

Living as Mapmakers

Charting a Course with Children Guided by Parent Knowledge

Debbie Pushor and the Parent Engagement
Collaborative II



SensePublishers

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COVER IMAGE

Taken by Melanie Lynchuk, the cover photograph captures her son, Jude, playing with a friend atop a map of Saskatchewan painted on the concrete in the River Landing waterpark in Saskatoon. Quite literally, the photo provides the viewer with one glimpse of Melanie's "mother's map" of the city. In a more subtle way, the viewer also gets a sense of Melanie's "mother's map" of her son.

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Debbie Pushor and the Parent Engagement Collaborative II

Department of Curriculum Studies, University of Saskatchewan, Canada



SENSE PUBLISHERS
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*For our parents,
who continue to teach us about the wisdom in parent knowledge.
We thank you for guiding our journeys
– from birth to forever –
with body, spirit, heart, and mind.*

ہمارے والدین کے نام
جو ہمیں والدین کے علم کے بارے میں بہت کچھ سکھا رہے
ہیں آپ کا شکریہ ہمارے سفر کی رہنمائی کے لئے پیدائش سے
ہمیشہ کے لئے جسم، روح، دل اور دماغ کے ساتھ
ہمارے دل کی گہرائی سے آپ کا شکریہ

*ni nîkikhkonânak,
kâ ahkami kiskinwahamâkoyâhkok onîkikhkomâwi kiskêhtamôwina.
ki nânâskomitinân ê kiskinohtahiyahk ni pimâtisowinân
– osci kâ nôkisiyahk iskohk kâkikê –
osci wiyâw, ahcahk, mitê, êkwa mâmitonêhcikan.*

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FOREWORD

Welcome to Pushor and the Parent Engagement Collaborative II's powerful exploration of teaching with parent knowledge in the foreground of one's educative practice. Here Pushor continues to develop her conceptualization of parents and families as central to education in school systems where they are often relegated to minor roles and are sometimes seen as liabilities to their children's learning. In a previous monograph (2013), Pushor and the first Parent Engagement Collaborative advanced understandings of what it means to position parents and their engagement centrally in curriculum-making in classrooms. In this second book, Pushor expands upon the notion of parent knowledge, describing the funds of knowledge humans carry and draw upon in daily lives, and how parents use, and grow, these funds of knowledge to inform an evolving knowledge of their child(ren).

Pushor's portrayal of parent knowledge as relational, bodied, embodied, intuitive, intimate, and uncertain comes to life in chapters by Pushor and each of the authors as they articulate the many contributions parents bring to classrooms when a curriculum of parents is lived out on school landscapes. Each chapter offers vivid examples of parent knowledge and how it can enrich the lives of teachers, students, and families. Finding ways to attend to family stories both in schools and during home visits, these teachers illustrate how they have worked as guest hosts, a concept Pushor uses to articulate the delicate negotiating involved for the teacher in being both guest and host of parents in schools and communities.

While white middle-class families may find their family stories at least somewhat represented in schools, for many other families this has not been the case. Parent knowledge welcomed and shared within the chapters of this book is deeply inclusive of families of new Canadians, of First Nations and Métis peoples, of non-traditionally gendered students and their families, and of families from varied social and economic backgrounds. Chapter 9, as one example, tells the story of how Kate Ney and Carson's parents collaborated over two years of Carson's schooling to promote a safe and caring environment for gender-creative Carson. It is a thought-provoking and moving example of the benefits of developing meaningful relationships with parents, for children and families, as well as for classmates, teachers, and schools. Other chapters bring in voices of historically marginalized families in a variety of creative ways. Indeed, a significant promise of this book lies in helping teacher candidates, teachers, administrators, and teacher educators hear these voices and consider mapping their own practice to be more inclusive of parent knowledge.

A number of chapters remind the reader of the challenges of welcoming parent knowledge into classrooms. There are instances of school staff members resisting the "gentle revolution" Pushor and the authors are living out in their work, and moments of tension with parents. The final chapter makes it evident that while changes in

FOREWORD

how parents are positioned in schools will not happen quickly or smoothly, the commitment of Pushor and the authors to keep at this process is strengthened by their collaborative efforts and support of one another.

The map-making metaphor the authors weave throughout this book provides another way to think about knowledge, about how teachers grow and learn over time, honing their practice shaped by experiences, such as those shared with parents in these chapters. This book is not a completed map, finished and ready for the reader to follow toward the destination of full integration of parent knowledge in classrooms. Individuals in different times and contexts have mapped ways forward in welcoming parent knowledge in their classrooms, and often those maps are not recorded; here the maps have been traced out in beautifully evocative images and words. This book is like an atlas of maps readers can use as a reference to map their own unexplored territories. The authors invoke quotes about map-making from a wide variety of literature to remind the reader that these chapters are meant to guide teachers as they develop their own maps of parent knowledge in their unique contexts. The focus is on the process of making the map, of deciding how to begin or deepen one's practice in relation to parents and parent knowledge. That is where the learning occurs, learning about oneself, about children and families, and learning about the profession and craft of teaching. Thanks to Pushor and the Parent Engagement Collective II for this important collection, which will be of much interest and support for educators across many contexts.

Anne Murray Orr

Anne Murray Orr, PhD, is an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Education at St. Francis Xavier University in Nova Scotia. Her current research is in the areas of early childhood education, literacies, indigenous language immersion programs, and pre- and in-service teacher education.

PREFACE

Pushor's research and scholarly work, which initially focused on attending to parents' positioning in relation to school landscapes, began with her doctoral work. As she spent a year alongside parents, teachers, and administrators in one elementary school setting, Pushor began to use the term "parent knowledge" to name and to talk about the particular knowledge parents held and used in regard to their children, and in regard to teaching and learning. She recognized that this knowledge was unique in that it arose from individuals' positioning and experiences as parents, and that it was knowledge that non-parents did not possess. As Pushor began to use this term, she was often asked to define or to describe what parent knowledge was, to elaborate on her understanding of this conceptualization. Finding an absence of research or writing on parent knowledge, Pushor conducted a four year narrative inquiry, funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, in which she engaged with three families to explore the questions, "What is parent knowledge?" "How is parent knowledge held and used by parents?" In the chapters of this book, we individually and collectively puzzle over these questions – and others. We ask ourselves how teachers currently use parent knowledge alongside their own in planning, programming, and curriculum making for children in schools. We talk about what that looks like, what it could look like, and what the impact of using parent knowledge in schools is and can be. We ask ourselves how parents can offer their parent knowledge to teachers, respectfully, as a gift to be laid alongside the teacher's own knowing. Throughout the unfolding pages of our book, we share our tentative and shifting understandings and wonders, understandings and wonders that have developed over time, in relationship with one another, and through living alongside parents in either our research or our teaching, or by living as parents in our lives with our families.

In her novel, *Certainty*, Madeleine Thien (2006) tells the story of a woman, Gail Lim, who is the producer of radio documentaries in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. Thien writes:

In radio, in the countless scripts she has written, Gail works with her belief that histories touch. Follow the undercurrent and you will arrive at the meeting place. So she weaves together interviews, narration, music and sound in the hope that stories will not be lost in the chaos of never touching one another, never overlapping in any true way. Each element a strand, and the story itself a work of design. Out of the disparate pieces, let something pure, something true, emerge. Let it remain there, visible. (pp. 209–210)

We, too, as authors of this work, believe histories touch. While we have lived disparate journeys in our homes and classrooms, we have also lived a shared journey

PREFACE

over the past two and a half years. We have engaged in graduate coursework together, in continuing personal and professional support circles as we have worked to translate our learning into new practices, and in writing and art-making experiences as we have collaborated to weave our stories into a “work of design.” Through this design, we intend that our voices resonate, touch, overlap; that they speak with honesty and vulnerability; that they express our knowing and our uncertainty. In the meeting place of this work, what we hope will remain there, visible, after your reading is done, is a strong sense of the central place parent knowledge holds in the work of teachers and schools.

Warm regards,
Debbie Pushor and the Parent Engagement Collaborative II

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A family is a circle of people who love you.

(Jasinek & Bell Ryan, 1988)

During the unfolding of the first offering of the course, *Practicum in Parent and Family Engagement*, graduate students enrolled in the course accepted the challenge to turn their narratives of practice into a collaborative manuscript. The result, *Portals of Promise: Transforming Beliefs and Practices through a Curriculum of Parents*, was published by Sense Publishers in 2013. When the second offering of this *Practicum* course began two years later with a new cohort of graduate students, a student entered the room and said, “This is the course in which we write a book, right?” And so began our work on *Living as Mapmakers: Charting a Course with Children Guided by Parent Knowledge*.

Through our experience with the first book project, we developed a wonderful team to assist us in bringing our book to fruition. We are so very fortunate to have benefitted once again from their wisdom, experience, knowledge, and insights. Bonnie, Mike, and Shelly, this book is as much yours as it is ours. Thank you for being part of our circle of family, our circle of love and support.

Bonnie Mihalicz: Bonnie, you are a sister, a friend, a mentor, a sage. We thank you for your gentle honesty, your critical reading and response, your selfless time and energy, and your unwavering passion and support. You are as much a mapmaker of parent knowledge as anyone anywhere. How privileged we are to have had you walking alongside us, working with us to sketch this particular map with such care and attention.

Michael McGarity: Mike, as an English teacher and a professor, you are a wise and gifted teacher. Thank you for challenging us to write with care and precision, to look and to look again, to continue to polish both our words and our skills. As a friend and member of our family, you are intelligent, direct, generous with your time, and consistent in setting high expectations. Our work is stronger, both because of your teaching and because of your investment in us.

Shelly Balbar: Shelly, you have amazed us once again! Despite being engaged in a full time career, and having a very full and committed life with family and friends, you have once again done everything it took to produce an artful and well-designed manuscript. We thank you for your talents, your time, your spirited energy, your confidence in us, and your belief that anything is possible. Shelly, you have always been a mapmaker, always someone who has been forging new maps. Thank you for standing with us on our map of love.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Robert Fournier: Robert, thank you for taking our photographs for the *About the Contributors* section of this work. We appreciate your generous sharing of gifts. Your gesture demonstrates the richness of working with families.

Our Families: Dear families, please know that we see this work as a reflection of our efforts and your efforts as well. We were able to do what we did because of your love, support, patience, and the time you extended to us. There really are no words to truly express our thanks. Our love will speak our thanks.

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ABOUT THE ARTWORK



The intricate collages which open each section of the book were created by the members of the Parent Engagement Collaborative II. They represent, for us, an additional act of mapmaking, an additional medium through which to map parent knowledge. Just as parent knowledge is bodied and embodied, relational, intuitive, intimate, and uncertain, our mapping of parent knowledge through the process of collage gave rise to these same modes of knowing and expressions of knowing. The collages make visible another sense of what we know about parent knowledge and how we hold and use that knowledge as mapmakers.

We were privileged to have artist Kathryn Green lead and inspire our artwork through her teachings, mentorship, knowledge and expertise, and insights. We would like to thank Kathryn for enriching our art, our book, and our lives.

Kathryn Green spent two decades teaching health promotion at the university level before leaving academe to pursue her interests in art and music. Her mixed media work frequently incorporates collage, transferred images and text, and is characterized by rich textures and colours. Her involvement in supporting the writers of this book to create collages brought together three of the central roles in her own life: parent, academic, and artist. Kathryn can be reached at kathrynlgreen@gmail.com.



PARENT KNOWLEDGE: A PARENT'S MAP OF A CHILD

SECTION 1

PARENT KNOWLEDGE

A Parent's Map of a Child

The term “parents” captures a vast and diverse group of individuals, different in race, culture, religion, gender, sexual orientation, and language, and varied in their positioning by social, educational, economic, and political systems within society. Therefore, how do we talk about “parent knowledge” without generalizing or reducing the knowledge parents hold about children, teaching, and learning? In our desire to attend to parent knowledge as personal and particular, as situated and contextual, we have chosen the metaphor of maps ...of mapmaking ...of living as mapmakers as a way to write about parent knowledge, and about teachers’ use of parent knowledge in the work they do with children in schools.

Captivated by a passage written by Anne Michaels (2009), in her novel *The Winter Vault*, our parent engagement collaborative took up the metaphor of “the mothers’ map”:

Lucjan was working on a series of maps, sized to fit, when folded, into the glovebox of a car. He painted each detail with care, like medieval decoration on an illuminated manuscript. Every trade, he had explained to Jean, has its own map of the city: the rat and cockroach exterminators, the racoon catchers, the hydro and sewer and road repair workers. There is the mothers’ map marked with pet shops and public washrooms and places to collect pinecones, with sidewalk widths and pot-hole depths indicated for carriages, tricycles and wagon-pulling. The knitters have their own map ... (pp. 249–250)

How does a parent hold knowledge of his or her child? How might that knowledge form an internal and intimate parent’s map of a child? How might that map, at any point in time, reflect a knowledge of connections to people who have a shaping influence in the child’s life – a kokum, an uncle, a big sister or brother, a nanny, a make believe friend? How might it highlight markers of moments and memories of significance – a first word or first step, an act of empathy, a passion pursued, an obstacle overcome, an expression of pure joy, or one of pain? How might it make visible pathways to spaces and places of import for the child – the child’s First Nations Reserve, his parents’ homeland, the cardboard box castle she created, a world of pretend, the comfort of home? How might it capture nuances of the child’s thoughts, of feelings, of growth, and change over time? How might a parent’s map

of a child be one that is very different from a teacher's map of that same child? What might a parent's map illuminate that a teacher's map cannot, given the different ways that parents and teachers are positioned in the life of a child and in their roles and intentions in relation to that child?

In this section, we begin with two chapters written by Debbie Pushor, Chapter 1 *Conceptualizing Parent Knowledge*, and Chapter 2 *Mapping Parent Knowledge*. In Chapter 1, Pushor explores the notion of "funds of knowledge" (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005), attending to the personal, practical, professional, and craft knowledge held and used by both teachers and parents. She then foregrounds the unique knowledge that arises from the lived experiences of being a parent, knowledge that is relational, bodied and embodied, intuitive, intimate, and uncertain. In this foundational chapter, Pushor addresses the power and politics of knowledge – who is seen to hold knowledge and whose knowledge counts – and what teachers have to gain in learning from and acting upon parent knowledge in their work with children. In Chapter 2, Pushor shares the stories of one parent who was a participant in her narrative inquiry on parent knowledge. She unpacks his stories to provide a close up view of the knowledge held by him and his partner and how they acted upon this knowledge in living with and educating their children. While Chapter 1 is conceptual, Chapter 2 brings life to the conceptualization of parent knowledge.

In Chapters 3, 4, and 5, Melanie Lynchuk, Suzanne Bronkhorst, and Gwyn Fournier position themselves as parents as they explore the power and privilege of expert knowledge in schools, examining notions of knower and knowing through parents' eyes. In Chapter 3, *From Educator to Mother: My Personal Journey*, Lynchuk shares the shift in positioning that occurred for her when she became a mother. Engaging in conversations with other moms of young children, Lynchuk comes to understand the utmost desire of these mothers – that teachers "take good care of our children." In Chapter 4, *If Only You Knew My Child the Way I Do: Erica's Story*, Bronkhorst reflects on how the expert teacher knowledge of her daughter's French Immersion Kindergarten teacher dominated and silenced her parental knowing of Erica in the decision whether to put Erica in French Immersion or English Grade 1. Bronkhorst proposes that teachers and parents can share their knowledge through a "web of caring" (Allen, 2007), contributing equitably and respectfully to decisions that affect children. In Chapter 5, *Big Dog or Little Dog: Rethinking My Beliefs and Practices as a Parent and an Educator*, Fournier stories experiences she had with her son's teachers when, perhaps, she took up a stance as the "big dog" in their conversations. In deconstructing these experiences, Fournier introduces two different types of knowing, *Kenntnis* and *Wissenschaft* (Sax, 2007) as a way of exploring parent knowledge as both expert and intimate. She employs the notion that if teachers live as children's second parents (Lopez & Stoelting, 2010), a true repositioning of parents and teachers becomes possible.

In this section, we share parents' stories and maps of their knowledge. By first foregrounding parent voice in our "work of design" (Thien, 2006, p. 210), we are consciously positioning parents at the centre of the conversation in which

we are engaged in this book. We are inviting those of you who are teachers, to dis/position yourselves, to assume a state of mind or attitude that enables you to fold your own map of knowledge, tuck it neatly away in your glovebox, and spread the parents' maps of knowledge wide open in front of you. We invite you to set out on an exploration of your knowledge of children, and teaching, and learning, guided by the parents' maps. We are hopeful that, when you cease your exploring, you will arrive where you started, in your classroom or school, and you will know that place for the first time (adapted from T.S. Eliot (1963), "Little Gidding," Section 5, p. 222).

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DEBBIE PUSHOR

1. CONCEPTUALIZING PARENT KNOWLEDGE



This will be the map of your heart, old woman.

(Domingue, 2013, p. 1)

BEING KNOWING, BEING UNKNOWING

Living as a Foreigner

As I think about knowledge – what constitutes knowledge, how knowledge is held and used, whose knowledge counts – I am taken back to times when I felt like a knower and times when I did not. In our late twenties, my partner Laurie and I moved to Germany for two years because I had accepted a teaching position with Canada's Department of National Defence. In many ways, my life within the school environment was familiar and comfortable as I was teaching the children of Canadian military members stationed overseas, engaging with curriculum, and employing a pedagogical approach situated in my Canadian knowledge and experience. My life outside of the school environment, in the small German village in which we resided and in the larger European landscape on which we travelled, was initially neither familiar nor comfortable. While I had been a competent and independent adult upon

leaving Canada, I found myself, in this unfamiliar country, not knowing how to use a telephone, conduct simple banking procedures, or produce correct change at a supermarket checkout. I was a foreigner on the German landscape and my lack of knowledge presented itself repeatedly in the taken-for-granted minutia of day to day life.

There was one particular experience, about two weeks after our move to Germany that remains poignant. This tearful and frustrating incident was an awakening to the vastness of the learning that lay before me, and to how much of that learning would be about myself. Living along the Rhine River on the border of the Alsace region of France, Laurie and I decided to make the short excursion across the border one evening to have dinner in a small French village. While we had travelled into the Alsace on another occasion, we had been with colleagues, a number of whom were French speaking. After being settled at a table in a very pretty, small quaint restaurant, by a waiter who did not speak English, we opened the menu to find that it was written solely in Alsatian French, a French dialect highly influenced by the Germanic language. Naively, neither of us had thought to bring a French-English or a German-English dictionary. Further, neither of us spoke French or German, so we had a limited language base from which to work. We tackled the menu together, using the little French or German language we knew, to make guesses about what some of the menu items might be. I finally decided on an item, really not sure what I was ordering, but believing it was a dish cooked with garlic. When my meal came, I was shocked to see something arranged across my plate that looked like a section of snake! (Knowing the French word for garlic is “ail,” I presumed the word on the menu, *ààle*, to be the Alsatian equivalent of the French word. Rather, *ààle* is the word for eel.) As the waiter stepped back to enable me to admire my artfully prepared meal, I burst into tears. Taken aback by my response, our server tried to determine what was wrong, and I tried to explain how I, suddenly and unexpectedly, was feeling overwhelmed by how new and different everything was. Unfortunately, speaking different languages, and embodying very different experiences and understandings of what comprises “new” or “different,” we remained foreigners to one another in that moment.

The waiter and I came together in the context of a shared dining experience, with a difference in knowledge of cuisine at the core of that experience. My knowledge of cuisine, though, was rooted in the foods of my rural Prairie landscape and expressed in my English language. The waiter’s knowledge of cuisine was rooted in the local foods abundant in the lakes, rivers, and woods of the Vosges Mountains and expressed in his Alsatian French. These differences resulted in my strong sense of foreignness and our deep lack of understanding of one another.

Teachers and Parents as Foreigners to One Another

While I was a foreigner in that pretty Alsatian restaurant, I have also been a foreigner in contexts much closer to home. I began my career as a teacher in a school in

Edmonton, Alberta, the city in which I had completed my undergraduate teacher education degree. I spoke the language, I was familiar with the school landscape, and I knew the expectations of my role as teacher. As I worked with my students, supporting their developing skills as readers and writers, I met regularly with their parents to discuss the children's progress and to determine strategies to further support their learning. I remember sitting one day after school with Tammy and Sherri,¹ sisters with whom I worked, and their mom, making a large reminder chart for the girls to hang in the entrance of their townhome. We role played how the girls would check the chart each morning and each afternoon before leaving for school, ensuring they had the necessary supplies, reading materials, or projects in progress in order to make valuable use of their class time. We also drew up personal schedules for each girl, marking in her scheduled out of school activities, supper time, bedtime, bath time, and so on, and then pencilling in times for reading and for homework. This moment in my life as a teacher has resurfaced for me many times over the past 25 years. It was not until I became a mother myself, trying to juggle the irregularity and busy-ness of life in a home with children, that I realized that, in the moment of making charts and schedules, I was a foreigner to Tammy and Sherri's family, no differently than I was a foreigner to the waiter in the Alsace.

My first son, Cohen, was a colicky baby. Because he always seemed to end up with a tummy ache after a feeding, I would walk him and rock him, sometimes for hours, before he would fall asleep, only to awake a short time later ready for another feeding. It was not uncommon for Laurie, my partner, to arrive home at the end of his work day and find me still in my nightgown, unshowered, either pacing the floor with our crying son or holding our sleeping baby in my arms. It was in these moments that I would reflect on the carefully timed and planned personal schedules that I had developed with the girls and their mom, and I would laugh at myself for taking up the position of expert and cry at my lack of knowledge and understanding of their family and their lives. Leggo (1998), expressed the problem of knowledge eloquently:

I am a foreigner to you, and you are a foreigner to me, and yet we play this game of deception and pretence that we are *not* foreign, that we know one another, that we understand one another, that we acknowledge one another. Let's confess our foreignness, our alienation, our separation, our lack of understanding. (p. 180)

Let's acknowledge that teachers and parents both hold knowledge of children, teaching, and learning – very different knowledge, arising in distinct contexts, held and used in varied ways and for varied purposes. Let's also acknowledge that both teacher knowledge and parent knowledge are of great value in informing, guiding, supporting the teaching and learning of children. Let's stop pretending that we know one another, and let's start attending to what parent knowledge is, how it is held and used by parents, and how it can be held and used by teachers as they lay parent knowledge alongside their own teacher knowledge in planning and decision

making for children. Let's change the story of whose knowledge counts on school landscapes.

FUNDS OF KNOWLEDGE

Every human being, regardless of such factors as age or gender, culture or religion, socioeconomic positioning or sexual orientation, parent or non-parent, is a holder of “funds of knowledge” (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005). These funds of knowledge are “historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and well-being (Greenberg, 1989; Tapia, 1991; Vélez-Ibáñez, 1988)” (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & González, 2005, p. 72). Our funds of knowledge develop out of all of our experiences, formal and informal, and, as a result, they are specific, situated, and contextual, shaped by the family and postal code into which we are born, and the family, communities, and places within which we choose to travel or reside throughout our lives. Each individual's funds of knowledge, then, are necessarily unique.

Funds of Knowledge as Personal

Polanyi (1958) wrote in depth about personal knowledge, an aspect of funds of knowledge, which is discovered by each of us as we pour ourselves into the particulars of the reality that surround us. It is the knowing to which we passionately commit as we engage with the world and are changed by it (p. 64). This knowing becomes a part of the fabric of who we are – neither objective or verifiable, nor falsifiable or testable – “we live in it as the garment of our own skin” (p. 64). We participate in both shaping our personal knowledge and being shaped by it (p. 65).

I grew up on a farm in Northern Alberta, where my family lived very close to my grandparents, and many aunts, uncles, and cousins. As a child and youth, I did not have the opportunity to take piano or music lessons, to participate in dance lessons, or to engage to any great extent in organized sports. I did have the opportunity to play endlessly in the fields and pastures, to walk in the dense muskeg, to wade in the creek, and to build forts in the willows. I did have the opportunity to ride horses with my dad and my grandma, to play in the hayloft or the granaries with my cousins, to sit at the kitchen table while adults talked and shared stories over coffee. I did have the opportunity to cook and bake in the kitchen with my mom and my sisters, and I did have many hours to lose myself in a book.

My personal knowledge is grounded in and shaped by these foundational experiences. When I am working to figure something out, to conceptualize it, I turn to story and to metaphor as an entry point to my understanding. I talk and work things through with others, I walk or run along the river valley, I cook to give myself time to think. I feel restricted in thought when I am in enclosed spaces, and I need a great deal of light to thrive in my living and working spaces. I do not turn naturally to music or dance to make sense of my world or to express my soul; I do not naturally

choose movement as a way to learn or understand, or to express my knowledge. “[My] arts of doing and knowing, [my] valuation and . . . understanding of meanings, are thus seen to be only different aspects of the act of extending [my] person into the subsidiary awareness of particulars which compose a whole” (Polanyi, 1958, p. 65). They comprise the garment of the skin in which I live.

Personal knowledge, as in my instance, is expressed in the way in which each individual takes up and engages with the “arts of doing and knowing.” It is a reflection of with what and with whom one interacts, to what and to whom one attends. It is a reflection of lived experiences, both planned and happenstance, and of the reverberations – internal and external – of putting oneself out in the world.

Funds of Knowledge as Practical

Building from the personal, Elbaz (1981) conceptualized knowledge as practical, as that knowledge which is “directed toward making sense of, and responding to, the various situations of” (p. 49) a particular role. While Elbaz examined in her research the practical knowledge of teachers, one can see how practical knowledge is held and used by those in any particular role – driver, cook, runner, artist. Elbaz understood that this sense-making knowledge includes both one’s personal knowledge and one’s funds of knowledge in a situated moment in time and place, enveloped within a broader social context, and influenced by an individual’s general theoretical orientation (p. 49). Practical knowledge, then, is knowledge that arises out of and is expressed within one’s lived experiences.

In her research, Elbaz (1981) found that practical knowledge, albeit often quite unconsciously, was expressed by individuals in a methodical way through their rules of practice, in a reflective way through their practical principles, in an intuitive way through their images, and in a coherent way through an organizing metaphor or account (pp. 49–50). When I think of my practical knowledge in one role or aspect of my life, let’s say in my running, I can see these structures of my practical knowledge at play.

While I have engaged in running as a core form of physical activity since my early 20s, my running has been inconsistent over the course of my life, influenced by demands on my time – pregnancy, babies, young children, work commitments, energy level, weather and geographic conditions, availability of running partners. Given this inconsistency, when I am running, I live by “rules of practice,” rules that guide what I do and how I do it (p. 61), in order to run injury free. These rules of practice include running slowly at first to give my body time to warm up, using a ‘run ten minutes then walk one minute’ pattern as I am building my endurance, walking the last leg of the trail in order to cool down, and taking the time to stretch muscle groups while they are still warm at the end of my run. I employ these rules of practice as they animate a “practical principle,” a broader more inclusive purpose and rationale (p. 61), that reflects my desire to run to live well. I see my notion of living well in the image of the Medicine Wheel, a First Nations symbol, which

captures sacred teachings to assist individuals along the path toward mental, physical, spiritual, and emotional health. For me, this “image” combines a sense of the needs (Elbaz, 1981, p. 61) I am working to meet through running, the feelings (p. 61) that the experience of running evokes in me, the beliefs (p. 61) I hold about health, and the value (p. 61) that I place on this investment of time in my own wellbeing. I try to consciously live by a belief that I hold in all aspects of my life, a belief that it is always about relationships. Running, for me, is relational. Sometimes it is about a relationship with my running partner(s), other times it is about a relationship with myself. It is always about a relationship between the mental, physical, spiritual, and emotional aspects of my personhood. Relationship is the “coherent account” (p. 50) that captures my “doing as informed by knowledge” (p. 62), my runner’s practical knowledge.

Practical knowledge, for all of us, reflects the knowledge we hold and use in the varied and multiple roles in our lives. It is the knowledge on which we draw as we “confront all manner of tasks and problems” (p. 47). Whether we are four or five years of age and learning to tie our shoelaces, or whether we are adults engaged in household chores, hobbies, or professional roles and responsibilities, we draw on practical knowledge in all of the different realms of our everyday lives (p. 50).

Funds of Knowledge as Professional and Craft

Moll, Amanti, Neff, and González (2005) depicted funds of knowledge as household knowledge, knowledge held and used by household members as they engage in social and economic relationships (p. 73). In their particular study of households in the border region between Mexico and the United States, they found that “household knowledge may include information about farming and animal management, ... knowledge about construction and building, related to urban occupations, as well as knowledge about many other matters, such as trade, business, and finance ...” (p. 72). Such household knowledge may be professional, the result of education, training, or experience in a particular field or for a particular occupation. I use the term professional knowledge, in a broad sense, to capture the knowledge one develops in the pursuit of earning a living. Household knowledge also includes craft knowledge, that knowledge that is honed in the development of life pursuits. Such life pursuits may also enhance one’s social and economic relationships, but I am using the term here to refer to knowledge that arises from one’s hobbies, pastimes, or recreational endeavours – gardening, fishing, rock collecting, scrapbooking. One’s professional and craft knowledge is often the knowledge which is used as an identifier by others. “I’d like you to meet my neighbour, Trevor. He is a mechanic.” “You should see my mom’s garden; it’s absolutely amazing!” The professional and craft knowledge one possesses becomes a common descriptor of who one is in the world.

My professional knowledge is situated in the field of education. It has arisen through my formal engagement in university degree programs, professional development, and academic conferences. It has been shaped by my informal

engagement with colleagues, in collaborative conversation, planning, teaching, and assessment activities. It has been broadened and deepened by my lived experiences as a teacher, consultant, principal, central services administrator, and university professor. It has been influenced by teaching contexts in various provinces in Canada and overseas. While professional knowledge is often associated with a certificate, diploma, degree, or apprenticeship, such knowledge, as can be seen in my case, encapsulates much more than formal training.

My craft knowledge is less defined, more transient, reflecting passions that have captured me at different points in my life, interests I have foregrounded in different ways at different times. I mentioned that I like to cook and bake. As a teacher, I made a birthday cake for each child in my class. I asked my students what kind of cake they would like, and I relished the challenge of working to make those wishes a reality. While baking a cake in the shape of a castle, Garfield (a cartoon cat), or a soccer ball, I learned new techniques and strategies each and every time. With no baking classes or formal instruction, I garnered my craft knowledge through reading, coaching by experienced bakers, trial and error, and a wealth of diverse experiences. I continued to use my craft knowledge as a mother, baking cakes for my children's birthdays and their special occasions. This craft knowledge became a marker within our family, a special part of our family's household funds of knowledge.

Just as with personal and practical knowledge, we are all holders of professional and/or craft knowledge. While non-working age children and youth do not have professional knowledge, they do have craft knowledge. They have rich funds of knowledge of dinosaurs, construction, princesses, and computer gaming. They possess funds of knowledge from their active engagement in sports, music, dance, nature, the sciences, and the arts, passions they often share with their parents or with other family members. All human beings, then, regardless of age or formal education, by virtue of their interactions in and with the world, possess and use funds of knowledge.

FUNDS OF KNOWLEDGE OF CHILDREN, TEACHING, AND LEARNING

When we understand funds of knowledge as personal, practical, professional, and craft, it becomes readily apparent that both teachers and parents hold rich funds of knowledge of children, teaching, and learning. Teachers and parents employ their personal knowledge when they engage in the particulars of their worlds with children, when they determine who they are and who they will be in these adult-child relationships, when they decide what is important to them and why. Teachers and parents employ practical knowledge, sense-making knowledge, as they live within situational contexts with children, responding in the moment, drawing on their conscious or unconscious rules of practice, practical principles, images of self, children, family, schooling, and education, and as they work to build coherent experiences, coherent lives. Teachers employ professional knowledge, the status-granting knowledge they gained through their formal degree programs as well as the

informal and ongoing knowledge they continue to develop in the unfolding of their career. Differently, because being a parent is not formalized by society as a career, many parents develop their knowledge of children and parenting through activities such as reading books and magazines, watching educational programming, attending classes, seeking advice from friends, family members, and experts, or keeping reflective journals. Teachers and parents employ craft knowledge, knowledge developed in their life pursuits, which reflects their passions and interests, and which complements, informs, contributes to, and enriches their lives lived with children. Teacher knowledge and parent knowledge, then, have much in common as both are comprised of the personal, practical, professional, and craft. At the same time, teacher knowledge and parent knowledge have much that make them distinct from one another. What matters is the nature of the context in which adult and child interact, and the nature of the relationship which exists between them also matters. The place of the school and the place of the home in society, and how teachers and parents are present in the lifetime of a child all matter.

Regardless of the richness of both teacher knowledge and parent knowledge, and regardless of what each type of knowledge offers in support of the growth and development of children, schools continue to privilege teacher knowledge. It is not uncommon, at the beginning of a new school year, for parents to receive information from the school outlining the academic calendar; the daily schedule; the policies of the school in regard to such things as attendance, discipline, and homework; and the procedures of the school in relation to entrance and exit, first and second bells, and indoor shoes. It is not uncommon for a Meet the Teacher Night to be held in September in which each teacher outlines his or her curriculum outcomes and expectations. It is not uncommon for parent information nights to be offered in which experts provide parents with information on topics such as home literacy or numeracy, discipline, and nutrition. In these taken-for-granted school practices, parents are positioned as unknowing, or less knowing, than educators about children, teaching, and learning. Their parent knowledge is neither acknowledged nor invited as decisions are made that affect their children and their families.

How might this be different? I believe that by developing a more comprehensive understanding of what parent knowledge is and how it is held and used by parents, educators will see possibilities for honouring parent knowledge, for using it alongside their own knowledge in the schooling of children, and for making policy, practice, and curricular decisions with parents and families, rather than on their behalf.

PARENT KNOWLEDGE OF CHILDREN, TEACHING, AND LEARNING

When I taught Tammi and Sherri, I believed I held enough knowledge about children, teaching, and learning to help their mother organize time and space within their home to facilitate her daughters' completion of schoolwork and their preparedness for school. I did not realize that because I was a foreigner, both an outsider to their family and an outsider to parenthood, my knowledge in that context was inadequate

and uninformed, and the imposition of my knowledge was disrespectful to and silencing for their mom. What I have since come to understand is that while everyone possesses funds of knowledge, only parents possess parent knowledge, the particular knowledge held and used by someone who nurtures children in the complex act of childrearing and in the complex context of a home and family. There was only one person in the situation I described who held enough knowledge – of Tammi and Sherri, of their home, of their family, of their lives – to imagine possibilities for the organization of time and space in their home to facilitate the girls’ learning, and that person was their mom. She was the parent, the insider, the one who held the knowledge – the parent knowledge – that could potentially inform the situation.

Parent Knowledge as Relational

Parents² know their children differently than anyone else in the world because of the uniqueness of their relationship. Winnicott, (as cited in Jackson, 2001), a psychoanalyst, saw “the mother’s body [as] a kind of nautical marker – the reliable object that shows the child where he is on the map” (p. 69). Heidi, author of Chapter 11 in this work, brought her six week old baby, Tessa, to one of the art making sessions of our parent engagement collaborative. Meeting Tessa for the first time, we passed her amongst us, taking turns holding and talking to her. Whenever Heidi spoke from somewhere in the room, Tessa, hearing her mom’s voice, reacted with a movement of her hands, her feet, or with the tilt of her head. Heidi was Tessa’s marker and Tessa was locating herself on her world map in relation to her mom. Winnicott believed that “[t]here is no such thing as a baby – there is only a baby and someone else” (p. 61). We are always relational, he wrote, and from the beginning “the baby holds the mother as much as the mother holds the baby” (p. 61). The relationship between a parent and a child is indeed one that is inextricably intertwined, in physical and emotional ways. I remember the moment when my toddler son, Quinn, twirled himself around in excitement, fell against the fireplace hearth, and cut open his forehead. At the same time that I was flooded with fear and concern at the sign of a gash worthy of stitches, I experienced a physical sense of pain in the pit of my stomach. I remember a much later moment when Quinn was on the mat in a high school wrestling match. As he was working to hold his own against a challenging competitor, I witnessed such an expression of raw and intense determination on his face that I suddenly burst into tears. It was a visceral reaction, unexpected, as if my body was exploding with Quinn’s emotion. I remember a fairly recent moment when Quinn called me, having been out of cellular range for five days as he hiked the Chilkoot Trail in the Yukon, alone, at 19 years of age, carrying a 50 pound pack. Reconnecting with him, hearing the exhilaration in his voice at what he had just accomplished, I could feel my heart pounding noticeably in my chest, and I caught myself laughing aloud. My knowing of Quinn and my knowing with Quinn, my relational parent knowledge, resided in the emotional aspect of our relationship and in the physical

experience of it as well. From birth to forever, the baby holds the mother and the mother holds the baby.

Parent Knowledge as Bodied and Embodied

Within parent knowledge, there is an element of “intense physicality” (Pryer, 2011, p. 29). Parents know their children in bodied ways, as “the materiality” (p. 29) of their bodies – theirs and their children’s – interact in a home and family environment. With babies, that materiality of parent and child is expressed in life-sustaining processes such as feeding, diapering, bathing, and rocking. As children grow, it can be seen further in an expression of shared play – in singing songs, doing crafts, playing sports and games together; in engagement in household activities – standing side by side doing dishes in the kitchen, raking and bagging leaves in the yard, and washing the car in the driveway; in connections during family activities – spending time at picnics, pow wows, or the cabin at the lake. As children become young adults, the physicality of the parent child relationship shifts to include the parents’ mentorship of teens into adult activities – teaching them to drive, sharing a passion such as boating or beadwork, helping them learn the skills needed to take up a part time or summer job. In a family, a parent’s body does not exist in isolation but exists in “a community of bodies” (p. 33). Through the multitude of ways in which the parents’ and children’s bodies connect, and through all of their sensory interactions – touching, holding, watching, listening, talking, caressing – parent knowledge is generated, held, and used.

Parents also know their children and hold and use their parent knowledge in embodied ways, in ways that are “grounded in bodily cues and conventions” (Goldberger, 1996, p. 352). Mark Johnson, a philosopher, referred to this way of knowing as “the body in the mind” (1987). A key premise of Johnson’s work is that all knowledge is embodied, that it is tied to our bodily orientations. Having been formally educated as a teacher, and having read a great deal on childrearing and parenting during my pregnancies, I had to work hard as a new mom to trust and act upon my embodied parent knowledge. Wanting to do things the ‘right’ way, in ways that experts advised, there were moments when I did not trust my ‘gut instincts,’ when I did not trust what I knew in the very core of my body. Cohen, our oldest son, was almost four when his twin brothers, Teague and Quinn, were born. Given the upset in household routines and schedules, and the comings and goings of many visitors, Cohen sought our attention in ways such as coloring on his bed sheets with crayons or ignoring any range of simple requests we made of him. Concerned with this change in his nature, I talked about with it our family doctor when I took the babies in for one of their regular checkups. Our doctor recommended that we use “time outs” for Cohen as a form of discipline in moments such as the ones I described. Although this form of discipline is not one that aligns with my beliefs, but feeling both exhausted and ineffective in my interactions with Cohen, my partner and I decided to use a time out strategy. On each and every occasion that I put Cohen

in time out, my body told me what I was doing was wrong; that what Cohen needed was to be brought closer to our family not moved away from us. Polanyi (1966) asserted that our bodies become the “ultimate instruments” (p. 15) of our knowledge and knowledge construction as “we know more than we can tell” (p. 15). I regret that I did not trust what I knew in those moments, that I did not listen to my embodied parent knowledge. What I did learn with time and experience is that no expert, even a trusted family doctor, knew the dynamic of my family the way I did, no expert knew Cohen, his emotions and responses, better than I did, no expert understood my beliefs about children or my hopes and dreams for Cohen and my family in the same way that I did. What I did learn is that “the body itself is a primary educational site” (Pryer, 2011, p. 9). My embodied knowledge, the knowledge I received from my body’s cues in those particular and contextual moments, was an important source of knowledge for me as a parent.

Parent Knowledge as Intuitive

A parent’s knowledge can exist, unspoken, intuited. In her novel, *Certainty*, Thien (2006) wrote of her characters, “Between mother and child, another language existed” (p. 303). In Chapter 5 of this work, Fournier shares a story of such a language existing between her and her son. She describes hearing in Morgan’s voice a shift in pitch or timbre, a subtle shift that no one else could even hear, but one that stirred in her a feeling, a sense, of an impending bout of strep throat. While Morgan was showing no outward or visible signs of illness – no fever, no redness or rawness in his throat, nothing the doctor could identify – Gwyn “knew” something was not right with her son. Anderson (2001), author of the Foreword in *dropped threads*, a collection of stories and essays about women’s lives, wrote that the work reminded her of “the impossibility of capturing in any medium of expression all that we are and what we experience” (p. ix). In this same way, I see the impossibility of capturing all of what parent knowledge is, all of the ways in which it is generated, held, and used by parents, in ways of knowing that are concrete, tangible, bodied or embodied. Something exists in parent knowledge that moves beyond even these elements to dimensions of knowledge that are abstract, non-rational, situated perhaps in the metaphysical, what I am calling here intuitive. Gail, the protagonist in Thien’s novel (2006), on a quest to unravel the past of her life, engages with a friend in a conversation about whether one can know another:

She asks him the question that has followed her here, that remains with her still. “Do you think it’s possible to know another person? In the end, when everything is put to rest, is it really possible?”

“By know, what do you mean?”

“To understand.”

“Understand, yes. But to *know* another person.” He pauses. “Think of knowing like beauty. The lines that we see are clear, we can trace them, study them in minute detail. But the depth that emerges is still mysterious. How to explain why it reverberates in our minds? When we know another person, I think it is just as mysterious. Knowing another is a kind of belief, an act of faith.” (pp. 272–273)

Gwyn, in my example above, knew her son Morgan in a way that was mysterious to outsiders – to others who could not note a change in Morgan, to their doctor who saw no visible signs of illness. To Gwyn, existing within the language of her relationship with her son, her knowing was not mysterious. It was a reflection of her belief in their mother and child language, an act of faith in her parent knowledge. The intuitive aspect of parent knowledge, then, speaks to that knowledge a parent holds and uses, which is transcendent, which moves beyond what is perceptible to the senses.

Parent Knowledge as Intimate

Parent knowledge is intimate knowledge as it is constructed, held, and used in some of the most private places of our lives and with people with whom we share some of our most personal and vulnerable moments. Because parent knowledge arises in the context of care giving and care receiving, it necessarily is knowledge connected to the very functions of daily life, those undertakings that attend to the health and wellbeing of family members and those that attend to their illnesses as well. As a result, it reflects an intimate knowledge of a child that few others possess. Further, homes are often the places in which people are their most authentic selves. They are typically places of unconditional love and acceptance, creating space for family members to be their rawest, their most emotional, and their most honest. In such a context, parents often come to know their children’s gifts and talents, their vulnerabilities and sensitivities, and their greatest joys and sorrows in ways to which others are never privy. It is out of such an intimate knowledge that parents develop their hopes and dreams for their children; their desire for their children to realize the possibility that the parents know exists at the very core of their children’s being.

Parent Knowledge as Uncertain

Existing within parent knowledge is a sense of uncertainty. Whether that parent knowledge is relational, bodied or embodied, intuitive or intimate, it is knowledge which reflects a moment in time. As Pryer (2011) noted, a parent’s “emotional, intellectual, and sensorial understandings ...always arise out of specific locations, contexts, and circumstances, [and] from, dynamic interactions” (p. 33) with their children and family members. What parents know, how they know it, and with whom that knowledge makes sense always depends on time and space.

I recall a Grade 1 moment with my son Teague, in which he had forgotten his lunch kit as he raced for the school bus. Leaving for the university soon afterward, I looped past his school so that I could drop his lunch to him. The school secretary, not concerned about one child's lunch in the busy-ness of a school of approximately 500 children, asked me to please leave his lunch, telling me that she would page him at lunch time to come and get it. Knowing that Teague would be anxious all morning about not having a lunch, I insisted that she let me take his lunch to him in that moment. I contrast my knowing of Teague then with my current knowing of my son. He has applied for law school in four diverse locations in Canada, and he is actively talking with my partner and me about choosing a university away from home. My parent knowledge of Teague at age 6 reflected an understanding of his desire for things to be predictable and anchored in a sense of familiarity and security. My parent knowledge of Teague at age 20 reflects an understanding of his desire to take on unknown challenges, of his readiness to embrace the unfamiliar, and of his determination to accept these challenges with a sense of security that is more distant and less concrete than he has known in the past. My parent knowledge of Teague today, my understandings of and interactions with him, have shifted and changed – as he has changed, as I have changed, as our family has changed, as our lives have changed.

Referencing the work of the philosopher Derrida, Pryer (2011) asserted that uncertain knowledge is the reality of human life, a reflection of its very nature (p. 33). Parent knowledge is knowledge that is constructed, held, and used in the dynamic context of a family, a unit of people who are always in flux. As a result, that knowledge is “complex, contradictory, precarious, indeterminate, ambiguous, awkward, messy and difficult” (p. 33). Parent knowledge reflects the best of what a parent knows at any point in time.

DWELLING IN: NO LONGER A FOREIGNER

Drawing upon Leggo's (1998) quote earlier in the chapter, I asserted that teachers and parents are foreigners to one another, just as I was a foreigner in the Alsatian restaurant when I first moved to Europe. While teachers and parents share the same children, and they have some contact with one another, they typically do not know one another. Further, because schools are structured to privilege teacher knowledge, and provide very limited, and superficial, opportunity for parents to share their knowledge, teachers know little of the knowledge parents hold of their children or of teaching and learning. By making visible what parent knowledge is, and how it is held and used by parents, I am consciously attempting to interrupt the current story of school. I believe that, rather than remaining foreigners in the communities in which they teach, teachers can choose to “dwell within” (Polanyi, 1958, p. 195) their communities, to spend time with parents and families, in order to know who they are, to know what they do, to know what they know. It is in the “dwelling in,” in the pursuit of developing an understanding of parent knowledge, that teachers

will have the opportunity to “consciously experience” (p. 195) parent knowledge and to “intelligently contemplate” (p. 196) how to use and honour that knowledge alongside their own in the teaching and learning of children in schools; making policy, practice, and curricular decisions *with* parents and families; and trusting that they have important and particular parent knowledge to bring to bear.

NOTES

- ¹ Pseudonyms have been used to protect the anonymity of the students.
- ² I use the term “parent” in the broadest of senses, more in the sense of a verb – one who parents – than solely as a noun. While the term parent denotes a specific person, I use it to denote any person who is engaged in the responsibilities and actions of parenting, whether that person is a biological or non-biological caregiver of a child, whether the caregiving arrangements are formal or informal, permanent or temporary, sole or shared (Pushor, 2013, p. 11).

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