Notice of the Final Oral Examination for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

of

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MEd (University of Victoria, 2008)
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“NUU-CHAH-NULTH Traditional Pedagogy: Shining Light on Authentic Contemporary Assessment Practice”

Department of Curriculum and Instruction

Friday, January 11, 2019
9:30 a.m.
Clearihue Building
Room B007

Supervisory Committee:
Dr. Kathy Sanford, Department of Curriculum and Instruction, University of Victoria (Supervisor)
Dr. Trish Rosborough, Department of Curriculum and Instruction, UVic (Co-Supervisor)
Dr. Tim Hopper, School of Exercise Science, Physical and Health Education, UVic (Outside Member)

External Examiner:
Dr. Jan Hare, Faculty of Indigenous Education, University of British Columbia

Chair of Oral Examination:
Dr. John Taylor, Department of Biology, UVic

Dr. David Capson, Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies
Abstract

Historically, the Nuu-chah-nulth People of Vancouver Island passed down knowledge and skills utilizing methods analogous with traditional Indigenous pedagogies around the world. These traditional teaching and assessment methods of the Nuu-chah-nulth have ensured the successful transfer of important physical, mental, cultural and spiritual knowledge over thousands of years. Within these pedagogies, assessment and evaluation is integral and inclusive, achieved through authentic and holistic means. Conversely, contemporary assessment in the post-secondary realm, despite endeavours to integrate formative assessment more frequently, tends toward a summative end result. The historical traditional assessment methods of the Nuu-chah-nulth exemplify holistic values and are illustrated through the concept of *heshook-ish-tsawalk*, or ‘everything is connected’. This dissertation argues that there are insights to be gleaned from identifying these assessment and evaluation methods, and in bringing them forward into contemporary pedagogy.

Through a series of interviews, the researcher examined the learning and teaching understandings and experiences of several Nuu-chah-nulth Elders and cultural experts. Interviews took place within the homes of the Elders, and care was taken to ensure representation across a wide range of Nuu-chah-nulth territory. Augmenting these interviews, the researcher examined archived recordings of past Nuu-chah-nulth Elders while reflecting on her personal experiences as a Nuu-chah-nulth person. These personal experiences were analyzed through an auto-ethnographical look at her own journey through education, and her recollections of traditional and contemporary assessment practice. Significant themes emerged from the collected data, including the overarching importance of time, relationships, echoing, and demonstration in historical Nuu-chah-nulth assessment. These themes fit naturally within a circular medicine wheel framework, which effectively illuminates the holistic and connected nature of an Indigenous pedagogy. This study concludes that these themes hold significant importance for contemporary assessment practice.