PROGRAMME

The Final Oral Examination for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
(Interdisciplinary Studies)

Fay Elizabeth Weller
1997 University of Victoria MA
1989 Learning University BA

“The ‘How’ Of Transformative Change: Stories from the Salish Sea Islands”

Friday, September 13th, 2013
2:00 PM
Human and Social Development Building, A102f

Supervisory Committee:
Dr. Warren Magnusson, Department of Political Science, UVic (Co-Supervisor)
Dr. Michael J. Prince, School of Public Health and Social Policy, UVic (Co-Supervisor)
Dr. Joan Wharf-Higgins, School of Exercise Science, Physical and Health Education, UVic (Non-unit Member)
Dr. Michael M’Gonigle, Faculty of Law, UVic (Non-unit Member)
Dr. Pamela Shaw, Geography Department, VIU (Non-unit Member)

External Examiner:
Dr. Marjorie Griffin Cohen, Political Science Department, SFU

Chair of Oral Examination:
Dr. Ruthanne Tobin, Department of Curriculum and Instruction, UVic
Abstract

This dissertation explores how transformative spaces and agency provide opportunities in everyday lives for transformative shifts from the dominant culture towards a culture of ecological decision-making. Stories about transformative change and system shifts, told by forty people involved in Canada’s Gulf Islands, form the basis for the findings. Their stories demonstrate how personal transformation leads to changed lifestyles and system shifts that reflect the interconnectedness between all living organisms. Two elements of the shift to ecological thinking are increased understanding of the natural world, and willingness to hear and empathise with other people’s realities. Change in communities is cumulative and unpredictable, mirroring personal transformation. Community self-governance is at the core of cultural shifts – the extent to which community members, with various purposes and realities, engage in empathetic dialogue. When interacting with governments and corporations, those who have shifted to ecological-thinking mode exercise their agency and respond according to their inner values. Factors that increase the likelihood of cultural shifts include: a) a multiplicity of different realities in the same space that create the opportunity for people to rethink their cultural box and see the arbitrariness of dominant norms, b) people exercising their agency rather than looking to government as authority, c) collective, non-hierarchical processes, and d) support and links to others in a network of symbiotic ecological-thinking nodes. The power in d) is the power of an accumulation of localisms that creates cultural shifts, arising from communities, which shifts society’s norms and behaviours.
**Awards, Scholarships, Fellowships**

2009-2013: University of Victoria Graduate Fellowship

**Presentations**


**Publications**


