable. For this reason, I offer the view of sacred world outlook as a way to uncover the destructive patterns of much of the educational agenda that permeates not only mainstream culture in the West, but also the "developing" world.

As previously stated, I believe that it is important for all educators to respectfully listen and learn from the wisdom of Indigenous peoples, as it manifests in stories, customs, arts and practices. Such teachings describe a way of living that is compatible with the environment and founded on a deep sense of community with the Earth and its human and non-human inhabitants. Spiritual traditions, especially those that embrace a contemplative practice such as the Buddhist path from which I have personally learned so much, offer a way to connect to our inherent wisdom and

basic goodness and thus to sacred world. Based on my reflections about my teaching experience and my understanding of these principles as I formulated curriculum design in the Bhutanese context, I propose that sacred world outlook can be cultivated in students by taking an ecological perspective which can be grounded in contemplative practice and pedagogy. Despite the challenges that this approach presented on social, personal, political and cultural grounds when I was working in Bhutan, sacred world outlook offers a platform for envisioning an alternative educational paradigm for working with the issues that face us in a global context. As elaborated in the discussion of View, Meditation and Action, the process is recursive, and offers plenty of scope for, and actually requires, input on a personal level and shared reflection among teachers and students. The fundamentals of the view of sacred world outlook are based on a non-conceptual relationship to the real world, and therefore are not for me or anyone to question. How we understand the latter, and our perceptions and assumptions around it are complex, requiring that we look inward, fostering an attitude of openness and compassion, and outward, cultivating an understanding of interdependence and the cyclical nature of existence.

Despite having access to cell phones, and watching movies, the monks' concept of the world beyond here is still limited. They are curious about my life and Canadian lifestyle which they relate to how things are here. Often the conversation will start with the words, "In your village. . . ?"

"In your village, Madam, are there many houses?"

"Many, many houses. It's a town, a big town."

"Do you have a car?"

"Yes."

"How far do you have to walk from your house to your car?"

I am not sure how to answer this without going into a big description of how houses are laid out in Canadian towns. I say, "My house is by the road."

This makes sense to them. Here, there is only one road. It goes from east to west across the country, winding around valleys, up mountains and over passes. Houses in this far southeastern part of Bhutan are perched on the sides of the mountains, joined by a network of footpaths and "shortcuts" as they are called. Everything needed for living is carried to its destination. Person

power is the main form of transportation, either on the shoulders or on a bamboo pole slung between two people. Furniture, gas canisters, 40-kilogram sacks of rice, children, building materials—all are carried to the houses on the backs of these tough and resilient people.

“Madam,” one boy asks, “Did it take a long time to get here from your village?”

How to answer this? In these days of airplane travel, time does not equal distance covered by foot. But I answer, “I came in an airplane. It is a long way from Canada to here,” and leave it to their imaginations to put those pieces together.

Reflections on meditation and contemplative practice. In Chapter 3, Meditation, I described a contemplative approach to pedagogy in which meditation is both a personal practice for the teacher, and also a practice within the classroom for teachers and students. It is here that I have expanded the definition of what “contemplative” means to include mindfulness, and that also expands that definition into what O’Donnell (2015) calls “an on-going permeated approach” (p. 198). When we do not fragment *what* we teach from *how* we teach, we open a path of communication not only between child and teacher but also between the child’s inner and outer experience. When we slow down, engage the senses, open to the intuitive, then our perception of the world and our consciousness of it becomes sacred, in the sense of being fully alive and fully real. From my experience in Bhutan and from my study, I have come to understand how an ecological perspective and contemplative practice in the curriculum can be brought together more efficaciously through the contemplation of interdependence, which can underpin and reinforce an understanding of sacred world outlook as a lived reality. For this I draw upon the Buddhist teachings on the interdependent nature of reality, and specifically from the writing of the Seventeenth Karmapa, Orgyen Trinley Dorje, leader of the Kagyu lineage of Tibetan Buddhism (Dorje, 2017).

Mindfulness practice is the foundation of the contemplative approach, but if we limit our understanding of contemplative practice to mindfulness alone, then we risk overlooking the wealth of meaning and connection that can be made to our world through the arts, observation in nature and through kinesthetic and embodied learning. It is apparent to me that the young child has an inherent ability to see the world as sacred and can experience the interdependent nature of our existence on a visceral level. Given the right conditions, body, speech and mind integrate effortlessly and naturally.^{lvii} When a story really speaks to children’s experience, I have observed

how it enters into their play. Objects in the environment become part of their imagined world, at which point they are immersed and at one with the world, in body, speech and mind. Stories from the various wisdom traditions and Indigenous cultures offer other ways of understanding the world, particularly if the story is contained within the study of the culture from which it comes. The emphasis in these stories on wholeness, community and harmony with the environment nurtures the uniqueness of the child and provides an alternative to the current consumer-driven perception of individuality.

Story and artistic expression continue to be a central and important aspect of the curriculum in the late elementary and early middle school years in the Enki curriculum I have discussed. Further to this, I propose that contemplations on the nature of interdependence can be introduced and practiced especially in the context of the natural world. Contemplating the causes and conditions which bring all phenomena into being, including our own lives, furthers the recognition of how we are connected to the many qualities and elements of life in its myriad forms. From the perspective of interdependence, we can contemplate, for instance, the causes and conditions that have brought us to our present time and place, and what we have in common with other life forms that binds us to them. We are all dependent on air, water, Earth and the sun, in common with trees and plants, animals, insects, birds and all living things. We are bound together by commonalities and by our dependence on them. But, because of different causes and conditions no two people, trees, dogs or flower are born the same, with the exception of cloning. Causes and conditions, internal and external, determine how each will evolve but, despite the differences, the underlying interdependence remains. An integrated curriculum which does not artificially separate the subject areas reinforces the perception of interdependence, and thus sacred world outlook.

Not only does a heartfelt relationship to interdependent reality strengthen and give structure to the ecological aspect of the curriculum, it challenges the preconceptions we have of otherness by which we understand objects in our world as being separate from us. It wakes us up to the projections we make about what a tree is, for instance, and from there it becomes possible to be more discerning about how we project labels onto things and people and make distinctions between subject and object, “us” and “them.” Contemplation of interdependence can become the ground of celebrating diversity and appreciation of that which unites us, rather than a reason for

discrimination. By recognising the interconnectedness of our existence with other people and other forms of life and the elements that make life possible, we can challenge the idea of the primacy of the individual by placing the individual in relationship to other people and the natural world. From this perspective, we can truly appreciate community and the knowledge and wisdom that resides in it that is expressed in diverse cultural traditions and practices.

There are several instances in the curriculum where the Bhutanese students compare, for instance, eating locally grown organic rice to imported, chemically grown rice from India, and the economic, social, and environmental costs of each. This can be a purely intellectual exercise. What I am suggesting is a much more intimate contemplation of what actually goes into the cup of tea that I am drinking—the people who picked, produced and packaged the tea, the physical conditions that were required for the tea to come to maturity, and so on. For younger students, attention to the web of connections that exist in the garden—the soil, the plants, the insects, the animals—can serve a similar purpose. While meditation and mindfulness practice stabilize our understanding and insights, I have come to think that a more active contemplation of interdependence could open possibilities for students to make a living connection between their lives and the impact that they have on the world around them, positively and negatively, and from there be able to devise ways of living more sustainably.

Vehicles are quite few and far between which makes walking on the road quite pleasant. Cars are beyond the means of most people. More practical on these roads are the jeep-like, rugged vehicles, called Boleros, which are more expensive than small compact cars. There is one bus a day which goes between our small town and the border town of Samdrup Jongkhar. Taxis, ten-seaters crammed with about 15 people, transport people the long distances between towns. Scooters and motor bikes are only workable for those who live close to the road. Bicycles are precluded for obvious reasons, and are not considered a good expenditure of energy on these steep roads, except by some of the young. That leaves little choice but one's legs as the preferred mode of transport. The most frequent vehicles are brightly decorated trucks from the nearby gypsum and coal mines that have blighted the landscape in some nearby villages, not that they can be seen from where I am. These trucks plough up and down the road on their way to India, spewing exhaust and throwing up dust into the otherwise pristine environment, and causing a considerable hazard to smaller vehicles.

Reflections on action—ecological perspectives and place-based education.

Investigation of the causal links and chains by which we are connected to other beings can strengthen and give real meaning to an ecological perspective. This, and the role of a place-based approach in the Bhutanese context, is the subject of Chapter 4, Action. I came to this project in Bhutan with an idea about curriculum design, tried and tested in the context of Canada, but it was not completely clear to me how this idea would adapt in the Bhutanese context. Despite assurances from my Canadian friend who had been working in Bhutan for ten years, and who was instrumental in bringing me there, I was torn between excitement and doubt. Coming from outside, and being from a Western culture, I had to acknowledge to myself that I was not in my comfort zone, and far from an expert in this environment. It helped to be aware of the tendency I sometimes felt to push through that discomfort, and to take instead the attitude of being a student: one who was there to learn and support the teachers in their learning, not to impose my agenda. In retrospect, I think that this has been effective in opening my mind to some of the cultural nuances that arose in our work together, something I explore further below.

On my first exploratory visit in December 2015, I asked to be shown as much as possible of the local culture and stressed the importance of engaging local people and the Indigenous culture in the curriculum. I visited many of the Samdrup Jongkhar Initiative (SJI) projects: the local women's weaving collective who were using traditional weaving skills to make amazingly beautiful products with recycled plastic bottles and chip packets as part of the zero-waste campaign,^{lviii} a local factory that made incense, a farming collective and also some villages in the area. I also met many of the local people, mainly older, who were still in touch with the traditional ways—astrology, bone-setting, plant medicine, organic farming, and story-telling among others. I could not communicate with these Elders because of language barriers, but it was important for the Bhutanese teacher to make the connection with them as resource people for LME, despite being known to each other previously in some cases. What became evident to me, and to the teachers, was that there was a wealth of knowledge in the traditions in the area—traditions based on knowledge attained through observation of the environment for many hundreds of years, and a way of life that was sustainable and harmonious with the environment. Preserving this knowledge and integrating it in to the curriculum has become of primary importance in the LME curriculum. Students have gone into the field to visit local knowledge holders, and many of these individuals have since been invited to talk to the LME students.

Bowers (2008) advocates a pedagogical approach which attends to the “cultural commons” which he describes as being “the intragenerational knowledge, skills and systems of mutual support, includ[ing] the narratives, approaches to the creative arts, ceremonies, civil liberties and systems of reintegration into the community, craft knowledge and so forth” (p. 331). This resonates with the approach that I recommended for LME and that has enthusiastically been put into practice by the teachers there who report that the students’ response to this kind of approach is extremely positive, as the students often make contributions from their own experience and knowledge. Some LME students came to class one day with nuts from the soap tree, known locally as *kilingse*. They described how the nuts were used for washing clothes and body before soap became commercially available. Thereafter, they collected many of the nuts and were inspired to use them instead of regular soap. Incidents such as these, and the bits and pieces of local knowledge and lore about plants, animals and customs that the students enjoyed imparting to me made me feel that this kind of approach was working for them, as well as for their teachers.^{lix} Creating a context for the curriculum that is based in the local culture, and that refers to the Indigenous and traditional ecological knowledge in this way, did much to mitigate my sense of unease that I might be perceived as the curriculum “expert.”

Challenges, Paradoxes, Insights.

The experience of being in Bhutan and applying the ideas of a contemplative and ecologically sensitive curriculum in a very different culture than that in which I had previously worked, has presented me with much food for reflection. In retrospect, my passion for education of this kind remains undiminished, but in putting it into practice I was confronted with various obstacles. There were personal, social and cultural challenges with which I had to deal that involved coming to terms with the institutional and political milieu in which I was working. The students’ warmth, curiosity and eagerness to learn were on-going sources of inspiration when I felt despondent and ineffective. In addition, during my time there I witnessed some inspiring applications of an integrated approach. Spontaneous demonstrations of an understanding of integrated curriculum on the part of the teachers was heartening. For example, there was a time when we made a sundial on the terrace of at the monastery, which necessitated spending the whole lesson on the terrace so that we could mark the shadow every half hour. The terrace was tiled so we could use chalk on it. Between times, the students were spontaneously engaged by

teachers in predicting the exact spot that the next shadow would fall, which evolved into a lesson on angles, astronomy and the seasons. It was a delight to witness this creative response, involving the students and applying the principles of integration so skillfully. As I have observed often in my teaching career, when there is direct relevance and the students are focused and engaged, learning is effortless and enjoyable. Having these experiences as a reference point in Bhutan and elsewhere strengthens my conviction in the importance of an approach of this kind, providing me with the motivation for moving forward despite challenges and difficulties, however and whenever they present themselves.

Cultural and social challenges. In my observations, a defining characteristic of social interaction in Bhutan, rooted in cultural and social etiquette, is a marked deference to authority, however that is perceived. This was a challenge for me in working with the teaching group who had varying amounts of teaching education and experience. Bhutan is a very hierarchical society and within a formal situation, such as meetings or teaching, this is expressed by defined roles.

During the period of new year celebrations in February, His Majesty the king, Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck, announced his intention to visit the monastery, as part of his tour of southeastern Bhutan. This would be his first visit, as the monastery is very new, the construction only recently having been completed since it was begun fifteen years ago. Consequently, there was a flurry of activity to finish off and spruce up the environment. The young monks were set to sweeping all the dead leaves off the grass, the flower beds were weeded, banners and poles with prayer flags were erected, and in the temple itself, everything was polished and gleaming. Chevrons hung around the entrance, and inside the walls were hung with the iconic paintings known as thankas.

The day arrived, and all the monks lined up on the driveway to greet the king. The senior lamas and monks made a group at the bottom of the hill and the rest of the monks lined up in order, tallest to the smallest, ascending the hill. Security agents, and military officers and their vehicles were crowding the grounds and the carpark. While we waited we practiced the stylized bow that is proper to give to royalty—a step forward on the right leg as one bows from the waist, hands reaching to the ground and palms open and facing forward, followed by a step back as one straightens up, all in one fluid motion. The monks had to hold their robe that wraps around their shoulder in a particular way, presenting a challenge for some of the younger ones. Men were

wearing colourful ghos and the white silk sash that is worn on official and ceremonial occasions. Those who have attained the title and honour of dasho, an order bestowed by the king in recognition of services rendered to the kingdom, wore red sashes. Women from the surrounding houses and the LME teachers were at the top of the driveway, wearing their best ghos and kiras. A local woman had just finished weaving my kira the day before, and although I was not very comfortable with the wide belt around my waist digging into me and restricting my breathing, at least I felt as if I didn't stand out too much. I should have known better! A Westerner is a novelty, and being taller and paler than Bhutanese women it was hard to hide myself in the crowd.

We knew the king had arrived when we heard the reed horns resounding below. As he walked up the driveway he was preceded by the horn players, two monks who held bundles of burning incense, and, of course, his body guards. The monks bowed as he walked in front of them, making a wave of maroon that flowed up the hill ahead of him. I bowed, keeping my eyes on the ground, but as I came out of my bow, I saw that His Majesty was coming towards me. So much for my attempt to fade into the background. He is quite young, only 37 years old, tall for a Bhutanese person, and regal in his dress, wearing a yellow silk sash over his elaborate brocade gho, depicting his royal status. His picture is everywhere, in calendars, on walls in shops, restaurants, and banks, so he was strangely familiar when I saw him in the flesh. He graciously thanked me for being there and for my teaching, and I thanked him for welcoming me to his country, and he moved on. On the one hand, I felt honoured and pleased to have been greeted by him. On the other, I felt uncomfortable, as it underlined the status that is automatically attributed to Westerners in Bhutan, a status which is to my mind somewhat dubious. Because of my appearance I was singled out. I wondered if I had not been there, if any of the others who deserved recognition more than me would have been acknowledged. It brought up, once again, the discomfort of being in a privileged position in that culture and all the questions associated with that.

My first task when I arrived at CGI was to offer some professional development with the LME teachers around the curriculum. I came at it from what I now see as a very North American approach. If I asked them to read certain things to facilitate later discussion, more often than not they would not complete the reading, or that is how it appeared to me. I put this down to my perception that in a formal situation I was seen as an “authority.” Their habitual patterns

associated with teaching and learning were that the teacher teaches, and the student absorbs the material. Discussion, queries, and feedback were mostly absent from their educational background. If I asked the teachers a direct question, one to one, they would usually answer, but it made them uncomfortable to be put on the spot in that way. Forming a group, in the sense that I was used to, and using approaches that I had used in the past was not easy. I was forced to be creative, with some success.

The first month of my time there, which was supposed to be the teacher education part, was mostly taken up with all of us getting settled. Some of us had to find places to live which was actually accomplished quite quickly. LME, which had previously been independent of SJI, had recently been brought under its umbrella of Youth and Education. All teachers were expected to take on administrative duties, particularly the team leader. Within the hierarchy of the organization it was not always clear to me whose role it was to educate the teachers and to reach agreement on what was important for them to know. I saw there was a tendency, as is generally the case, to fall back on what is familiar, which in Bhutan is the traditional Bhutanese style of teaching that relies on lecturing and questioning. Where I emphasised active learning, and the understanding of integrated curriculum as a holistic approach, the traditional style is more about student behaviour, documentation, and communicating content. I was trying to communicate the *how* aspect of curriculum, while the focus would often revert to the *what*. Getting the students up and out of their seats during a class was unfamiliar territory and somewhat threatening as it challenged the traditional teacher-student relationship where students are passive and the teacher is active. On top of this, I was very aware of being the outsider coming in charged with telling the teachers what to do, and the resistance I felt from time to time was, I felt, a consequence of this. I did not want to be seen in that role, of course, but neither was I in a position to lead and fully take initiative in the areas of my specialization, given the hierarchical structure.

A month after I got there, the young monks returned from their annual home visits, and classes started. With the full team of teachers assembled, and actual teaching situations to refer to, some progress was made in shifting attitudes and practices. I was able to observe classes and give feedback and make suggestions. We discussed lesson planning and activities each day, but this tended to be somewhat scattered because there were three different teaching groups, and two observers, myself and the head teacher. It took time, sensitivity, and discussion to work through

some of the issues. The hierarchy in school and work situations makes it harder to be straightforward in discussing issues, and I did not want to put anyone in an uncomfortable position, or to violate cultural mores myself. I found, however, that the issues would surface eventually, sometimes when I was least expecting it, or that a vague uneasiness would be dispelled in an unexpected way. The discussion on the subject of lesson planning was one of these moments. I had been working on lesson plans for the units for over a year, and although I felt that lesson planning should rest primarily with the teachers, I went ahead as I had been asked to do. About halfway through my time in Bhutan I suddenly learned that the teachers did not really want my lesson plans, but rather wanted detailed unit plans from which they could build their own lessons. This made so much sense to me, and not only did it explain the sense of resistance that I had been feeling, but was also an important way of acknowledging the teachers' familiarity with the culture and appropriate materials for their students.

I return here to the questions that I raised in the first chapter, and allude to above, with regards to my location as a privileged, white, Western woman, working in a “developing” country. The social and hierarchical structure of Bhutan meant that I was often referred to as an “expert” and an “authority,” much to my discomfort. While I have a particular background and set of experiences to offer, and had been invited to share that, I am far from being an expert when it comes to understanding the culture of Bhutan and how things work beyond the observations I was able to make in the few months I was there. As I take a step back from my own observations, and look at my work in the context of the literature and research that has been done through work with Indigenous populations and in “developing” countries (Cajete, 1994; Chinn, 2006; Gruenewald 2003; Kanu, 2003; Smith, 1999), I question my role, my influence and my contribution there; such writers offer some insight into the discomfort I mention above, and the questions remain pertinent. I find it ironic, in retrospect, that as a Westerner my purpose in designing this curriculum is to question the hegemony of the Western dualistic approach to knowledge that is taking hold in Bhutan, and to promote an educational approach which emphasises Indigenous knowledge and the de-colonization of knowledge. Herein lies my dilemma. The complexities involved around the privilege and the expertise that was attributed to me characterize the larger problem, as well as my own view of my work in Bhutan. My experience highlights some of the bigger issues around not only research by Westerners in “developing” countries, but also the work of development agencies, such as the World Bank,

whose motive is blatantly neo-colonial, although clothed in the veneer of benevolence, such as the Education For All movement, that I describe in Chapter 2. While I hasten to distance myself from such endeavours, from the point of view of the Bhutanese villager, what might be the essential differences between me and one of them? Certainly, I did not drive around in an SUV or live very differently than other people in the village. On the other hand, although my salary was tiny from the Western point of view, I became the go-to person among the larger group of my colleagues if someone needed to borrow some money. Was this a reflection of my privileged position, or was it a sign of acceptance and familiarity?

My heartfelt conviction is that the understanding of interdependence and sacred world, however it manifests, offers a way to demystify the role and the privilege of white, colonialist actors and attitudes in this context. The strong connection that the Bhutanese people have to the world as sacred may be taken for granted by them, but I see it as something precious that needs to be articulated and preserved in the face of encroaching modernisation. The importance of the national culture is acknowledged in the GNH philosophy, but there are many factors that are undermining its potency and influence, the education system being one of those. It is this appreciation for the knowledge and wisdom that is bound up in the culture, and particularly the Indigenous and traditional knowledge and wisdom, that I have tried to highlight in the curriculum. At the same time, I have to acknowledge that my understanding as an outsider, a privileged Westerner, is limited. But might it not also true that an outsider can stand back and see various different aspects of a culture, in a way that those who are part and parcel of that culture may not be able to? As in any system of social stratification, there are rigidities and assumptions that maintain power and privilege for some and keep others in a marginalized position. I believe we have much that we can learn from the wisdom enshrined in the Bhutanese culture, and I also see its limitations and felt their impact. If I try and define the “outcomes” and “results” of my curriculum work, the focus of conventional research, they remain hazy and inconclusive, and I am left wondering what, in the long run, will endure the test of time. On the other hand, sacred world outlook is predicated on the understanding that basic goodness is common to all people, East, West, North and South. Based on that assumption, can we find ways to share knowledge, perceptions and understanding, and develop relationships that are respectful and beneficial to all involved, human and non-human? It is in this spirit that I humbly offer this work, and acknowledge that there are no answers except the on-going questions and the work of bringing

them into awareness. The words of Høeg's character Smilla, in *Smilla's Sense of Snow* (Høeg, 1993), resonate for me, and give me an insight into my "urge to explain" (p. 204).

There is *one* way to understand another culture. *Living* it. Move into it, ask to be tolerated as a guest, learn the language. At some point understanding may come. It will always be wordless. The moment you grasp what is foreign, you will lose the urge to explain it. To explain a phenomenon is to distance yourself from it. (Høeg, 1993, p. 204, italics in the original)

At present, I continue to work on creating some of the units for the curriculum in the capacity of curriculum designer, but for financial reasons LME will not be bringing me back to Bhutan in the foreseeable future. I suspect, as well—although this has not been stated explicitly—that the leadership and the teachers of LME feel that it is time for them to take the project into their own hands, which feels completely right to me, although I also feel somewhat sad about it, personally, given the richness of the experiences I have shared with the teachers and students there. I continue to have Skype conversations monthly, and I am sure I would be welcomed if I was to return under my own auspices.

It is a week into my stay, and we have come up with a plan for professional development with the teachers. I approach the second day with some trepidation. The previous day had become very weighty, no one responding to questions or cues for discussion. I couldn't tell if anyone had read the material on the curriculum that I asked them to read, or if they considered it so boring they didn't have anything to say about it. Consequently, I end up doing little more than lecture them. They were looking pretty glazed half way through the afternoon. In assuming a North American style of discussion and feedback, I realize that I am far off the mark.

I have given them an assignment to tell a story to the class next day, so that we can work with it in a similar way as I would do with my class at the Shambhala School. I approach today's class somewhat nervously, unsure as to how this will work. One by one, however, the teachers tell their stories. Quiet and deferential in a formal context, outside the classroom environment they are generally more extroverted. In a social context, there is laughter, jokes and lively discussion. As they tell their stories, this is the side that surfaces. Several of the teachers are natural storytellers, effortlessly using gesture and facial expression, invoking imagination and

connection to their story. The recall process is awkward to begin with, for the storyteller teacher and for other teachers who are acting as students, and there are plenty of embarrassed giggles. But in re-telling, a connection is made again to the story which engages the other participants in the process. Seeing the teachers drop their reserve and show their “informal” sides, I breathe more easily.

Language. The issue of language was an on-going challenge. Despite the members of our team all speaking English, their grasp of the language did not allow them to go into much depth in discussion. It was awkward for me to realise that when I was present in any kind of formal setting, the language spoken would be English, which precluded some people from participating. Once a Bhutanese government official came to the SJI office for a visit, and even though I had very little background and was not current with the discussion, etiquette required that I sit next to him, and that all discussions be in English. Despite my peripheral role and status in that situation, my presence determined the way things happened, which I am sure meant the exclusion of others because of language, making me feel uncomfortable.

Within the monastery, some of the senior monks had good English skills, and some of the LME students were quite proficient. Sometimes I would have expectations of what they could understand in the classroom context, and would then find that their understanding was quite limited beyond a certain point. When I taught the monks, I would often fall back on my knowledge of movement exercises, songs, and verses to back up what I was trying to communicate. Without the constant back and forth between Sharchop and English, communication beyond a social level with the monks was difficult, and communicating the material used in class was harder. It was also a reminder that the materials that we used had to be accessible and very clear. Neither could we move at the same pace as I was used to. Learning was necessarily more hands-on and practical, and reflection, feedback and discussion were more limited than I sometimes expected. Given the importance of storytelling in the curriculum, I sometime felt frustrated not to be able to gather stories directly from local people because of the language barrier. There are a few resources in English (Choden, 1994), however, which we were able to reference and use in the lessons. Some of the old people in the area were storehouses of local lore and stories, and they were also invited into the classroom.

Among themselves, informally, once they had become used to having me around, my young colleagues would mostly speak Sharchop. Not being able to participate in a conversation, laugh at a joke or follow the course of events was sometimes a very lonely experience even though I never felt that I was being excluded intentionally. There were times when my frustration with their reticence in the formal context, combined with the limitations of language, made me feel like giving up and leaving them to their own devices. At times, I felt as if I was in a bubble, where life was going on around me but not really touching me. But then there would be a trip to the river with the boys, an afternoon in the garden, or on occasions, a social gathering of the LME/SJI team, and once again I would be filled with delight at the energy and enthusiasm of the students and teachers, appreciation of the beauty of the land, the generosity of the people, and the richness of the opportunity that had been offered to me.

Being immersed in a culture that is so foreign to me has made me reflect upon how learning happens in the young child as, in some ways, I feel myself to be in that state in relation to the people here in Bhutan. I don't know the language and understand very little. Food and cooking, laundry, washing, bathing, shopping: all are unfamiliar, and despite many people being able to speak basic English I still feel like I am learning everything from scratch. In the absence of language, I am thrown back on using other means of communication and ways of learning. Just like the child learning a language for the first time, I watch and listen, trying to make sense of what is happening around me. Using gesture requires me to be somewhat more extroverted than these reserved people are comfortable with. As I get to know them, it feels easier, but I sympathize with the child who struggles without words to communicate their wants and needs. It can be lonely and isolating, but it is also a great time to observe, reflect and learn, just as the young child must do. There is a sense of yearning and sometimes of straining to understand. I listen, almost as if my ears are on stalks as the words of the Sharchop language flow over me, jokes are cracked and stories told, none of which I can understand. Occasional words and phrases pop out that are familiar, and from those, I try and piece together what is going on. I feel sometimes, that if only I could flick a switch, everything would become clear.

Environmental and practical challenges. In designing the curriculum, I had not taken into account the climate that has an impact on the rhythm of the year in the part of Bhutan where I worked. I visited CGI for the first time in winter, which is the dry season: quite warm during

the day, but chilly at night. It never gets cold enough that there is a need for heating the houses, but I sometimes had to put on several layers, and I was glad of a lightweight down jacket I had thrown in at the last minute. My second visit in April 2016, gave me a taste of what the rain could be like during the monsoon season. When the mountain was shrouded in thick clouds it could be damp and chilly, especially when the rain came down in torrents accompanied by gusting wind. When the sun came out it was very hot and humid, and there were times too, when we were in thick cloud, hardly able to see a few yards ahead, but it was still very hot. In effect, there were only two seasons, although at the end of the dry season—spring in that part of the world—there are some trees whose leaves turn bright red, and others that lose their leaves. The unpredictability of the weather meant that we were not always able to carry out the plans we had for projects outdoors, although it would take a major downpour to cancel. In the annual plan we had to adjust to the seasonal rhythms, so that the units with more inside activity could be carried on in the summer, during monsoon season, and during the dry season the outdoor activities could happen.

The weather was also a major factor in the functioning of the Internet. On days when we were in the clouds, the connection did not work very well for some reason. The communication network was vulnerable to lightning strikes, and seemed to be quite unreliable altogether, as the system was dial up: fibre optics and high-speed Internet were not available. Without a reliable and functioning Internet, it was hard to access materials in a timely way, and to be certain of having what we needed in time for classes. For the first three or four weeks of my recent visit, it was almost impossible to get onto the Internet. After a visit from Bhutan Telecom we would have access for maybe a few hours. Finally, after begging and pleading on my part, we bought a new modem, which solved many, but not all, of the problems. All electronic devices do badly in this climate, and keeping them dry and dust-free is a constant challenge. We were without a printer for a long time until a local technician took a look at it and discovered that the problem was caused by cockroaches making their home in it. As previously mentioned, access to books is limited, as well as to other materials such as art supplies. Art supplies that I saw were of poor quality. Availability of science equipment is also very limited. Buying most supplies entailed a trek to the town of Samdrup Jongkhar, and without direct access to a car for any of us in the group, this was always problematic. I would have loved to get cameras for the students to use, but not only would that have been prohibitively expensive, there was always the problem of

obtaining them. There were some computers designated for student use in a hypothetical computer lab, but the lab never actually materialised mainly due to issues of space at the monastery and the unpredictability of the Internet. Despite all these obstacles, which might seem huge to a teacher in a Canadian school, the teachers were resourceful, and they were able to gather most of what was needed although it took time to organize everything. One of the teachers took apart a cheap umbrella to get parts that were needed for making a weather station. Bamboo, which grows everywhere and is amazingly versatile, was used in many of the projects.

In common with many teachers in Bhutan, the lack of professional resources to help with special needs and social problems (Gordon, 2013) was also felt by the LME teachers. Help with students who had learning difficulties was not available. I do not have training in special needs, but in my experience, approaching reading and writing as described earlier, using gesture, movement, and art, is often helpful to students with difficulties. I communicated these approaches to the teachers who were able to apply them in their lessons. Some students come to the monastery with social and family problems, but counselling and therapy is still very new in Bhutan, and therefore not easy to access. In the monastery, perhaps more than in some of the more traditional monasteries, there is at least some awareness of the impact social and family problems can have. With such a large group of students, and so little time, quick attention to such issues was rare, until there was a problem with a student. Again, the language barrier meant I was not dealing directly with these issues, but in the teaching group we discussed possible approaches that the teachers could take. In the end, however, responsibility for these kinds of problems rested with the monastic body, and not the teachers.

Personal and cultural challenges and paradoxes. When I first went to Bhutan, one of the things that I had to adjust to was living and working in a Buddhist monastery. I had to learn who was who, who the most senior monks were, and how to address them, even when just in passing. In general, it is not the custom for women to have much to do with monks, but this was not the case in this monastery. There was a lot of joking and casual conversation between the monks whatever their seniority, and women who lived and worked around the monastery, including the LME group, limited, of course, for me by language. Traditional dress for Bhutanese women is very modest, and although I did have a couple of kiras, which I wore on special occasions, I felt more comfortable in long skirts than in pants. In the monastery, women

always wear traditional dress. When we went to the garden or on hikes with the boys, we wore Western dress. Many of my clothes were not suitable because wearing sleeveless shirts is not acceptable. Unfamiliar cultural and social customs would catch me unawares. I learned, for example, that one should always receive and give objects with both hands, and when I forgot I felt awkward.

Being in an almost exclusively male environment was not as lonely as I imagined it might be. The monks, and Bhutanese men in general, seemed to be completely lacking in what we would call “machismo” in the West. Compared to India, it appeared to me that men involved themselves far more readily in family life, shopping and cooking, doing laundry at the communal taps, or carrying children on their backs, and I saw both men and women working in the fields. The division of labour between men and women seems to me fairly equitable, and under the law men and women are treated equally. In addition, women are the majority landowners in Bhutan, as land ownership is matrilineally determined, with women owning up to 70% of the land (Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations, n.d.). Domestic abuse was not absent, however, and a campaign to bring it into awareness included the distribution of garbage cans around the area with slogans such as “Real men don’t hit women,” and “Crimes against women are crimes against humanity” painted on them. Alcoholism is an increasing problem in Bhutan; it accounts for a high proportion of national healthcare costs and mortality (Dorji, 2012). I did get lonely sometimes, missing home, friends and family, and feeling removed and outside of what was happening. But the feeling never lasted for long. I felt a strong sense of community at the monastery, and having Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche as my teacher in common with everyone added to that. The Buddhist rituals and routines were not completely foreign to me, and being able to participate in them was an enriching experience.

There were, however, behaviours and attitudes that I felt to me as though they were paradoxical to Buddhist teachings: punishment being one, for children as well as animals, as I write about below. Although corporal punishment is no longer permitted in schools, it is still practiced in some monastic institutions. I did not get the impression that the children at CGI were living under a threat of a beating, and they were, for the most part, cheerful and out-going and had a great deal of freedom. I attribute this to the strong container that the monastic setting provides. Rules are extensive for monks, but they are underscored by the values of Buddhist teachings.

Topics such as bullying, sexuality and abuse tend not to be addressed overtly in Bhutan, and, as I note above, the issue of abuse has come into social consciousness only relatively recently. We had some discussion on how to approach these topics with the young monks, and there are places in the curriculum where they can be addressed.

About halfway through my time in Bhutan I formed an attachment to a puppy that had been abandoned. He became my little shadow, a great source of pleasure and comfort to me, my companion everywhere I went. Dogs do not have the same status in Bhutan that we attribute to them in the West. The idea of dogs being “man’s best friend” is completely absent. They are not kept in the houses, but they congregate around inhabited areas and are fed the leftovers from the meals, usually rice. They roam around, scavenging and lazing in the sun during the days. At night, their barking is tolerated because they help to keep the wildlife away from the gardens and the crops. Bhutanese people seem immune to the sound, something I thought I’d never get used to, but surprisingly I did. While dogs are tolerated, they are sometimes mistreated, and I saw people, some of the younger monks included, kicking the dogs or throwing stones at them. This was one of the paradoxes of Bhutanese culture that I found so difficult to reconcile with Buddhist teachings. It was considered a bit eccentric of me to attach myself to the puppy, and part of his attachment to me was that I wanted to protect him from being teased or mistreated.

As it got closer to the time for me to leave, there was the problem of his future. He had been so young when he had been taken from his mother that he had come to rely on humans for his food, and he was not a good scavenger. He was also small and an outsider to the dominant dog pack that lived around the monastery. The problem was solved by a young child who came to a celebration at the monastery, and unbeknownst to me, took him into the family car and drove away with him, as I learned later. No one knew who the child was, so there was no recourse possible. I was devastated and outraged that someone would do this. But I suppose that if dogs are not considered to belong to anyone, then they are there for the taking. The rational side of me knew that I could not have hoped for a better solution for him. After I left, the dog was spotted by someone in Samdrup Jongkhar, and according to the report he was well and thriving!

The Evolving Cultural and Political Context of Lhomon Education

If it is true, as is often said, that the future lies in the hands of the next generation all over the planet, then what we do *now* is crucial to their behaviour in the future. I believe, along with many others, that education and education policy is pivotal in this respect. The values and assumptions, however, that are embedded in most education policies and reforms in both mainstream Western culture and in countries throughout the world, differ widely from those that are being suggested here and that were the subject of the *Educating for Gross National Happiness* conference and subsequent policy changes. The more recent Bhutan Education Blueprint 2014-2024 (Ministry of Education, 2014), which lays out the present government's plan for education for Bhutan, seems to have different priorities than those of the GNH conference in 2009. It aligns more closely with curriculum and education reform documents of governments that have affiliated themselves, consciously or unconsciously, with the demands of the corporate-global economy. An emphasis on science, technology and mathematics is evident in the document, while arts and culture are barely mentioned. Phrases that suggest this are: "Languages, Mathematics and Science subjects will be upscaled" (p. 12), "improving student learning outcomes in tune to international benchmarks. . . scale up curriculum and assessment to meet international benchmark. . . scale-up innovations and options to continuously raise English language and STEM [science, technology, engineering and mathematics] competency among teachers. . . scale-up private sector and international partnership in education" (p. 13). Bhutan now subscribes to PISA-D, the Programme for International Student Assessment for developing countries (Bhutan Council for School Examinations and Assessment, 2017).

The definition of literacy that came out of the Educating for Gross National Happiness initiative identified the need for an educated populace who would be culturally literate in both Indigenous and modern ways, in issues of science, health and nutrition, as well as being politically and media savvy. Educating for GNH envisioned a way in which Bhutan's people could move into the modern world with their eyes open, proud of their culture and traditions, and able to navigate their way through the pitfalls of consumerism and materialism, and the barrage of media, in creative and innovative ways. Initially it was intended that the LME curriculum could be adopted over time, or at least serve as a model, for an alternative to an education system based on materialism and competition. Over the last year it has become clear to those involved in the LME

project, that the present system is fast moving in the opposite direction where policy and government are concerned. This is not a problem to be overcome in Bhutan alone. As Bowers (1993) points out, it is at the heart of the issue, as values such as those that underpin LME challenge the current dominant way of thinking, promoted by theories of globalisation, “education for all,” and the neoliberal political economy worldwide. Education that takes an ecological perspective and that allows questions to arise about the current practices of destruction and unlimited growth are, fundamentally, a political undertaking. If we are to ask young people to take on this kind of inquiry we also have to offer the means by which their conviction and questions can be grounded in a value system that gives coherence to their conceptual understanding. This, I believe, is the role of contemplative practice and an emphasis on the interdependent nature of our existence.

There are however, some hopeful signs that the ideal of GNH inspired education is still alive in Bhutan. Right at the end of my time there, we organized a workshop to which many prominent figures in education, the education colleges and the university in Bhutan were invited (Samdrup Jongkar Initiative, 2017). As well, some educators from India were invited; their work stood out in terms of challenging the education system in India, the one upon which the Bhutanese system is based. The purpose of the workshop was to determine a future course of action for LME and its role, not only for the young monks currently enrolled in the program, but to extend its activities and approach into the wider education community. The senior monks who were involved with the Buddhist education of our students were also present. The LME team’s presentation was enthusiastically received, and the discussion that followed was productive. Following the workshop, the LME team wrote a proposal, based on the outcomes of the discussions and the focus groups. It was proposed that LME, within the monastic setting, should be a seven year program with the option for those who wanted, to take the class 10 exam following an intensive one to two year preparation for the exam requirements; that the two year exam preparation course could be extended to youth in the community who had failed the class 10 exam; and, in the long run, professional courses could be offered that would open up entrepreneurial opportunities for youth in areas such as sustainable building practices and technologies, organic farming, eco-tourism, and other areas relevant to the local economy.^{lx} SJI has a long-term vision to build a self-sustaining village for which it has recently acquired land,

putting Gross National Happiness principles into practice. The professional courses would be integrated with the building and running of the village.

Another promising sign that the potential for GNH inspired education is alive occurred when I was in Bhutan in 2012. I met a group of so-called “class 10 dropouts,” working in non-formal education teaching literacy in the villages. They seemed to feel that their work was meaningful, and they showed a positive attitude towards their work. They were an out-going and creative group of young people, whose social skills, risk-taking and ability to articulate their experience contrasted favourably with some other groups of students I met. The plight and stigma attached to class 10 dropouts seems to be a huge waste of talent, but is also a potential resource for Bhutan’s future if their energy and skills can be channelled. This was an issue that was addressed by SJI through their Youth and Education program, of which LME is a part, and at the workshop on the future of LME.

It was my perception that in Bhutan work is understood as one of two extremes—back-breaking manual labour on the farm or highly paid government jobs. The “class 10 dropouts” are over-qualified for one and under-qualified for the other. Manual labour and jobs in the service industry are considered low status and undesirable, and are also underpaid (Rinchen, 2008). Immigrants from India and Nepal generally fill these jobs. Consequently, young people drift to the cities in the hopes of making money. The entrepreneurial spirit, as it is understood in West societies, is not widespread in Bhutan, which so recently emerged from a feudal social structure into the modern world.

One of the phrases that I heard in the context of furthering a GNH spirit in people was to promote the “dignity of labour” (Dema, 2011). Dignity of labour and a strong work ethic is widely considered to be lacking in Bhutan’s youth (Rinchen, 2008). Engagement in community projects, such as the building of the temple at the village mentioned previously, is encouraged by government and by SJI to promote the dignity of labour. “Karma yoga,” engaging mindfully in work projects, was practiced at the monastery and during the Mindfulness Camps with the local teachers. Monks, young and old, participate in various projects around the monastery weekly. Students from the Royal University of Bhutan (RUB) College of Engineering close to the monastery cheerfully volunteered their services to the monastery for such tasks as carrying building materials from the road to the site of the seed bank being built on the monastery

grounds. A cheerful attitude towards work was tangible at the monastery among the monks, young and older, who undertook everything, be it work or play, with a joyful enthusiasm. I was told that the CGI monks had been the only group out of about 4000 monks at a recent teaching in a remote part of Bhutan who had cleared up and repaired the damage to temporary structures following a major hailstorm.

Implications and Conclusions

Locating GNH education in Bhutanese culture and ecology. At the heart of GNH, the guiding principle for development in Bhutan, is sacred world outlook. It incorporates the Buddhist wisdom that has shaped the culture of Bhutan over hundreds of years and that is manifest in every aspect of Bhutanese life. I have had the opportunity to experience, from my perspective at least, how modernization is impacting this traditional society and how the traditional values are being eroded by materialism and consumer-driven aspirations of young people. Despite that, the innovations of modernization, such as healthcare and literacy, have brought many benefits to the people of Bhutan. My observations and reflections convince me, however, that alongside the benefits of modernization, the values and traditions that have sustained the Bhutanese population for centuries need to be given equal weight within the development path of Bhutan. Deeply embedded in Bhutanese culture and spiritual traditions is a view of the world as sacred, but that understanding is being challenged by the worldview of materialism and success. Extending an understanding of culture and tradition into the schools and thus into society in the long run, has to go beyond the wearing of traditional dress, pledging allegiance to the king, and the staging of religious ceremonies and festivals. The Indigenous knowledge of the people still exists in the hearts and minds of the old people in the villages, and also in many of the young people who have grown up in the villages. Unless it is seen as worthwhile or valued, not only within the current education system, but also by the people themselves, old and young, there is a real possibility that this knowledge could be lost within a generation. Where traditional knowledge is addressed in the existing education system it is within a framework that implicitly espouses the values of the global economy. A culturally sensitive, place-based approach to education requires a clear statement of alternative, ecologically sustainable values that already exist in the traditional culture of Bhutan.

One of my research questions addresses the extent to which these views have been influenced by my Buddhist practice. I see the values of culture and community that includes the wider ecology as being located within sacred world outlook, and they are therefore directly related to my background as a Buddhist. My understanding of interdependence, as already stated, is also directly a result of my commitment to a view of reality that understands everything to be connected. For this reason, the LME curriculum offers a model for how to integrate the knowledge and the values upon which it is founded into the curriculum, so that the inherent connection that the Bhutanese have to sacred world is not lost. By taking each of the four pillars of GNH and creating thematic units which address the core learning and issues within them, the aspiration is that students will be able to make connections within and between each pillar, each year deepening and broadening their knowledge and perspective of interdependence. Within this context young people will perhaps grow up to have a genuine commitment to, and understanding of the inseparability of the four pillars of GNH as more than just empty words and a path to individual happiness, thus maintaining their cultural connection to sacred world. Parallel to this, changing how the curriculum is implemented—methods of delivery, integration of subject matter, taking a holistic approach, and approaches to assessment—could create coherence and relevance in teaching and learning.^{lxi}

The interest and enthusiasm with which the Bhutanese presentation of GNH to the United Nations was received indicates that Bhutan and GNH policies are a source of inspiration internationally for an alternative model for sustainable development (United Nations News Centre, 2011, July 19). Within Bhutan itself, there is a risk that GNH will become no more than a quantifiable index system.^{lxiii} When not applied holistically, problems such as that of youth unemployment become pressing. It was this concern that the first Prime Minister, Jigme Thinley, was addressing in focusing on education for Gross National Happiness, and which was the original rationale for the LME curriculum with its foundation in sacred world outlook. As quoted previously, his concern, as he expressed it at the Educating for GNH conference (Hayward & Colman, 2010), was to skillfully integrate modernization into Bhutan so that the rich culture and traditions would not be lost. Ideally, education brings many benefits, giving individuals the ability to make informed choices around health, and social and political issues, as well as providing opportunities for citizens to improve their well-being on all levels. Modern approaches to sustainable practices and technology have the potential to benefit the population economically,

enabling them to be more self-reliant and resilient in the face of the challenges of modernisation in a global economy. The objective of the LME curriculum and approach is to value the wisdom of knowledge holders, engaging monks, farmers, village Elders, traditional healers and women in a thoughtful integration of the modern into traditional culture and education for sustainable living.

Teacher education. My experience working with educating the new teachers highlighted for me the importance of teacher education. Whether in Canada, Bhutan or elsewhere, a sacred world inspired approach to teaching and curriculum runs counter to established norms of teaching, both in its practice and in its underlying principles. Integrated curricula, thematic teaching and experiential or discovery learning are terms that come up frequently in the education context, but my perception and reading of how these terms are used is that they often remain purely at the conceptual level. They do not usually extend to a more integrated practice, involving body, speech and mind. As long as art education remains separate from environmental education, social studies from science, and mathematics from movement, the mindset is not one of integration of subject matter, the whole person, or our relationship to the environment. Programs in teacher education colleges might integrate not only the ideas of sacred world outlook—interdependence, ecological perspectives, and contemplative practice and also, ideally, manifest those relationships in the actual structure of the program. Bowers (1993), in a discussion of the Western cultural assumptions in teacher education around ecology and the understanding of individuality in the context of community, suggests that, among other theoretical frameworks, “the Buddhist doctrine that everything is an intricate, interdependent web (making individual autonomy—and self-creation—an impossibility) can be used to challenge the view of the creative, autonomous individual that still seems to be the prevailing orthodoxy in many teacher-education programs” (p.171). Related courses in teaching colleges and continuing education could offer openings for teachers and potential teachers to connect and begin to question the values and assumptions upon which mainstream education is based. Discussion around hidden curriculum, in which the values of the neoliberal worldview are embedded, can open the minds of student teachers to the ecological and social crises, brought about by globalisation, in a way that real change can happen. For these to go beyond a purely conceptual understanding of the issues and to engage teachers in the kind of transformative journey that Bowers (1993), Bai (2009) and others are suggesting takes a radical re-thinking of

the approach to teacher education. The reality is that changing the mindset of an institution is much harder than changing the mindset of individuals, but offering opportunities to see the world and worldviews in a different light is not beyond the bounds of possibility. When this is underpinned by a contemplative practice and there is a willingness to explore what a contemplative practice means on a personal level and how to bring that into one's teaching practice, there is ground for change to happen. Offering opportunities in teacher education to understand and learn about pedagogical practices that support the integration of body, speech and mind are, I believe, integral to changing the way we think about and conduct ourselves as teachers and the way we understand curriculum.

Education in the global context. My time in Bhutan, working with young Bhutanese teachers, experiencing the challenges of converging modernisation with traditional culture, and implementing a curriculum based on a commitment to dialogue and integration of these, has convinced me that there is a place for education that straddles the modern and the traditional. Education gives children the tools by which they can expand and synthesize their knowledge and understanding of the world. Having worked with curriculum applying the principles of sacred world outlook in Canada and Bhutan, I feel confident that it is a framework that can be adapted to various cultural settings. Having said that, in countries where there is an existing Indigenous culture, one that is currently being threatened by encroaching modernization, as in Bhutan, I feel it is most important for the curriculum to focus on the wisdom of that culture. The workings of the local ecosystems, the customs and practices of the people, both urban and rural, will determine much of the content. In the West, curriculum like the Enki curriculum that communicate the wisdom traditions of the world and Indigenous knowledge, model examples of living sustainably and harmoniously in the world, and an alternative worldview to that which underlies the curriculum in mainstream Western culture. In countries such as Canada, where much Indigenous knowledge has been lost through the process of cultural assimilation, the consequences have been devastating for Indigenous communities. Curricula that are place-based and culturally relevant, engaging youth with the Elders of their communities such as those mentioned previously (Aikenhead & Jegede, 1999; Bartlett, Marshall & Marshall, 2012; Kulnieks, Longboat & Young, 2010; Metallic & Seiler, 2009; Snively & Williams, 2006) offer an opportunity to reclaim and revive the traditional knowledge of the Elders and reawaken a connection to sacred world. For those who learn and those who teach, whether in urban or rural

environments, a pedagogy that provides opportunities for reflection, contemplation, and connection through integrated curriculum and methods, is a path to the recognition of basic goodness and sacred world. Given that sacred world and basic goodness are not cultural phenomena, however, but universal attributes that are available to all, curriculum founded on sacred world outlook is accessible to all.

Working with children most of my life in several different cultural contexts has given me the confidence that there is an inherent impulse in all children to learn and discover. If children learn *how* to learn, their natural curiosity and intelligence will motivate them to explore, question and wonder. This is an expression of basic goodness which we, as educators, need to support and recognise. Given the opportunities and a context that is conducive to learning, their individual capacities will flourish in body, speech and mind as discussed previously in Chapter 3. The context of body is the environment which extends from the child's physical safety and comfort to the natural surroundings and ecosystem of which she is a part. The context of speech is the ability to make connections and see the relationships between phenomena and to have the ability to express those verbally or artistically, through writing or movement. The context of mind is making sense of it all, extrapolating from one situation to another, having the ability to be analytical and critical and having the ability to feel true compassion and empathy. When all three are attended to in the learning environment, education is globally, situationally and personally relevant.

The sun starts to go down behind the walls of green and a shadow falls across the pool. It is time to start back up the mountain. I am not looking forward to the climb, but I find myself a good stick and set off. One of the boys offers to take my backpack, which I don't refuse. In fact, going up is not as hard as I had expected. Everyone is tired, so we stop for frequent rests, and this time I have a better opportunity to look around me at the forest. There are some true giants with spreading buttress roots that soar up above us. It is a shock to come across the site of illegal logging, where a hole has been ripped in the canopy. The stump bleeds raw and naked in the light that streams through.

At the orange grove we stop, and then again at the farmstead where the teachers are served mango juice and the boys are served Coke. Several of them refuse the Coke as they are convinced of its detrimental effects on their health. The three-legged dog that has kept up with us

the whole way is showing signs of strain, panting and shaking. I am faced again with the cultural difference of attitudes to animals between the West and here. Apart from a few remarks and the monks telling me the story of how she lost her leg, there really aren't many expressions of sympathy. She flops down and is as glad of a rest as I am. From the farm, it is only a short hike to the monastery.

When we get back some of the boys rush off to play soccer, much to my astonishment. Others show the prizes they have brought back with them: a tattered great hornbill wing feather; two snail shells; a giant dried pod with big flat seeds inside, that rattles and is used as an instrument; a spray of wild orchids in bloom, intact with the roots, which will be placed in the monastery garden. It has been a wonderful day, not only to be in the jungle and the Bhutanese countryside, but also to spend the time with the students who amaze and delight me with their innocence and unspoilt enthusiasm for their world.

As I conclude, the metaphor of weaving with which I started this thesis arises once again. Threads have emerged and been incorporated into the whole. Colour comes from reflections on my personal experience, and complexity from the questions that have arisen in the process. The final tapestry is a product of my curriculum design work in Bhutan and my experience as a teacher and educator over many years, a convergence and interweaving of many different influences: political, spiritual, artistic, philosophical and social. Many teachers and their ideas have inspired me and have opened my eyes and my heart to a way of understanding the phenomenal world and its workings beyond that of the culture in which I have lived most of my life. They have inspired me to live to the best of my ability by an alternative worldview than that which is dominant in mainstream Western culture. I offer this work in the hope that it will resonate with others who have similar aspirations. In applying this worldview to curriculum and education, my aspiration is that educators and teachers, whether in urban or rural settings and in diverse cultural contexts, will be inspired to adopt practices that genuinely engage their students in caring for the Earth and for each other.

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Appendix A

LHOMON EDUCATION

**GROSS NATIONAL HAPPINESS
CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK**

Chokyi Gyatso Institute for Buddhist Studies

Dewathang, Samdrup Jongkhar

Bhutan

Compiled by Jackie Mitchell, LME curriculum designer, 2017

Gross National Happiness

Curriculum Framework

Lhomon Education at the Chokyi Gyatso Institute,

Dewathang, Bhutan

If I ever have the opportunity to create a school for children, I want them to learn what it is to be human. . . I want to teach children how to make a fire, and that the source of water does not come from the tap. The aim of this education is to refine ourselves so that we will see the world in a different way, so that we can help others, and through helping others make ourselves happy and content. Therefore, what we are learning is not to get jobs, but to refine and make ourselves elegant both outwardly and inwardly. Dzongsar Jamyang Khyentse Rinpoche (Khyentse, n.d.)

The Vision

The vision of Gross National Happiness (GNH) is based on the understanding that the happiness of an individual and of a nation cannot be achieved solely by the accumulation of material wealth. Living harmoniously with the environment in a sustainable fashion, good health, strong communities, and relevant education are all vital factors in the attainment of happiness. With this in mind the pilot program for the Lhomon Education project at the Chokyi Gyatso Institute (CGI) in Dewathang is designing a secular education program for the young monks at the Institute, infused with the values and vision of educating for GNH, inspired by and following the directives of Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche. The holistic and integrated curriculum will draw upon local resources and knowledge making it relevant to the local culture, and that of Bhutan in general. Taking the view that education is a process of lifelong learning, students will engage in exploration of the environment, ask big questions and find answers based on their experience. The program aspires to address the problems that are faced in Bhutan, as well as globally, as a result of modernization, such as rural/urban migration, destruction of the natural environment, food security and unemployment. Its graduates will be educated in ecological integrity and sustainable practices that merge scientific concepts with Indigenous knowledge, compassion and service to the

community. They will appreciate, not only intellectually but also in their hearts, that everything is connected and everything matters. This is eloquently expressed by the previous Prime Minister, Jigme Thinley:

Knowing how different our vision and goals are, we know with certainty that what we want to see is nothing less than transformative—graduates who are genuine human beings, realizing their full and true potential, caring for others—including other species, ecologically literate, contemplative as well as analytical in their understanding of the world, free of greed and without excessive desires—knowing, understanding, and appreciating completely that they are not separate from the natural world and from others—in sum manifesting their humanity fully.

Lyonchhoen Jigmi Y. Thinley

Closing speech, Educating for GNH workshop, Thimphu, 12 December 2009

(Hayward & Colman, 2010, p.215)

Guiding principles

The curriculum framework for the Lhomon Education (LME) at the Chokyi Gyatso Institute (CGI) is an initiative which emerged from the Educating for Gross National Happiness in Bhutan conference in December 2009. Educators from Bhutan and around the world as well as principals, teachers and students from Bhutan, the Bhutanese Prime Minister and the Minister of Education gathered in Thimphu to envision how Gross National Happiness (GNH) could be implemented in the sphere of education. It was evident that for Bhutan to fully realize the ideal of GNH, the necessity of educating the populace to become literate, in the broadest sense, was fundamental to the success of such an endeavour, and is the principle which inspires the formation of the present curriculum¹. The ground was laid in the LME Druk 3020 Curriculum² which emerged from the conference proceedings. What follows incorporates and expands upon that and is guided by the following principles:

¹ See http://www.gpiatlantic.org/pdf/education/bhutaneduc_litrev_1.pdf

² This curriculum document is no longer available online.

1. The literacies

- Basic literacy and beyond. In this context, the definition of literacy is expanded beyond basic adult literacy covering competence in reading, writing and mathematics. It is understood to include competencies in the following areas:
- Ecoliteracy and sustainability. Living in harmony with the natural environment, and protecting the gifts of nature for the future of the nation, the planet and those who live upon it. Sustainability is a key focus for all areas of the curriculum, not just in the environmental sense but in matters of economic development and the establishment of an equitable society.
- Cultural literacy. Well-being of the community and respect for the values and beliefs which create cohesion in a society. In Bhutan, preservation of the cultural wealth and heritage inherent in the Buddhist tradition has a central role to play in this.
- Indigenous knowledge literacy. The traditional ecological knowledge and practices handed down through generations of Bhutanese people about living in their unique environment. The customs, traditions and social structures that support them. The continuity of this knowledge is an important principle which guides this curriculum with reference to other Indigenous cultures worldwide.
- Scientific literacy. Direct investigation of the environment and the understanding of scientific concepts through practical experience. The impact of biotechnology and its implications for food security in Bhutan and beyond.

- Health literacy. The information that is needed to maintain a healthy lifestyle and the customs and practices associated with that, from both a Western scientific point of view and that of traditional Bhutanese medicine.
- Food and nutrition literacy. What we consume, where it comes from and the processes involved with its production, distribution and consumption. A focus on sustainable practices, health and food security.
- Civic literacy. Understanding of the democratic process and engagement in it through service, critical discussion, community involvement and being politically informed.
- Multicultural literacy. Bhutan's role and place in the world and an understanding of cultures outside Bhutan. Identifying commonalities and divergences both within and between Bhutanese culture and other cultures, such as issues of gender equality, ethnic minorities and race.
- Media literacy. The ability to use technology and media and to understand its role in creating social knowledge. The ability to be critically discerning about media and recognize its impact, both positive and negative, on the individual as well as the larger community and Bhutanese culture.
- Statistics literacy. The ability to understand, interpret and critically evaluate statistical information as it is encountered in daily life.
- Arts literacy. Valuing and appreciation of Bhutanese art forms and sacred art from other cultures. Engagement in creating art using various media for personal satisfaction and expression and the development of an aesthetic involvement in everyday life.

2. Holistic and integrated learning.

The above literacies are taught using an integrated approach to teaching subject areas. The *process* of learning is emphasised rather than viewing education as a product. Rather than a system in which standardized testing and competition are the path to material success, the values enshrined in GNH suggest a different kind of outcome for the graduates. Education for GNH has at its core ecological integrity and compassion, requiring an alternate approach to teaching and learning. It recognizes that the division of learning into discrete subjects is artificial and not how we experience our lives from day to day. In reality, learning and subject areas overlap in many ways which allows for an “economy” of teaching. Connections are made between and within subjects in the context of lived experience making learning relevant and vital. Information gained in this way is retained, in contrast to facts that are learned by rote and then regurgitated for exam purposes and quickly forgotten. Hand in hand with this approach is the recognition that learning has to address the whole person, the physical, intellectual, emotional, social and spiritual aspects of being. A holistic and integrated approach to teaching and learning addresses the values and competencies that will make educating for GNH a lived reality.

3. A Process Approach

Developing an awareness of the processes involved in the production, consumption and disposal of food and objects that we take for granted in everyday life will be an important aspect of inquiry in the curriculum. An examination of this kind reveals the interdependence of those processes and the consequences that arise from them, thus loosening our conception of objects as solid, consumable and disposable. By relinquishing our treatment of these objects as consumables, and seeing them from the perspective of a series of interdependent processes rather than as solid consumer products, the environmental, economic, social and health-related impacts of these processes are revealed. The curriculum will take a process approach, so the emphasis will be on understanding the causes, conditions and effects of phenomena, rather than a

product oriented approach, which focuses mainly on rigid criteria for outcomes, assessments, and testing. Practical applications and usefulness are examined in relation to the GNH pillars, those being sustainability issues in the arenas of economics, the environment, cultural and social stability, as well as in governance.

4. Assessment

The assessment plan for LME is based on the premise that all students have something to offer and, following Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche's directive, that no student should be considered a failure. It also recognizes that tests, rubrics and other conventional assessment tools are not conducive to learning in a holistic and integrated environment such as LME. They foster competition and anxiety among students and low self-esteem in those who may not do well in the tests but who have much to offer elsewhere. Assessment is based on the students' portfolios, self-assessment through student-friendly interviews, skills development and assessment based on group cooperation, not competition, and the teachers' on-going reflective narratives on student progress. A student's participation, not only in class, but also their contribution to the overall social and physical environment is taken into consideration in the assessment process.

5. Community Service

Community service at least one day per week will give students an opportunity to become involved in assessing needs in their community and researching, planning and implementing a program of service. Evaluation of its impact and monitoring its progress will give students a real-life exposure to practical aspects of the curriculum including the collection and analysis of statistical data.

6. Teaching developmentally and brain based learning

It is understood that children of different ages learn differently. Very young children learn through imitation, play and physical experience primarily. From about the age of 8 years children begin to be more aware of the outside world and

their relationship to it. Imagination, artistic expression, and relationships are what nurture them in their educational journey. After puberty, they are more analytical in their approach to learning. They need to be challenged with big questions and to be given the scope to find out the answers for themselves. These changes are brought about by changes in the brain as it develops and grows. While all these aspects of learning – physical, spiritual/emotional/social and intellectual - are present in a child as they grow and learn, creating a strong foundation at each stage for subsequent learning strengthens the overall outcome of their educational journey. The curriculum is designed to maximize the learning capacity of the students by tailoring material to their needs and abilities according to their age and stage of development.

7. Stories and the oral tradition

At CGI initially we are dealing with the last two of these developmental stages. Stories, which provide context and a framework of reference for new material, are an important component of the curriculum. Through their imagination activated by stories, students can refer back to familiar material and relate it to new material. The stories provide the ground out of which all curricular material arises, the practice and methods, both for the teacher and for the students. The stories are drawn from a wide variety of cultural sources. The wisdom and learning of different cultures is the touchstone and reference point for the curriculum and topics to be studied. Through the stories the values of GNH conduct and society can be presented in a non-moralistic way and contrasted with values that promote materialism, greed and aggression. Depending on their age and stage of development the story context will change. The stories reflect the universal issues which are faced at various stages of development by children as they grow up providing some guidelines for their personal growth and understanding of themselves in society.

8. Integrating the arts

Teaching with and through the arts is a central aspect of the curriculum. Story, dance, visual art, music and drama from Bhutan and other cultures are integrated into the material being studied. Engagement in the artistic process stimulates the imagination and provides opportunities for students to explore their creativity and make a personal connection to the material being studied. Cultivating an aesthetic sense through the practice and study of the arts extends into daily life and enriches and enlivens the experience of learning for the students and for the teacher.

9. Health and fitness

Throughout the curriculum there is a strong emphasis on health and fitness. Time is made for physical exercise, games and movement. Students learn about hygiene and keeping their bodies and minds healthy and sane. Modern, as well as traditional approaches to healing are taught to the students.

10. Contemplative practice

Contemplative practice is understood to mean integrating the three aspects of our being – physical, spiritual/emotional/social and intellectual - referred to above and which, in Buddhist terms, are referred to as Body, Speech and Mind. The integration of body, speech and mind includes, but is not limited to, mindfulness meditation. Engaging in the arts, appreciating nature and being deeply immersed in learning are all considered to be contemplative experiences when practiced with this intention. The curriculum incorporates opportunities for cultivating contemplation through movement, outdoor activities, and the arts. Connections to Buddhist thought and practices, and the monastic curriculum that the students follow, are made throughout the units.

11. Organic gardening and growing food and medicine

Growing food organically and maintaining a vegetable garden is an on-going and central aspect of the curriculum. Learning how to make compost, for instance, presents many opportunities for teaching science in a holistic way, blurring the

boundary between classroom and the environment. It presents ways for farmers and elders from the local community to impart their knowledge to the students, who can also learn many farming techniques by helping with harvesting and cultivation. With instruction from local healers with extensive knowledge of the medicinal plants in the locality, students grow some medicinal herbs for their own use.

12. Environmental Learning

In addition to creating and maintaining an organic vegetable garden, there is a strong focus on environmental learning. Students are engaged in understanding, explaining, and maintaining the zero waste policy at the monastery. Fieldtrips in nature provide opportunities for activities such as bird watching, still life drawing, honing observational skills, and identifying plants and animals in the environment.

13. Indigenous knowledge and multicultural issues

Youth urban migration poses a major threat to Bhutanese traditions and way of life, threatening traditional knowledge in the sphere of food production and, in the long run, food security. By incorporating Indigenous and traditional knowledge directly through working with elders in the locality, students will learn the value of traditional ways and their importance to political and social stability. At the same time evaluating these traditions and applying what is useful from modern approaches, for instance in organic farming, is important for future development. Finding ways that new methods can be applied in the existing farms to enhance traditional practices is an important aspect of the curriculum. While the curriculum needs to be Bhutan-oriented, there also needs to be an exploration of the larger world. This can be introduced through the stories and a cultural exploration can follow, bringing in the art, music, dance, as well as the particular achievements of that society. Examples include Egypt and the pyramids or Rome and its roads. Many projects which address the various literacies can be developed.

14. Language

The curriculum is written in English and the materials are derived from English sources. However, in keeping with the desire that students should maintain a strong connection to their heritage, including their mother tongue, translation by the teacher whenever necessary is encouraged. The language spoken in Eastern Bhutan is Sharchop (or Tshangla-Lo) which is not written. Students speak a mixture of English and Sharchop in class. Much of the traditional knowledge and wisdom of the people of Eastern Bhutan is captured in their language. Students keep a dictionary in which they write Sharchop words phonetically and translate them into English. In their interactions with elders in the community, many words that are going out of current use can be recorded in their dictionaries.

15. Sacred outlook

All of the above can be summed up in the phrase “sacred outlook”. This refers to cultivating clear insight into the interdependent nature of phenomena and nurturing the capacity to skillfully engage in the world for the benefit of all beings. This principle is central to the teachings of the Buddha which influence the values that permeate GNH with its Four Pillars of sustainable and equitable development, environmental conservation, the promotion and preservation of Bhutanese culture and good governance. From the perspective of sacred outlook, everything matters and everything is connected. In the context of the curriculum, sacred outlook is upheld by the teachers and cultivated in the students by taking an ecological perspective focused on sustainability, joined with contemplative practice. It is considered to be central to a GNH based curriculum.

Teacher education and professional development

As important, if not more so, is that the curriculum should be in the hands of teachers who hold the vision of the curriculum, who are educated in the underlying principles, and who are can bring it to life in the classroom. For that reason the teacher education is an essential feature of the curriculum. Teachers will work with the curriculum designer to become familiar with the

principles above and their practical application in the classroom. It is recognized that every teacher has their own style and interests and therefore part of the education process will be more inward-looking, becoming comfortable with his or her own style through meditation and contemplation and looking at how that manifests in the classroom. Adaptation of the units to fit the style and interests of the teachers will be a part of the process as well as working with the curriculum designer to integrate the arts and contemplative practice into the units. Observation, feedback and discussion are central to the process.

Teachers observe at model schools to expand their education and learn about methods and approaches that could enhance the LME curriculum.

Collaboration with local schools and teachers on topics of common interest are encouraged especially around integrating GNH values into the curriculum.

GNH Curriculum Units

The following units are organized around the Four Pillars of Gross National Happiness: protection of the environment; sustainable economic development; protection and promotion of culture; and good governance. Ultimately the Four Pillars overlap and therefore the subject matter covered will do the same. We can begin by looking at an aspect of environment, but from the point of view of GNH and this approach, inevitably we will end up talking about sustainability, culture, and government as we proceed through the unit. The units are designed to run parallel to the Buddhist studies that the monks undertake over a four-year period. LME classes are held for 3 hours a day and each unit lasts approximately 8 weeks.

	Environment	Sustainability	Culture	Governance
Year 1	Myself and the community.	Earth: our bounteous planet.	Early Humans and traditional ecological knowledge.	Ashoka: the dharma king.
	Who am I? Where am I? Getting to know incoming students, their backgrounds, abilities, and	Caring for the earth and understanding the sources and consequences of pollution; creation of an organic vegetable garden; composting	What is culture? Exploring aspects of Bhutan’s culture; Bhutan’s languages; creation stories from other cultures and	The life of Ashoka; his adoption of dharmic principles; the edicts addressing equality, justice, environment,

	education. Becoming familiar with the monastic environment and how it functions.	and decomposers; soil formation; plant biology; plant propagation; ecosystems and plant/animal interdependence; nutritional contents of various foods; ecological footprints of local versus imported foods.	the Himalayas; the evolution of culture from hunter gatherers to agricultural communities and towns; the role of traditional and Indigenous knowledge in the preservation of culture; Buddhism and traditional ecological wisdom in Bhutan.	medicine, and human and animal welfare; GNH and these issues; the role of Bhutan's kings in the development of Bhutan and GNH.
Year 2	<p>Fire and Heat</p> <p>Where did fire come from? Stories of the origins of fire; bow drills and other ways to make fire; fire prevention and safety; the sun and the solar system; sundials and measuring time without clocks; energy, fossil fuels and renewable and non-renewable resources; solar energy and technology; fire in our bodies – digestion and sexuality; fire in traditional Bhutanese medicine.</p>	<p>Water of Life</p> <p>Where does the water we drink come from? Local water sources and drainage systems; the properties of water; the water cycle; water pollution and its consequences; Buddhist thought on water; hygiene and importance of handwashing; waterborne disease; drought and water shortage; impacts of flooding and erosion; hydroelectric energy; construction of a hydroelectric generator.</p>	<p>Art and Culture in the Buddhist World.</p> <p>Early art forms and the Greek influence; cultural influences in Buddhist art; Bhutan's 13 traditional crafts and their relationship to Buddhism; thanka painting; Japanese art and aesthetics; art in everyday life; technology and art; the impact of consumer culture on art; art as communication.</p>	<p>Gandhi</p> <p>The story of Gandhi's life and his adoption of sustainable and traditional lifestyle; non-violent protest, and his role in the independence of India; introduction to colonialism; his legacy in India and in the world.</p>

Year 3	Air and space	Trade	Media Literacy and Technology	Monarchy and Buddhist Kingship
	Is space empty? The properties of air, its constituents; plants and the gas cycle; causes and effects of air pollution; air pressure and its applications in technology; flight; weather, seasons and climate; greenhouse effect and global warming; sustainable solutions to climate change; wind and harnessing its power. The respiratory system; hygiene and airborne diseases; diseases from pollution and dangers of smoking; wind element (lung) in traditional Bhutanese medicine.	Where does this shirt come from? Supply and demand; barter and money; the Silk Road; Bhutan’s trading partners, imports and exports then and now; simple accounting and balancing a chequebook; debt, savings, financial planning; wants and needs and the consumer culture; the real cost of consumer goods from production through distribution and disposal; GDP and globalization; waste, pollution and zero waste; GNH and sustainable alternatives, fair trade, self-reliance and local economies.	Can we trust everything we hear and see on the media? Critical thinking around the media; understanding statistics in the media; developing mindfulness around emotional media messages; developing writing and communication skills; basic computer literacy; sharing information, stories and blogging; creating a website for the monastery; how do computers and television work? The binary system; environmental costs of producing computers.	History of Bhutan, its structures of governance from Zhabdrung to the present constitutional monarchy; relationship between Buddhism and the king in Bhutan; examples of Buddhist kings in the past. Other examples of enlightened governing.
Year 4	Humans and the Environment	Nutrition, Food Security and Bio-technology.	World Religions	Democracy
	Who do we share our world with? Bhutanese eco-systems; issues of conservation including:	Where does our food come from, what do we need, and how much is enough? Cells, the building	A survey of world religions; what do they have in common and how do they differ? Compare Buddhism with these. Theism, non-theism	How can I make a difference? The origins of democracy and the forms it has taken; constitutional monarchy and the

<p>human/wildlife conflict; eco-tourism; poaching and illegal wildlife trading; forestry; effects of rural/urban migration. How do we impact our world? The built environment; designing for sustainability, safety, function, and aesthetics; appropriate technology and “green” building. Designing, modelling, and building a structure.</p>	<p>blocks of life; salt, minerals, and essential nutrients; osmosis. Food and bio-technology; GMOs. Issues of food security: hybrid seeds, invasive species, trade, and the food supply. The nine traditional grains grown in Bhutan and traditional farming. How do modern methods help or hinder Bhutanese agriculture and the food supply?</p>	<p>and mono-theism. Eternalism and nihilism in religion. The interface of culture, environment, and religion. Trungpa Rinpoche’s concept of Shambhala and enlightened society. Engaged Buddhism. Fundamentalism in different religions; attitudes towards religion in the world. How is Bhutan and Buddhism viewed outside Bhutan?</p>	<p>parliamentary system. Civil engagement and democracy. Media and politics. Debating and public speaking. Mock elections to parliament; political parties. GNH and democracy; interdependence of the Four Pillars</p>
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While the current LME program at CGI is for four-years, the options for the evolution of LME both in the context of the monastery and in the wider context of mainstream education in Bhutan and beyond are being considered. The documents from the LME Brainstorming Workshop which was held in April 2017, contains the details of these proposals and is available from SJI (info@sjj.bt).

Endnotes

ⁱ Body, speech and mind are known as the three doors, or gates, in Buddhist teachings. Each has its particular style that determines how we interact with our world—through the physical sensations of the body, through the communicative power of language and other symbolic forms, and through the cognitive abilities of our minds. Speech, therefore, from this point of view, includes qualities such as relationship, emotion, imagination, dreaming and artistic sensibility.

ⁱⁱ See Endnote *xii* for a detailed discussion of the use of the term “Indigenous.”

ⁱⁱⁱ Use of the term “developing countries” to describe what was previously known as the Third World is falling out of favour because of the implied hierarchy between “developed countries” as superior and “developing” or “underdeveloped” countries as inferior to the former. This poses a problem of labelling those countries that previously fell in the latter category. To demonstrate that I am aware of this issue I put quotation marks around the word “developing,” as in “developing” countries. The website below was helpful to me in its presentation of the difficulties in finding appropriate terms to describe these countries:

<http://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2015/01/04/372684438/if-you-shouldnt-call-it-the-third-world-what-should-you-call-it>

^{iv} Although Bhutan was never colonized, it came under the influence of British imperial rule because of its proximity to India. The colonialist influence is reflected in the education system which was adopted from India in the late ‘50s that was a carbon copy of the colonial education system that continued to exist in India even after independence. There have been education reforms in recent years in order to make the curriculum more relevant to the Bhutanese context, but it still maintains many of the characteristics of the British colonial system in form and content, especially at the high school level (Gordon, 2013).

^v Sutton’s work is not published, but information is available on the Enki website at <http://www.enkieducation.org/>

^{vi} Khyentse Norbu's films include *The Cup* (1999), *Travellers and Magicians* (2003), *Vara: A Blessing* (2013), and *Hema Hema: Sing me a Song While I Wait* (2016).

^{vii} An article on the Lhomon Education workshop on integrated curriculum in Paro, Bhutan in July 2012 is available at <http://sjieducation.blogspot.ca/2012/07/2012-lme-curriculum-development.html>

^{viii} Khyentse (2003) approaches right view, wisdom, from a Theravadin perspective which is defined as the absence of wrong view (p. 2). Wrong view has three aspects: that we assume permanence whereas all things are in a state of decay and re-formation, as in the example he gives that we relate to our hand of yesterday as the same as that of today, ignoring the fact that it is constantly changing; that although we have a tendency to see our hand as one entity, actually all reality is compounded, and our hand is in fact, made up of many things—blood, bones, skin etc.; and that we forget that phenomena exist as interdependent entities, and we relate to everything as being independent, when in fact “hand” is dependent on a whole set of interrelated phenomena (p. 3).

^{ix} I took this photograph in the Dzong (monastic and administrative centre) in Paro, Bhutan. Typically, these paintings are not signed, and the artist is not acknowledged. This is because in the Vajrayana Buddhism of Bhutan, the paintings, and the act of painting them, is considered an offering and a practice, and not something for which one would take personal credit.

^x John Miller was a participant at the Educating for GNH conference in 2009. For a full list of attendees at the conference see Endnote *xxvii*.

^{xi} The curriculum design project in Bhutan is dependent on funding which does not allow any reference to religious practice or philosophy. I therefore use the word “secular” in order to make it clear that the program is not a religious program, despite the environment in which it will be practiced. The Lhomon Education project is financially and organizationally separate from the monastic organization.

^{xii} The United Nations (2004) paper on *The Concept of Indigenous Peoples* provides the following definition of the term “Indigenous”:

Indigenous communities, peoples and nations are those which, having a historical continuity with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies that developed on their territories, consider themselves distinct from other sectors of the societies now prevailing on those territories, or parts of them. They form at present non-dominant sectors of society and are determined to preserve, develop and transmit to future generations their ancestral territories, and their ethnic identity, as the basis of their continued existence as peoples, in accordance with their own cultural patterns, social institutions and legal system. (p. 2)

Historical continuity consists of factors such as occupation of ancestral lands, common ancestry, culture (including dress, religion etc), language, and residence of certain areas as well as other undefined relevant factors (p. 2).

However, the paper goes on to say that, “observers from indigenous organizations developed a common position and rejected the idea of a formal definition of indigenous peoples that would be adopted by States” (p. 2). The bottom line is that if a group of people define themselves as Indigenous then they are considered Indigenous within the UN. My use of the term “Indigenous” in the context of this study is complicated by the fact that Bhutan was never occupied by a European power. While it would be correct according to the definition above to refer to North American tribal peoples as Indigenous, the people of Bhutan would not be understood to be Indigenous according to this definition. However, the factors of historical continuity apply to the Bhutanese people, and I therefore feel that it is not wholly inaccurate to define the people of Bhutan as Indigenous. I feel there is a case to be made, therefore, for referring also to populations in countries that were not occupied in the same sense, especially if one considers the pressures that these populations are under to maintain their culture, languages, and traditions in the face of encroaching neocolonialism and the globalization of culture under a neoliberal ethos. McIntosh (2004) identifies the Gaelic-speaking Highland Scots as Indigenous in this sense. Bhutan has several differing groups of traditional peoples, each with their own language, customs, and dress, who could each be considered Indigenous in their own right. Their traditions and cultures are under threat in the same way as Indigenous peoples in places such as Canada are. However, there is a culture in Bhutan which is distinctly Bhutanese, and recognized as such

from the dress, language, religion etc. Therefore, in keeping with the place-based approach I am taking, the term “traditional ecological knowledge” is probably more accurate to apply in the Bhutanese context.

^{xiii} *Mi'kmaq* is the word used to denote the First Nations people of Nova Scotia, Canada, and regions surrounding it that were the territory of the Mi'kmaq before colonization. It is a noun. *Mi'kmaw* is the singular of *Mi'kmaq* as in “my Mi'kmaw friend.” It is used as an adjective, as in *Mi'kmaw language*. See <https://novascotia.ca/abor/docs/links/Use-of-Words.pdf>

^{xiv} Ruth Holmes Whitehead is not an Indigenous person. I am conscious of the issues that surround quoting a non-Indigenous writer on Indigenous matters; however, I also feel a debt of gratitude to Ruth Holmes Whitehead whose work was a valuable resource for me when I started teaching many years ago. Through her, I was introduced to the Mi'kmaw stories and worldview in her collection, *Stories from the Six Worlds: Mi'kmaw Legends* (2013), which started me on a path of exploration of Indigenous stories and worldview of the Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq First Nation. Bernie Francis, Mi'kmaw linguist and co-author with Trudy Sable of *The Language of this Land, Mi'kma'ki* (Sable & Francis, 2012) acknowledges the work of Holmes Whitehead in gathering the legends of the Mi'kmaq when he says, “I have had the good fortune of being able to return to the Mi'kmaw Elders to share the discussions Trudy and I had as well as those I had with Ruth [Holmes] Whitehead, and to learn where the Elders stood in regards to these legends” (p. 13).

^{xv} Chöeke is the Bhutanese term for the classical Tibetan language and script in which Buddhist texts are written and which has been the language of instruction for Buddhist monks for centuries. Dzongkha which is the national *lingua franca* in Bhutan is similar in most respects, but is considered to be the secular version of the sacred Chöeke language.

^{xvi} In the Vajrayana Buddhism of Bhutan and Tibet, merit is one of the “two accumulations,” the other being wisdom. Practices such as the reciting of mantras, supporting monastic institutions, circumambulating stupas and prayer wheels, performing meritorious deeds, and making offerings of money, butter lamps, food etc., have a twofold purpose: to accumulate merit through the purification of misdeeds and wrong-doings that obscure the ability to recognize buddhanature, or

innate wisdom, and having removed those obscurations, to recognize the wisdom that is revealed thereby, in order to achieve enlightenment in this life, or in a future life.

^{xvii} A recent report from the European Environment Agency warned of the changes happening in Europe and in the world as a result of climate change.

The observed changes in climate are already having wide-ranging impacts on ecosystems, the economy and on human health and well-being in Europe. New records continue to be set on global and European temperatures, sea levels and reduced sea ice in the Arctic. Precipitation patterns are changing, generally making wet regions in Europe wetter and dry regions drier. Glacier volume and snow cover are decreasing. At the same time, climate-related extremes such as heat waves, heavy precipitation and droughts, are increasing in frequency and intensity in many regions. Improved climate projections provide further evidence that climate-related extremes will increase in many European regions. (European Environment Agency, 2017)

^{xviii} In Chile in 1973, American corporate interests in the lucrative copper mining industry were threatened by an elected socialist government who would have nationalized the copper mines. They reacted by supporting a vicious rightwing coup, through companies such as AT&T (also known as IT&T) with CIA involvement (Central Intelligence Agency, 2000). On the other hand, the re-establishment of democratic institutions in Iraq was cited as a legitimizing factor in the invasion of that country in 2003. US and British interests in the oil industry were threatened by Saddam Hussein who had, at one time, been a US ally (Ahmed, 2014).

^{xix} Thimphu, the capital and the most densely populated of the urban areas of Bhutan currently comprises an estimated population of 152,000 of the total population which was approximately 784,000 in 2016. This represents 38% of the population. An urban growth rate of 3.7% per annum has been observed between 2010 and 2015, in contrast to the overall growth rate in the country of 1.5% per annum. (UN Data, 2017).

In an issue on food security in Bhutan, the online magazine, *Bhutan Observer*, says:

Increasing trend towards urbanization is one of the causes that have resulted in farm labour shortages resulting in decreased agricultural production. The strong demand for labour from urban areas has left village homes to the aging population or hired caretakers. . . . Extreme cases have resulted to even abandoning of villages in search for more opportunities in urban areas. . . . This issue of migration has already created farm labour shortage in farm land leading to many cases of uncultivated farm land, thereby affecting the overall food production in the country. . . . Cost effective imports have gained magnitude and are taken as a substitute for domestic production. Moreover, with better access to education, parents send their children to schools resulting in less help in the farms. (Bhutan Observer, 2010, pp. 10-11)

^{xxi} In “developing” countries, such as Bhutan, graduates aspire to a limited number of government jobs in the absence of any other lucrative sources of income. The *Bhutan Education Blueprint: Rethinking Education 2014-2024* (Ministry of Education, 2014) which lays out the agenda of the present government for education was “inspired by the national aspirations of preparing Bhutanese children to be nationally and globally productive” (p. 11). The document appears to shift the emphasis towards business and entrepreneurship, despite the importance it attributes in its preamble to GNH and holistic education.

^{xxii} In the neoliberal influenced curriculum, business and entrepreneurship, science and technology dominate the curriculum, while the arts and liberal studies are relegated to the background. This tendency can be seen in the new Nova Scotia curriculum, the Action Plan for Education (Nova Scotia Department of Education, 2015). What Eppert (2008) calls “the spirit of control” based on fear and “the erasure of uncertainty” (p. 66), along with a tone of forced optimism, pervades the text of the new curriculum document. Modernization is equated with increased instruction in math, science, and literacy and, significantly, forging partnerships with the business community.

Businesses and educators are key stakeholders in ensuring that our students are well prepared to embrace the challenges of a complex global economy. In Nova Scotia, business leaders have expressed a keen interest in working with the public school system to ensure our children have the skills they need to be successful in the workforce. . . . The

Department of Education and Early Childhood Development is committed to developing the future workforce and the entrepreneurial skills and attributes of our students through increased partnership with the business community. (Nova Scotia Department of Education, 2015, p. 16)

One whole page of the Plan is devoted to Partnerships with the Business Community (pp. 15-16) whereas creative arts are not mentioned at all in the curriculum innovations for grades Primary to 3, and only once in grades 4 to 8, albeit squashed into a list alongside computer programming, science labs and “collective impact projects” (p. 23). Despite efforts to include more physical activity, emotional supports for students and teachers, special programming for racial minorities, and responsiveness to perceived needs of the community, the fundamental concepts continue to be in line with the root metaphors and assumptions named by Bowers (2001) and Hall et al (2013). Nowhere is there a mention of climate change, global warming or the ecological crisis which we face in the 21st century, nor do I note any challenge to the assumptions of the global economy that equates growth with prosperity, happiness with material gain, and success as an outcome of competition.

^{xxiii} *Schooling the World* (Hurst & Black, 2010) can be viewed on Youtube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ho3bT0eYZo&t=9s>

^{xxiv} For more information on Helena Norbert-Hodge, and her other films, *Ancient Futures: Learning from Ladakh* and, most recently, *The Economics of Happiness*, see <http://schoolingtheworld.org/people/helena/>

^{xxv} Manish Jain is co-founder of The People’s Institute for Rethinking Education and Development. For a biography see <http://schoolingtheworld.org/people/manish/>. Manish Jain also attended the 2009 Educating for GNH conference. See Endnote *xxvii* below for a complete list of attendees at the conference.

^{xxvi} The chair of the Global Partnership for Education, Julia Gillard, made the following statement:

For donors who want to multiply the value of their contributions, we are creating an incentive pool of funding which will provide developing country partners with an additional dollar for every three dollars they raise for education from other sources such as multilateral development banks, bilateral donors and the private sector. One clear use of this funding could be to create packages with the World Bank so that its soft loan International Development Assistance (or ‘IDA’) funding becomes more attractive to use in education. (Gillard, 2017)

See also <http://www.globalpartnership.org/country/bhutan>

^{xxvii} A list of international and Bhutanese participants in the 2009 Educating for Gross National Happiness conference at Thimphu, Bhutan, is available in the proceedings of the conference at www.gpiatlantic.org/pdf/educatingforgnh/educating_for_gnh_proceedings.pdf

^{xxviii} Information on Lhomon Education is available at <https://www.sji.bt/category/lhomon-education/>

^{xxix} Information on Chokyi Gyatso Institute is available at <https://khyentsefoundation.org/chokyi-gyatso-institute/>

^{xxx} Following a resolution in July 2011 that was adopted by the United Nations Member States that pledges “to pursue the elaboration of additional measures that better capture the importance of the pursuit of happiness and well-being in development with a view to guiding their public policies” (UN News Centre, 2011, July 19), the Royal Government of Bhutan offered to convene a panel discussion on the topic of happiness and well-being at the General Assembly (UN News Centre, 2012, September 28). In April of the following year this meeting took place, attended by over 500 delegates, during which the Prime Minister of Bhutan, Jigme Thinley, addressed the General Assembly on how Bhutan and its GNH policies provides a model for a different way of proceeding with development goals and for measuring their success. The Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon, said that sustainable development is intricately linked to happiness and well-being and that this should be the focus of The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development—or

Rio+20—that was to take place in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil on 20-22 June 2012 (UN Development Program, 2012, April 2). Bhutan’s bid for a seat on the Security Council was not successful.

^{xxxii} This approach is called discovery learning in the Enki approach. One of the important aspects of contemplative teaching and learning is creating opportunities for children to inquire, explore, imagine, and to go deeply into a topic, rather than accumulating facts, figures, and information.

^{xxxiii} Using the word “fruitful” in this context is complementary to the use of the words “ground” and “path” as used in the headings of the previous sections. Fruition, the goals or emergent quality or qualities, is the outcome of the conditions—the ground—which precede the adoption of a path by which the fruition is pursued. Ground, path, and fruition are often used as organizational devices when communicating a text or a talk in Buddhist teachings.

^{xxxiiii} One of the key principles of ecology is that “everything matters,” and nothing can be considered as separate from the other aspects of the ecosystem. For the purposes of this study, however, in my discussion of contemplative pedagogy, I am focusing on certain aspects of the Enki ecosystem to elucidate which I feel to be most important and perhaps least understood. More information on the Enki approach can be found on the website at <http://www.enkieducation.org/index.htm>

^{xxxv} Different children have different dominant learning capacities, as Gardner (1993) and others have pointed out. Some children take in information visually, while others may have learning capacities that are predominantly aural, tactile or kinesthetic, among other learning styles. When a child is comfortable and at ease in his or her learning style, then her capacity to make connections within and between topics and themes is more easily accessed. Experiencing the integration of body, speech, and mind can happen through many avenues—through movement, art, nature, and even numbers or the written word, to name but a few of the myriad of ways of making connections to sacred world.

^{xxxv} Theories of child development have been described in various ways in the educational world, and this is a vast topic which is beyond the scope of this thesis. Child development is a central aspect of Sutton's approach, however, and for me, as an Enki teacher, it has determined what I taught and how I taught it, according to the stages of development that are described in the Enki curriculum. Drawing upon the theories of Erikson (1950), Steiner (1907), and Piaget (1964) among others, and her own observation, Beth Sutton in the Enki approach, describes these stages from the perspective of body, speech (or heart, as Sutton refers to it), and mind, and how each manifest at different ages and stages of development. While body, speech and mind are functioning all the time in everyone, at different stages of development one aspect can be seen to be more predominant than the others. Each stage has a particular developmental issue that presents itself and has its corresponding pathway to, and expression of, integration of the body, speech and mind in the individual. Going into Sutton's theory of developmental stages in detail is beyond the scope of this study, but further information is available through the Enki website <http://www.enkieducation.org/index.htm>

^{xxxvi} With 72% of its area covered with forest, Bhutan is not only a carbon neutral country, but it is a carbon sink. The Prime Minister of Bhutan, Tshering Tobgay, (Tobgay, 2016) notes in a TED talk that:

72 percent of our country is under forest cover, and all that forest is pristine. That's why we are one of the few remaining global biodiversity hotspots in the world, and that's why we are a carbon neutral country. . . . Of the 200-odd countries in the world today, it looks like we are the only one that is carbon neutral. Actually, that's not quite accurate. Bhutan is not carbon neutral. Bhutan is carbon negative. Our entire country generates 2.2 million tons of carbon dioxide, but our forests, they sequester more than three times that amount, so we are a net carbon sink for more than four million tons of carbon dioxide each year. (Tobgay, 2016)

^{xxxvii} In the elementary grades, environmental education has been merged with the teaching of Dzongkha, the national language, so I was unable to get an in-depth look at these materials.

^{xxxviii} David Orr attended the 2009 *Educating for Gross National Happiness* conference in

Bhutan. See Endnote *xxvii* above re: the complete list of attendees at this conference.

^{xxxix} Gregory Cajete attended the 2009 *Educating for Gross National Happiness* conference in Bhutan. See Endnote *xxvii* above re: the complete list of attendees at this conference.

^{xl} See Endnote *xiii* for an explanation of the different uses of the words Mi'kmaq and Mi'kmaw.

^{xli} I recognize that it might not be possible for someone from outside a culture to teach about the wholeness of Indigenous communities in the sense that Little Bear refers to it here. I include this quote as it speaks to me of the importance of relating, to the best of our ability, to the totality of creation and the interdependence of all its elements in the educational endeavour. In this we have much to learn from Indigenous communities and cultures, past and present.

^{xlii} Vandana Shiva attended the 2009 *Educating for Gross National Happiness* conference in Bhutan and delivered the keynote address. This can be accessed in the proceedings of the conference (Hayward & Colman, 2010). As noted in the preceding Endnote *xxvii*, the list of conference attendees is included in the conference proceedings.

^{xliii} I have also used, at times, resources which were compiled by non-Indigenous writers who worked in close collaboration with Elders from the relevant communities. These include Holmes Whitehead (2013), as already mentioned, and Waters (1963) *Book of the Hopi* which was written in conjunction with Hopi Elder, Oswald White Bear Frederick, and many other Hopi Elders.

^{xliv} See the Lhomon Education web log for some examples of stories that have been gathered from local Elders <http://sjieducation.blogspot.ca/>

^{xlv} See Endnote *xvi* for an explanation of merit as it is understood in Buddhist terms.

^{xlvi} Information on the Samdrop Jongkhar Initiative can be found at <http://www.sji.bt/> and <http://gpiatlantic.org/bhutan/docs/samdrup-jongkhar-profile-aug2.pdf>

^{xlvii} See Endnote *xxvii* for a list of attendees at the 2009 *Educating for GNH* conference.

^{xlviii} June Gordon (2013) is professor of international comparative education at the University of California, Santa Cruz. Her interest and experience as a researcher of Asian cultures and schooling with a special focus on migration and immigration gained her an invitation from the REC in 2010 to provide “a lens through which to better understand the challenges facing educational reform in Bhutan” (p. 289).

^{xlix} An article on the Lhomon Education workshop on integrated curriculum in Paro, Bhutan in July 2012 is available at <http://sjieducation.blogspot.ca/2012/07/2012-lme-curriculum-development.html> Unfortunately, the original curriculum framework document mentioned is no longer available online.

¹ See an article on the Brainstorming Workshop at <http://www.sji.bt/category/lhomon-education/>

^{li} The 12 literacies for an educated populace are defined in the *Educating for GNH* (2009) literature as: basic literacy that covers reading, writing, and maths, cultural literacy, ecological literacy, Indigenous knowledge literacy, science literacy, health literacy, food and nutrition literacy, civic and political literacy, multicultural literacy, art literacy, media literacy, and statistical literacy (Hayward, Pannozzo, & Colman, 2009).

^{lii} The curriculum framework which I designed, *Lhomon Education Gross National Happiness Curriculum Framework*, is included as Appendix A to this thesis with permission from Samdrup Jongkhar Initiative, under whose umbrella Lhomon Education operates.

^{liii} I have used the term “Aboriginal” here because that is the term used by Aikenhead (2002). I am still working to understand the correct usage of the words “Aboriginal” and “Indigenous”; I have not found there to be much of a difference in their definitions. In Ontario and Manitoba, Canada, usage of the term “Aboriginal” has been rejected by some First Nations communities (Joseph, 2016). Joseph suggests honouring the terms that each group of people prefers. See also Endnote *xii*.

^{liv} There are about 24 languages spoken in Bhutan, besides Dzongkha and English, each with its own traditions and customs. There is also an overall national culture that is expressed through dress, architecture and adherence to Buddhist practice and principles, among other things. The advent of a broadcasting network and television has helped establish the uniformity of the national culture.

^{lv} There were nine grains that were grown traditionally in Bhutan, known as *dru-na-gu*. They were rice, wheat, barley, peas, two kinds of buckwheat, millet, mustard, and soybeans. Choden (2008) relates the story of how farming came to Bhutan and how the first human beings were able to live solely on the food of happiness, but as their merit declined they needed physical food. The deity, Chenrezig, also known as Avalokiteshvara, had compassion for the people, and scattered seeds upon the earth that grew and replenished themselves without needing to be cultivated. People became greedy, however, and began hoarding the grain, stealing from each other and quarrelling. The quality of the grain deteriorated, husks grew on them, and the need arose to sow, cultivate and harvest the grains. The term for agriculture in Bhutan is *sonam* which can be translated as blessing.

^{lvi} Refer to Endnote *xxii* above, concerning the recent Nova Scotia curriculum document, *The 3 Rs: Nova Scotia's Action Plan for Education* (Nova Scotia Department of Education, 2015).

^{lvii} It is worth noting here that in the Enki approach meditation practice is not recommended until the pre-adolescent years. An over-emphasis on the conceptual, mind, aspect of mindfulness meditation and thought processes tends to bring younger children into the conceptual realm which can be dis-integrating to body, speech and mind rather than integrating. Sutton says, "Rather, all the aspects of the Enki approach create an integration of body, heart, and mind, and thus a meditative experience, for the child" (Sutton, personal communication, December 20, 2017).

^{lviii} The women wash and shred the chip packets into strips about 3 mm wide. The chip packets are silver on the inside, so when the strips are tightly woven into the fabric along with the traditional brightly coloured fine cotton threads, the fabric has a glitter that is subtle and intriguing. The women sew the fabric into bags, purses, backpacks, and table mats as well as the

traditional belts and sashes that are worn with the women's clothes. Plastic bottles are shredded into long strips about 5 or 6 mm wide and woven into baskets, lunch boxes, and other utilitarian objects that have a great deal of strength.

^{lix} This echoes Aikenhead (2002), that teaching science within the context of Indigenous culture engaged and enlivened the process of learning for Indigenous students from that culture.

^{lx} One of the guests at the workshop was Sonam Wangchuk (see websites below for details of his work), who was also a participant at the 2009 *Educating for GNH* conference. Concerned with the wasted talent of failed class 10 youth in Ladakh, India, he described the inspiration behind the Student Educational and Cultural Movement of Ladakh (SECMOL). He and his colleagues tackled the problem by starting a school for which one of the entrance criteria was failure in the class 10 exam. Mirroring many of the conditions that are present in Bhutan, where youth who fail the class 10 exams are classed as dropouts, SECMOL was an inspiration to us at LME and provided a model which we could integrate into the long-term vision of the program. Whether this comes about is going to depend on many factors, including the political climate and the leadership of the GNH project in the Samdrup Jongkhar area through SJI. Further information on SECMOL and Sonam Wangchuk's work in Ladakh can be found at <http://secmol.org/> and at <https://yourstory.com/2016/12/sonam-wangchuk-himalayan-institute-of-alternatives/>

^{lxi} Methods of assessment for LME are described in the LME curriculum framework document which is attached as an appendix to this thesis.

^{lxii} The nine domains of GNH comprise an index that was created to measure the projected outcomes of GNH. The nine domains are: living standards, education, health, environment, community vitality, time-use, psychological well-being, good governance, cultural resilience and promotion. Information on the nine domains can be found at http://www.gnhcentrebhutan.org/?page_id=833