Assessing Anishinaabe Children's Narratives: An Ethnographic Exploration of Elders' Perspectives

Évaluation des récits d'enfants anishinaabek : une exploration ethnographique de points de vue d'anciens

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Abstract

This paper reports on an ethnographic research project conducted to explore the narrative skills of a group of eight Anishinaabe children. An emically-derived methodology was developed to examine narrative skills and the results were compared to those obtained using a scoring system developed for narrative analyses with majority culture English speaking children. The research illustrates that narrative analyses derived from a Western based perspectives, such as the Narrative Scoring Scheme (NSS) from the Systematic Analysis of Language Transcripts (SALT) software, is not always congruent with a narrative analysis based on the Anishinaabe perspective that reveals culturally relevant preferences for components of narratives based on the perceptions of Elders who value Aboriginal orality. The application of a Western based narrative analysis tool placed a different emphasis on what was valued as a 'good' narrative and these evaluations did not consistently reflect Anishinaabe orality values and perspectives. The research addresses culturally appropriate practices for eliciting and assessing the narrative performance of Anishinaabe children and provides an opportunity to understand the research participants in their own context while exploring culturally-specific meanings behind the data.

Abrégé

Cette communication fait rapport d'un projet de recherche en ethnographie qui voulait explorer les compétences narratives d'un groupe de huit enfants Anishinaabe. Une méthodologie émiquement dérivée fut développée pour examiner les compétences narratives et les résultats furent comparés à ceux qu'on avait obtenus à l'aide d'un système de cote élaboré pour des analyses narratives auprès d'enfants de culture anglophone majoritaire. La recherche illustre que les analyses narratives dérivées depuis des points de vue à base occidentale, comme le Narrative Scoring Scheme (NSS) du logiciel Systematic Analysis of Language Transcripts (SALT), ne sont pas toujours congruentes avec une analyse narrative basée sur le point de vue Anishinaabe, qui révèle des préférences culturellement pertinentes pour des composantes de récits basées sur les perceptions d'anciens qui apprécient l'oralité autochtone. L'application d'un outil d'analyse narrative à base occidentale a mis un accent différent sur ce qui était apprécié comme un 'bon' récit, et ces évaluations n'ont pas reflété de façon uniforme les valeurs et les points de vue d'oralité Anishinaabe. La recherche touche des pratiques culturellement appropriées permettant d'éliciter et d'évaluer la performance narrative d'enfants Anishinaabe et donne l'occasion de comprendre les participants à la recherche dans leur propre contexte tout en explorant des sens culturellement spécifiques derrière les données.

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Narrative Skills, Academic Success, and Aboriginal Narrative Style

Narrative skills are important for social and academic success (Bliss & McCabe, 2008; Johnston, 2007). Children who do not develop narrative abilities at a level typical for their age may experience compromised relationships with peers, adults, and educators (Bliss & McCabe, 2008). Johnston (2007) states that the paramount goal of the primary grades is the acquisition of literacy and that oral language development, including narrative skills, are foundational to the development of literacy during these early years. Oral storytelling is therefore a relevant area to investigate since reading, writing, and spelling rely on an oral language base.

Furthermore, orality, in the form of story telling, has an extensive history in Aboriginal communities and is a life skill that is valued by the community, as evidenced by the traditional practice of encouraging oral history and oral language. A large number of Native languages were spoken in Canada prior to European contact. None of these were expressed in written form until the beginning of the 19th century when Roman or syllabic writing systems were adopted (Burnaby, 1982; Sugarhead, 1996). Instead, cultural knowledge and traditions of individual communities were historically handed down using oral traditions and genres. The strong oral traditions of First Nations, and specifically Anishinaabe[1] communities, have not been adequately considered in terms of their potential for supporting children's academic success. By gathering information about the components and aspects of narratives produced by Aboriginal children, we can gain further insight into Aboriginal orality and how it differs from mainstream narrative models. This knowledge can guide educators in creating culturally sensitive and appropriate bridges between storytelling and literacy activities in the language arts curriculum. Oral storytelling may also be effectively used in teaching and learning by transmitting knowledge, worldview, and learning among Aboriginal people.

Challenges in Aboriginal Education

The strong oral traditions of First Nations, and specifically Anishinaabe communities, have not been adequately considered in terms of their potential for supporting children's academic success. The 2006 Canadian Census data regarding Aboriginal peoples from Statistics Canada showed lower educational attainment levels for Aboriginal peoples as compared to non-Aboriginal populations. More recently the Canadian Council on Learning (2007) highlighted the interconnectedness of literacy and the economic, social, and cultural life of

an individual in *State of Learning in Canada: No time for complacency. Report on Learning in Canada 2007.* The report revealed that a healthy balance of spiritual, emotional, physical, and intellectual aspects of a person supports life-long learning. The document called for an acknowledgement of the informal and traditional knowledge that Aboriginal learners bring to the classroom. Research from Ball (2006; 2007; 2008) and Kanu (2002) related socioeconomic factors to social disadvantage and exclusion from full participation in school. They identified a mismatch between cognitive and learning experiences of Aboriginal students outside school and the academic content and processes of the formal school system. Chambers Erasmus (1989) has also described aspects of cultural mismatches in performance expectations that interfere with Aboriginal student success.

Patterns of language used by children vary within and across Aboriginal communities and some of these variations have recently been documented and elaborated as features of Aboriginal English dialects or First Nation English Dialects (FNEDs). These dialects are distinct from the form of English that is spoken by mainstream society and are legitimate, systematic, and rule-governed variations of the English language with different and distinct pronunciations, vocabulary, grammar, discourse, and pragmatic usages (Ball & Bernhardt, 2005; Ball & Bernhardt, 2008; Bernhardt, Ball & Deby, 2007; Heit & Blair, 1993). Aboriginal children who speak a FNED are at a disadvantage when their communication skills are formally assessed in school and challenges they face are often framed in a deficit perspective. Several authors (Ball & Bernhardt, 2005; Fadden & Lafrance, 2010; Heit & Blair, 1993; Peltier, 2009; Peltier, 2010a; Peltier, 2010b; Peltier, 2011; Sterzuk, 2008; Sterzuk, 2011) have advocated for a shift in how we perceive and respond to FNEDs to improve academic outcomes for Aboriginal children. Speech-language pathologists have expressed the need for research examining regional data to identify and define the speech and language characteristics of Aboriginal English Dialects. Anderson (2002), Friesen and Friesen (2005), Leavitt (1995, 1987), Nevins 2004, and Piquemal (2003), among others, have also identified the need for a curriculum that integrates elements of traditional and contemporary First Nations culture and validates Aboriginal languages, interaction patterns, and models of discourse as legitimate ways of knowing and learning by making them central to the curriculum. This approach would not only reduce racial tension (Ghosh 2002) and help Aboriginal students feel more comfortable in the classroom, but would also better meet the needs of tuition-paying Aboriginal students in provincial schools, creating a heightened sense of place or connection to

community/land and facilitate involvement of Elders and community members in the schools. In 2007, the Ontario Ministry of Education launched an *Ontario First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Policy Framework* aimed at developing educators' understanding of Aboriginal learning styles and curriculum approaches that support Aboriginal students' literacy and success. The Policy states that, "All students in Ontario will have knowledge and appreciation of contemporary and traditional First Nation, Métis, and Inuit traditions, cultures, and perspectives" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 7).

The Evaluation of Children's Narratives

Researchers in North America have identified narrative developmental sequences for non-Aboriginal populations from the perspective of Western traditions that utilize a variety of analytical models. Several foundational methods for evaluating narratives and their structure have been developed for evaluating children's narratives, including Labov's high point analysis and Stein and Glenn's (1979) story grammar analysis (Labov & Waletzky, 1967; Stein & Glenn, 1979). Labov's personal narrative structural analysis puts the emphasis on affective information and narrative organization around emotional 'high points' or crisis events. Stein and Glenn's story grammar structure model identifies narrative elements such as setting, initiating event, internal response, plan, attempt, consequence, and reaction.

Story structure and meaning have also been evaluated using high point analyses (McCabe & Peterson, 1984; Ripich and Griffith, 1988; Schneider, Hayward, & Dube, 2006; Stein & Glenn, 1982). McCabe and Peterson (1984) analyzed children's narratives using story grammar, high point, and dependency (linguistic complexity or propositions) analyses. Story-raters applied a subjective six-point scale to identify the "good" stories. Story components and structural patterns were analyzed by Schneider, Hayward, and Dube (2006) and this approach to narrative analysis was suggested as a useful component in a speech language assessment. The authors encouraged clinicians to obtain local norms for narrative content and structure utilizing their protocol.

Another form of narrative analysis, the Narrative Scoring Scheme (NSS), (Miller & Chapman, 2008) is an automated measurement tool based on the work of Stein and Glenn (1979, 1982). The analysis is associated with the Systematic Analysis of Language Transcripts (SALT) (Miller & Chapman, 2008) software and is of particular relevance to this research. The NSS represents a purportedly objective narrative structure scoring system by providing explicit examples of scoring criteria for story grammar categories.

Speech-language pathologists who include narrative analysis in their assessment of children's language skills often use this clinical tool, and the narrative elements are familiar to educational practitioners as they contain the traditional elements of story grammar models. The NSS evaluates seven narrative dimensions: (1) introduction–setting and characters; (2) character development main character(s) and supporting character(s) with first person character voice dialogue; (3) mental states–frequency and vocabulary diversity of emotions and thought processes; (4) referencing–clear antecedents to pronouns and references; (5) conflict resolution–thorough description to advance the story; (6) cohesion–logical sequencing with smooth transitions; and (7) conclusion–final event concludes and the story is wrapped up. The story-rater applies a five-point scaled score (0–*minimal/ immature*, 3–*emerging*, and 5–*proficient characteristic*) for each dimension and these are summed to arrive at a total NSS score. A scoring rubric is provided to guide the scoring.

In addition to the analysis method, story elicitation methods and the context in which they are collected are influential factors to consider when evaluating narratives (Gutierrez-Clellen & Quinn, 1993; Melzi, 2000; Pesco, 1994; Ripich, & Griffith, 1988; Schneider et al., 2006;). The research conducted by Ripich and Griffith (1988) utilized picture sequences to elicit stories. The situation of joint-focus between the story-teller and listener provided by the pictures was found to have an influence on the type and amount of descriptive language and the story components used by the storyteller. Schneider et al. (2006) investigated picture-elicited stories of children and this study brought to my attention the importance of using pictures that are suitable and relevant to First Nations populations as an important consideration in using this approach to elicit narratives. Since narrative elicitation methods have an impact on the information presented in stories, a culturally familiar setting with known participants was chosen for use in the present research. This provided children with freedom to share stories in a circle with peers. This approach is supported in a study conducted by Gutierrez-Clellen and Quinn (1993), where different means of assessing narratives with various ethnic groups of children was explored, and in which the authors recommend that "the examiner should consider the 'naturalness' or cultural relevancy of the methods used to elicit the children's stories" (Gutierrez-Clellen & Quinn, 1993, p. 4). Finally, research by Melzi (2000) emphasizes the importance of sharing personal event stories as a vehicle for children to share their feelings and opinions instead of simply retelling factual information. Pesco (1994) elicited personal event stories in storytelling circles with Algonquin children. I was

inspired by this study as circles are a culturally relevant eliciting context.

Finally, a large body of research has documented cultural variations that exist in the ways in which narratives are constructed and organized, and also in how these narratives should be viewed and analyzed (Bliss and McCabe, 2008; Gutierrez-Clellen, Pena & Quinn, 1995; Gutierrez-Clellen & Quinn, 1993; Johnston, 2007, 1982). Chambers Erasmus (1989) and Johnston and Wong (2002) described aspects of cultural mismatches in performance expectations that interfere with Aboriginal student success. These investigators emphasize the importance of storytellers' perspectives and cultural orientations as important factors to be considered in understanding and assessing storytelling. Differences in perspective and interpretation may lead to deficit interpretations of children's narrative abilities in the classroom when teachers expect a traditional literate style in oral language and narrative formulation (Michaels, 1981). Nevertheless, Bliss and McCabe (2008) recommend that, if the long-term goal for all children is academic success, all students regardless of their cultural background should be taught to comprehend and tell classically structured narratives.

Aboriginal Storytelling

Aboriginal storytelling is a cultural approach to learning where listeners make their own meaning according to their level of readiness and each story challenges the listener with new learning. Each retelling of a story is valid; however certain narrative details and content may be pertinent to only a specific geographic region or tribal area. For example, linguistic anthropologist, Valentine (1995), described Ojibway stories as representing two narrative categories, the *tipaacimowinan*, which are stories of historical and personal importance, anecdotes, personal accounts, and amusing tales, and the *aatisoohkaanan*, which are sacred stories and legend-myths. Some oral stories may combine both elements by being set in current times and including a mythical character.

Piquemal (2003) describes the circular structure of traditional tribal narrative (e.g. events within events and meaning piled on meaning) as a story unfolds. The circular structure means that the listener/teller is central and the experience of the story radiates outward in a three-dimensional, interconnected spiral. The form and structure are unlike those of Western fiction in that they are not tied to any particular time line, main character, or event. Rather than a 'good' versus 'evil' order (or 'Western binary'), these stories focus on a concern for balance and harmony.

Meanings arise from the story in a holistic context and a moral may not be stated explicitly. Instead, the listener is expected to construct meaning over time, both during and after the storytelling event. Narratives are shaped by the interaction of the storyteller and the listeners and therefore are subject to change when being retold.

Cavender (1996) illustrates the important role of oral history and narrative. Dakota oral tradition includes oral history and ensures each generation understands its own history and responsibilities to future generations. Story repetition is an important acquired skill arising from rigorous and extensive training in Dakota life. The storyteller's connection to the land and place is solidified with each telling of a story. Dakota stories are not written, and Dakota people are responsible for their repetition. These are not merely interesting stories or even the simple dissemination of historical facts. They are, more importantly, transmissions of culture upon which our survival as a people depends. The learning of these stories is a lifelong process and, likewise, the rewards of that process last a lifetime (Cavender, 1996, p. 13). The author concludes that stories help the young people, the children, and grandchildren of the elders and storytellers gain an understanding of where they came from, who they are, and what is expected of them.

Aboriginal scholars Archibald (1997), Cavender (1996), Howard (1999), Mader (1996), and Simpson (2000) illustrate how traditional stories provide a lens to see the past and a context to interpret experience. These authors investigated storytelling and oral traditions in a variety of Aboriginal communities by working closely with Elders who use stories about their experience as pedagogy. This illustrates the importance of story within the Aboriginal oral tradition. Mader (1996), for example, studied the stories of seven traditional educators in a northern Alberta Cree community. She described these teachers as being community Elders and illustrated the learning process in a First Nation learning context, sharing insights gained. Elders are respected for their wisdom and do not necessarily have to be old to be given this honour. These Elders freely offered their wisdom to living generations of their people in order to connect them harmoniously with their past, present, and future and for the purpose of sharing with newcomers. She describes how one Elder selected stories of her own life to facilitate her own learning that were not presented in chronological order since the timeline of some stories was not important. These authors also described the benefits of using storytelling in classrooms in order to enhance cultural values such as respect, responsibility, reciprocity, reverence, holism, interrelatedness, and synergy. Student involvement through story telling helps people "think,

feel, and be" (Archibald, 1997, p. 212) and solidifies responsibility to future generations and connection to the land and place. Cavender (1996) describes how the oral tradition often includes rigorous and extensive training in oral history and story repetition and requires significant competence and skill. Howard (1999) describes how oral storytelling provides an opportunity for the storyteller to share a message that reinforces important cultural values. Simpson (2000) and others have described how the oral tradition may be used for transmitting knowledge, worldview, and learning among Anishinaabek people by effectively using storytelling in teaching and learning. Scholars including Chambers Erasmus (1989), Kanu (2002) and Van der Wey (2001), have also investigated how Aboriginal storytelling and personal event stories may be used to enhance learning. The authors describe how Aboriginal students are culturally socialized to learn through storytelling and are comfortable engaging in classrooms that utilize storytelling as an oral instructional method. Teacher and peer understanding of the individual's reflective practice is facilitated and class discussion and further inquiry is deepened through sharing a personal event story about culturally relevant field trips or experiences. Teachers who listen as Aboriginal children disclose who they are through their stories can extend the competencies that these children bring to school by confirming and validating their experiences, knowledge, and the cultural context where experiences and knowledge are situated.

The Structure of Aboriginal Children's Narratives

Relatively little is known about the nature of Aboriginal children's storytelling in general and its application to learning in particular. An extensive search of the academic literature was conducted to identify any existing research supporting and acknowledging Aboriginal children's ways of knowing and learning and their relationship to narrative structure, content, and use. The few studies of Aboriginal children's narratives identified through the search include Cronin (1982), Kay-Raining Bird and Vetter (1994), and Pesco (1994). These authors describe Aboriginal children's narratives using the perspective of Western traditions of structure and meaning and critically examine the adequacy of those perspectives in light of social and cultural aspects of storytelling. The researchers propose that North American researchers' ways of eliciting narratives is different from how stories are told in First Nation contexts.

Pesco (1994) gathered 'shared experience narratives' from Algonquin children aged 10 to 13 years, in Rapid Lake, Québec. High point analysis revealed complete or complex episodes present in the story structure. However, internal response and internal plan were typically absent. Pesco concluded that an emphasis on goal-directed behaviour was not suited to Algonquin children's narratives. Also, half the stories ended at the high point without a resolution, a component that is typically expected in mainstream stories. Rather than interpreting this pattern as indicative of less-developed structure, Pesco viewed the prevalence of the 'ending at the high point' pattern as possibly reflecting local standards for storytelling and participants' desire to engage listeners and keep them in the story realm. A second key finding from Pesco's study was that of the importance of the teller-listener relationship. Algonquin children's narratives placed equal value on relating to each other and relating events during the storytelling interactions with peers. This interesting phenomenon suggests that the storytelling context is of great importance when sampling Aboriginal children's narratives that has implications for storytelling curriculum activities as well. Cronin (1982) studied grade 6 Cree and Métis children in Lac La Biche, Alberta and illustrated the importance of teaching Cree story structure in schools. The Cree narrative was described as deviating from the 'ideal structure' used in the school system. The study showed that the students lacked significant knowledge of traditional Cree story structure and were better able to recall the conventional European structure. This was attributed to these Cree students having been exposed to and learning to produce the well-established Euro-American story schema after six years of attendance at a large integrated school.

Kay-Raining Bird and Vetter (1994) gathered stories from Chippewa-Cree children in grades 1, 3, and 5 on the Rocky Boy Reservation in Montana. The content and structure of the stories were analyzed to compare narrative features from traditional (strong Cree cultural influence in the home) versus non-traditional (acculturated life-style) students and a diverse range of story structures were found within this cultural group. They concluded that episodic structure was an appropriate means of analyzing Aboriginal narratives and that older children told stories that included more complete episodes, obstacles, elaborated endings, and multiple, causally connected episodes than did younger children. Story content analysis showed that intrapersonal obstacles were used only by children in the oldest group. A number of later-developing aspects of story content were identified that were related to Cree cultural influences and these were evident in the narratives from the traditional students. The developmental course for story structure and content was seen to vary between the groups as a function of culture. Despite the sensitivity of the episodic analysis, these researchers felt that use of emically-derived

structural accounts rather than the etically-derived clinical analyses that they employed would have provided a better description of the stories of Chippewa-Cree children. They recommended future research to contrast etic measures with emic accounts of the same stories produced by Aboriginal children.

In spite of this research base, in most cases Aboriginal children's narratives continue to be evaluated with reference to traditional protocols that are not based on standards for good storytelling derived from within the children's own culture. In many cases, speech-language pathologists continue to apply the elements of classic Western stories as learning and mastery targets for all children. Given the findings of the few studies reviewed above, such an approach has the potential to result in deficit interpretations of Aboriginal children's narrative skills. A lack of understanding of Aboriginal children's unique speech, language, and narrative abilities may interfere with a positive and optimistic perspective and reduce available opportunities for them to fully participate in the educational process. This deficit orientation regarding their competence is compounded by cultural and linguistic misjudgements and misunderstandings, even when English is the children's first language (Ball & Bernhardt, 2005; Ball & Bernhardt, 2008; Bernhardt, et al., 2007; Fadden & Lafrance, 2010; Heit & Blair, 1993; Peltier, 2009; Peltier, 2010a; Peltier, 2010b; Peltier, 2011; Sterzuk, 2008; Sterzuk, 2011).

These fundamental research and personal observations set the stage for the present study. I chose to investigate the components of Aboriginal children's narrative structure by applying a culturally appropriate narrative elicitation task and adopting an emically- derived narrative analysis protocol related to components and patterns of Aboriginal narrative schemes. The research project represents an attempt to bridge the gap between emic and etic perspectives of Aboriginal storytelling and to highlight the importance of these distinctions for the culturally appropriate evaluation of narrative competence for Aboriginal children.

The Present Study

I was privileged be able to conduct this ethnographically-driven research study that examined the narratives produced by Anishinaabek children of the Nipissing First Nation community in north-eastern Ontario. My position as a researcher in this study was supported by my personal membership in the Anishinaabe Nation, my understanding of community dynamics, my life experience in a First Nation community, and my working relationship in the Nipissing First Nation territory. An overarching goal was to address the knowledge gap surrounding Aboriginal children's oral language traditions and represent these as important and legitimate expressions of knowledge, beliefs, and traditions that have a rightful place in classrooms and that can be used to educate all children. This research took the form of an ethnographic study with opportunities to understand the research participants in their own context and to explore the culturally-specific meanings behind the data. The specific goals of the research were to:

1. create an emic or insider's research paradigm for consideration by future researchers;

2. explore Anishinaabek Elders' attitudes towards and evaluation of children's narratives;

3. inform the narrative assessment process used by speech-language pathologists, and

4. inform teacher evaluation and elicitation practices for First Nation children's narratives.

Method

Since the Aboriginal community values family and community involvement in decision-making, I approached the leadership via the Nipissing First Nation Education Committee several months prior to initiating the research project and received approval for the research study. I was cognizant of the need to include Elder's perspectives in my research approach, and initiating the study in the manner described below created many opportunities for us to develop a relationship by socializing, sharing personal anecdotes, and developing mutual understanding and trust.

Participants

Both purposeful and convenience participant recruitment methods were employed within the specific First Nation community of Nipissing First Nation, as this afforded an authentic and familiar group of Elders, students, and community members with interest in this topic. Purposeful sampling means that participants are not randomly selected but instead are intentionally invited to participate in the research due to their personal knowledge and expertise.

Elders. In the case of this study, Elders were purposefully selected based on two criteria: that their first language was Anishinaabemowin; and that they had not attended formal schooling beyond high school. I established these criteria since individuals with these qualities are known as "keepers of the Ojibway language," meaning that Anishinaabemowin frames their perceptions of orality and they possess an

"Indian mind" or Anishinaabe worldview. The Aboriginal language frames one's perceptual and cognitive processes, and a reduced number of years in formal education minimizes the impact of acculturation to Western perspectives. These criteria were especially relevant so that Elder ratings would depict preference for children's stories that exuded features of Aboriginal language or narrative style rather than those of the Western perspective that is upheld in the formal school setting. These selection criteria resulted in a small sample, since those individuals who met them were elderly and very few in number.

Three Elders known to me were initially approached about the project to gain their support, and these Elders then referred me to others of similar backgrounds. Eight Elders were visited a few times over a six-month period in order to establish rapport and a level of trust. From the outset, it was explained to each Elder that I planned to carry out a research project about children's storytelling in the community. Four Elders consented to participate in the study. I provided them with a verbal explanation of how the study information would be collected and used, and they were assured of anonymity if they so desired. Each Elder was presented with the option of giving free and informed consent verbally and having this tape-recorded, or of providing written consent. The presentation of tobacco is a culturally appropriate way to show respect and to ask for help. The tobacco offering to Elders reflects the Anishinaabe understanding that life and thus, knowledge originate with the Creator. Sharing of one's knowledge acknowledges spiritual connection. Two Elders chose to receive a tobacco offering from the researcher as their scripted informed consent was explained and obtained. The other two Elders chose to have the researcher read the information to them, outlining their role and the request for their free and informed consent. All four Elders voluntarily signed the informed consent form that was provided. These Elders' time and dedication to this project were considered with reverence.

Children. Child participants were eight children within the age range of 8 to 10 years. All children were English-speaking, none were bilingual. The child participants represented a convenience sampling of 24 children who were approached and who agreed to participate in the project. Signed parental consent forms were obtained and the children's assent for the audio-recording of their narratives was obtained verbally using a pre-determined script that was read to all children. Two girls were in grade 3, one boy and two girls were in grade 4, and two boys and one girl were in grade 5. Each child told from 1 to 7 stories, resulting in a total of 36 stories.

Eliciting Children's Stories: Storytelling Circles

Four children's storytelling circles, each lasting an hour and a half, were held within the community. Since narrative elicitation methods have been shown to impact the information presented in a story as described above, (Gutierrez-Clellen & Quinn, 1993; Melzi, 2000; Pesco, 1994; Ripich & Griffith, 1988; Schneider et al., 2006), a familiar setting with known participants was intentionally selected. This provided children with the freedom to share their stories in a circle with familiar peers. The peer storytelling circles described by Pesco (1994) were used as the narrative elicitation context in this study. A circle is a culturally relevant setting conducive to storytelling, and circle protocol ensured that each individual's story was listened to by everyone in the circle. All of the stories produced by the children were audio recorded.

I opened each storytelling circle by explaining the traditional circle protocol to the children, who were seated on the floor. A "talking stone" (a round, smooth rock) was introduced, and it was explained that the stone would help each person to listen respectfully, remember, and share openly from the heart. The person holding the stone was to be the speaker, and when finished, he or she would hand the stone over to the person on the left, thus ensuring that the circle flowed in a clock-wise direction. Movement in a clock-wise direction represents following the route of the sun and speaking your truth that flows from your heart as perceived by Anishinaabek people. The passing of the stone signalled that the speaker was finished telling their story, and this precluded the need for prompting the child to say more or to verbally indicate when the story was complete. The importance of not interrupting or correcting a storyteller was emphasized and, in the situation where a personal experience had been shared by two or more members of the circle, the option to recount the story from one's own perspective was welcomed when his or her turn arrived. The option of passing the stone on to the next person without sharing a personal event narrative was provided, and in a few instances this option was used. There was no expectation that an individual's story would be scrutinized by peers or by the facilitator in the circle. Each participant was instructed to take what they could from each sharing and to leave the rest. This supported the Aboriginal values of non-interference and personal holistic processing and learning that involves mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual elements.

In my role as the storytelling circle facilitator, I opened up each circle by sharing a personal event narrative to set the stage for sharing. I sat in the circle with the children and over

the course of the storytelling circles I shared one story about a childhood experience and one story about a recent outing. When the stone came around again, I passed the stone to the next person without telling my own story, to minimize my influence and modeling on the children's storytelling process and to allow more time for their narrations.

The circle format for storytelling was nonthreatening and created a respectful environment. Familiar peers participated in the circle, thus contributing to a child's feelings of trust and comfort in sharing. The children sat quietly and listened to their peers' narratives. More often than not, when it was their turn, they shared a story about a personal experience. The circle provided an environment conducive to self-expression in the absence of criticism or competition. On occasion, a previously told story influenced the next storyteller to tell a story with the same theme. This created a nice flow among storytellers in the group.

Eliciting Elders' Perspectives on "Good" Stories: Elder Gatherings

The audio taped stories were presented to the four participating Elders during two gatherings, each of which was no longer than one and a half hours in length. This meant that the imposition on the Elders' time for the rating and discussion of the stories was not excessive. Through ongoing discussion, a narrative coding protocol unfolded over time. This formed the basis for the story analysis and for the definition of what might be described as "good" Anishinaabe narratives. This method differs from that typically used in narrative analysis by using the iterative and incremental development of a narrative analysis framework in ways proposed by ethnographic research approaches (Leavitt, 1995; Nevins, 2004).

Elder Ratings. The process at the first gathering consisted of the Elders identifying their 'most liked' stories. As an Aboriginal person myself, I was aware that traditional Aboriginal people often believe that each child is whole and complete, bringing special and individualized gifts to the world from the Creator. Since such a belief system conflicts with the Elders' task of choosing or favouring one child's story over another, at the outset of the story rating session I explained to the Elders why it was important to judge each story in spite of the fact that this process was perhaps uncomfortable for them. Once I provided this explanation, the audio recording of each story was played for the group using speakers and each Elder completed a story rating scale individually and in confidence. Each story was identified numerically, with the identity of the storyteller undisclosed. The Elders listened to and rated each of the

36 stories using a binary scale: 1= *Did not like the story very much* or 2 = *Liked the story very much*. A rating of 2 meant that the Elder explicitly and definitively identified the story as "favourable or good" in contrast to those less favourable stories that received a rating of 1. This scale was used so that the stories receiving a score of 2 were easily sorted for further in-depth analysis and created a means to compare and contrast the stories in order to enrich the analysis.

All of the stories shared by the children in the storytelling circles were treated with reverence, for they are extremely special, offering insights into how each Anishinaabe child perceives the world, his or her relationships with family members, the First Nation community, and the land. Each story was assigned a title which is represented in the summary tables. The title of each story exemplifies topics and activities that were especially relevant to this group of Anishinaabe children.

Elder-Generated Codes. In the second Elder gathering, the stories that were rated as being liked by the Elders were listened to again. After the digital recording of each of the stories was played for the group, the researcher facilitated a discussion of questions such as, "Why do you like this story?" or "Is there anything else that you like?" It was anticipated that some of the Elders might prefer to speak in Anishinaabemowin, as their use of the mother tongue was potentially more conducive to providing detailed descriptions of the nature being requested in this discussion, and also since use of the English language might present a linguistic barrier to the accurate expression of what they truly wanted to convey. An Anishinaabemowin interpreter was present during the Elder Panel discussion to provide the option of responding in English or Anishnaabemowin, however this option was only rarely used during the session. All Elders participated in the session and had no difficulty expressing themselves in English. The Elders' comments and responses to the children's stories were audio- recorded for further analysis. The researcher summed up their responses verbally throughout the discussion period and also wrote them on a flip chart.

Development and Elaboration of Elder Codes. The data categories that emerged directly from the Elder participants' comments were considered to represent an emically-derived measure of Anishinaabe children's personal narratives. The emically-derived protocol was then applied to analyze the narratives of the Anishinaabek children, identifying story schemes, structure, and content that were relevant to the Anishinaabe worldview. The development of such a unique analysis protocol was central to creating a culturally relevant lens, rather than

Table 1. Elder-identified preferred narrative elements and themes and frequency of occurrence in the narratives

Code Number	Code Content/Description	Frequency of Occurrence in Elders' Measure
1	flow of events and ideas without interruption	17
2	humour or amusement	16
3	use of descriptive language by the narrator to create a vivid picture	17
4	a sense of adventure and excitement	6
5	statements or expression of emotion and feelings	12
6	"Ways of thinking" - Listener's insight into the story-teller's thinking process, listener's inquiry and reflection	14
7	attention-grabbing or unexpected events	16
8	Mention of a savoured treat	2
9	dialogue and storyteller animation (voice)	12
10	reference to the extraordinary or unexplained	4
11	examples of good moral character and values	4
12	familiar settings and events that are memorable	7
13	pleasant childhood experience	6
14	unpleasant childhood experience	5
15	story induces distant memories in the Elder from shared experiences	3
16	reference to relationships with family and community members	15
17	not lengthy	11
18	lengthy	7
19	ending stated	11
20	ending not stated	7
21	intergenerational story passed down from family members	3

applying prescriptive codes based on Western concepts and themes. According to Rubin and Rubin (2005, p. 209), such an approach provides opportunities for generating original insights from the research data, thus avoiding "testing someone else's theory rather than building one of your own".

Based on the content analysis, a list of 21 Elder-identified preferred narrative elements and themes was derived from the rating and discussion of the children's stories through an ethnographic process of grouping similar comments together known as content analysis. The Elder codes used for the analysis of the children's stories are provided in Table 1.

Examples of the comments made by the Elders during the second Elder's panel gathering that led to the generation of the coding system used to analyze the children's narratives are provided in Appendix A.

Coding of Children's Stories with Elder-Generated Codes.

Each individual story was transcribed verbatim by the researcher following the conventions of the Systematic Analysis of Language Transcript (SALT) (Miller & Chapman, 2008) that included features of punctuation, dialogue, trailing off, and intonation. The transcribed stories were then coded by the researcher using the Elder-generated coding scheme presented in Table 1. These Elders' codes were entered into the utterance analysis option for hand-coding of the SALT software program (Miller & Chapman, 2008). The themes contained in the narratives were then analyzed using SALT and a frequency count of each of the Elder codes was generated.

Use of Narrative Scoring System. The Narrative Scoring Scheme (NSS) of the SALT software program was also applied to the narratives to provide an analysis of the stories that captured the expected elements of traditional Western narratives and provided an index of each child's ability to produce a coherent narrative according to these standards. This provided a comparison for the analysis based on the Elders' coding system, with the intent to allow areas of agreement and disagreement that might be indicative of cultural differences in narrative structure and values to emerge. The NSS scores were decided upon by the researcher. The seven Story Characteristics that were scored included: introduction (setting, characters); character development; mental states; referencing; conflict resolution; cohesion; and conclusion. Each of these characteristics received a scaled score from 0 (minimal, immature) to 5 (proficient). Minimal/Immature characteristics were scored as 0 and a score of 1 was subjectively determined by the researcher. Emerging characteristics were scored as 3 and scores of 2 and 4 were

subjectively determined by the researcher. A composite score was derived by adding the total of the seven characteristic scores. The highest possible composite score obtainable was 35. A good composite score is within the range of 15 to 35, while a poor composite score is with the range of 7 to 14. NSS Composite Scores are shown in Table 2.

Results & Discussion

Elder Ratings

The Elders' story rating scale sheets were tallied, revealing that 30 of the 36 stories had been assigned at least one rating of 2 (*Liked the story very much*). Of these, 18 were given a 2 rating by three of the four Elders. The researcher placed these 18 stories into the group of "preferred" stories. Six of the children's stories had been assigned a rating of 1 by all four Elders, and these were placed into the group of "not preferred" stories. The remaining 12 stories, which had received only one or two ratings of 2 by the Elders, were set aside. The audio-recorded Elder discussion was transcribed and comments regarding specific stories as well as general group comments made as they reminisced about life experiences that were related to the children's story themes were noted. A summary of the story titles of the preferred and not preferred stories and the story rating and code score they received from the Elders is provided in Table 2.

Elders' Culturally Valued Narrative Elements and Themes

The Anishinaabe Elders applied their insider "ways of thinking" in their evaluations of preferred and non-preferred narratives. They preferred stories that gave insight into the storyteller's or character's thinking process and stories that caused the listener to engage in further thought or interpretation in response to the story. These are important aspects of Anishinaabe orality, as they serve as learning tools. As the listener engages in active thinking and as stories are remembered and revisited over the life span, new learnings unfold for the individual. A summary of the frequency with which each of the Elder- generated codes was applied to the 24 (preferred and not preferred) narratives can be found in Table 1. The frequency of Elder Codes for all stories ranged from 2 (lowest) to 17 (highest). As shown in Table 2, the Elder Preferred stories had high counts of Elders' codes that ranged from 8 to 17, while the least preferred stories had lower counts that ranged from 6 to 8.

Recounts of personal events were the predominant type of narrative shared by the children in the storytelling circles, as these were the type of narratives that were modelled in the initial story telling circles. The child storyteller usually

Table 2. Story titles, Elder Story Rating, Elder Story Score and NSS Scores

Brief Story Title	Total story length	Story Rating Elder 1	Story Rating Elder 2	Story Rating Elder 3	Story Rating Elder 4	Elder Code Score	NSS Composite Score
1. Grandpa's Story about a Stink Bomb	1:09	2	2	2	2	9	30
3. 4-Wheeling in the Garden	1:27	2	2	2	2	9	33
7. The Car Crash	2:20	2	2	2	2	10	31
8. How I Broke my Arm	3:17	2	2	2	2	9	35
9. The Bear at the Dump	2:38	2	2	2	2	8	34
10. My Pets	13:03	2	2	2	2	17	34
11. The Leech at the Beach	3:25	2	2	2	2	10	34
12. My Pet Bunny	3:35	2	2	2	2	12	33
17. My Cousin's Ruined Dress	1:23	2	2	2	2	11	30
2. Skating at the Outdoor Rink	1:35	1	2	2	2	10	31
4. Skating To Dokis Point	1:23	1	2	2	2	13	32
5 .Trip to NY Islander Hockey Game	1:52	1	2	2	2	10	33
6. Getting Pushed in a Hole	1:44	2	1	2	2	9	34
13. Family Day at Trout Lake	2:33	2	1	2	2	12	33
14. Summer Program Water Day	1:09	2	2	1	2	9	26
15. A Spoiled Surprise	:53	2	2	1	2	8	34
16. How I got my Family Clan	1:07	2	1	2	2	10	29
18. Trip to Ottawa Senator's Hockey Game	1:53	2	2	2	1	13	31
19. Slippery Slide	:58	1	1	1	1	6	30
20. Gibralter Rock Accident	:50	1	1	1	1	7	23

21. Slammed The Door on my Thumb	1:38	1	1	1	1	6	31
22. My New Dog "Ben"	1:11	1	1	1	1	7	30
23. Trip to Kettle Point	1:08	1	1	1	1	7	34
24 .The Axe Accident	:42	1	1	1	1	8	31

narrated their stories from the perspective of an observer or co-participant in stories related to activities with family or friends.

Many of the preferred stories were about shared activities with family and community members, and a number of these stories took place on the land. These themes illustrate the importance of Anishinaabe kinship relations and grounding of an individual as one develops a relationship with Mother Earth and nature. A number of stories had an element of surprise or suspense and included unexpected and unexplained elements (Elder Codes 5, 6). Examples of such stories include the narrative about 'The bear at the dump', and the narrative about 'How I received my Clan'. A sense of humility was usually evident as the child was not usually depicted as the main character and was not described as being superior to others. Some stories involved taking pleasure from being tricked or fooled or behaving in a naive or childish way (Elder Codes 2 and 7). 'A Spoiled Surprise', 'Getting Pushed in a Hole', and 'My Pets' are examples of such stories.

The most frequently applied Elder-generated codes were: flow of events and ideas without interruption, humour or amusement, attention-grabbing or unexpected events, reference to relationships with family and community members, use of descriptive language by the narrator to create a vivid picture, statements or expression of emotion and feelings, dialogue and storyteller animation (voice), not lengthy, and ending stated.

Of the coding categories represented in Table 1, four of the Elder codes are of particular relevance to this study and are therefore discussed in more detail to illustrate the important culturally-specific meaning behind the data.

Humorous stories (Elder code Number 2) were funny and amusing. Humour plays a large role in Anishinaabe storytelling and orality, as evidenced by many of the stories spontaneously narrated by the Elders during our gatherings. The Elder storytellers themselves frequently expressed their amusement while telling a story, and the listeners frequently responded with laughter, however not all of these stories were recounts of happy or pleasant events. This requires further explanation as Anishinaabe humour is not always evident to a non-Anishinaabe. Non-Anishinaabe readers may be surprised at some of the events that the Elders considered to be unpleasant childhood experiences but that were nevertheless categorized as humorous. Non-Aboriginal people may feel that a humorous response to such situations is not in good taste. The Anishinaabe sense of humour is culturally based and Anishinaabek are socialized differently than people from other cultures, backgrounds, and experiences. Humour has supported the "undying spirit" of the Anishinaabek over the course of history and usually in an unpleasant situation the humorous side of things is emphasized.

Six of the preferred stories were coded as pleasant childhood experiences and included elements of family harmony and fun, while five were coded as unpleasant stories about accidents, brushes with death, and unhappy feelings. This illustrates that the Elders did not value pleasant childhood experience stories over those stories that represented an unpleasant experience for the storyteller. This accords with traditional Anishinaabe values concerning life experience. It is natural that a person experiences both hardships and enjoyable times in the circle of life. It is believed that wisdom is gained from both positive and negative life experiences, and that the Creator never subjects a person to something that he or she is not ready for along his or her learning path. It can be said that someone who has experienced and learned from both positive and negative events has an old Spirit and will become a Spirit Guide to support other younger Spirits in their life journeys on the Earth.

Intergenerational stories (Elder code 21) were stories that had been received by the storyteller from a family member. This factor is especially relevant to the Aboriginal culture and socialization practice. The community respects those who relate stories from the past to support an oral history and connection to place/land/family.

Table 3. Summary of NSS coding

Brief Story Title	Introduction	Character Development	Mental State	Referencing	Conflict Resolution	Cohesion	Conclusion
1. Grandpa's Story about a Stink Bomb	5	5	1	5	4	5	5
3. 4-Wheeling in the Garden	4	5	4	5	5	5	5
7. The Car Crash	5	5	5	5	4	3	4
8. How I Broke my Arm	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
9. The Bear at the Dump	4	5	5	5	5	5	5
10. My Pets	5	5	5	5	5	4	5
11. The Leech at the Beach	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
12. My Pet Bunny	4	5	5	5	5	5	4
17. My Cousin's Ruined Dress	5	5	5	4	5	5	1
2. Skating at the Outdoor Rink	4	5	4	5	5	5	3
4. Skating To Dokis Point		5	4	5	4	5	4
5. Trip to NY Islander Hockey Game	5	5	5	5	5	4	4
6. Getting Pushed in a Hole	5	5	5	5	5	5	4
13. Family Day at Trout Lake	5	5	5	5	5	4	4
14. Summer Program Water Day	4	3	4	5	4	5	1
15. A Spoiled Surprise	5	5	5	5	5	5	4
16. How I got my Family Clan	5	5	4	4	5	5	1
18. Trip to Ottawa Senator's Hockey Game	4	5	5	5	5	3	4

19. Slippery Slide	3	4	4	5	5	5	4
20. Gibralter Rock Accident	4	4	1	5	5	3	1
21. Slammed the Door on my Thumb	5	4	4	5	5	3	5
22. My New Dog "Ben"	5	3	4	5	5	4	4
23. Trip to Kettle Point	5	5	5	5	5	5	4
24. The Axe Accident	5	5	4	5	4	5	3

Cultural beliefs, and values are perpetuated through the oral tradition and stories are passed down from generation to generation.

As shown in Table 2, six of the stories that were not preferred (received an Elder rating of "1" from each Elder) were less than two minutes in duration. However, 11 of the 16 preferred stories were also less than two minutes in duration. These were all assigned the Elder code 17 (not lengthy). This demonstrates that story length alone was not consistently associated with positive Elder preferences, and that shorter stories were valued by Elders under certain circumstances and when combined with other elements.

NSS Scoring

As can be seen in Table 3, the NSS story analyses demonstrate that the Anishinaabe storytellers were judged to have: *emerging* to *proficient* (NSS Scores from 3 to 5) application of story introduction features such as setting and characters; *emerging* to *proficient* (NSS Scores from 3 to 5) application of character development elements; *minimal/immature, emerging,* or *proficient* (NSS Scores from 1 to 5) application of mental state references; *emerging* to *proficient* (NSS Scores of 4 or 5) use of antecedents to pronouns and clear referents; *emerging* to *proficient* (NSS Scores of 4 or 5) application of conflict resolution; *emerging* to *proficient* (NSS Scores from 3 to 5) application of cohesion where events follow a logical order and less emphasis is placed on minor events; and *minimal/immature, emerging,* or *proficient* (NSS Scores from 1 to 5) application of conclusion where the story is clearly wrapped up and the final event is drawn to a conclusion.

Comparison of Elder and NSS Coding

The comparison of the findings of the Elder-generated analyses and the NSS scoring results shown in Table 2 indicates that a number of features of Anishinaabe story structure and content are the same as or similar to many of the components considered to be valued in conventional Western-perspective storytelling analysis approaches incorporated in the Narrative Scoring Scheme. It can be seen that, for some stories, a high Elder Code Score corresponded with a high NSS Composite Score. For example, the *My Pets* story obtained an Elder Code Score of 17 and an NSS Composite Score of 34, and the *Skating To Dokis Point* story obtained an Elder Code Score of 13 and a total an NSS Composite Score of 32.

However, a comparison of preferred versus not preferred stories also reveals an incongruence between scoring codes for many of the elicited narratives. NSS Composite Scores for the preferred stories ranged from 26 to 35 (within the range of composite scores for good stories) and the scores for the not preferred stories ranged from 23 to 34 (also within the range of composite scores for good stories). In other words, some stories that were not considered by the Elders to have a significant number of features of a good story nevertheless obtained high NSS values when a Western-perspective lens was applied. The *Trip to Kettle Point* story was "not preferred," (and received an Elder Code Score of 7), yet this story had a total NSS Composite score of 34, which represents a slightly higher score than that of two of the Elders' preferred stories. Similarly, the *Slammed the Door on My Thumb* story obtained only an Elder Code Score of 6 and yet received a total NSS Score of 31. These findings show that the narrative analysis derived from a Western based perspective such as the NSS is not always congruent with a narrative analysis based on the Anishinaabe perspective, and illustrates how the application of an emic narrative evaluation scheme sometimes yields different results than an etic or imposed clinical tool. The Elder derived coding highlighted elements of the elicited narratives that were culturally driven while the

NSS highlighted a suggested level of proficiency in narrative development that was not intricately linked to the story content or to cultural values regarding good storytelling from an Aboriginal perspective. The Elder Story Ratings and Elder Codes and Scores provided rich data that reflected cultural traditions around Aboriginal narratives.

Summary

In this research, an emically-derived standard was used to examine and evaluate Anishinaabe children's oral stories. An etically-derived assessment protocol represented by the *SALT* computer software and Narrative Scoring Scheme was applied and compared to the scoring provided by the four Elders who were well-versed in the elements of Anishinaabe orality. The story features investigated with a conventional story analysis protocol included the traditional narrative components including the presence of an introduction; character development; mental states; referencing; conflict resolution; cohesion; and conclusion. Each characteristic received a subjective scaled score from 0 to 5, resulting in a total NSS Composite Score for each story. The emically-derived protocol of 21 categories developed by the Elders was also applied to each story, and a total Elder Code Score was obtained for each story.

A comparison was made between the etic and emic standards applied to evaluate the stories and the data illustrate that narrative analysis derived from a Western-based perspective as represented by the NSS was not always congruent with a narrative analysis based on the Anishinaabe perspective. The application of an emic narrative evaluation scheme yielded different but in some cases complimentary results to those obtained through the use of an etic or Western clinical tool. The research shed light on Anishinaabek Elders' attitudes towards and evaluation of children's narratives and illustrates that oral storytelling tasks can be considered as appropriate activities for eliciting and investigating important culturally relevant discourse elements of communication that underlie the communicative competence of Aboriginal children. Results of the study reveal culturally relevant preferences for components of narratives based on the perceptions of Elders who value Aboriginal orality.

Engagement with the Anishinabek community was positive and the children were happy to share personal event narratives and to have time with other children after school. The Elders expressed happiness and gratitude towards the children for their enjoyable stories and were honoured to participate. The researcher enjoyed seeing the world through the eyes of the children as stories were shared. The circle format for storytelling was nonthreatening and created a respectful environment. At times a story also stirred the memory of the Elders and they reminisced about times gone by, sharing a personal experience narrative with the same theme.

In primary grade classrooms, teachers frequently engage children in a circle setting such as story time or show and tell. A circle setting for sharing of personal event narratives can readily be applied in the classroom and it may be helpful to introduce a relevant theme to create focus for the group, especially for Anishinaabe students. Since a storytelling circle is appropriate for bringing together children and Elders, some teachers may wish to approach an Anishinaabe Elder from the children's community to join the circle. With the involvement of an Elder, the traditional circle protocol and use of a talking stick or stone would be appropriate. A child's emotional state and sense of well-being are important factors that facilitate memory and learning. Classrooms that nurture children and exude pleasant surroundings are more conducive to child learning than impersonal, anxiety-ridden environments. When children are given the opportunity to share stories in the classroom, information is gained by teachers and peers about the child's cultural background, interests, family, and community. This can support cultural understanding, and such shared knowledge can facilitate relationship development within the school.

Limitations of the study include 1) the small sample size, that affects the generalizability of the findings to other Aboriginal cultural communities and classrooms and 2) the lack of coding reliability for both the Elder derived coding and the NSS scoring. The narratives were coded by the researcher who was familiar with the children who produced the stories and with the comments made by the Elders about each of the stories. As a result it is possible that some elements of bias may have entered into the coding process that might have affected the final analyses.

Nevertheless, the study presents a novel, emically-derived perspective for the evaluation of the oral stories of Anishinaabe children to inform the narrative assessment process used by speech-language pathologists, and inform teacher evaluation and elicitation practices for First Nation children's narratives. An emic or insider's research paradigm has been created and presented to inform future researchers and positively influence use of ethnographic and qualitative research in this area. The data illustrate Aboriginal children's narrative skills and communicative competency and expand the understanding of language socialization through engagement in meaning-making with the Elders. The resulting list of 21 emically-derived

story features is now available for use by educators and speech language clinicians. This will support educators' and practitioners' acknowledgement of the value of oral storytelling in the school setting.

The study also provides an example of how to conduct research in a respectful and collaborative manner in Aboriginal communities. Although my identity as an Anishinaabe person helped me to gain access to the community, preceding with transparency and respect enhances the possibility of conducting research in Aboriginal communities for other researchers as well. The Elders who participated were provided with an opportunity to confirm the accuracy of the data collected from them and this upheld the relationship between research participants and the researcher and reconfirmed their informed consent. The stories shared by the children have been regarded with reverence, for they are extremely special, offering insights into how each Anishinaabe child perceives the world, his or her relationships with family members and the First Nation community and the land. It is important to give back to the community. The Elders and children who participated in the research were presented with gifts of appreciation and the results of the research was shared with the Nipissing First Nation community. The Education Committee members, Chief and Council, participants and family members have access to the thesis at the First Nation Education office. The findings of this study may inform speech and language intervention for the Nipissing First Nation children.

This research provides a springboard for teachers and practitioners to explore the benefits of oral storytelling and the importance of establishing links to the Aboriginal community and legitimizing Aboriginal ways of knowing into the classroom. Future research should attempt to bridge the gap between emic and etic perspectives of Aboriginal storytelling and to highlight the importance of these distinctions for the evaluation of narrative competence for Aboriginal children. Additional ethnographic Aboriginal narrative studies are necessary to illustrate common threads and patterns from other communities with similar belief systems, political and economic histories, and cultural patterns of communication. It may be possible to identify characteristics that are shared in other Aboriginal communities that will permit the generalizability of information obtained from this study to diverse communities.

Aboriginal orality is an obvious bridge to literacy, academic success, and community participation. Oral storytelling activities present Aboriginal children with culturally sensitive and appropriate bridges to literacy in the language arts curriculum. Through storytelling, students can connect with peers and develop self-confidence as speakers. As teachers and clinicians engage with Aboriginal students in oral storytelling circles, their perceptions and response to the students will hopefully also shift towards greater acceptance and validation of FNEDs. Frequent opportunities to speak and listen to non-Aboriginal peers in class will also provide exposure to standard English language models for children speaking FNEDs that might support Aboriginal students in acquiring elements of standard English and become bidialectal. Teachers and practitioners should be encouraged to explore the benefits of infusing oral storytelling and oral language within the goals and objectives of the academic curriculum. Oral storytelling is also an appropriate segue for establishing links to the Aboriginal community and legitimizing Aboriginal ways of knowing in the classroom. Anishinaabek orality traditions are important and legitimate expressions of cultural knowledge, beliefs, and traditions that have a rightful place in classrooms and that can be used to educate *all* children.

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End Notes

[1]Anishinaabe and its plural form Anishinaabek refer to the Ojibway and Algonquin people, while Anishnaabemowin refers to their Aboriginal languages and dialects.

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APPENDIX A

Elders' comments	Elder Code description	Code Number
Sounded smooth, no interruptions or pauses, nice flow. The way they told the story right through. It just flowed without hesitation. Was a fast story. Did he take a breath when he was telling that story?	Flow of events and ideas without interruption	1
It was quite humorous. The ending was funny. She thought it was funny about going to the dressing room and listening to that RAP music. It was a funny story because her friend was trying to skate and she kept having these incidents. She fell down and couldn't get up. She went over the boards and thought it was funny after awhile and did it again. She tried to redo her mistake. It is funny because he gave it (uncle's gift) away before it was wrapped. It was like the other story. The surprise was spoiled. She talked about her father spoiling the surprise and when her mom told her, she just said, "Oh." The cat died from too many hairballs–that's what he thinks!	Humour Or Amusement	2
We can picture it. He described the things he was doing. The way he described his mother walked sideways so she wouldn't get poison ivy. They all seem to have a vivid memory. They are very descriptive about the circumstances of the story. It stayed in their mind. Descriptions of where she was and what they were doing. It kept it interesting. Hot day with nice, cold water.	Use of descriptive language by the narrator to create a vivid picture	3
It was quite the adventure. Everybody was excited about going on the trip. Sounded like it was the first time she went to the city, and she was excited.	A sense of adventure and excitement	4
He was afraid. They were excited to go to the party. His mother gets really sad when he loses his animals when they die on him. It had a happy ending for the bunny but sad for the boy because he had to give it up. Too bad the rabbit got away. Was quite a shock and surprise.	Statements or expression of emotion and feelings	5
He knew enough to stay in the car. He seems to be a thoughtful young man. He's thinking about "If we didn't drive our friend home, we would have got in the accident." He explains the names of his animals... their Ojibway names, and that's how he learns his Ojibway too. "Zii zii" means sugar. The cat died from too many hairballs–that's what he thinks! Was a story from way back. She hesitated for awhile until it come to her.	"Ways of thinking" - Listener's insight into the story-teller's thinking process, listener's inquiry and reflection	6
Interesting. There's something happening and you expect something else.	Attention-grabbing or unexpected events	7
He remembered he ate the candies. Popcorn. The treat at the end. Hot dogs!	Mention of a savoured treat	8

She was animated as she told the story. Her voice was rising up higher. The way their voice sounds. The story was about a little girl, and he tried to sound like one. She sounded excited and repeats herself.	Dialogue and storyteller animation (voice)	9
I never found that when I was a kid. Nice for the kids to get out there. I never got to see a big hockey game yet. Was a good trip for them.	Reference to the extraordinary or unexplained	10
Sounded like he really cared for them (his pets). The story belongs to the Spirit World and all this kinda stuff, and I guess that's why we liked it. You know I always like a little "Believe it or not" story. Sounds like he believes it.	Examples of good moral character and values	11
I liked it because maybe it's something that happened to me. I dropped popcorn (Lucky Elephant) and I picked it up slowly (as if savouring it). You can't throw that away! The rink is right there. Garden Village is about a mile along the shore to Dokis. I like Fun Day…break your neck, sore knees, sore butt.	Familiar settings and events that are memorable	12
Nice for the kids to get out there. Was a good trip for them. Sounds like it was fun.	Pleasant childhood experience	13
Nobody else got hurt, and that's a good thing. His mother gets really sad when he loses his animals when they die on him.	Unpleasant childhood experience.	14
Story about the wild bunny stimulated Henry to reminisce about his pet rabbit who ran away with a wild rabbit. Stimulated Linda's recall of the time her daughter had a bunny. Someone threw me off the dock. It brings you back, way back…having a good time on the ice…sliding…sore elbow.	Story induces distant memories in the Elder from shared experiences	15
He thinks his father is like a hero to him 'cause he's doing service to this man by helping him stay conscious until the ambulance comes. About him and his mother taking care of the dog. They're washing it in the sink. At least the family is together. Sounds like they had a satisfying day. A lot of people aren't doing that kind of thing anymore.	Reference to relationships with family and community members	16
A nice and short story. Not too long, and told it pretty fast.	Not Lengthy	17
It was so good I fell asleep (lengthy).	Lengthy	18
Some just stop but others tell you when they're done.	Ending stated	19
Some just stop, but others tell you when they're done.	Ending not stated	20
Relating a story that was told to her by her grandfather. The way she tells it she owns the story. She's very into it.	Intergenerational story passed down from family members	21