The Final Oral Examination for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF CURRICULUM & INSTRUCTION

GABRIELA McBEE

2001 University of Victoria MA in Hispanic Studies
1998 University of Victoria BA

“Learning from Indigenous Knowledge: A Trail to Understanding Elders’s Wisdom”

Tuesday, July, 30, 2013
9:30 am
MacLaurin A341

Supervisory Committee:
Dr. Lorna Williams, Department of Curriculum & Instruction
(Supervisor)
Dr. Michele Tanaka, Department of Curriculum & Instruction, UVic
(Member)
Dr. Budd Hall, School of Public Administration, UVic
(Outside Member)

External Examiner:
Dr. Vicky Kelly, Faculty of Education, SFU

Chair of Oral Examination:
Dr. James Lawson, Department of Political Science, UVic
Abstract

Fostering collaboration among people of diverse ethnicities is vital to improving our relationships with Nature and with each other. All knowledges known to humans have their limits, including Western scientific knowledge. This study argues that Indigenous elders have a wealth of nature-based wisdom which is urgently needed. The Thirteen International Indigenous Grandmothers have been sharing their wisdom with the world and meeting them inspired this work. Two Grandmothers, one Taíno, a Caribbean Arawak nation, the other Mazatec, who follows in the healing tradition of curandera María Sabina, and members of their families kindly agreed to be research participants so that I could bring attention to their gifts and share with the world. Embodying their ancient wisdom they do not see themselves as separate from Nature but as integral part of it. Their relationships to all beings, humans, animals, plants, minerals, and spiritual entities, are imbued with love and care. They can be role models for people who have forgotten the most basic premise of reciprocity and empathy for all our relations. The methodologies underlying this investigation are Indigenous. I used strategies of inquiry such as storytelling, participant observation, and reflexive self study. Respect, reciprocity, and relational accountability are its pillars. Being of European descent, doing research with Indigenous elders required great vigilance on my part. I had to challenge my own conventional Western views and question the truths I am surrounded with to gain an understanding of my research participants’ worldview. Even with the best of intentions all I could hope for was an approximation. As I immersed myself into the worlds of my participants the great significance of plants as part of their physical, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing became evident. Maize, tobacco, and the plant teachers cohoba and psilocybe mushrooms were, and for the most part still are, essential entities closely knit into their cultural fabric. Coming from a background where the written word is placed high above the spoken one, and Nature is seen as separate to us, it is important to acknowledge that much rich understanding of the world is beyond pen and paper, even beyond words.
Awards, Scholarships, Fellowships

1995/96 Pablo Cabañas Memorial Scholarship, University of Victoria
1998 German Consulate Book Award, University of Victoria
1998/99 Dean’s Scholarship, University of Victoria
1999 Louise Fothergill-Payne memorial Scholarship, University of Victoria
1999/00 Dean’s Scholarship, University of Victoria
2000 Grad Studies Bursary and Travel Grant, University of Victoria
2006 Office of International Affairs Seed Money Grant, University of Victoria
2006 Office of International Affairs Seed Money Grant, University of Victoria
2012 Grad Studies Travel Grant, University of Victoria

Presentations

1998 La política de Nancy Morejón. Situating Hispanic Knowledge. Connecting Literature and Social Justice An interdisciplinary conference at the University of British Columbia, B.C., Canada. (oral)
2000 Return from Oblivion: Coatlicue Arises. Exile in the Hispanic and Italian World. 16th Annual Colloquium Hispanic & Italian Studies, University of Victoria, B.C., Canada. October. (oral)
2001 *Two Mexican Female Icons Interpreted by Jesusa Rodríguez*. Graduate Student Conference. Telling Stories: Interdisciplinary Studies. University of Victoria, B.C., Canada. March. (oral)

2006 *Cacique Panchito: An Indigenous Cuban Chief (Tainos)*. Nuns, Monks & Priests in the Hispanic and Italian World 22nd Annual Colloquium Hispanic & Italian Studies, University of Victoria, B.C., Canada. October. (oral)


**Publications**