Perspectives of Four Rural Music Educators: A Collaborative Narrative Journey
Through ‘Sense of Place’

by

Janet Margery Spring

A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Music Education
Graduate Faculty of Music
University of Toronto

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore the perspectives of four rural Ontario music educators through the conceptual framework of ‘sense of place’, to determine how ‘place’ influences their rural lives, their music education praxes, and their interactions with their rural students and communities. Rural places in Ontario are in a state of transformation and how educators define the term rural is also contingent on changes that occur in their rural communities and schools. My second objective was therefore to investigate participants’ perceptions of the terms ‘rural’, ‘rurality’, and ‘community’ through their narratives of lived experiences related to the classroom, school, and community contexts. In other words, how do historical, sociocultural, and political issues that exist in rural areas shape educational perspectives and practices, and specifically from a music education viewpoint?

This research is grounded in the narrative methodological perspectives of Connelly and Clandinin (1986, 1988) and Beattie (2009) with a focus on the importance of investigating teacher perspectives through the personal, practical, and scholarly knowledge (Beattie, 2009) they have gained through teaching. Extensive data was collected over a period of eight months through participant interviews, their narrative stories and autobiographical accounts, and
metaphorical perspectives. The process concluded with a collaborative focus group session.

Throughout the data gathering process, participants read and reflected on each other’s viewpoints, which illuminated important themes of tension and conflict related to their teacher roles, aspects of their rural communities and rural culture. Participants also critiqued important next steps for rural communities and education, acknowledging the role of place in pedagogy and teacher identity. This research study provides insight into context dependent elements of curriculum and teacher education that affect music education practices today and for teachers of the future.
Acknowledgments

There are many people I would like to thank who assisted me on my doctoral journey and who encouraged and supported me during this process. From the time I walked into the Faculty of Music, University of Toronto to inquire about beginning a Masters program in Music Education, Lori-Anne Dolloff, Lee Bartel, Patricia Shand, Liz Gould, and Mary Beattie have been my academic mentors and guided me along my scholarly pathway to the completion of my Doctoral studies. I thank you for your wisdom and the way in which you have challenged me to think crucially and work to the best of my ability.

I would like to thank my rural teaching colleagues and students of the past and present who have given me the inspiration to investigate the issues that affect rural educators in Ontario. I credit Frank Archer, my first principal, who taught me the value of a rural community and the importance of the rural school to be the ambassador and facilitator of rural pride and strength. Frank, your commitment to rural culture, music education, and community has inspired me to pursue why ‘place’ matters in rural music education. I am extremely grateful. Thank you!

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This research study would not have been possible without my four very enthusiastic participants, Germaine, Lenore, Natali, and Anne. You dedicated many hours of sharing your stories of rural living and teaching, your histories, memories, and heartfelt experiences. You have provided me with invaluable information and have been the backbone of this thesis. I thank you for your continued interest in rural music education and concern for the betterment of rural education and communities.

Most importantly, I would like to thank my family; David, Karen, Holly, Mary, and Craig for their continued support and encouragement. And to John, my wonderful spouse – you are my guiding light and my greatest advocate!
Dedication

I dedicate this doctoral thesis to my wonderful mother and greatest mentor, Margery Stewart, who has taught me the value of arts education and life-long learning.
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PART I

Chapter One

Introduction

“Human knowledge is a constructed form of experience and therefore a reflection of mind as well as nature; knowledge is made, not simply discovered”

Eisner (1991b, p. 7)

My Personal Story: From Urban Roots to Rural Place

My beginnings as a formal researcher began during my Masters studies in a course called, Teacher Perspectives, where I was asked to write a self-narrative. In my doctoral studies I wrote my personal story as one of the requirements for the final paper in the course, Narrative and Story in Research and Professional Practice. I was very excited to begin these research assignments for during my career as a music educator and regular classroom teacher, I did not feel my work was considered important or validated. Someone wanted to hear my personal story from a personal, professional, and scholarly perspective?... The following will be a narrative self-study research, based on the narratives that I have written throughout my scholarly journey from those beginning points to this doctoral thesis. It will be an examination of learning experiences, personal, professional, and scholarly ... and of the connections, progressions, and themes that I have uncovered as I have written my personal reflections related to the practice of teaching music. (personal reflection, January 2012)

Prelude: Discovering the Importance of Reflection

This opportunity to write my personal story as a means of understanding myself in terms of the personal, professional, and scholarly pathways, has been an enlightening experience, where I have “[journeyed] backward and inward in order to reconstruct my early felt experiences, to extract from them their meanings and to story them narratively in the light of later experiences and feelings” (Beattie, 1995b, p. 12). I begin my story as I revisit my past in terms of my personal background, music education, and roots in an urban centre. I then reflect on
and examine my move to a rural area to begin my teaching career as a music educator and advocate for the arts. Throughout the years, I discover the importance of community in a rural area and the impact that music can have on students and a rural population in general.

Narrative self-study, or the writing of my personal story provides the means by which I can “detach myself” from the emotions and experiences of the pivotal moments in my life, “and be capable of looking at them from many different perspectives, and to be able to deal with them through writing” (Beattie, 1995b, p. 5). As I write my personal story, I realize that “my growth as a person and growth as a professional [are] inseparable” (p. 29) for each position has become mutually dependent on the other, particularly in the study of music, where music as a discipline is so personal yet contains a realm of professional attributes. I am also able to learn through writing, by discovering the true meaning of my thoughts, beliefs, and actions as they shape my “personal, professional, and practical knowledge” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1986, p. 293). This exercise has therefore allowed me to discover the underlying themes of my self-narrative journey.

The themes that I have uncovered and that have influenced my personal, practical, and professional growth are threefold. Firstly, I believe that music teachers and the study of music as a discipline play a large role in shaping the future of professional music education. Drawing on the work of Dolloff (1999), she relates that our “teacher images ... are definitely a product of the culture in which we grow” (p. 192), and that “teachers in our [personal] stories become role models for students’ image of self-as-teacher” (p. 194). The teachers who are framed in my stories of the past therefore play a large role in my perception of self in the role of music educator. The work of Bolden (2009), Clandinin (2006), Eyre (2009), Goodson, (1992), Holt-Reynolds (1992), Knowles (1992), Knowles and Holt-Reynolds (1991), Miller (1998), and
Roberts (1991) also provide me with the tools to understand the importance of teacher identity construction through teachers’ lived experiences. In addition, these authors stress the significance of writing stories, so that I may reframe my experiences to gain further insight for future knowledge. Consequently, my reflection about teachers of my past will provide me with personal knowledge that will assist me in my further study of music, in my own music teaching praxis\(^1\) and in this doctoral dissertation.

Secondly, I believe that the study of music is a very individual and personal experience that evokes spirituality in an emotional sense, and uncovers many complex thoughts – feelings of security, insecurity, and attachment to the space and place where I teach. It elicits a strong bond between self and the spiritual element of music; it provides an outlet of emotions, and a capacity to understand the self. As I reflect on my musical roots and heritage as well as my early music studies through the narrative process, I am able to reframe my experiences for better understanding and future growth. I therefore draw on the theories of Dewey and McDermott (1981) and Eisner (1991a, 1991b), which elucidate the importance of the art of experience in a transactive sense. I turn to Polanyi (1958) and the significance of personal knowledge in understanding oneself, and Miller (1998) who stresses the importance of interconnectedness and exploring tensions that exist in stories of self. The theories of Czikszentmihalyi and Rathunde (1992) discuss artistic experiences that produce a spiritual and emotional joy in an intrinsic sense, a “state of flow” (p. 59). Johnson’s (2007) notion of “embodied knowledge” (p. 101) as it relates to the body and spirit also contributes to the foundation for this study. The ‘personal’ aspects in my stories reflect and are therefore grounded in these theories through the

\(^1\) The term ‘praxis’ is a formal noun, defined as “practice, as distinguished from theory” (Oxford Online Dictionary). This term (plural – praxes) relates to a ‘practice’ where the act of ‘practising’ is reflexive in nature, where the act of doing in teaching incorporates reflection-in-action (Schön, 1987). This concept is discussed further in Chapter 3.
methodology of narrative self-study whereby, telling and reframing the experiences in stories is employed both as phenomenon and as method.

Finally, as a rural music teacher, I have found strength and support in the rural community and have discovered that a community – a place – plays a large role in assisting educators to teach and positively inspire their children to achieve success in music education. In a rural community, the school, the music teacher, and the students develop a strong bond in the education of youth. Through the nurturing and caring actions of the music teacher, and with the help of a rural community that supports the musical endeavors of the school, a sensitive and compassionate holistic relationship can be forged that benefits all. I therefore draw on the theories of caring of Witherall and Noddings (1991), Miller (2000), and Connelly and Clandinin (1990) in regard to caring and community, and on Ladson-Billings (2000, 2009) regarding the importance of community building. Miller (2000) stresses the importance of holistic learning where students learn in a caring, concerned environment that highlights the significance of the social climate in the classroom and the community as a whole. Consequently, my third theme is the intersection of the personal and professional in a community sense, where caring and concern work collectively to produce a positive learning experience and where the place through and in which I learn and teach impacts my social, emotional, and holistic state of being. The following personal account will therefore provide evidence of these underlying themes and will inspire further personal, practical, and scholarly knowledge as I reflect on the writing of this doctoral thesis and continue my teaching and learning in new places and communities.

**My Musical Beginnings: The Study of Music**

*My teachers and role models.* Music has always played a very important role in my life, from my very early childhood years to the present. My father and mother were wonderful
advocates for my music education. My father is a great lover of music; he sings all day, and for every family event, he either quotes a line from a famous song, a war song, or a song from a musical, or he sings a song. For my dad, life is still a song and to his grandchildren’s delight when they were young, he sang to them. Today he sings little songs to his great grandchildren. Every event came with a song. My mother contributed to my music education in a different, but very direct way. She was the one who made sure that I continued with piano until I completed all Royal Conservatory requirements for Grade 10. She was a great advocate for the Arts, for she was a freelance writer. It therefore seems to me that my first ‘music teachers’ in a sense were my parents who inspired me and gave me the opportunity, interest, and tools to study music.

Not only were private piano lessons part of my life, but also getting involved in the school music program was one of the greatest joys of my elementary school career. I attended a Kindergarten to Grade 6 School in the City of Toronto that boasted of an excellent music program as well as an award-winning choir. It inspired me to begin a choir when I first started teaching and model my choral pedagogy after my director. She was an important role model for me as I began my rural music teaching praxis. As Dolloff (1999) states, “Writing stories about teachers gives individuals an opportunity to remember the important positive … role models in their own educational history” (p. 206). My elementary teacher was a positive role model, and also someone who inspired me as an adult to become involved in community choirs, continue my love of choral music performance and include an extra-curricular choral and musical program in the schools where I taught.

**The emotional and spiritual challenge: Building community.** Looking back over my years of private piano lessons, and all of the thousands of hours I practised alone, it is interesting
to reflect on the way that music education through private lessons is so separate and disjointed from school music education. It seems that the two never do intersect, unless you have a music teacher in school that really makes the effort to include private students somehow in their school music experience. It is also remarkable to reflect back on the influence of private music teachers and the role they play in their student’s emotional and spiritual life. My piano teacher was such a big part of my life as I grew into adulthood. This connection and genuine friendship lasted way past the lesson days. What other subject of study would provide the student with more than education in such a closely-knit way? In my rural area I made close connections with my students, for I live and teach in the same community.

In a small rural area, when the music teacher lives and teaches in the same community as her students, the students develop a bond with their teachers that they may not do in a larger centre. My students often visited my home and were guests at special events held at my farm. They were also friends with my own children and were often their guests as well at our family functions. My students then had the opportunity to build special bonds with me … sometimes they remarked that they considered themselves part of our extended family. As I also taught my own children, my commitment to music education was perhaps much greater. It was also a large part of my own children’s music education and growth as young musicians. (personal reflection, February 2010)

Intersection of the personal and professional: Caring and community.

It is remarkable how telling a story and reliving an experience assists me, the researcher in finding meaning out of my stories and question my past. Clandinin and Connelly (1994) stress the importance of being “always engaged in living, telling, reliving, and retelling our own stories” (p. 418) to make further clarification and meaning out of these lived experiences. As I reflect back on the meaning of my destination into music education, I can understand the reasons behind my change in direction and appreciate the implications of the move. (personal reflection, March 2010)

As I was completing my music degree, I met my spouse who lives in a small rural
community north of Barrie, Ontario\textsuperscript{3} so after this year, I moved to the rural area. I completed a two-week practice teaching session at the school in the village, teaching with a Grade 4/5 class and the music teacher. Due to the fact that I was going to be residing in the community, and had completed my music degree, the principal was very interested in me as a potential teacher at the school. He wanted to hire a community person to fill the job of the music position, for the music teacher was transferring. He believed that the music teacher was an integral part of the community, as she would bind the school community together with the village community as the previous music teacher had done. He was my principal for 10 years. Many came after him, some very supportive of the music program, others not.

When I was hired for the full time music position at the rural school, which would be my school for 28 years, I was told that I would be teaching music from Kindergarten through Grade 8 and would be responsible for a marching band. Surprisingly, I was the only full time elementary music teacher in the school board\textsuperscript{4} at the time. To this day there are very few, if any full time elementary music teachers in this school board. I taught vocal music from Junior Kindergarten to Grade 8, provided ukulele and recorder instruction to junior and intermediate students, and taught instrumental music to students who were members of the marching band. I also produced a major musical each school year with the support of the staff and community. For many students in the junior and intermediate grades, this annual event was a special one. In addition, the residents of the surrounding community provided a keen, dedicated, and enthusiastic audience. The students sang to a sold-out house for each performance.

\textsuperscript{3} For information on the city of Barrie, refer to http://www.barrie.ca/Pages/default.aspx

\textsuperscript{4} A school board is comprised of a local group of elected citizens (trustees) and school officials that are responsible for the administrative and financial affairs of operating schools in their area. For more information on school boards in Ontario, refer to the Ontario Ministry of Education website, found at: http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/
Throughout the years, with school board cutbacks, the music program suffered a decrease in hours, and I was eventually put into the classroom as a regular classroom teacher. However some principals were very creative with scheduling and gave me half time music education responsibilities. Yet throughout the late 1990s and into the early 2000s with the new directives of the Ontario Conservative Government – Premier Mike Harris\(^5\) days, my music schedule was significantly decreased (Gidney, 1999; Sears, 2003). With community funding and staff assistance, I continued the marching band program on an extra-curricular basis. The new Conservative government was talking about a ‘common sense revolution’ that changed the direction of education in the province and made teachers more accountable for their individual mathematics and literacy praxes (Gidney, 1999). In their opinion, more time was needed on the core subjects. The Arts were and still are not considered important (Countryman, 2008; Eisner, 2001a).

During this tumultuous time, I also lost my music room. It was needed for a classroom. As the 80 piece marching band had no practice space, the instruments were put on the stage. The community members were outraged at the board and particularly the principal. However I continued to teach the band on an extracurricular basis. It was not an ideal teaching and learning situation but was the only option left to me. Our band continued to perform across the southern part of the province, performing at community festivals and parades. They performed mostly on the weekends, and attended more than 20 weekend events throughout the school year. They were ambassadors for our school, our community and our area. The students knew how important our community was, for they supported our band financially, emotionally and morally. From this music experience, they learned the importance of rural community.

\(^5\) Mike Harris was the leader of Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario and Premier of Ontario from 1995 to 2002.
It is amazing that a small rural community bonds together to support the Arts in a holistic sense! And in a rural school, so many of the staff members have a vested interest in their community, their own children, their students, their neighbours’ children. We are teaching our neighbours’ children as well as our own. Ladson-Billings (2009) remarks about these strong community bonds that teachers build, saying, teachers “seek to help students see community-building as a lifelong practice that extends beyond the community” (p. 78). Maltas (2004) also refers to caring in rural areas, stating, “In rural communities, the school provides rural community members with a sense of affiliation and pride” (p. 26). Spring (2006) refers to this sense of pride and community feeling that exists throughout the rural area where she has taught. She states, “As parents, teachers, and students work together in the community, they have developed a closely-knit neighborhood which cooperates as a unified whole and who care about successes of the individual as well as the group”. (personal reflection, March 2012)

I was now without a music room and a practice space, except for the school gym, foyer and halls. A committee representing all of the community service clubs – the Fall Fair and Maple Syrup Boards⁶, as well as band parents and other interested community members was formed to put forward a plan to help raise monies to fund the building of a new ‘music facility’. Permission to build on the school site would be required; all funds would be donated and the music facility would be donated to the board. The board would provide maintenance, the band parents – custodial services, and the community would fund the bill for everything. The deal was passed, signed, and stamped. Now we just had to raise the money.

With the help and support of the band parent chairperson, the band students and community members, we raised $78,000 in one year. Throughout the school year, the band performed for many different groups to present their case and to positively advocate for financial support. All service clubs throughout the province that were responsible for hiring the band to perform at these events, wrote a letter in support of the continuation of the band and the

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⁶ The Fall Fair Board is comprised of a group of elected volunteer representatives who are responsible for planning, organizing and facilitating the local Fall Fair, which occurs annually on the Canadian Thanksgiving weekend in October. The Maple Syrup Board is comprised of a group of volunteers who are responsible for planning, organizing, and facilitating the annual community Maple Syrup Festival, which occurs in April. All monies raised from these community events are distributed to the schools and community service clubs for the betterment of the rural community.
importance of the music group to have a building to practice in. It was a momentous occasion when the building was erected on the school site the next school year. The building was a state of the art practice facility with two soundproof practice rooms, a storage room for instruments and uniforms and a beautiful practice space with a cathedral ceiling and large expansive windows. Thanks to the community support and perseverance of the students and music staff, the building was now operational and ready to use for band practices, concerts, and regular music and drama classes.

Despite the completion of the new music facility, one challenging situation after another arose. I found myself becoming resentful of the declining interest and support at the administration and board level. Drastic measures were taken by the new administrator to let the students and band staff understand that they were not a priority and were not valued. One principal remarked, “I don’t want this school to be known as the band school.” This comment made me aware that despite strong community support; the music program was in jeopardy. The political issues regarding the band program were also causing me a great deal of stress. Music was now a subject that was taught outside of class time as an extracurricular subject. The band was even approached to pay for use of their own music facility and the school washroom during their weekend performance preparations. That was the last straw. I knew that my time was up and it was the appropriate moment to move on. At this time I began my Masters, then Doctoral degree at the Faculty of Music, University of Toronto.

Writing my personal narrative has provided me with the opportunity to examine my growth as a music educator in a rural community. In addition, the study has made me aware of the strong bond that exists between a music teacher and her students and how a music program functions with the support of the community it serves. It has also taught me that in my rural
community, the school and community work together as a team to build a sense of community and sense of place.

**Postlude.** It had always been a goal of mine to investigate the issues of rural music education in Ontario from a place-based perspective, seeing that literature on the subject is very limited. As I reflect back on my move from an urban area to a rural community, I understand that it is important to study music education from a teacher perspective and investigate how a music educator adapts to new situations and how the teaching context impacts her praxis. I see how a music educator is like a hardy perennial plant. When I moved to the rural hamlet from the city, I adapted to the school and community in which I served. I adjusted personally and professionally to this new environment, which at the beginning of my career was an optimum one. With the best support at all levels, and with the best resources, I planted my roots. As time passed, and the political situation gradually forced me to adapt to change, and eventually hindered my program, I transformed my music teaching praxis by pulling up roots and transplanting my perennial plant to a new garden. A few roots were left behind and still struggle to grow under new direction. I continue to grow now in other directions, leaving my impact on students wherever I teach.

**Setting the Stage: My Research Context**

**Need for the Study**

Literature that pertains to rural schooling, and particularly rural music education in Canada is almost non-existent. Research on the rural education situation in the province of Ontario is very limited. Studies that investigate rural music teacher perspectives are also few and far between. The background information on this topic from a Canadian, and/or an Ontario perspective is therefore very sparse. However, a slightly better situation is present in the United States, for some studies have been completed that examine rural education, yet this research has
concentrated on issues that deal with rural education in more general terms. Maltas (2004) comments that, although many studies have been completed that focus on urban and suburban schools and teacher practices, very few, if any have focused on the rural music teacher. In addition, she remarks that, “rural teachers have been studied as a general population” (p. 6) and very few studies have focused on individual teachers of specific subjects, such as music. Although research from our neighbours to the south provides valuable background information and resources on rural schooling, community involvement and rural music programs, research from both a Canadian and more specifically from an Ontario perspective is greatly needed.

**Purpose of the Study**

This study is designed to evoke the voices of rural music teachers, which are absent from the literature. The purpose is to hear stories of their lived experiences, and particularly how a sense of place intersects with professional praxis.

**Research Question**

What are the lived experiences of four rural music educators in Southern Ontario?

**Sub-questions.**

1. What personal, sociological and professional circumstances are representative of rural music educators?

2. What are music teachers’ perceptions of a sense of place in the contexts of their professional praxes?

3. What features of rural lived experiences contribute to a sense of place?

4. How do educators situate their practice to embody place-based teaching practices?
Limitations to the Study

The teachers selected to participate in the study are representative of two school boards of education in the rural area of Simcoe County\(^7\) and have taught in 18 rural schools combined throughout their years of teaching music. I taught with two of the participants at the beginning of my teaching career. I therefore have a bias, as I was researching in ‘my own backyard’. This will allow for greater knowledge of ‘insider status’ of the specific context, and greater depth of conversation due to shared experiences. However care must be taken to interrogate assumptions based on past experience. The findings are not intended to be generalizable to areas outside the specific research area or individual teacher experiences.

Overview of the Thesis Design

This thesis is presented in three parts. Part I, Chapter 1 includes an introduction that tells my personal and professional story. Chapter 1 also sets the stage for the narrative journey, which outlines the need and purpose of the study as well as the research questions and limitations of the research. In Chapter 2, I present academic literature on the concepts of space and place, rural and rurality, and rural school characteristics from a Canadian perspective and beyond. Chapter 3 includes a comprehensive overview of qualitative research methodology, outlining the perspectives of the pioneers associated with the Chicago School of Sociology in the 1950s, to narrative research since that time. I incorporate a discussion of the theories of narrative research in education from stories of experience, life history, autobiographical studies, and collaborate narrative. I also discuss research from a metaphorical and musical perspective. All of the above provide the reader with the methodological steps that have guided my research pathway.

\(^7\) For more information on Simcoe County, refer to www.simcoe.ca
Part II contains Chapters 4 through 7, which introduce the participants through their narrative stories. Each participant chapter is configured similarly, where I provide their perspectives on rural, rurality, and sense of community, their teacher roles, narratives of conflict through juxtaposition of purpose and space, narratives from the heart and of the future, and a cadence, where each participant provides their perspective of their rural music education experience through a composition they chose. I conclude each participant chapter with my viewpoint of their sense of place in perspective.

Part III presents the discussion portion of the thesis from Chapter 8 through 9, where the participants debate the issues raised as they met in the collaborative focus group session. In this meeting, they discussed their perspectives on the future of rural areas, education and rural music education in terms of the big issues that apply to the Ontario educational perspective. Chapter 9 concludes with a discussion of the theoretical discourses to ponder for future consideration and a summary of the responses that answer the four sub-questions that guide the inquiry. A final section addresses implications for future research. I end as I began, with a personal reflection.
Chapter Two

A Literature Inquiry

The Concept of Space

Space and place are often linked together in academic discussion, yet each term is distinctive. Space is an open area, void of material form; it can be an unoccupied physical area, an empty room, the area referred to as ‘personal space’, a blank part of a page, an interval between two notes or the open area between the lines of the musical staff. A space can also be an area where social events occur, such as the space rented in a church hall, a band shell, or a soccer field. Peterson (2002) classifies space as material, representational or social, and states that, “space helps constitute the social” (p. 253).

In Production of Space (1974/1991), Lefebvre critiques the way that space is represented in the conceptual form. It is often classified quantitively without reference to human activity that occurs in a space. Carp (2008) effectively summarizes Lefebvre’s notions in regard to the misrepresentation of space. She states, “the Western industrialized world is so governed by abstraction that even the sensory and practical aspects of human life are represented and communicated primarily in terms of quantities, commodities, and categories” (p. 130). This interpretation disqualifies the lived experiences that occur in social spaces, which evoke human sentiment, memories, feelings, and interactions.

To represent space in terms of the physical, mental, and social aspects related to the use of space, Lefebvre created the conceptual triad to deconstruct the “social production of space” (Carp, 2008, p. 130). Carp provides an excellent representation in chart form that illustrates Lefebvre’s breakdown of social space. She also uses the conceptual triad as an analytical instrument in her teaching practice to deconstruct issues in “teaching, research, and community
service in planning” (p. 136). In this dissertation, I utilized Lefebvre’s conceptual triad as an initial sorting and coding tool through the analysis portion of my data for it proved to be an effective and comprehensive framework. The use of the conceptual triad will be defined in greater detail in the analysis section of this dissertation.

The Concept of Place

Place is a three-dimensional point in time; it is a specific location on a map or an undefined region of unending boundaries. Place can also be a specific area such as a piano room, a restaurant, a barn. Each has a special context, and creates an atmosphere, and sense of feeling. Sometimes place is one that denotes ownership – ‘this is my place at the table’. Yet places are endearing and are special – people become attached to them if they are favourable, or unattached to them if they are unpleasant. Individuals experience each place in different ways.

Emotional experiences and sentimental attachments make places noteworthy. Places can also exude fear and distaste. Gieryn (2000, as cited in Spring, 2013) explains place from a sociological point of view. “Place is remarkable and what makes it is an unwindable spiral of material form and interpretive understandings and experiences” (p. 471). Spring (2013) comments,

Epiphanic moments also occur that makes place a very personal ‘space’, evoking memorable experiences and emotional responses. In addition, people identify with ‘place’ and are classified by their locale – ‘She is a Torontonian’ or, ‘She was born and raised in the country; she is a country girl’. (p. 4)

Escobar (2001) (cited in Convery, Corsane, & Davis (2012)) poses the question, “how do people encounter places, perceive them and endow them with significance” (p. 1)? Experiencing a place is very personal and unique, a concept I understood more clearly as I moved to a rural area after growing up in an urban centre. The two places that I have called ‘home’ are strikingly different; the urban city is a busy place with hustle and bustle, and my rural home is busy, but
peaceful and tranquil. Yet they cannot be seen as binary opposites from a dualistic perspective, for both places share similar qualities and people may possess a sentimental attachment to each. From my perspective, I “maintain some attachment to the urban place that I moved from, yet my music teaching career and immediate family have grounded me in my rural area” (Spring, 2013, p. 3). I therefore feel a special attachment to my rural place – my community.

Wyly (2008, cited in Spring, 2013) describes community as “a particular part of space” that is “invested with meaning, history, and symbolism by various individuals and groups” (p. 2). Community is also part of space and place, filled with locales, people and things, or can be a virtual or imaginative community. The term ‘community’ therefore denotes many different connotations. Community is also a term that is utilized recurrently, particularly when related to rural areas, and will be more clearly defined later.

Convery et al. (2012) describe places “as genius loci, thought of as being made up of a range of factors which include the topographical, the cosmological and spiritual, the built environment and people’s emotional and psychological engagement with place” (p. 2). My rural place and my surrounding community therefore bear sentimental value. I have developed a sense of being and belonging to my rural place that has evolved over a long period of time. It is not a static feeling, for as my rural place changes over time, my feeling and attachment to it transform as well. It may diminish and may heighten, depending on my beliefs, interactions, and the physical changes that occur in my place. Yet I have developed a keen ‘sense of place’, personally, and professionally – a sense of rural place.

Osborne (2006) critiques the difference between space and place. He remarks, “Space is a neutral entity, defined by objective coordinates and measures, but ‘place’ is a motive entity, experienced emotionally and defined objectively” (p. 149). Tuan (2001) expresses that “place is
security and space is freedom: we are attached to the one and long for the other” (p. 3). Space can be boundless or may have limits, like a practice studio, football field or concert hall. All of the social events that occur in these bounded spaces are “social activities that transform the latter [space] into place” (Osborne, 2006, p. 150). Space is also transformed into an area of meaning, and according to Cresswell (2009), “space becomes a place when it is used and lived” (p. 2). Space is only transformed into a meaningful place through the lived experiences of others. Rural and urban places can only become relevant and expressive as the voices and emotions of people are either heard or felt.

Consequently, place shapes the feelings of local residents, the individual and/or community. Sometimes the local ‘voice’ is co-constructed as residents discuss their attachment to place and the similar feelings they share toward their community, whether the locale is in an urban or rural area. It can be “an indigenous community, a community that bonds together in an inner-city urban setting, or a small community of people coming together socially for a special purpose (e.g., an AA meeting, church congregation) or function” (Spring, 2013, p. 3). Through experience, human interaction, and attachment, a person may develop a feeling of security and a profound ‘sense of place.’

The Problems with ‘Place’ and ‘Sense of Place’

Massey (2012) remarks that, “no place’s ‘sense of place’ is constructed without relations with and/or influences from elsewhere” (xiii). Places are in a state of constant change, particularly from a global perspective, where people who come from different ethnic and social groups may “live these locations in very different ways” (p. xiv), maybe staying for short periods of time, then moving to another locale. Williams (2006) refers to this as a “polysemic sense of place” (p. 69), meaning that one place may mean something different to each person. People may
come with a different historical perspective of place, which also adds to the complexity of the feeling. Convery et al. (2012) contend (as cited in Shamai & Ilatov (2005)) that “sense of place is often used to refer to multiple conceptualizations of place” (p. 1) which lead to an insipid, unclear definition of the term.

Massey (1994) discusses the issue of time-space compression, where the ‘global village’, expanding mobility across space and time, provides a new perspective in regard to the term ‘place’ and the emotional attachment to place, or ‘sense of place’. She defines time-space compression. It is “movement and communication across space, to the geographical stretching-out of social relations, and to our experience of all this” (p. 2). She credits this fast-paced, mobile world to the increase in capitalism and internationalization, which according to Convery et al. (2012) creates a situation where people are “networked to both local and extra-local places; hence they have a global sense of place and one that is locally specific” (p. 2). Places become linked now to many different historical backgrounds, for each new group brings a fresh perspective, which is entrenched in their past and future. Massey sums it up, remarking, “It is a sense of place, an understanding of ‘its character’, which can only be constructed by linking that place to places beyond. A progressive sense of place would recognize that, without being threatened by it. What we need, it seems to me, is a global sense of the local, a global sense of place” (p. 9).

The work of Ladson-Billings (2009) highlights the importance of the ‘global sense of the local’ and ‘a global sense of place’ from a classroom context. Ladson-Billings’ teacher participants exemplify pedagogical practices and develop their students’ ‘sense of place’ inside and outside of the school. They reach out to their students personally and professionally as they model best practices in the school setting, community, and beyond. They also follow “culturally relevant teaching practices” (p. 29) by “the way they see themselves and others” (p. 28), thus
engaging students in learning that is continuous and collaborative – where the teacher and students learn together in a context, “building bridges and scaffolding for learning” (p. 28). Following a curriculum that is culturally specific to students and to the context in which they teach, Ladson-Billing’s teacher participants effectively engage students by “focusing on student learning, developing cultural competence, and cultivating a sociopolitical awareness of their students” (p. xi). They are also able to see the profession of teaching as reaching beyond the school – to the community. In this manner, they make connections from both a pedagogical, personal, and community perspective with their students, “making a connection between their in-school lives and their out-of-school experiences” (xi). Students learn curricular materials; yet they are adapted to be relevant to their ‘place’ and their sociocultural backgrounds. This pedagogical practice therefore encourages commitment to ‘place’, instilling in students and teachers, a sense of attachment to ‘place’ – or a ‘sense of place.’ Ladson-Billings’ model of culturally relevant pedagogy that incorporates community, learning in context, and learning collaboratively, may prove to be a significant model for educators who teach in other urban centres or rural areas.

When I moved from an urban area to the rural area where I began my music-teaching career, I brought my own ideas of what the term rural meant, and my own views about ‘place’. Yet I quickly noticed how my new community exuded a very strong bond between the geographical space the residents inhabited, the emotional ties they felt toward ‘place’ and the spiritual togetherness that existed between community members, community groups and the school. Coming from an urban area, I did not possess a ‘sense of place’ in the previous locations where I had lived. Rather, I experienced an emotional ‘placelessness’. Gruenewald and Smith (2008) refer to ‘placelessness’ as a phenomenon that is “associated with alienation from others
and a lack of participation in the social and political life of communities” (p. xvi). I had not ‘put down roots’ in any one place, rather I had remained detached from my geographical and social setting for various reasons. I was merely residing where I lived, “develop[ing] no particular connection to [my] human and non-human environment” (p. xvi). As I moved to my new rural area, I was therefore impressed by the spiritual and emotional attachment to place as demonstrated by my spouse, his family and friends, my new teacher colleagues and other community members.

Hay (1998) discusses these feelings of ‘sense of place’ in terms of “a personal sense of place”, “ancestral [historical] sense of place”, and “cultural sense of place” (pp. 1–16). I believe that the community members, my rural neighbours, possessed all of these attributes. After many years of living in my rural place, I too have developed a strong bond to my community and my place.

In the following discourse I define a person’s ‘sense of place’ as a general feeling of connectedness to his/her community and believe this to be a very personal instinct that is not static, yet transforms boundaries of time, space, and emotions. As this definition relates to a personal feeling and/or belief, I leave its meaning to the individual participants who utilize this word in conversation.

**Rural and Rurality**

An assessment of current literature on the meaning of the term ‘rural’ paints an inconsistent, and stereotypical picture. Adjectives such as unique, friendly, safe, community-minded, neighbourly, etc. (Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, 2004) pervade the federal statistical data representations produced and published by the federal and provincial governments of Canada. Academic literature from a United States perspective also reports that definitions of ‘rural’ and ‘rurality’ are contradictory and are subject to a great amount of interpretation (Barley
& Beesley, 2007; Hardré, Sullivan & Crowson, 2009). Inspecting Canadian statistical data, compiled by Statistics Canada, it is difficult to obtain a clear picture of what the term ‘rural’ actually represents and how it is conceived.

In Canada, the latest attempt to define the term rural and describe the recent trends in rural areas is inadequate. Presentation of the quantitative results from Statistics Canada census information (see Bollman, 2012) is confusing and inconsistent. A declaration such as “Rural Canada is growing, not everywhere, but rural Canada is growing” (p. 4) is an example of some of the deficient ‘qualitative’ statements provided. This federal statistical data does not provide citizens, academics, educators, and educational researchers with relevant facts and figures to investigate rural living, rural features, or rural educational matters. It tends to look at ‘rural’ as if it were specific to a business model. Population graphs and charts may be of use in some cases, but do not have the capabilities to examine rural living from sociological perspectives. The five rural definitions presented in the document produced in 2001 are still referenced, examining “different geographical criteria such as population size, population density, labour market context or settlement context” (Du Plessis, Beshiri, Bollman, & Clemenson, 2001, p. 6). Thus, studies that investigate rural living and rural experiences in general are desperately needed. In terms of education, teacher voices of experience that are absent from the literature must also be researched, particularly from provincial perspectives. In other words, “teachers who live and teach in rural areas must therefore present themselves according to who they are within their geographical rural space, what and how they practice in their place, and how they come to terms with living and teaching in a rural space and place” (Spring, 2013, p. 6).

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8 Information on Statistics Canada and the services and data they provide can be retrieved from: http://www.statcan.gc.ca/start-debut-eng.html
Rural School Characteristics

**A Canadian perspective.** Studies that focus on rural education in Canada from a school perspective are limited. In a Canadian comparative analysis study of rural school districts in Manitoba, Wallen (2008) calls for research that focuses specifically on issues pertaining to education in rural areas. She relates that research to date tends to pertain to rural issues such as leadership, teacher preparation, and school consolidation. Wallen (2008) remarks that these topics “need to be addressed differently in rural areas than they are in urban areas” (pp. 566–567). A few studies have been recently completed on Canadian perspectives, such as music teacher identity, Ontario (Eyre, 2009), issues of rural school closures in Ontario (Irwin, 2012) and place-based music education in rural Manitoba and British Columbia (Brook, 2011, 2013). However literature from a Canadian perspective on rural school characteristics is minimal. Researchers must therefore turn to studies completed outside of Canada for pertinent data.

Current data related to the number of students attending rural schools in Ontario is difficult to locate. A search of the Ministry of Education website for the number of rural students attending schools in Ontario produced no results. Data retrieved relates back to 2007, when the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs (2007) released information, stating approximately 315,000 rural students attend elementary and secondary schools in communities with less than 100,000 residents. The report also states that, “schools are important centres of activity in rural communities” (p. 25). Their goal is to support “quality education close to home” and “rural schools help bind smaller communities together” (p. 22). However, Corbett (2007) discusses the ways in which Canadian rural school policies, philosophy and curriculum tend to encourage the depopulation of rural communities.

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9 Secondary schools in the area pertaining to this study provide full day educational instruction for students in Grades 9 through 12. The Province of Ontario funds Ontario public secondary schools.
Beyond a Canadian perspective: Looking south. From a United States perspective, rural academic literature reveals that small rural schools are beneficial in terms of programming; they promote community involvement and close ties between students, staff, and community and instill a strong sense of community and place through the involvement of parents and local businesses in day to day school activities (Bates, 2011; Busseri, Rose-Krasnor, Willoughby, & Chalmers, 2006; Frederick & Eccles, 2006; Isbell, 2005; Hunt, 2009; Kahne, Sporte, Torre, & Easton, 2008; Lee, Smerden, Alfeld-Lero, & Brown, 2000; Wilcox, 2005). Derrett (2003a, 2003b) also discusses how rural festivals and celebrations instill a strong sense of community and sense of place between students, staff, parents, and local residents. Many teachers also live and teach in their rural community, so there is continued contact with students throughout their school years and a strong support network available. This familiarity with all rural residents builds strong community and school relationships. In terms of music education, Bates (2011) and Isbell (2005) discuss the positive relationships that are built between students in rural schools, which include grade levels of Kindergarten through Grade 12. There is strong peer support, demonstrated by older students mentoring the younger musicians. All of the above attributes build a bond between rural residents and the school – teachers, parents, and students.

Rural teachers and students also suffer from negative factors such as isolation, lack of professional development, lack of resources, and proper school facilities, expectations that teachers instruct outside of their areas of expertise, lack of privacy, and a small student body that affects the makeup of sports teams and music groups (Bates, 2011; Isbell, 2005). The authors also report that due to the lack of funding for music supplies, local community groups must often rally together to support the extra-curricular endeavors of the school. In addition, Bates (2011) contends that rural teachers and students are considered as being ‘inferior’ by their urban
counterparts when meeting to compete in music education competitions. He remarks, “professional focus on large ensemble performance seems to benefit suburban schools, students, and teachers more than it does their rural counterparts” (p. 90). Larger urban schools have the availability of a larger student body to choose from, and repertoire chosen for competitions supports larger balanced ensembles. Rural students therefore are not afforded “a level playing field” in many cases (p. 91).

*Why Rural Matters 2011–2012: The Condition of Rural Education in the 50 States: A Report of the Rural School and Community Trust Policy Program*[^10] is a biennial document that reports on the state of affairs of rural education across the United States of America. The purpose of the document is to provide an analysis of each state, to highlight the needs of rural school districts and bring attention to the priority issues that each state is experiencing. The document also outlines the challenges that rural educators and policy makers face as they attempt to satisfy the curriculum needs of rural children. The U.S. rural population has grown to over 9.6 million children from 2008 to 2009. This report provides multiple perspectives from which to view issues such as population, student and family diversity, educational outcomes on state tests and graduation rates, pupil expenditures as compared to the U.S. education expenditures, and longitudinal data related to change in: number of rural students, Hispanic rural students, rural student poverty, and a change in rural students as a percentage of all students. The reasoning behind the new indicators and revised gauges introduced in this report is also discussed in the document.

The methodology is strictly quantitative in nature. The Rural School and Community Trust Organization that publishes this document retrieves statistical data from information compiled by the National Center for Educational Statistics and the United States Census Bureau. The Rural School and Community Trust is a national non-profit organization that reports its findings to Capitol Hill. The mission of this organization is to address rural education issues, particularly in areas that suffer from poverty. Their mandate is to provide documentation that will inform state and federal policy makers about the needs of these marginalized rural communities and to advocate for teacher equitability, teacher retention, teaching resources, and school leadership. The Verizon Foundation, an organization that promotes and financially supports special projects in education and health, funds the publication, Why Rural Matters. This document is particularly useful to those who are involved in rural education research in the United States and for researchers who are investigating rural issues in areas where rural education is not a priority. It may serve as a template and source of data for organizations in other countries that wish to bring attention to the state of rural affairs that affect their rural populations and communities.

Despite current literature that is available on rural education and rural music education issues that pertain to schools outside of Canada, it is important that further studies are completed from a Canadian perspective that focus on the issues that are related to rural schooling. Having up-to-date quantitative data that is easily accessible through Statistics Canada and that provides a foundation for this research is a must. Also important from a music education perspective is the investigation of the process by which music education programs in rural areas create an identity, an attachment to rural communities and how music bonds residents together (Green, 2011; Hudson, 2006). Research is needed that problematizes the general assumptions that are found in
discourses surrounding rural education in general, and rural music education in particular. Furthermore the voices of those involved in rural music education are often not heard. A collaborative narrative methodological approach may effectively guide these avenues of research.
Chapter Three

Experience is the bedrock upon which meaning is constructed and that experience in significant degree depends on our ability to get in touch with the qualitative world we inhabit.

Eisner (1993, p. 5)

The Guiding Pathway into Narrative Research

Qualitative Research

The art of research through the investigation of human knowledge is one that relies on human experience, human emotions, and interactions with others. Eisner (1991b) discusses the significance of human knowledge that grounds qualitative research. He remarks, “Human knowledge is a constructed form of experience and therefore a reflection of mind as well as nature; knowledge is made, not simply discovered” (p. 7). As educational researchers delve into the many issues that prevail in education today, they tell the stories that provide us with profound knowledge based on lived experiences of those who work and learn in educational environments.

This school of thought brought qualitative research to the forefront in the profession of teaching, beginning with a group of very noteworthy researchers from the Chicago School of Sociology such as Small, Thomas, Hughes, Burgess, and others (Lutters & Ackerman, 1996). From the period after World War One to the 1950s, these researchers highlighted the significance of human interaction and social relations through qualitative research methodology. Lutters and Ackerman (1996) provide an extensive account of the founders of the Chicago School, and discuss their tremendous impact on qualitative research. They remark that 10 members of the sociology faculty were instrumental in initially developing a rigorous qualitative research methodology. They believed, “Qualitative methodologies, especially those used in naturalistic observation, were best suited for the study of urban, social phenomena” (p. 3). From
this important group emerged many other figures, one being George Mead, who was instrumental in introducing symbolic interaction theory, and his colleague John Dewey, a proponent of experience through reflection and interaction.

**Reflective praxis.** With the firm foundation of qualitative research established by the Chicago School in the field of sociology, researchers such as Dewey expanded this practice by stressing the importance of reflection in understanding the world around us. Greene (1990) explains that in Dewey’s concept of knowing through “reflective praxis”, the mind cannot be absent from human thought in terms of interaction with others or human surroundings, and is “not isolated from the world of human value and human action” (p. 202). Reflection is an important way of understanding interactions at all levels. Reflecting on these interactions and the perspectives generated provides a way of ‘knowing’. Beattie (1995a) compares Dewey’s concept of ‘knowing’ in a qualitative sense to the early studies in education that mainly utilized empirical and analytical approaches. She relates that the studies of Clark and Yinger (1979), and Clark and Elmore (1981) employed methodologies that were more analytical in nature, focusing on “frequencies of verbalization” and “tabulated into mathematical models of teacher cognitive activity” (p. 55). She further remarks that studies such as these lack a qualitative approach to education and do not investigate the notion of knowing in “practical classroom situations” (p. 55). What is absent from the data and research findings, are teachers’ views and the practical knowledge they realize in their classroom situations and through their experiences and interactions with others.

**Personal practical knowledge.** In terms of practical knowledge related directly to teachers and teaching in the classroom, the influential qualitative study of Elbaz (1983) brings the notion of the importance of ‘teacher thinking’ and reflecting on personal knowledge related
to praxis to a new level. Teacher knowledge and interactions in the classroom further provide an understanding that can in turn, influence day-to-day decision making as teachers work through the curriculum, teaching, and learning process. Beattie (1995a) remarks, “Elbaz puts forward a view of the teacher as an autonomous agent in the curriculum process” (p. 57). Now the teacher is seen as a mediator whose personal knowledge and ways of knowing, (rather than the data compiled from instruction and scheduling), instruct her teaching pathway and provide instructional insight. To take Elbaz’s work to another level, the writings and research of Clandinin (1986), Clandinin and Connelly (1994, 1995, 1998, 2000), and Connelly and Clandinin (1986, 1990) refer to teacher knowing as ‘personal practical knowledge’ (Connelly & Clandinin, 1984, 1985). Clandinin (1992) defines this term as “a knowledge that reflects the individual’s prior knowledge and acknowledges the contextual nature of that teacher’s knowledge.” She further clarifies that, “it is knowledge that is constructed and reconstructed as we live out our stories and retell and relive them through processes of reflection” (p. 125). Reflecting on stories and experiences is therefore key to the qualitative process, and particularly noteworthy in understanding teachers and their processes of teaching.

**The reflective practitioner.** Another important concept of qualitative research is attributed to Schön (1987), and others such as Russell (1987) and Russell and Munby (1991, 1992) who believe that teacher knowledge is gained through reflective practice – the reflective practitioner seeks awareness and comprehension through active reflection. Fenstermacher (1994) discusses the author’s notions of reflective knowledge by “knowing-in-action, reflecting-in-action, reflecting-in-practice, and framing and reframing” (p. 11). He summarizes Schön’s concept stating, “teacher knowledge is inferred from action that arises in the course of experience as a teacher” (p. 12). Applied to a master class in music, Schön (1987) discusses the importance of
the reflective music practitioner who communicates to her student through imitation in action. In this learning environment, the music teacher and the student work together to create a musical performance that is “a kind of designing” (p. 175). By means of imitation, the teacher encourages her student to know-in-action, reflect-in-action, and frame and reframe the musical interpretation until satisfaction in the performance is reached. Tremmel (1993) (citing Schön, 1987) summarizes the notion of reflecting-in-action, stating the teacher and student are "working together in a dance-like pattern, simultaneously involved in design and in playing various roles in virtual and real worlds, while at the same time remaining detached enough to observe and feel the action that is occurring, and to respond" (p. 436). This type of knowing further adds qualitative insight into music teaching from a practical, reflexive level, hence from a praxis position.

Fenstermacher (1994) summarizes these two concepts of Connelly and Clandinin who see personal practical knowledge as integral to teacher ‘knowing’ and Schön’s reflection in action as significant. “Both strands seek a better understanding of the knowledge teachers bring to their work and the understandings they have of it, although each rests on a different theoretical and methodological foundation” (p. 9). Both of these areas of research provide groundwork for further research in the stream of qualitative studies.

Geertz (1995) is credited for advancing the notion that the researcher is an important part of the qualitative study, particularly in story. Polanyi (1958) also views personal knowledge as a relevant part of the research process with his concept of tacit knowledge. Peshkin (2000) discusses the researcher’s contribution in interpretation of the story he is gathering. He remarks, “Interpretation is an act of imagination and logic. It entails perceiving importance, order, and form in what one is learning that relates to the argument, story, narrative that is still undergoing
creation.” Through interpretation, the author believes that researchers must “develop a reflective awareness that … contributes to enhancing the quality of our interpretive acts” (p. 9). The researcher as an active participant in the qualitative research process is therefore one who imparts knowledge herself as she finds meaning in her rich data.

**Narrative Research in Education**

Since the mid 1980s, narrative research as a medium to describe teacher experiences has taken on many different forms; stories of lived experience, autobiography, life history, and those related to other arts-informed disciplines, such as music, visual arts, drama, dance, etc. Eisner in Beattie (1995b) discusses the importance of narrative in the Arts stating, “The past decade or so has been one in which the importance of narrative, the construction of stories … have been increasingly recognized for the distinctive potential contributions they can make toward understanding the personal and intimate lives that people lead” (p. ix). Those who wish to study education, specifically in relation to teacher beliefs and thinking, are researchers and authors, who uncover practical knowledge through lived stories of experience.

**Stories of experience.** The important foundation of narrative studies and academic writing to investigate teacher perspectives are attributed to researchers such as Beattie (1995a, 1995b, 2000, 2004, 2009), Barone and Eisner (2006), Britzman (1991), Clandinin and Connelly (1995, 1998, 2000), Cole and Knowles (2000, 2001), Mitchell and Weber (1999), Polkinghorne (1988), Van Manen (1992), and others. Recent researchers and academic writers have adopted their practices and methodology, and have continued to uncover teacher knowledge and personal knowledge through experience using the above forms. Based on the philosophies of Dewey (1934) and his theory of “the art of experience”, and Eisner (1991a, 1991b, 1993, 1995a, 2004) and his concept of the arts and teaching, educators ground their stories of experience from their
daily praxes, interactions with colleagues and students, and experiences in and out of the classroom environment. Eisner (1991a) remarks, “Teaching is a constructive activity whose efforts result in forms that can provide what the fine arts are intended to provide: a heightened consciousness and aesthetic experience” (p. 44). Clandinin and Connelly (1994) describe Dewey’s notion of education. They state, “For Dewey, education, experience, and life are inextricably intertwined … when one asks what it means to study education, the answer is to study experience”. They qualify Dewey’s philosophy further by remarking, “The study of experience is the study of life, for example, the study of epiphanies, rituals, routines, metaphors, and everyday actions. One learns about education from thinking about life, and one learns about life from thinking about education” (p. 415). Personal experience is therefore paramount to understanding the daily experiences of a teacher and those experiences provide important knowledge and understanding of the teaching praxis.

In the area of researching daily experiences of teaching, Van Manen (1992) employs a phenomenological approach. Utilizing this method, researchers use a “systematic attempt to uncover and describe the structures, the internal meaning of structures, of lived experience” and through this process they attempt “to explicate the meanings, as we live them in our everyday existence, our lifeworld” (p. 11). Van Manen (1992) explains this through the philosophies of Merleau-Ponty (1962). Through lived experience we “re-learn how to look at the world by re-awakening the basic experience of the world”; researchers view an “abiding concern of lived experience… called a turning” (p. 31), which allows further reflection on “essential themes” (p. 32). Lived experiences therefore allow educators to be reflective in practice, “involving our immediate, pre-reflective consciousness of life” (p. 35). For teachers, a conscious reflection of daily experiences provides insight into thoughts, beliefs, attitudes, and interactions with
colleagues and peers and in regard to curriculum and teaching routines. Van Manen (1991) elaborates by including “meditations, conversations, day dreams, inspirations, and other interpretive acts [through which] we assign meaning to the phenomena of lived life” (p. 37), and to “bring to light that which presents itself as pedagogy in our lives with children” (p. 44) in the classroom, staff room, playground, and in the implementation of extra-curricular music activities.

Coulter and Smith (2009) discuss the importance of narrative studies and the analysis of the stories that provide rich data. They remark, “Narrative analysis studies rely on stories as a way of knowing. Stories emerge as data are collected and then are framed and rendered through an analytical process that is artistic as well as rigorous” (p. 577). One of the pivotal points in narrative and the importance of personal knowledge were introduced by Connelly and Clandinin (1986) when they coined the phrase “personal practical knowledge”. They discuss their work in terms of teacher knowledge in a personal and practical sense. “The work is epistemological in character but deviates from epistemology as commonly understood in curriculum studies by focusing on personal experience rather than upon reconstructed formal logic” (p. 293). Moving away from Schön’s reflective practitioner notion of knowing “in action”, and now valuing personal knowing in a practical sense, where day to day experiences become part of the practical in knowledge, Clandinin and Connelly believe the day to day values, judgments, beliefs, acquired through practice are in a sense the true knowing of experience. Britzman (1991) acknowledges how a teacher can be an “author of that experience”; the experience is imbedded in theory, yet experienced on a personal level. She clarifies:

The sources of theory, then, are in practice; in the lived lives of teachers, in the values, beliefs, and deep convictions enacted in practice, in the social context that encloses such practice and in the social relationships that enliven the teaching and learning encounter. (p. 50)
Richardson (2006) states that Britzman’s analysis above, describes Clandinin and Connelly’s personal practical knowledge as “an embodiment of this process” (p. 58). Narrative inquiry has now become a personal, professional, and practical phenomenon, and as Connelly and Clandinin (1986) state, “the term personal practical knowledge defines our interest in understanding teaching acts in terms of personalized concrete accounts of people knowing” (p. 297).

In terms of a narrative methodology that investigates the perspectives of rural music educators, narrative is an important methodological vehicle to illuminate the diversity of rural geographies and sociocultural practices – traditions, cultures, and ways of life specific to certain areas. The narrative voices of rural music educators will not only add to rural education academic literature but will deconstruct the essentialist definitions and assumptions of rural environments and sociocultural perspectives that inform literature today.

**Narrative and life history.** Narrative and life history studies provide an opportunity for the researcher to investigate the life and lived experiences of participants over a period of time. In the field of education, life history studies offer knowledge through the narrative stories of teachers. They recount personal information and experiences that show the progression and change, which takes place in the classroom, as well as in curriculum that transforms over time. Researchers such as Cole and Knowles (2001), Holt-Reynolds (1992), Knowles (1992), Knowles and Holt-Reynolds (1991), and Mitchell and Weber (1999) make use of narrative methodology to understand how teacher beliefs, classroom climates, teacher perceptions, and historical perspectives evolve over time. In music education practices, Dolloff (1999) utilizes narrative through lived experiences of music teachers who reconstruct their beliefs about teachers of their past. This process also helps them to construct their own identities as teachers. Cameron and
Carlisle (2004), in their research into the social climate created in a music classroom, also use narrative to explore “the effect of macro structures and micro interactions of music education on the social/emotional climate and hence on the very being of the musician” (p. 21). Cole and Knowles (2001) comment on the importance of life history “which goes beyond the individual or the person, and places narrative accounts and interpretations within a broader context” (p. 20). As teachers recount their life experiences using a historical perspective, the authors uphold the unique ability of life history research to “interrogate the meaning and significance of the past as it influences the present and the future” (p. 20). Context in teacher experiences are constantly in flux and changing quickly over time, as noted by Cole and Knowles (2001). They state, “As life history researchers, we sense that we can more fully know and understand these uniquenesses and complexities, because of our commitment to understanding lives in context” (p. 23).

Beattie (1995a, 1995b, 2000, 2004, 2009) has provided excellent guidance in the history of narrative research as well as in the philosophy and implementation of the methodology of narrative studies. She stresses that narrative can sustain a dual purpose and function as a phenomenon as well as a methodology (1995a, p. 61). In terms of a narrative, it presents both the voice of individual experience as well as the voices of others who may have different perspectives. Narrative assists in understanding the old and new feelings, and emotions of individuals, simultaneously transforming and filling in the missing pieces of an individual’s life experiences. In narrative research, we can revisit perspectives of others and realize new pathways of experience as the story evolves. Narrative as a phenomenon allows us to study life stories, in the context of the participant’s life and teaching praxis, and acknowledges interpretations of experiences. Beattie (1995a) refers to MacIntyre (1981) to describe the link between narrative as method and phenomenon. She states, (citing MacIntyre, 1981), “The link
between narrative as method and phenomenon can be found in MacIntyre’s concept of selfhood, a concept of a self whose unity resides in the unity of a narrative which links birth to life to death as narrative unites beginning to middle to end” (p. 61). Clandinin and Connelly (2000) also view the link between narrative as method and phenomenon, explaining, “We keep in the foreground of our writing a narrative view of experience, with the participants’ and researchers’ narratives of experience situated and lived out on storied landscapes as our theoretical framework” (p. 60). Connelly (2009) reminds narrative scholars to refrain from “thinking of method disconnected from phenomena” (p. 45), for narrative methodology is intimately entwined with narrative as a phenomenon itself. Narrative therefore “names the structured quality of experience to be studied and it names the patterns of inquiry for its study” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 2).

**Autobiographical studies.** Self-study or autobiographical research through narrative stories has provided educators with a scholarly methodology to learn about themselves, their past, present, and future. It reveals ways in which their interactions with the world around them can produce knowledge to positively affect their personal and practical growth. Bullough and Pinnegar (2001) describe what self-study research is, “When biography and history are joined, when the issue confronted by the self is shown to have relationship to and bearing on the context and ethos of a time, then self-study moves to research” (p. 15). As a teacher writes her self-study, she will “provide us with different kinds of knowledge and different ways of representing it and has the potential to bring new meaning to the experiences of change, of growth, and of professional development in a teacher’s life” (Beattie, 1995b, p. 8). The teacher’s narrative voice will therefore produce personal, practical knowledge, and bring forth new meaning to experiences of self. These personal ways of knowing can impact a teacher’s professional development, and can offer insight to others in the profession in terms of teaching strategies, and
Collaborative narrative. In a narrative study, a tremendous opportunity arises for collaboration: collaboration between researcher and participant, collaboration between all participants in a focus group setting, and then collaboration between the researcher and the collective group of participants. Thus a triangulation occurs where each member of the study provides her personal, practical knowledge, and then it is further constructed through a dialogue and discussion with co-participants. The researcher then synthesizes the co-created knowledge.

Beattie (2009) relates how this fruitful knowledge is produced. She remarks:

In doing this kind of research with others, collaborative relationships and shared interpretations and meaning-making are central aspects of the ways in which narrative researchers work with participants to study the meaning of these individuals’ uniquely personalized concrete ways of knowing and being, from the individuals’ own perspectives. These processes involve shared explorations, interpretations, and ongoing meaning making prior to the documentation of the shared inquiry by the researcher. Research participants receive copies of transcribed interviews and are invited to discuss, clarify, and expand the interim meanings expressed there. They are also invited to comment on the interim narratives that researchers write, to collaborate in clarifying and furthering the interpretations and meaning making, and in the co-creation of knowledge. (p. 33)

Collaborative stories therefore become the medium in which the researcher and her participants can gain knowledge through reading, listening, discussing, and participating in open-ended interviews. The research is no longer a mere scribe, but one who is a participant in ‘living out the stories’ through a mutual relationship with the participant, where knowledge is shared and built upon for greater understanding.

Connelly and Clandinin (1990) discuss the collaborative quality of the researcher-participant relationship, stating, “As researchers, we become part of the process. The two narratives of participant and researcher become … a shared narrative construction and reconstruction through the inquiry” (p. 5). They qualify the researcher’s role, for “we learned
that we too needed to tell our stories. Scribes we were not; storytellers and story livers we were. And in our story telling: the stories of our participants merged with our own to create new stories” (p. 12). The collaborative process in the authors’ view brings new knowledge through the collaborative story writing process. They confirm that, “because collaboration occurs from beginning to end in narrative inquiry, plot outlines are continually revised as consultation takes place over written materials and as further data are collected to develop points of importance in the revised story” (p. 11).

Barrett and Stauffer (2009) also stress the transformation the researcher experiences in the collaborative narrative process. They state, “this research relationship is one in which the researcher too can be changed. In this process, narrative inquiry becomes to varying degrees a study of self, of self along-side others, as well as of the inquiry participants and their experience of the world” (p. 12). A learning process therefore takes place, as the researcher and the participant are co-learners in the collaborative narrative experience. They gain a further perspective, obtaining further knowledge of the world around them, in the classroom, and the community.

**Research from a metaphorical perspective.** Clandinin (1985) first utilized the concept of an image to represent teachers’ personal, practical knowledge of experience; “teachers’ classroom images grow out of their experiences, both private and professional” (p. 379). The author states that an image “is an experiential construct” (p. 367) which links a teacher to her praxis metaphorically speaking. I asked each participant to provide a metaphor that represents her teaching praxis, which serves “as a tool for explaining what teaching is like, for describing some of the less easily evoked parts of the teaching/learning context” (Dolloff, 1999, p. 206). For each participant, the metaphor is a helpful device to describe their relationship with their rural
teaching context, to their students and/or their community. Participants’ metaphors may change throughout time, as their rural area is in the constant state of fluctuation. Dolloff (2007) contends however, that as teachers we must “interrogate the images that we hold” (p. 7) as our sense of our teaching context changes throughout time. This notion is very relevant in a rural music education context.

**Research from a musical perspective.** In writing life stories of experience, Denzin (2008) stresses the importance of stories of self, written in a performative sense. He remarks, “We live in stories … We need larger narratives, stories that connect us to others, to community, to the morality, and the moral self” (p. 119). He discusses three concerns that researchers who are writing interpretive biographies, or stories of lived experiences should heed, “The emphasis on self, biography, history, and experience must always work back and forth between three concerns – the concerns of performance, of process, and/or of analysis” (p. 119). Performance is represented in the text of the stories that provide a glimpse into the life history of the researcher and participant. Stories may “tell the past … in ways that allow us to disrupt conventional narratives and conventional history” (p. 119). They draw on social, political, and educational issues that would help us to understand our changing and evolving teaching and learning environment. An analysis of the stories and epiphanic moments that recur in our self-study or interpretive biography, and in the stories of our participants will uncover the underlying themes that will inform and provide further knowledge related to the teaching of music.

Bresler (2008) suggests, “musical experiences can help reveal important dimensions of qualitative inquiry that have not been explored” (p. 226). Through a collaborative music education research project with Elliot Eisner, she noted (with amazement) that the music lesson in a classroom provides her with a structure to “make sense of educational settings” (p. 226). In
regard to music education research, Bresler uses music as a metaphor for arts-based collaborative research where teamwork in musical ensembles provides a framework, “consisting of individual voices, each with its own timbres and characteristics, yet all interacting to create a composition”. (p. 226). This could take the form of a collaborative story or a collaborative musical composition representing the data. Bresler also stresses the importance of “engaged listening” (p. 227), “the polyphonic nature of lived experience” (p. 229) and “disciplined empathy” (p. 234) all of which are crucial elements of performance in an arts-based setting. These elements are also significant in the collaborative research context, where the researcher-participant relationship is dependent on each other to produce further personal, practical knowledge. All key aspects of the music lesson come into play in this mutual learning experience, where “orchestration, rhythms, dynamics and form” (p. 234) interact in the arts-based collaborative learning research encounter.

In Mullen, Diamond, Beattie, and Kealy (1999), four researchers work together to produce a collaborative arts-based experience in which they “use the image of a musical chord that consists of a group of notes sounded together to represent [their] collaborative process” (p. 341). Using literary, artistic, and technical forms, the four collaborators produce stories of experience and resulting forms of art that demonstrate the collaboration that occurs when a “quartet” produces a “musical chord” representative of their individual interests and talents in education. They remark, “we imagine our inquiry as a shared story, as an improvisation of professional practice, and also as a framed form of art” (p. 342). As they “define [themselves] as teacher researcher-artist inquirers” they work together in a collaborative arts-based position to “more fully infuse narrative and educational inquiry through the introduction of self-reflection, shared storying and collaboration” (p. 367). These four researchers have utilized their varied artistic talents to further demonstrate collaboration through arts-based techniques of performance.
In the field of preservice music teacher education, Richardson (2006) provides music educators with a glimpse into the lives of seven preservice music teachers during their Bachelor of Education year of study. The participants’ stories of “musical experience are the narrative phenomena” which “explore the knowledge inherent in their lived experiences through narrative methods” (p. ii) and the collaborative narrative process. This inquiry serves as an excellent example of the narrative process through lived stories of music, of performance, of music education and of outside experiences related to the study of the discipline. Richardson (2006) states, “It sings of finding voice, of having agency, and of coming to the understanding that it is through storying our lives for and with others that we finally acknowledge and hear our authentic narrative voices” (p. ii). This collaborative narrative arts-related study also gives direction for further study in the discipline of music education and stresses the importance of understanding the self and others who possess the musical talents and knowledge to pursue careers as educators in this field.

The Structure That Binds: Methodological Framework

An education that neglects literature and the arts, neglects the richness and diversity of the ways that we have been shown the various dimensions of human existence and human awareness; the ways in which the myths and legends of the past influence our present actions, the interconnectedness of all aspects of ourselves as human beings, and our interconnectedness to all things in the universe.

(Beattie, 2009, p. 40)

Collaborative Narrative Methodology

This study is grounded in the methodological perspectives of the above researchers as I view the narratives of experience of four rural music educators. It is based on the philosophies of Clandinin and Connelly (1994, 1995, 1998, 2000), Connelly and Clandinin (1986, 1988, 1990, 2006), and Clandinin, Pushor and Orr (2007), with their grounding in the importance of
“personal, practical knowledge” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1986). It is through this lens that the investigation of lived experiences (Dewey, 1938; Van Manen, 1990) of four rural music educators will provide the reflective knowledge to further understand their teaching praxes. Using collaborative inquiry, my participants and I will gain further “personal, practical knowledge” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1986) as we have the chance through dialogue and reading of our stories to, “reflect, reconnect, reframe, relate, and re-imagine [our] musical life experiences in the context of building [our] “personal, practical knowledge” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1986), “in essence, coming to know what [we] know” (Richardson, 2006, p. 79, cited in Spring 2013). Reflecting in a collaborative sense will provide rich, new learning. In dialogue with others, my participants and I will further our understanding of the teaching praxis in the context of individuals’ teaching environments and in the interactions with others outside of the classroom.

Clandinin and Connelly (2006) also highlight the importance of narrative inquiry which contains “three commonplaces … temporality, sociality, and place” (p. 479), and stress that narrative inquiry must include these in conjunction with one another. They add, “simultaneous exploration of all three commonplaces is crucial to a successful inquiry” (p. 479). Clandinin, Pushor and Orr (2007) also discuss this concept and further qualify the three commonalities. They frame temporality as a notion that is constantly “in transition” (p. 23) where stories have a past, present, and future. Stories of lived experience are always in an ongoing state of transition, as stories evolve over time and continue to develop in the future. Sociality is a term the authors use to describe the learning context, which is dependent on human interaction and relationships that “form each individual’s context” (p. 23). The relationship between the researcher and her participants opens up another level of interaction and provides a new form of personal and
practical knowledge. The authors describe ‘place’ as the actual physical location where the
inquiry and the events – past, present, and future – occur. They remark, “a narrative inquirer
needs to think through the impact of each place on the experience” (p. 23). Changes may occur
with ‘place’ throughout the investigation, which must be considered.

Eisner (1991a, 1991b, 1993, 2004) and his notion of “the arts enlarging our knowledge of
the world” (Eisner, 1991a), and Dewey’s (1958) concept of “art as experience” provides another
aspect of collaborative narrative inquiry as stories of experience offer valuable data of personal,
practical knowledge. In an arts-informed inquiry from a musical perspective, the music
researcher and her participants may view the collaborative narrative process as enrichment. They
may further understand their teaching methodologies, and the ways in which their personal
interactions with students, colleagues, and community impact the study of music. McMillan
(2005) discusses the importance of personal involvement in music making and teaching,
reflecting on musical experiences and dialoguing with the self to gain personal and practical
knowledge to move teaching and performance praxes forward. She comments on the value of the
qualitative reflective practice referring to the connection that exists between affective and
aesthetic ways of being and thinking. These processes “intersect with propositional and technical
knowledge in all the facets of my work as a musician, a music educator, and a scholar” (p. 14).

her concept of the importance of teachers’ stories in ‘constructing professional knowledge in
teaching’ (Beattie, 1995b). Eisner (1995a) discusses Beattie’s notion of the importance of
intimacy, describing narrative research as a “story through which each of ourselves is made and
remade, told, and retold” (p. ix). This is a practice “in which artistically and humanistically
rooted forms of inquiry are regarded … as a legitimate and illuminating means for understanding
our most complex and difficult problems” (p. x). From a music teacher’s perspective, stories of experience can highlight and inform the “personal, professional, and scholarly” (Beattie, 2009, p. 29) knowledge utilized in the processes of teaching and performing music. Deconstructing these processes will provide further insight for teachers to “understand the meaning of narrative ways of knowing and being, and of learning to enact them in their personal, professional and scholarly lives” (Beattie, 2009, p. 30). The investigation of our lived experiences will provide us with a better appreciation for the ways music has shaped our lives and with further personal, practical, professional, and scholarly knowledge (Beattie, 2009, p. 29).

**Research Design and Data Elicitation**

The thesis process has been a phase in my life’s journey where I have uncovered the importance of relationships, of stories, of language, and of music in my life. (Beattie, 1995b, p. 10)

**Choosing My Participants**

I received Ethics Approval from the University of Toronto Ethics Review Board and immediately began the participant recruitment process. Since I had worked for thirty years with the Simcoe County District School Board, I chose to recruit teachers who taught in my home County of Simcoe. I know many elementary and secondary teachers in three school boards and am very familiar with the region and the schools. Simcoe County is also predominantly a rural board, with two small cities, 22 townships, two First Nations communities, and Canadian Forces Base Borden. The county encompasses an area of approximately 5000 square kilometers. Children attend schools in one of the four school boards, Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board, Simcoe County District School Board, Conseil scolaire de district catholique Centre-Sud, Conseil Scolaire Viamonde, a number of private schools, and Christian schools. I therefore believe that in choosing my home county as a research field, finding rural teachers who
teach music would not be as problematic (there are very few full time elementary music teachers in the board – teachers who are classified as designated music teachers) so I would be recruiting mostly teachers whose major teaching assignment would be a subject other than music, and who would teach music either through preparation time or by trading off a subject. I had also in 2006, conducted a small mixed methods research study on elementary band programs in the county. I decided to recruit longstanding teachers for the breadth of their experience. These teachers have recently left their board contract positions and are now involved in different educational capacities. Germaine has assumed a full-time supply teacher role, and Anne is working as a supply administrator and as an adjunct professor at a local university. Natali is on a long-term leave of absence from her board, and Lenore is retired.

The four participants, Germaine, Natali, Lenore, and Anne represent two boards in the county. Germaine is the only teacher who was a designated music teacher. Natali assumed the roles of French teacher, and teacher librarian, and taught music through preparation time. Lenore was a kindergarten teacher and was involved in many different aspects of music in the schools. Anne was a regular classroom teacher, a vice principal and principal, teaching music either through preparation time and/or as an extracurricular program. The four participants all taught in rural schools and between them have taught in 16 rural schools throughout their years as educators.

As I explored the stories of four rural music teachers in Ontario and my own stories as researcher and participant, I utilized different forms of narrative; autobiographies, interviews, journals, a focus group session, and a collection of participant’ narrative stories. My participants had the opportunity to also choose a literary metaphor and music composition that exemplifies their teaching in a rural setting. The following is therefore an overview of the different types of
narratives that will inform my inquiry into the perspectives of four rural music educators.

**Forms of Narrative**

**Autobiographical writing.** Clandinin and Connelly (2000) suggest that, “one of the starting points for narrative inquiry is the researcher’s own narrative of experience, the researcher’s autobiography. This task of composing our own narratives of experience is central to narrative inquiry” (p. 70). I therefore began by grounding myself in the research topic, explaining my music education history and how I became interested in rural music education. I also asked my rural music teacher participants to write an autobiographical sketch, for I believe it is paramount to understand their beginnings and interest in teaching in a rural setting as well. Through my autobiographical narrative as well as my participants’, I reconstructed the stories in my researcher ‘voice’. Clandinin and Connelly (1994) explain the importance of the researcher to “construct meaning in those texts” instead of merely letting “field texts” exist in original form and stand on their own merit. The authors qualify that the researcher must transform them into “research texts”. As the researcher reconstructs the stories gathered, she must “search for these patterns, narrative threads, tensions, and themes that constitute the inquiry” (p. 423). The resultant research texts were shaped by the relationship the researcher has to the topic of inquiry and the participants, as well as the voice of the participant and researcher. Clandinin and Connelly caution, “we need to consider the voice that is heard and the voice that is not heard” (p. 424). An experienced researcher must then be vigilant in order to capture the authentic voice of the participant as it relates to the research topic.

**Interviews.** Research through the interview process provides invaluable data, and as Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000) state, the interview process “is not simply concerned with collecting data about life: it is part of life itself, its human embeddedness is inescapable” (p.
Interviews provided the most salient data and occurred throughout a seven-month data-gathering period. The interviews were open-ended. In the first interview each participant provided a background of her teaching praxis and the history of how she came to teach in a rural school. At this initial interview, participants were also asked to write their ‘personal story’ before the next session. Three participants decided to ‘tell’ their story in the next interview; one participant chose to write her story and read it to me. All succeeding interview sessions were open-ended and initiated by informal unrestricted questions to facilitate the conversations.

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000) comment that this type of interview “increases the salience and relevance of questions; interviews are built on and emerge from observations” (p. 271). I believe the unstructured conversation-style interviews supplied me with a vast amount of rich data. The interviews took place in a relaxed atmosphere at the discretion of each participant. They were audio taped and immediately transcribed. The participants verified each interview transcript for accuracy and made comments to further clarify or add to the data. The participants also received a copy of the other’s interviews and were welcome to comment on those as well.

**Journals.** Email and written journals also produced rich data. Clandinin and Connelly (1994) relate that journals are “a powerful way for individuals to give accounts of their experience” as well as “another method of creating field texts”. The authors remark that educators’ journals contain thoughts and experiences and “weave together their accounts of the private and the professional, capturing fragments of experience in attempts to sort themselves out” (p. 421). Three of the participants used the journaling process occasionally as a means to tell their stories and/or to add to the information from the interviews that were circulated. The journals were either handwritten or typed and sent via email correspondence. One participant preferred to relate her stories orally and did not take advantage of journaling or email.
correspondence, yet she was eager to add written comments to the transcripts, when necessary. The participants and I re-read the journal entries in later interview sessions and discussed the issues raised. These were also distributed to each participant and they were asked to comment on them further if they wished.

**Collaborative focus group session.** After all interviews were completed, the participants and I met at a convenient location and conducted our focus group session over a long lunch. Each participant was asked to provide me with questions that they felt should be raised during the session. Questions dealt mostly with the future of rural communities, schools, and place-based music education programs. Creswell (2007) discusses the advantages of focus group sessions, remarking, “Focus groups are advantageous when the interaction among interviewees will likely yield the best information, when interviewees are similar and cooperative with each other” (p. 133). Since the four rural music teachers possess similar interests in rural music education and have a vested interest in the success of rural education, the focus group session produced a wealth of rich, extensive data. The session was audio taped, the data was transcribed and verified with all participants. A transcriber attended the session as well; she made note of expressions, emotions and body language. She also manually transcribed some of the conversations.

The above methods of data collection provided me with a vast amount of data.

**Metaphors of Experience**

**The literary metaphor.** After I completed the interview process with each participant, I asked them to choose a literary metaphor or image that they believed would best describe their role as a rural music educator. I suggested that the metaphor could either be a word or a phrase. Eisner (2008) comments on the importance of metaphors to express personal feelings and
emotions. He states, “Our personal attributes are captured in the metaphors that we choose or invent to describe them. It is through such description, at least in part that we enable others to understand how we feel and indeed, enable us to recognize our own feelings” (p. 8). Higgs stresses the importance of metaphors in teaching. “Teachers, therapists, clinicians, and consultants must be empathetic, creative, and imaginative, and also must be able to translate the understanding gained in practice using metaphors, narratives, representations, and nontraditional tools that can be imagined and created” (p. 544). After some thought, the participants provided me with a metaphor to represent their praxis.

**Music metaphor selection.** I asked each participant to choose a composition from the repertoire they taught that represented their music teaching praxis at any point in their career. They were apprised that it could be a composition that they enjoyed performing/conducting the most, or a favourite of their students. Borrowing the words of Elliott (1995), the composition could be chosen for its “artistry, design, creativity, tradition, emotion, narration characterization, culture, ideology, [or link to] community” (p. 158). I then requested that each participant write a narrative to tell their lived experience related to the composition. Each participant was very eager to participate in this selection and share their stories with the group. They all remarked on the salience of this experience, for it conjured up forgotten memories and emotions related to a special moment in their music teaching careers.

To describe the importance of this musical activity – bringing forth the stories related to music and teaching praxis – I turn to Elliott who states, “Music is a multidimensional human phenomenon involving two interlocking forms of intentional human activity: music making and music listening” (p. 42). The author relates that music is not merely an aesthetic experience as labeled by Reimer (2003) but one that is “a diverse human practice” (p. 43). To be human then is
to live in contexts, to think and feel in contexts and to teach in a context that is spatial, interactive, and emotional. Teaching the subject of music is therefore one that overlaps the personal, and the praxis level, bringing into focus the emotions, perspectives and personal interactions with students that extend beyond the self. The teaching of music is therefore personal as well as interactional, weaving together teachers’ and students’ act of making music, or musiking. Small (1998) defines musiking as “one great human activity” which involves “composing, practising, and rehearsing, performing, and listening”. These are not “separate processes but are all aspects of the one great human activity that is called musiking” (p. 11). Teachers and students work together to produce musiking experiences, as they are collaborative, intertwined, emotional, and community-based occurrences. Music is individual, and filled with emotions, yet it is a communal experience, where the conductor and students work toward a common goal. Thus, writing a narrative story through the lens of what a composition means to the participant in terms of the rural education perspective, evoked thoughts that went beyond the personal, professional, and scholarly. It became an intersection of the aesthetic, emotional, and practical value that is experienced in the making and performing of music by both the student and teacher.

Data Analysis

Beginnings: The conceptual triad. After interviews, email, telephone, and personal conversations were completed, they were transcribed and verified by participants. Participants also commented and made additions and/or deletions where necessary. All interview transcripts were given to each participant so they could make comments if desired. These comments/topics were then used to stimulate further conversation in the focus group session. A large amount of data was therefore gathered, and then analyzed for recurring themes.
To aid in the transcription analysis for recurring themes, I utilized Carp’s (2008) interpretation of Lefebvre’s (1991) notion of space, which proved to be very fruitful as a sorting tool and as one to guide my thoughts. In this resource, Carp introduces Henry Lefebvre’s theory of social space as detailed in *The Production of Space*, (1974/1991). Lefebvre (1974, 1991) criticizes that space is often considered a static form when used in planning and development models and/or when certain geographical areas are under observation and are planning for future change. Carp explains Lefebvre’s notion that space should not be considered as such but should be represented as a “multifaceted process mobilizing both physical and social transformations” (p. 130). To exemplify the importance of space as being an environment wherein interaction takes place and where human relationships occur and are influenced by this space, he developed the notion of a conceptual triad. Carp (2008) remarks, “It is people who sustain and transform places through their productive interrelationship with space” (p. 132), hence Lefebvre’s triad explicitly explains this relationship.

The conceptual triad contains three fields – physical, mental, and social fields that together represent the interaction that occurs in relation to human experiences enacted in a physical space. Carp’s representation of this conceptual triad is displayed in chart form and is used as “categories of analysis” (Appendix A). She demonstrates how these ‘fields’ begin as concrete frameworks, then expand into more abstract forms: Physical develops into: 1) Spatial practice, 2) Perceived space, then expanding to the concept of: my body/your body, Mental expanding to: 1) Representations of space, 2) Conceived space, then to: my mind/your mind and Social: 1) Representational space, 2) Lived space: my direct experience/your direct experience (p. 133). She also qualifies the term, *ground-truthing*, which she defines as, “the practice of using field observations to interpret, analyze, and verify remotely sensed information about physical
features of an area” (p. 129).

These conceptualizations – ground-truthing and the conceptual triad can therefore be used when examining and critiquing space and place in relation to other topics outside of the planning realm, such as in narrative studies. Carp discusses the value of the conceptual triad in examining teaching and planning practices and research. She remarks, “By extending purpose to teaching and community service as well as research, the examples suggest that, beyond inspiring an approach to analyzing social space, the conceptual triad can also inspire numerous approaches to acting on it” (p. 136). In her subsequent examples, Carp discusses the use of this analytical model to interconnect embodied professional knowledge and “creative initiative that emerges from place-specific knowledges and experiences” (p. 140). It also demonstrates how people view social spaces, revealing shared and different attributes. Yet these outcomes provide important knowledge for educators, planners, and sociologists who all acknowledge the variance of social spaces. I therefore chose this very relevant model to aid in the organization of my data.

Finding my way: The themes surface. Narrative research produces a great amount of data. Due to the fact that I was ‘drowning’ in the vast quantity of transcript data, which is often an issue that occurs with narrative methodology (Larsson & Sjöblom, 2009), placing data into the format of the conceptual triad provided me with the analytical tools to view themes that recurred throughout the transcripts, and in the placement of the data into each subsection – physical, mental, and social. As the data amount became overwhelming, I realized the linear organization of the chart served as an appropriate guiding structure and was a needed visual tool.

I decided to revise the conceptual triad chart to fit the needs of this research. I therefore expanded on the original chart, compiled by Carp (2008). In the ‘more concrete’, I placed the topics I wished to interrogate. In the ‘physical’ or ‘where’ field, the topics related to physical
space, the county, town, and school. In the ‘mental’ or ‘what’, ‘how,’ and ‘when’ fields, I placed the representations of space I wished to query. These included the definitions of rural, rurality, community, curriculum, and rural school. In the ‘social’ or ‘who’ field, I placed personal, community, church, and professional interactions. In the ‘more abstract’ fields, I expanded on each to further interpret what I wished to query. In the ‘most abstract’ or ‘beliefs’ fields, I placed my participants’ actual quotations and narrative passages that exemplified the topics (Appendix B). Now that the chart was completed in a skeleton form, I was ready to compile a chart for each participant.

As I went through each participant’s transcriptions, I highlighted quotations and narrative passages that I felt would best represent each theme. I had to decide which narratives to highlight and which to leave out, which is an issue with narrative research when a large quantity of data is collected (Clandinin and Murphy, 2007). I then colour coded the transcript passages, noting the dates and typed in quotations where I believed they would best fit. In the ‘physical’ field, all quotes that related to physical space and place were pasted into that section. Similarly, for the ‘mental’ section, I included quotations that related to teacher plans, methodologies, and theories, as participants had discussed these in the transcripts. In the ‘social’ field, I included all quotations that related to their lived experiences – their stories of interaction with students, parents and community. Some of these passages focused on certain events that were independent, or outside of the realm of the emergent themes. These could be isolated, sensitive matters, and/or special remarkable circumstances that participants chose to highlight. I was therefore focusing on the ‘particular’ rather than the ‘general’ in these cases (Pinnegar and Daynes, 2007).

It wasn’t until I compared all of the participant’s charts that I was able to identify themes
that were recurring across all participants’ data. As I compared and cross-referenced each participant’s chart, I was able to formulate headings relating to the data and themes. Finally, as each participant chart was completed, the emergent themes became clearer and the following results emerged. The physical and mental fields intersected to produce the theme of *Teacher Roles*, and the physical, mental, and social fields intersected to produce the themes of *Juxtaposition of Purpose and Space: Narratives of Experience, Narratives of Conflict, Narratives of the Heart* and *Narratives of the Future*. This amalgamated field also produced the *Literary Metaphors* and *Music Metaphors* (Appendix C). I discussed the charts with each participant and gave them the opportunity to view the emergent themes that unfolded through the short dialogues and the narrative stories. In continued conversations with the participants, we co-constructed (Chase, 2005) the themes in a sense. The resulting themes as discussed above were used to guide the analysis and organize the thesis presentation.
CHAPTER FOUR: GERMAINE

The Stories Between Us

Germaine and I live in the same county, approximately 30 kilometers away from each other. We both have taught music for many years with different boards, yet I had not met Germaine until I contacted her to participate in my doctoral study. Through a mutual acquaintance I was introduced to Germaine, who is well known for her school and community choirs that perform throughout the county at local choral festivals and school events. I had also heard about Germaine’s work with the church and the opportunities she provides for private piano and vocal students to participate in community church Christmas and spring performances. My own children’s private piano teacher and their high school music teacher often have commented on her musical expertise and praised her for encouraging their students to be a part of her community music events. When her name was brought forward by one of my doctoral study participants, I contacted Germaine. She was very interested in being in the study. Since that time, Germaine and I have met many times. I have also attended one of her Christmas concerts, held in her small home church where she has been the organist for the past 43 years.

Germaine and I have both remarked that it is unfortunate that we have worked with children in a music role for many years and not very far away from each other, yet we have never crossed paths or known of each other’s existence in a personal, interactional, musical sense. We both have experienced similar issues of living and teaching music in rural areas but demographics and lack of communication between educators who teach in different school boards has kept us apart, each on a parallel music education journey that has not yet intersected.
Our Research Conversation Moments

After calling Germaine to ask for her participation in my study, she invited me to her home for our initial interview. Her lovely rural home, tucked in a quiet cul-de-sac outside the nearby town of Penetanguishine, provided a very relaxed atmosphere for our first meeting and open-ended interview/conversation. Germaine described her neighbourhood. “It is just like the farmland, a little pocket of a community” (personal communication, August 10, 2012). Even though we had never met, we found that we had mutual acquaintances and interests, and our spouses shared many farming contacts. Our shared interest in music education and rural studies immediately connected us. We both remarked that when living in a rural area, people either know of each other or have some type of relationship linked to families. Germaine stated, “[The] farming community is very together … like they know each other … I think it is the community that needs the support of each other. I think they rely on each other (personal communication, August 10, 2012). Our first meeting was very productive; we discussed the terms ‘rural’ and ‘rurality’. We scheduled our next meeting for a week afterward in a restaurant in the local town. Germaine and I met for five interviews; one at her home, and four others, which were held at local restaurants.

A Metaphor: The Wolf as Culture: A Story of Community

Every July, Germaine’s small community celebrates the Festival du Loup, a cultural festival where the members of Lafontaine, Ontario “celebrate the art, culture, and the French Canadian heritage”\(^{11}\) of this small hamlet\(^ {12}\) that has a history dating back to the first visit of the

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\(^{11}\) [http://www.festivalduloup.on.ca/home.html](http://www.festivalduloup.on.ca/home.html)

\(^{12}\) For the purpose of this dissertation, the term ‘hamlet’ is used to represent small rural areas that have a population of less than 1000. According to Statistics Canada (2011), communities with a population of 1000 or greater and a population density no fewer than 400 people per square kilometer are referred to as “small population centers” or (POPCTR). Any communities outside of small population centers are designated as “rural areas”, a term that for the
French explorer, Samuel de Champlain in 1615. According to historical, personal, and legendary accounts, between 1902 and 1903, a wolf terrorized the small community of Lafontaine for seven seasons, raiding barns and pasture fields and killing livestock. The wolf was also rumoured to be very large, ferocious and had the strength to kill a human being. However, according to the author and participant in the story, Father Thomas Marchildon\textsuperscript{13}, who was the parish priest for approximately 40 years, the wolf actually saved him from death. Yet the adults were terrified that their children would be susceptible to an attack, so they were reluctant to let children wander and play outside, even though the wolf had only attacked the local barn livestock.

In this area, four different immigrant groups had arrived and settled at different times; the first group of families were descendents of the Métis and voyageurs, the second were families who were encouraged to move to this region from Quebec to farm the land, the third – from Joliette, and the fourth – from Vaudreuil-Soulanges. Some settled in the areas around Lafontaine where the land was rich and excellent for crop production, while others were granted wooded lots that were not as fertile. This caused dissension between the groups. Arguments and disputes over land resulted in a division between the citizens, resulting in strong feelings of animosity. This was also fueled by their different cultural backgrounds, despite the fact that they were all Francophone and originally from different areas of Quebec or other French speaking regions. They also were devout members of the Roman Catholic faith. When the dangerous situation of the wolf came to a head, and after many false accusations were made – at one point the story refers to one farmer shooting a neighbour’s fierce dog, which he suspected was the perpetrator –

\textsuperscript{13} http://www.ameriquefrancaise.org/en/article-348/Legend_of_Loup_Lafontaine.html

\footnotesize{purpose of this study is too general. For further information, refer to the following website: http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2011/ref/dict/geo049a-eng.cfm}
the wolf was finally apprehended by one farmer, shot and killed. This man was blind in one eye and according to the story, wanted to shoot the wolf so that the priest would say a Mass in the honour of the community that would rally the people together as a cohesive unit. Afterwards, the priest of the parish church in Lafontaine honoured the killing, yet begged the people to become one – to settle their disputes and work together as a community from then on. Just as the wolves move in packs and protect each other, creating a safe and cohesive group, so should this small rural community, preached Father Joseph Beaudoin, the priest of Sainte-Croix church. From that day on, the small community of Lafontaine has encouraged and embodied togetherness, peace and love through their church parish, their French cultural activities, and through the strong agricultural ties they still share. Due to the fact that they are members of one of the very few Francophone rural communities in Ontario, they must collectively protect their legacy through a strong sense of community and sense of place. Today this strong sense of community prevails, as Lafontaine and area residents celebrate their Francophone heritage and French culture in their church, their schools, and through cultural activities. During the Festival du Loup, the wolf symbolizes community, as many families display their wooden carved wolves during festival time. Culture bearers dress up as wolves as they perform and present their handicrafts at the festival – all exemplifying the strong Francophone culture and advocating for its spirited continuance.

As I listen to my interview conversations over and over again and pour through my countless interview transcripts and personal notes I have made to myself, I am coming to the realization that the wolf as a symbol of culture may be a fitting metaphor for many rural communities that must strive to preserve their communities by protecting the bonds that they have forged between families and the traditions they have upheld for generations. The rural
landscape is constantly evolving and changing with the influx of new families, with changes in the demographics of an area and with an erosion and attenuation of the agricultural areas. It is sometimes difficult to preserve the traditions that have been the mainstay of the rural communities. Many longstanding rural residents wish to keep their traditions, yet are struggling to do so as the rural settings are influenced by the outward growth of adjacent urban areas which encroaches on the rural communities and the new families that are moving in from the urban centers. Yet when I visited Germaine’s church for her Christmas concert, I was awestruck by the strong sense of community and sense of place residents demonstrated during this celebration of their faith, and of the Christmas season.

A metaphor of community experience: Concert de Noël. In one of our interview/conversations, Germaine discussed her interest in conducting at the adult level and how she had started a SATB (soprano, alto, tenor, and bass) French choir a few years ago. During a telephone conversation I had with Germaine just before Christmas, she invited me to her annual Christmas concert that was going to be held a week hence. She was very excited about the concert because it was the first time that her daughter was conducting. (Her daughter had just assumed the new role of conductor of the Saint-Louis Children’s Choir, taking over from Germaine). For the first time, Germaine would be part of the audience for this portion of the concert. Germaine’s adult choir would be performing as well. A mass choir of all participants and two local solo singers would close the program with Germaine conducting. It sounded like a wonderful concert to be part of, so I marked the date on my calendar and planned to attend.

The Concert de Noël was held on le dimanche 9 décembre 2012 14 h, at Église Sainte-Croix Lafontaine. When I arrived a half hour early for the concert, the parking lot and the parking spaces around the church were quickly filling. Concertgoers were bringing in parcels
that contained non-perishable food items. Even though Germaine warmly invited me to attend, I felt hesitant to go into the church because I felt like an outsider, but when I got to the door I was greeted by a parishioner who made me feel very welcome. He greeted me in English, however in the church everyone from then on was speaking French. By the time the concert started, the church was packed. Germaine was right! The church was filled with standing room only and everyone sitting close to me seemed to know each other very well. They were talking and discussing the concert, fixing their children’s hair and concert attire, then sending them from the nave to the chancel and choir stalls to be ready to assemble with their fellow choristers. And the smells that surrounded me were of incense, the scent of pine and cedar boughs, candles, and smell of the wooden pews, walls, pillars, and ceilings. Looking over the program, I also noticed that I knew some of the performers and their music teachers who were accompanying them. One was my own children’s private piano teacher and another was my children’s high school music teacher; two musicians who had played a large role in the musical education of my children. Seeing their names on the program made me feel more welcomed, and almost a part of the community. Our local high school music teacher is a member of the Église Sainte-Croix and a singer in Germaine’s church choir. Germaine is also the church organist of Sainte-Croix.

The concert selections – choir pieces, vocal solos, duets, and instrumental solos – were all in French, as were all announcements and instructions. Once more I felt a little uneasy. Even though I knew some of the performers and conductors, I felt like an outsider because of the language. How could this be? I am able to converse somewhat in French, but I have never been part of the audience where all musical numbers and announcements were in French. Glancing at the morning’s bulletin for Sunday Mass that someone had left in the pew book pocket, I saw that it was completely in French as well. Little did I know that I was sitting in the only rural French
Roman Catholic Church in the Georgian Bay area!

Throughout the concert, and for quite some time afterward, as I drove 30 kilometers back home, I reflected on the feelings that overwhelmed me – how so many people seemed to be at home in their church environment, and how unified they were, celebrating their togetherness in this musical setting and in the small rural community church that without doubt has been a landmark in the area and a building of importance in their families’ lives. According to Williams (2006), historical landmarks and heritage sites, such as the church in Lafontaine, are symbols of an attachment to place, where the notion of a local sense of place is tied to the heritage sites of the community. The church is part of the residents of Lafontaine’s past, present, and future, in terms of the music making, their language, and heritage – aspects of their lives that seem to draw them together in a celebration of community, of worship, fellowship, and of place. To me, the music that filled the church, produced by the local soloists, the instrumental ensembles, the two children’s choirs, and the adult choir, and the finale with all participating in the mass choir, grounded them in their place. I believe that each concert participant, the conductors of the ensembles, the speakers, masters of ceremony, and members of the congregation, possess a strong sense of place, so strong that it gave me a longing to be part of it, part of their French culture, part of the small rural community and to be a co-participant in the concert. As the concert ended and the families gathered up their children and said goodbye to their friends and neighbours, Germaine came down to the pew where I was sitting to warmly thank me for coming. I was so pleased that I had been invited to take part in this special Christmas celebration. I left with my thoughts, strong feelings of regret, feelings of longing and joy, and the thrill to have experienced such beautiful Christmas music in a historic French Catholic church.14

14 http://www.crccf.uottawa.ca/passeport/I/IB2b/IB2b01.html
Église Sainte-Croix, Lafontaine, has stood as a significant heritage building for the residents of Lafontaine and area, and the centre of community life for hundreds of years. The first church was originally erected in 1856 on the same site but as the French population in Lafontaine and area increased, the need for a larger building became apparent. The church that is standing today was completed in 1877. A school was built on the same property to serve the children of the French families, who originated from Quebec as far back as the early 1830s, as well as a rectory and convent. Disputes soon erupted however, regarding the language of curriculum delivery and changes in management between the French and English Sisters of Sainte-Croix. A Roman Catholic Secondary school or Continuation School was built in 1944 and closed in 1966, due to school board amalgamations. Église Sainte-Croix and école Catholique élémentaire Sainte-Croix, Lafontaine continue to serve the Francophone families of the area. These are the institutions where Germaine first began teaching and has been organist for the past 40 plus years. This small French Canadian settlement that first began in the 1800s is still the home of approximately 1,000 French Canadians who continue to advocate for their Francophone historical presence through local cultural events at the church and school, and through their sense of commitment to the agricultural land that surrounds them. “Their strong sense of community and vigorous institutions have nurtured Lafontaine’s strong French-Canadian culture” (Frenette, 2007, p. 7). Germaine is a very important member of the community. It is from this perspective that I tell her story.

Germaine’s Story

Germaine grew up on a farm on the 18th Concession of Tiny. When she was 6 or 7 years
old, her grandmother moved and gave Germaine’s family her piano. Her mother’s family was very musical; her mother played the piano and her uncles played the violin. When they moved the piano into Germaine’s farmhouse, her parents noticed that she was playing by ear; playing tunes that she heard on the radio. Her mother said, “We better get her into piano lessons” (personal communication, August 21, 2012). Her mother could not drive so her father took time off the farm to drive her into town to take piano lessons.

When Germaine was 11 years old, they sold the farm and moved into the nearby village of Lafontaine. She continued to take piano lessons until high school. When her sister announced that she was getting married in Vancouver, Germaine wanted to go, but her family could not afford to send her. Germaine then dropped out of school and her music lessons to work full time at a dress factory as a seamstress to earn the money for her train fare. She was only 16 years of age at the time.

The following year, Germaine married a local boy; her next-door neighbour. By that time, her family had moved again to Concession 13. After she was expecting her first child two years later, she left her job at the factory. She became a stay-at-home mother, and had four children. When a friend asked her if she would do some supply teaching, she was surprised, for she had not finished her high school diploma. Yet with encouragement, she started supply teaching in the French school, as her mother, who lived next door, babysat while she was supply teaching. Some of the parents contacted Germaine to see if she would teach piano. Soon she was teaching about 20 students at the school during school hours a few days a week.

After her fourth child, Germaine decided that she wanted to teach on a regular basis. She then contacted the high school director who gave her high school credits to complete her diploma. At this point, she was able to enroll in university correspondence courses in psychology. She then
went to the University of Ottawa satellite campus in Mississauga, Ontario, and carpooled with two other adult students. Germaine found the courses difficult for some of them were in English, others in French. Germaine remarked on her gradual transition from supply teaching, to obtaining her degree through correspondence:

Now I was supply teaching as well at the time and my kids were young. I was a stay at home mom ... I had to do my Bachelor of Arts by correspondence and it took me 4 years with the four kids. I did my BA and then I went to Mississauga for a year, traveling back and forth, doing my teachers college\textsuperscript{15}. The year I graduated there was an opening at St-Louis. I started there, JK in the morning and music in the afternoon. And it validated what I was ... I had seen that I could do a greater good ... for more kids by teaching in the classroom setting, than teaching private students. (personal communication, August 10, 2012)

After Germaine graduated from Teachers’ College, she began teaching with the French Separate Board\textsuperscript{16} in the local town, teaching JK in the morning with 16 students, and the music program in the afternoons. She was then moved to an intermediate classroom where she gained experience in the intermediate division, further qualifying her to accept the itinerant music education position that required her to travel between three French schools. Unlike many music teachers, she was fortunate to have a fully equipped music room in each school.

Germaine’s music education position required her to teach music, dance, and drama. She was also expected to prepare her students for an annual Christmas concert, and teach all students

\textsuperscript{15} Germaine refers to ‘teachers’ college’, a teacher education program that is offered at a number of Ontario universities. To become certified in Ontario to teach in an elementary or secondary school, a student must fulfill the requirements of a Bachelor of Education to become a fully certified professional, an Ontario Certified Teacher (OCT). Further information can be retrieved from: http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/list/faculty.html

\textsuperscript{16} A Separate School Board is a publically funded Catholic School Board. In the province of Ontario, both English and French public boards, and English and French separate school boards are government funded. Further information on public and separate school boards, French and English may be retrieved from: http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/educationFacts.html
music for church Mass. In addition, she prepared all students to enter the French section of the local music festival. After a few years, due to cutbacks, one of the French schools closed. She finally moved to one school permanently and taught music and French language acquisition to Kindergarten students. She continued her active involvement in the French section of the music festival with her school choirs and classes, and continued as church organist in her home church. Recently she has retired from her teaching position, yet remains very active in her school as a volunteer in a music capacity, as well as continuing her church organist position and conducting an adult French choir in the local nearby town. This new choir that she formed in 2000 has been very active, performing at local church and community events.

**Rural, Rurality, and Sense of Community**

I asked Germaine to define the term ‘rural’ and what it means to her. Germaine defines ‘rural’ in a demographic and social sense and relates the term to the importance of faith. She stated:

> To me, rural is when kids are still living out in the concessions ... Where there is farmland, where there is a sense of small community ... in our rural [area] ... almost the school and the parish go hand in hand. And the kids are bused in and ... to me fresh air! You know... there is not a store on every corner ... some people have to drive 20 minutes to where there is a store ... We are lucky here, we are a little bit closer [Germaine moved to a small subdivision], we are from a little bit more rural ... but to me, everybody knows everybody else, everybody knows everybody else’s business. I remember having a party line at our house where everybody listens in. That to me is rural. You know, everybody is ready to come and help a neighbour with a problem. I am sure they do that in bigger communities, but it’s just a sense of belonging I guess. (personal communication, August 10, 2012)

Even though she and her family have moved away from the family farm to a local rural subdivision, she still feels that it is somewhat rural:

> It is just like the farmland, a little pocket of a community. But I don’t feel really rural here because I don’t interact with the neighbours ... Whereas my other [location], we were on a concession, I knew the neighbours a bit more because I
was home raising my kids. I would interact a little bit more but here, we are busy building a life I guess. But we know the neighbours and we are really friendly … but I don’t feel that sense of community as much as … mind you I know most of the people but we don’t hang out together. But … my husband … he would bring up the tractor because he is a farmer and he would bring the tractor out to blow out the driveway and if he sees someone else with their little blower, he will blow somebody else’s driveways. He doesn’t get paid for that … and when his tractor broke down and he was shoveling, well the neighbour came with his little blower … so to me that’s that, that is a sense of a rural community. (personal communication, August 10, 2012)

Germaine introduced an important point about rural living. In this passage, she related to her own emotional geography and how rural neighbours and communities are so entwined. Not only does she live in a demographically rural area, Germaine believes that there is also an emotional attachment and a feeling of neighbourliness that might not occur in other communities. To her, helping her neighbours demonstrates a sense of rural community.

**Community demographics: Impact on professional praxis.** Germaine discussed the demographics of the area as it relates to her music education praxis. In her region that services the three schools, the school children come from the rural concessions, from the very small hamlets, the larger village, and a very small population from the beach areas. However, she still considers each area as being rural, because students are mostly bused. “Many students are the grandchildren of the farmers who used to till the land … they live in the house that their grandparents built but their parents work off the farm, and rent the land to larger corporate farmers” (personal communication, August 10, 2013). She commented on the difference in families’ socio-economic status, which somewhat impacted her music education praxis. Students therefore came to her music classroom with a variance of music training, and she adjusted her lessons to reflect that. Most parents were very supportive of Germaine’s music program because of her strong commitment to her community, involving each student in the church services, concerts,
community cultural festivals, and the regional choral festival. Germaine also considered her school population as a community in itself and as a family, for many students are related. She discussed the family connections:

And family! At our school it is amazing! There are … cousins in every class … Do you have any relations, any relatives in this school? “Oh ya! In Grade 2, I have … in Grade 3, I have …” they are all … it’s like big, big families that come from farming families that had 7 or 8 kids. Now they have 3 or 4 kids. There are a lot of relatives. When a child arrives, and doesn’t have any relatives, it’s shocking, you know … I don’t know if they feel they are missing something because … you see them walking out of school and it’s like… big brother, and little brother, and cousins. One bus comes in and I always call it the Deschamps bus because there are … four brothers – their kids from Perkinsfield all take the same bus and they are all Deschamps. They are all from the same family and when I was doing bus patrol, when they were coming out of the bus in the morning, I would say, “Hello Deschamps!” Because you know it is a family, it is all family, cousins; that to me is rural! (personal communication, August 10, 2012)

Germaine is therefore very well known in her area as a community builder, with her involvement in so many different local events. Most of the parents know her personally and her students understand the strong community bond that exists between school and home. She remarked:

The support – everyone knows me … students know that you know the parents. You can always say, “Okay, I am going to be talking to your parents tonight.” I think … it brings you even closer together. Because sometimes they’ll say, “Oh Madame? My mom says that she was at a party with you last night!” … And they feel good about it. They feel almost like family! … Because we are all related! Somewhere or another they’ll say, “Are you related to my grandmother?” Then I’ll say, “Yes. Do all the background on it,” and it just makes you feel like a sense of belonging, a big family oriented community! I think that would be … the most beneficial of … teaching in a small community like that … knowing everybody else … and knowing the kids, you know that maybe their parents are struggling so you can be more compassionate. You don’t treat the kids the same way when you know where they are coming from. You can’t! You know they are having a hard time at home. You know the parents … a little bit more compassionate with those kids. Other kids – you know how the parents are and you know that the kids need the discipline more at school than they are getting at home! So I think that’s another important aspect of being in a small community. (personal communication, August 13, 2012)
Germaine believes that the sense of rural community, which is evident throughout the school day, impacted her music education praxis in a positive way. She feels that all students are one family in the school context as well as in the community after school hours. Germaine commented, “When I address the assembly at the school, I always say the ‘Ste-Louis family. Because I am involved with everybody, the custodians, you know we are all family … and it is even more connected in the music program” (personal communication, August 10, 2013)!

Germaine related her community closeness to the great success of her music program, both in the school and in the relationship that she built in church and the community. She said that a music teacher in a rural area is “one of the most popular people in the community” (personal communication, August 13, 2012) and she attributed this sentiment to forging closer relationships with her parents. She accomplished this by providing all parents of her students with her personal email. She related:

I think that is important, a closer relationship, because what worries one parent, usually other parents have the same worries, about maybe trips I took with the kids, attire for the concert, …even though it was written in French. Some parents don’t read French too well, so one parent was saying, “I can’t thank you enough for your quick response to my emails! This is the best experience I have had at school. I don’t understand all the letters that are coming home [due to ALF] and I feel a disconnect with the school because of it. This is the first time that I really felt part of the school!” And I thought, what a simple thing! … The music educator is an outreach participant – building and promoting community. I wonder if a music teacher in a large centre would want to give out their emails? Probably not! (personal communication, August 13, 2012)

Community connections to the people and to the land. Not only is Germaine a part of the school and church community, she and her family also belong to the rural agricultural community. Coming from a longstanding farming family, both she and her husband have strong ties to the agricultural sector in her rural area. She remarks on the importance of community – of having a connection to the people, the industry, and the land – a connection that bonds families
and individuals together. Rural residents have connections with many people, despite long
distances that may be between them. They also need the support of each other if difficult
situations or times arise:

The farming community is very close … they know each other … even on the
news when they are talking about a farmer; … it could be out in Alliston, my
husband would say, “Oh ya, I know him”! … I think it is the community that needs
the support of each other. I think they rely on each other for something … you
know it is just that kind of … area where they need the support of each other. I
think it is just a tough organization to be in. This day and age, it brings them all
together and the interest too of course. Just like us, you know, music teachers –
you know of other music teachers in the area from taking music workshops or …
going to a concert … you get to know other teachers and there is some sort of a
bond … even though we don’t need to maybe help [each other] out … but
sometimes with some music. But farming … I think it is essential to be in contact
with other farmers … And I think it is living off the land is what brings that rural
aspect a little closer … Like you have strong roots in the land. Oh that feeling
transfers on to the school! (personal communication, August 10, 2012)

Germaine’s sense of rural, rurality, and place are therefore deeply connected with her belief of
community, which to her are the people, the land and most importantly her faith, the church.

**Church community and school.** As the organist of the local rural Roman
Catholic Church of Ste-Croix, Germaine believes that her sense of rural community is
related to her work and affiliation with the church, the school and church congregation.

Through her role in each division, she relates to the community members on different
levels, yet these roles are very intertwined. Because the church is the governing authority
of both education and religion, her music program served as a mode of worship. Her
school children were a part of each monthly school Mass. Consequently; the children
developed a strong sense of place through the community church service, through worship
together and through church activities. The music program that Germaine offered is the
glue that binds this community together.
Aspects of Community

_Fishbowl_. It is well documented in rural academic literature that living and teaching in rural communities is problematic in terms of privacy (Corbett, 2006, 2007; Hunt, 2009). The opposite also holds true; this lack of privacy or familiarity also produces feelings of belonging, forges strong community relationships, encourages feelings of empathy toward others, and builds a sense of community (Barley & Beesley, 2007; Hunt, 2009). Germaine discussed the negatives aspects in terms of teaching; where a lack of privacy provides some parents an opportunity to tie personal situations to a teacher’s dealings with her students:

Everybody knows you so you have to be very careful when you are out in the community … I had disciplined a group of students one time and I didn’t have time to get to all [of them] for the story, so I gave them a reflection [paper] … this was just at the time when my mom was having her amputation … “Oh it’s probably because your mother is sick and you’re a little bit more [upset]”… She was a nurse! She knew that my mother had been in the hospital! So I thought, “How dare you bring my mother into this!” So that could have been, you know, oh it’s just because her mother is sick, she is taking it out on the kids! (personal communication, August 13, 2012)

In Germaine’s role as organist in her community, her personal and professional life is on display as well. This holds true for other community leaders. She told the story of a priest who was taken out of the community and relieved of his charge, due to allegations of sexual misconduct. She addressed the concerns that were felt by all of the members of the community. Yet the familiarity and personal behaviour of all members is easily scrutinized, which can be a good thing. Community members have a strong neighbourhood watch program in force, where

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17 This term is used figuratively to represent a place or community that is closely knit in the sense that all actions and communications are “open to public view and criticism” (Oxford Online Dictionary). Retrieved from: http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/american_english/fishbowl The term is also defined as “a state of affairs in which you have no privacy” (The Free Dictionary). Retrieved from: http://www.thefreedictionary.com/fishbowl
any wrongdoings can be brought to the forefront. Familiarity also provides the personal touch, where students know their teachers well outside of the classroom and feel very comfortable having their teachers as neighbours. She commented:

Teachers are known in the community because we are rural. They know what the teachers do. They know their hobbies. Every year I get gift certificates. They know where I go to dinner; they know where I like to shop. You know, it’s nice, I like ... to think that they either take the time to inquire or that they just know because they have seen you there. They know I like to garden … So, that too, it just brings everybody closer together like a family … (personal communication, August 10, 2012)

Ladson-Billings (2009) also understands the positives of teachers knowing the students and students knowing the teacher outside of the classroom. She remarks, “They [teachers] see themselves as a part of the community and they see teaching as giving back to the community. They help students make connections between their local, national, racial, cultural, and global identities” (p. 28).

Strong community relationships are also a product of a fishbowl community, where parents can be very vigilant about changes in school programs and/or cutbacks and act quickly to affect positive results. Germaine discussed how parents influenced a superintendent’s decision about taking her out of the music role and putting her into a classroom. When a parent met her on the street and asked her if she was looking forward to the school session in the fall, Germaine told her of the plans to move her into a class as a regular classroom teacher. The parent spread the word quickly and rallied parents to fight to keep Germaine in the music education role. Germaine told the story:

The superintendent summoned me to her office. And she said, “I would like to put a face to your name and you can tell your parents to stop sending me faxes and emails, and phone calls. … for the last week, nothing but this is coming in and I have had enough!” She said, “Apparently we cannot take Madame Germaine out

18 An educational superintendent is a school board official that is responsible for managing a school board district.
of the music program!” I didn’t ask her [the parent] to do anything. I just mentioned to her that I would be teaching Grade 6 and she said, “What about the music program?” So I always have that support … I am pretty happy about that. I am pretty proud that the parents are always behind me. (personal communication, August 21, 2012)

**Isolation.** Feelings of isolation and exclusion are sometimes characteristic of rural communities. Where rural residents possess the characteristics of being friendly and inclusive (Du Plessis et al. 2001) to neighbours and long-time residents, they are also known to exclude those who move into the community. However in Germaine’s situation in one school, which is in her local village, she encountered feelings of segregation and a sense that she was not wanted as time elapsed. She described her feelings of isolation:

> It was probably the school that I felt more like a stranger when I went to it … that’s where I knew the most people … because I am church organist at that parish, so I know the people very well and the parents – people know me very well. And it’s where I should have felt the most at ease, the most at home … it was MY school, the school that I had been involved with as a student, as a parent, as a volunteer, [and as a teacher] … but I didn’t feel the support there as I did [at my other schools]… and eventually it took a toll … and it was heartbreaking … I left with a broken heart because I didn’t feel that I ever was able to do what I wanted to do there … well I did, I did a lot, I did choir. I did everything. (personal communication, August 13, 2012)

Germaine believes that this uncharacteristic feeling of isolation in her home community could be a product of her personal and professional ‘fishbowl’ situation, where her teaching practices at all of the three area schools were always under close scrutiny, and compared, even though she included all students of the three schools in every integrated choral event. She also speculated that her closely watched actions were perhaps considered excessive and ‘over the top’. She explained:

> At that school, I don’t know if I was making them look bad … when music is a focus, it is a very prestigious focus and it is a highlighter of the school. Sometimes I feel that maybe in rural communities where there maybe is not much else going on, if the music is a BIG … drawing card, oftentimes people who are not involved in that, resent the person who is involved … showing off? … It had to be the staff’
… I don’t think it was the parents, you know, I grew up in that community and parents knew me, they knew me as the village musician, and maybe they were taking it for granted, that was … I was going to do that …[spend a great amount on extracurricular music events]. That I owed it to the community and I think that when I left, they thought, you know, “Who does she think she is?” I got that feeling from certain parents, or certain members of the community that, well, “She must like the other school better, we are not good enough,” but it wasn’t my intention, but that was my feeling when I left. (personal communication, August, 13, 2012)

In a rural community, these feeling of isolation may become more obvious, for the parents of the students you teach are your neighbours, long-standing acquaintances, and maybe even relatives. Consequently, for rural residents like Germaine who are in the ‘spotlight,’ these feelings of alienation and the actions of the residents may take a long time to resolve, for there is no escape from derogatory remarks or incidents in a fishbowl situation (in a rural area).

Isolation in small communities affects music teachers who very often are the only music educators in their area. In Germaine’s teaching praxis she did not have any teachers on staff to plan or share music education curriculum ideas with. In addition, the closest French Catholic School in her board is 60 kilometers away and does not necessarily have a full time music program similar to Germaine’s school. Bowen (2009) and Bates (2011) discuss this isolation issue, reporting music teachers are isolated in rural areas in the fact that they have very few to collaborate with, due to the fact that there may only be one music teacher per school or per area. Bates (2011) comments:

Because rural music teachers, especially those in remote areas, can sometimes feel isolated relative to opportunities for face-to-face interactions with other music educators, it may be helpful to find a local source for professional validation and support through the development of a strong teacher identity – connecting with a community of teachers within the school from other subject areas yet sharing common goals. (p. 92)

For Germaine, the only opportunity to collaborate with another French music educator was through competition in the local music festival. She described her opportunity to collaborate in a
competitive sense. “You know – my competitor had very high calibre music program as well so it was very interesting because I had the three schools and she had St. Joseph. And it was very good competition … and after she left, I missed that … the other teachers just didn’t offer me the challenge” (personal communication, August 13, 2012)! In Germaine’s case however, direct collaboration with the neighbouring music educator was discouraged, for the educator did not teach at a French Catholic school, rather a French Public School. Germaine qualified this and explained that there are underlying political reasons why her French Catholic school board does not allow collaboration to occur between the two boards. She related that these are due to “funding issues and competition for students” (personal communication, August 13, 2012).

Maintaining and/or breaking traditions. Germaine also experienced an unwelcome reaction when she tried to implement new ideas that upset the longstanding traditions that she was expected to follow in one of her local schools. She believes that this sentiment heightens the lack of a sense of belonging in a community and because everyone knows everyone else, the negativity is felt more deeply. “Interactions with [peers] … especially if you are an itinerant teacher and you arrive with new ideas … they don’t always go over well. We don’t do it like that here! You know, so a little bit harder to introduce different ideas” (personal communication, August 13, 2012). Breaking traditions is a difficult venture in a small community. In rural areas like Germaine’s, tensions may develop where longstanding residents may wish to hold on to historical conventions, customs, and values. They may resist any change and new ideas that are proposed.

Music education traditions in small communities are often difficult to sustain, particularly if the music educator leaves the school. Often the program does not continue if she is not replaced. Germaine told me about a conversation she had with a student at one of her former
schools, where she had directed a very active and vibrant program. She had taught the student in Junior Kindergarten and Senior Kindergarten and the student was very talented in music. This student was now in Grade 8. She recounted their conversation. Germaine asked, “So what are you doing in music this year?” The student replied, “Oh I don’t know, I wasn’t there that day” (personal communication, May 4, 2013). Germaine was very upset. Since she had left the school, the music program had been reduced greatly.

**Teacher Roles**

**Teacher and place in motion.** Throughout her teaching career as a rural Francophone music educator, Germaine experienced a great deal of change. When she began teaching, her schools were part of the Simcoe Separate Board (Catholic), and later the French first language schools became part of the Separate (Catholic) French Board – (conseil scolaire du district catholique centre-sud (csdccs). Living and teaching in a predominantly Francophone area, her roles encompassed teaching in three small schools, moving from school to school throughout the workweek. After one school closed, due to the dwindling population, which was 50 students at its lowest level, Germaine continued to teach in the two remaining schools. Both were French Catholic first language schools with a mixed student population of French first language and French immersion students. Many years later, for personal and professional reasons, Germaine decided to stop teaching at her village school where she had attended elementary school, and where she assumes the role of Church organist, to teach in one school. Germaine therefore began teaching in three schools, until one closed. She then taught between two schools, until she was

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19 French and English are the official languages of Canada. French first language families speak French as their native tongue.

offered a chance to teach full time in one. Germaine found it difficult to teach the music program in the small schools, for she was expected to teach split classes: 1/2, 3/4, 5/6, 7/8, where the students were not consistently promoted to the next grade in the same group or in some instances, one grade would be split three different ways. This inconsistency was a challenge from a music education perspective; for she had to vary her program annually and in many instances have to repeat concepts taught previously. Bates (2011) relates how music educators in rural schools often deal with challenging scheduling and programming issues, where they are expected to be flexible so that students can receive the subject requirements.

*Acquisition of the French language (ALF).* Particularly challenging was Germaine’s role at Ste-Louis where she was expected to teach music through the ALF - Acquisition of the French Language program – Aquisition de la Langue Française starting at the Kindergarten level. In this school with the mixed population (many of the students were ALF, and the minority were French First Language), music is taught through a form of mime to satisfy the requirements that no English vocabulary be spoken. However, what was very onerous and discouraging to her was the fact that students who were French First Language, yet who were learning as ALF students, were not provided with the language instruction at their level. She was teaching on a lower language level to satisfy the ALF students. She remarked:

> When I was teaching a song I would have to mime it all out so they would know what I was talking about! Have a picture or you know, some kind of a prop … I remember teaching one song for the festival two years ago, and it was, *Michaud, Michaud*, it’s a cat that goes into an apple tree. The branch breaks. Michaud falls. Where is Michaud? Michaud is on his back. And you ask him to get back up. So I am doing the whole kit and caboodle about … you know I am doing the cat and then going up the tree and then going up on the branch. The branch is breaking and

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21 [http://resources.curriculum.org/fsl/oral/elementary.html](http://resources.curriculum.org/fsl/oral/elementary.html)
I fall to the ground … Ah Michaud! At the end I ask the kids, “Qui est Michaud?” and they are all looking at me. This can’t be you know? (personal communication, August 21, 2012)

What seems absolutely hilarious and elementary to the French first language students was puzzling and not understandable to the ALF students. Germaine’s music lesson instruction continued in this manner throughout much of the Kindergarten and primary grades.

Germaine classified her music program as cumulative, meaning that she built on the knowledge gained; she offered the students in each school a stable, continuous music program from Junior Kindergarten to Grade 8. Despite the inconsistencies in class makeup, due to the low enrolment, she was able to plan her lessons to satisfy student needs and fulfill the curriculum expectations. At the Kindergarten level, Germaine used picture books, individual pictures, and photos that represent the vocabulary of the songs and rounds. By learning the French vocabulary associated with the songs, Germaine was able to justify the expectations of the ALF program, which was her main responsibility, and in addition to that, she provided students with a singing repertoire. Incorporating movement in a Dalcrozan style and rhythm instruments, she engaged her students at many different levels; mind, body, and spirit:

So, just to get them to speak in French and then we would do the rounds. Then we would do the movement to the piano. I had little tunes … all basic dance steps as well – pats chassés, gallop, skip, elephant, hop, the march, and I would do mouse, in aerobics, and they … I could have done that movement to the piano up to Grade 8. The kids loved it. Sometimes the Grade 8s would go by and they’d come into the classroom and do it with them – you know because the Grade 8 was right beside me. And they would say, “Madame, we miss that!” … So I became more of a clown … to really do a lot of movement and gestures to get them to understand what to … you know how to listen in French … (personal communication, August 13, 2012)

At the junior and intermediate levels, Germaine built on the foundations of each previous grade, teaching a vocal program and highlighting movement and dance. The students further
reinforced their knowledge and understanding of rhythm, pitch, dynamics, and basic notation through recorder and ukulele instruction. As the students progressed to the late junior and intermediate grades, they studied music history and composition. At these levels, ALF did not seem to be as much of a problem for Germaine, yet she and other staff members encountered issues with some Anglophone students and teachers who continued to converse in English outside in the schoolyard and sometimes in the classroom, despite strong directives from her board. She commented that this practice is counterproductive in most teachers’ efforts to provide proper French instruction. This will be discussed further in the section on culture.

Germaine said that she was very fortunate because in her board, and unlike the public and separate boards in the county, regular classroom music is a protected subject. Where one school down the road may not provide a music education program, her French Board provides the Arts and physical education through planning time. Germaine has always struggled with the notion of these inconsistencies that exist in music education, particularly in rural areas, where in one region, music may be active, vibrant, and provide an inclusive program that reaches out into the community, whereas in the neighbouring community a music program may be greatly lacking or non-existent. Inconsistencies in rural programming are well documented in the literature (Arnold, Newman, Gaddy, & Dean, 2005; Veblen & Beynon, 2007) and educational policies must pay attention to these local differences (Hardré et al., 2009).

**Teacher–student relationships build music community.** Germaine defined herself as a music educator with many specific roles to fulfill, and it is through these roles that she built a future musical community to expand French music and cultural heritage. Germaine believes that it was her responsibility to develop musical talent that hopefully will continue throughout

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22 A planning time teacher provides a contractual break to a regular classroom teacher or specialist teacher. This time is utilized for planning, marking and/or liaising with other teachers.
adulthood. She believes her role was as follows:

It is to develop talent I think. To make kids feel … good about their voice, regardless of … what they have … the parents I think would look to me to … develop whatever musical talent is in their child, whether I tell the parents that they think their child should take piano lessons, or I really think they should take voice lessons. They have that timbre … that is just so special … unique… voice lessons. I don’t know about a big school if they would have a chance to do all that; and too, at recess, kids will come and see me. They book me at recess to come and rehearse … especially around music festival time. (personal communication, August 10, 2012)

To develop an appreciation of music was another important aspect of Germaine’s role. Following curriculum guidelines, she developed a music history course that taught the students “where we have come from and where we are going” (personal communication August 10, 2012). Particularly important as well to Germaine was to provide the students with an appreciation of their French cultural heritage through the study of French legends and folksongs. She believes that studying their culture provided them with a sense of place in history as well as in their present community, because of historical issues regarding assimilation with the surrounding English speaking communities:

It’s because it comes from the soul, the singing. It comes from your roots. They love to sing … vocal, songs, and when you explain where it comes from, it is important to know their roots in French folklore because more and more they are being assimilated. It is good for them to know their roots, where their people come from, especially in Grade 4 because we do legends. Of course I speak of the legends … in drama, Le Loup de Lafontaine, where the francophone families come from – Quebec and from parts of Quebec. And so they all get that from their story in Grade 4! Another year, another story and so, I am trying to cover all bases. That is what I like about teaching all the grades is that I make sure that … every year they have something that I offer that helps with the choir program as well. So that when I talk about something, I know they have heard it before. I talk about the deportation of the Acadians when I do Celtic music. You know they know and sometimes I have to add on a little bit because the younger kids wouldn’t have had the story already, but the older kids would say, “Oh ya, oh ya!” They would make the links to music and history and you know, a lot of links; music links a lot of aspects of life! (personal communication, August 10, 2012)

As a music educator who taught the same students throughout their elementary grades, she
covered many diverse aspects of their heritage. As Germaine stated, “I have become a constant in their life. Classroom teachers come and go, change each year, but they rely on me to be always there” (personal communication, August 10, 2012) for curriculum, for musical support and as a strong community representative who advocates for music through many different avenues.

Another important aspect for Germaine was to expose her students to different instruments, through recorder, ukulele, and Orff instruction. She also advocated for French folk music, which is a big part of her community’s music making in the home. She provided important guidance on a one-on-one basis in composition and in rehearsing their compositions and choir solos, duets, and trios. As the school is isolated and stores and restaurants are far away, students would generally remain at the school during lunch and recess times. These blocks of time were beneficial for students to meet with Germaine for extra help. She stated:

They get to compose something … so during recess the kids will come and say, or they will say first thing in the morning they see me in the hall or at the bus, “Can I see you at first recess? Can I see you at lunchtime? Can I go and rehearse? Can we go over our duet or trio?” So eventually I have to make a schedule because there is too many coming so I have two rooms and I will get one group to rehearse with the CD and I will go and work with the other and then I will switch – and then the next recess, two more groups or two more individuals. So if I remember, things work out. Working individually! (personal communication, August 10, 2012)

Germaine believes that inspiring a sense of place and of rural community was a significant part of her role as music educator. In a rural community setting, children tend to be encouraged by their families and by their siblings. She stated, “Inspiring them to get involved in their community, their music community that they have in the school … they tend to follow their siblings, or their relatives or have that interest because they have had such a good experience before” (personal communication, August 10, 2012). As they grow into adulthood and leave her school for secondary school, then undergraduate studies or workplace opportunities, their
musical interests and sense of community tend to strengthen. She added:

I had several students after they came to high [secondary] school, they would come and sing in my adult choir. That was one of the best presents they could give me – taking the time to come back, and contributing to the adult choir for the duration of high school. I have some of them who went to university and are back in the area. After university, they are back in the choir again! (personal communication, August 13, 2012)

**Intersecting Roles: Church, School, and Community**

**Choral preparations and concerts.** Germaine believes that the most important parts of her teaching praxis were the extracurricular activities she initiated and operated on her own in her schools. These included primary, junior, and intermediate choirs, preparation for solos and ensembles for the rural music festivals, and music preparation for church activities. Particularly special to Germaine were her choirs and the sense of community that emerged among students from the different schools when she combined them into a massed choir. She remembers the joy and sense of accomplishment she derived from the three school groups and how the students reveled in this special, unique, community experience, and singing with other students from their community outside of their school boundaries. Their common interests of music, of singing, and of their language and culture bonded them together for exciting musical experiences:

We had a big choir … the older kids from Grades 2 to 8 … at one point I had a combined choir of the three schools so there was about 100 students in the choir and I practised at each school separately and then a couple of weeks before the concert, I would bus two of the schools, usually the smaller schools and I would pick them up on the bus and we would go to the other school to rehearse everybody together. It was always fun, nice seeing everybody … I was all by myself … I didn’t have an assistant. It was just me! … Everybody thought I was nuts but I didn’t have any trouble. I guess I was organized and I was self-disciplined and I was expecting discipline from the kids. When we stopped for a break, it was just like … everybody would take off and then I would whistle and they would get back and take their spots and keep going! Ya! (personal communication, August 10, 2012)

In a small rural community that is isolated in terms of geographical (physical) distance,
the music teacher encounters added frustrations in terms of the logistics of being involved in cultural activities outside of the school. Germaine’s three schools encompassed a large area, making organized activities and experiences such as these very difficult to plan for in terms of logistics and cost. Germaine discussed the importance in rural areas such as hers of having the support of parents, administration, and community because without adequate musical resources and additional funding, such events could not happen. She also referred to this support in terms of equipping her classrooms to adequately teach and prepare students for these events:

> You have to show off more or less to the parents and to … your parent committee. It’s important! I said, “I have three schools and I have a music school, I have a music room in each school and I have a piano in each school, but that didn’t just happen!” You know, I got some instruments at one school and I would bring them to the other school and I would show the parents what could be done! (personal communication, August 13, 2012)

**Concerts: Rural community liaison.** Concert preparations were an unwritten expectation of Germaine’s teacher role and in all three rural schools; these concerts were a large part of Germaine’s commitment to outreaching to the community, of giving back to them for their continued support and encouragement. Not only do parents and families of the students attend these events but also the whole community gets involved:

> The support! Everybody knows me, everybody … at the Christmas concert, standing room only! All the kids are in it. I had to do two presentations because grandma, auntie, uncle, the next-door neighbour, the cousins, everybody comes! Because it is not just one parent that comes, it’s the whole community [that] comes. Some people are there and don’t even have kids in the school. They just want to come and see what is going on. Because they know that it is going to be a really good concert! It’s going to be entertaining, it’s going to be funny, because I always have some funny songs, and they are all animated. They are going to have a laugh and they are going to have a cry because I always have something deep and profound! They know it’s well worth it. So I have to do a day performance and a night performance. So the whole community knows that this is important and … the last concert I had this spring, the music festival, I did an evening of stars, day of stars, some of the parents came up to me and said, “We knew the program here before we had kids, and when we had kids we knew where we would be sending our kids to school because of this music program. That … really meant a lot to me!
Particularly important to Germaine as well were the concerts that she provided for the local nursing home and for church functions. Her school involvement was also appreciated by the local organizations, because without Germaine’s participation, they would not have had any visiting arts groups to provide entertainment for their residents:

I bring them out to the community a lot … we go and sing at the Georgian Manor, … like last year we went … they were so happy … I have been doing it since I was teaching. I always bring the kids to the Manor every Christmas time. They said, “You are the only school that comes” … And with the concerts at the church, we used to do a concert at Ste-Anne’s church in Penetang and a concert at Ste-Croix, and it was … St. Vincent de Paul’s you know, for getting food. The only admission was to bring some food for the needy. I always told the kids that we should be proud of what you are doing, because thanks to you, your beautiful voice, not only are you making a lot of people very, very happy, somebody at Christmas was be able to eat, thanks to your offering today. I always make sure that I tell them the importance that they have outside of their personal feeling of accomplishment, that they are providing something greater. You know, it’s always, I am always performing, the kids, not at just the school but outside in the community. So the French community really … the French rural community …

As a result, Germaine received very positive support for her music program as she provided an Arts experience for the whole French community, school, church, and beyond. All selections were in the French language culture and were very well received. She saw herself as being in the public spotlight with her choirs. She related:

Through the music program, I meet a lot of people on the street who will stop me and say, “Oh you do such wonderful work.” I would think, “Oh who are you?” … I will say, “Oh, are you related to the students?” And they would say, “Oh I am so and so’s aunt and I was at your concert,” “just amazing” or “I am a neighbour or I am a grandmother, or I am a friend of the family.” I am sure that the other teachers wouldn’t get that because they are not out in public … on display all the time.

As a rural music educator, being in the spotlight also highlighted the music program and garnered continued support, both financially and morally. With so many accolades she also
received the necessary monies to continue her program.

Germaine also remarked that her rural music education program was a highlight in her rural area and was one that was revered throughout the province. Oftentimes her choirs were invited to perform in venues outside of her community, such as in the Toronto area. These performances highlighted the rural area and demonstrated a commitment to culture and community:

We went to sing at Palais de Congres, the Toronto Conference Centre. We sang [for] the governing body of teachers in French … So our reputation has set out across the province, you know, but the importance of … music in a school. We are always invited because we are a small school, a rural school you know. They could get any choir from schools in Toronto, but they specifically wanted to see what a rural school could accomplish. And a music performance … you always are happy with the outcome. I think they sometimes think that it is a rural school, there mustn’t be very much musical activity, and maybe in some schools, it is a fact, but not in our’ s! (personal communication, August 10, 2012)

Bates (2011) discusses the issue of rural school inferiority when performing in urban concert venues and in competitions held in city centres. He contends that rural students are assumed to be “less intelligent, diligent, and capable than suburban students” and are “paraded down the street in an obvious comparison from small schools to large – the quaint and bucolic to the impressive and refined” (p. 91). Yet Germaine believes that her student groups celebrated music success in rural areas and demonstrated this to their urban audience. Germaine tends to refute Bates’ claim.

**School and church: Music education and the Roman Catholic faith.** To Germaine, her faith and commitment to the school and church was very intertwined. As part of the students’ regular music curriculum, they are taught all portions of the Mass in preparation to sing during the school masses at the local church. In the Mass, she was responsible for teaching the entrance hymn, the Kyrie, the offertory hymns, Sanctus, Agnus Dei, and songs for the communion and
recessional. For each month, Germaine was expected to teach songs that related to the different religious themes. The children’s choir also sat in the choir loft with her as she accompanied and led the service from her organ. She told me how excited her students were to have that privilege:

The children’s choir would be sitting upstairs with me. They would be your classes – the kids from Grade 2 to 8 that were in the choir; they were allowed to sit upstairs and sit in the loft with me … it was a real privilege. They were always excited about that, “We get to sit upstairs when we go to Mass!” (personal communication, August 21, 2012)

Yet all students would be part of the church service either as part of the congregation or choir. Germaine discussed her role in preparing the students for each service. She also talked about her faith and how important music is in a spiritual sense. She reinforced this bond between music and faith with her students. Going hand in hand as well is the French culture, for the complete service is in French:

I would teach all the kids the songs. … that we would be selecting for the next mass so I would have to choose the music far enough ahead, especially for the younger ones, like the Grades 1 and 2, just for them to learn the words, you know, and go through the words reading by rote and then eventually they… could get the first verse and … the chorus … they loved it! All the kids loved singing the songs for church. I don’t know why, but they did! I guess it was the way I presented it. And I was always saying that … when you sing a song, you are singing for Jesus and you are … praying twice. When you sing a prayer you are singing twice and you can be darn sure that He is happy you are using the voice He gave you. So I would take out the books, because I had duotangs with all the songs in them. I would pass them out and every month, I would say to one class or another, you get to choose the songs for the upcoming celebration. Flipping through the pages, [they would say] “I want this one, I want this one!” I would write all the suggestions on the board … The whole mass would be in French. (personal communication, August 21, 2012)

Germaine felt that this affiliation between the church and school further solidified a sense of community and rural sense of place in everyone – the school staff, students, parents, church staff, and surrounding community as they worshipped as one.

Community choir: Commitment to rural culture. In 2000, Germaine formed the first SATB community French choir for adults in her rural area. In this capacity, she provides an
educational opportunity for French-speaking amateur musicians to perform for their community members and also to receive valuable musical instruction in their first language. To both her children and adult choirs, her message is clear; she believes strongly in the importance of fostering a sense of rural community. “I inspire them to get involved in their rural community, their music community. And the children… in the school and community …” (personal communication, August 10, 2012).

**Professional development facilitator.** As an arts initiative, the regional public school board purchased a class set of Orff instruments as well as a class set of world drums for each school. For the larger schools with a greater school population, mostly located in the urban areas, they acquired sets of both. But for the smaller schools, each set was shared between two schools and it is the responsibility of the music educator (if there is one) in each school to transfer the sets back and forth to the sharing school. Teachers from Germaine’s rural area, who taught with the public board, contacted Germaine, for they knew that Germaine incorporated world drums and Orff instruction as part of her regular music program. The teachers were thrilled when Germaine offered to provide music instruction – a professional development workshop for anyone interested in attending, and on her own time. She remarked how excited they were for this opportunity, for many of the teachers did not have any music training whatsoever and wished to utilize the resources that were bought for their schools:

I remember when that happened because there were some teachers around who came to my school to see what can be done with the xylophones, the Orff instruments. Gave them a little bit of a workshop and they were so excited. I had them all on the instruments, and basic stuff … basic patterns, and … gave them some resources that they should get, to be able to incorporate that in singing, and with their recorders. I do a lot of recorder and Orff and accompaniment and movement. But every time I do recorder there is always a singing part because it is always a song. So they do recorder and voice and maybe Orff instruments and movement… and they were thrilled. “Oh wow this is going to be fun!” What are the other schools doing, you know? And that’s what they said, there are some
schools, they have no one who has any musical knowledge! (personal communication, August 10, 2012)

Germaine was very surprised and disappointed at the same time to realize that in many schools in her rural area that were not part of the French Catholic or Separate School boards, students were not receiving any music education and many schools lacked the proper staff to deliver the programs, despite the fact that the school board had spent thousands of dollars on instruments. The inconsistency in music education was particularly disturbing to her. She once again reiterated, “Music is a protected subject in our board” (personal communication, August 10, 2012).

**Juxtaposition of Purpose and Space**

*Narratives of conflict: The importance of moving with the ‘pack’.* In the following narratives, Germaine discussed the issues that she feels have impacted her rural community, her rural school, and her music education praxis.

*Local versus regional jurisdictions: Dissonance and tensions.* Germaine dealt with a great deal of change during her teaching career, especially at the ground level where she worked with students and staff, dealing with day to day changes in scheduling, varying teaching assignments, direct cutbacks, and learning new curriculum. She also coped with even greater transformations from the political level at the top, the Ministry and board stratum. These changes not only affected her day-to-day music education praxis, but also imposed greater control on students, staff, parents, and community. Apple (2004) labels schools as vehicles “to ‘process’ both knowledge and people” in a way that marginalizes learning, exerts control over groups of people, and sets new pathways that do not necessarily improve situations where learning takes place. Apple describes this process where “schools latently [or subliminally] recreate cultural and economic disparities, though this is certainly not what most school people intend at all” (p.
32). In Germaine’s case, when the separate schools that serviced her Francophone area were amalgamated with the French Catholic Board of Ontario, she believes that the education system became less productive. She remarked:

We had better service, better understanding when we were with the Simcoe Separate Board than when we went to the big amalgamated French Board. Like our French Board goes all the way to Niagara Falls, to the south, Peterborough, and Penetang in the North. That’s a HUGE board – Mississauga. That’s all our board! ... So we are just … lost in the middle of the woods. That’s how we feel! (personal communication, August 13, 2012)

Germaine believes that the school system became watered down, and could no longer service their area properly because the schools in the French board are so far apart. She described how moving from a local to a regional board deprives students, teachers, parents and their community of special cultural needs. Both the politics and the economics of education in a large board disenfranchise student learning. Bigger is not better and specific cultural groups are not provided with the support that is so needed, particularly in areas that are isolated from other schools with similar cultural and educational needs to satisfy that culture. Germaine therefore contends that the ‘local’ is not represented as it was in the past.

Consequently Germaine discusses the importance of the educational community to stick together, to help each other out, and to make concessions. Parents in the community assist where necessary as well. According to Germaine, a movement from a local to a regional board has many implications in regard school infrastructure. She explained the issues. Funding for new schools is provided, yet the board does not repair the existing structures. Parents assist with the repairs and subsidize the costs:

And … money is coming in, they’re always in competition with the public board, so build new schools … but when they are building new schools, all the funding is going there! Trying to maintain our school? Trying to get a toilet fixed? Not high on their list of priorities. So more and more … you see these things, and you see your school deteriorate ... and I painted my classroom myself because I couldn’t
stand it any more. Principal paid for my paint but I painted my classroom myself and a lot of teachers took it upon themselves. You know, we could have got slapped on the hands, but we … would do it after school. Took me 40 hours to do my classroom of course because there are 12-foot ceilings. … But it wouldn’t have gotten done. They … did a work project on the weekend. My brother-in-law is a dry-waller. He came in with permission from the school and painted the halls, fixed the front entrance … scraped all of the broken plaster. So otherwise it doesn’t get done! (personal communication, August 10, 2012)

The school community must rally together to advocate for updates in the school building, and demonstrate a keen interest in the programs to promote the continuance of the school.

_The politics of schooling: Boundaries and physical space._ Since the French Catholic School lacks local representation that advocates for the small rural school in Germaine’s area, issues of space and boundaries are magnified and an attention to logistics of issues such as transportation and use of physical space is not dealt with. This marginalizes accessibility to schools of choice, hence student learning, and compromises the ability of teachers to teach in a properly equipped teaching space. Germaine referred to the first important issue; transportation, which compromised attendance at her school. Students who wanted to attend Germaine’s French First Language School, opted to attend the public French school in the town, 12 kilometers away, for her French Board did not offer busing. To bypass this problem, the French Board decided to supply a bus only for the French-speaking children. Yet some students have a very long bus ride, some as much as 76 kilometers away, for Germaine’s school services a large area of Simcoe County. It is well documented in the literature that these long bus rides for rural school children prolong their school day, take time away from their families, reduce student leisure time away from academics, and the cost of transportation reduces the monies needed for instructional funding (Beeson & Strange, 2000). In terms of French first language students, transportation issues force them to have to make serious decisions about whether or not they continue their first
language instruction – a right that was legislated by Section 23 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms\textsuperscript{23}.

As a result of the issues in transportation, access to programs, and other cultural issues yet to be discussed, one of Germaine’s schools now has a low population of less than 80 students, which reduces the number of classes and creates many different split classes. This compromises all of the Arts programs. In her other school, which has an increasing enrollment, Germaine had to fight to keep her music room. She explained how a portable was needed to facilitate the overflow, and how the music room was slated to become a classroom, leaving her without a music facility:

They were going to put me in the gym on stage as my music room! I ... told the principal, “I am NOT going to be ... I don’t want to be a menace ... I don’t want to be threatening but I will NOT teach, I will not compromise my music program to be teaching there on the stage ... and that is the only place where parents ... are supporting the activities to be spectators” and I said, “That would mean that whoever is coming to see the games, they are not allowed because it is my classroom?” They are going to think, because of music, we can’t go watch our students, our children play sports, because there would be no room for spectators because it would then be my music room. I am not doing that. I cannot ... music is almost fighting with the sports ... to get the students; extra-curricular ... that would be my last fight. I cannot fight that. Parents would look down on the music room, because ... they are not allowed to go watch their children play sport.

(personal communication, August 13, 2012)

The situation was settled favourably for Germaine when a new superintendent, formerly a music teacher visited the school and saw the large amount of Germaine’s instruments and music supplies out of cupboards and on the floor. Germaine placed everything in a pile so that the superintendent could see that moving this massive amount of music supplies from room to room would be an impossibility for Germaine. He made a favourable judgment and allowed her to

\textsuperscript{23} For information on the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, refer to: http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/const/page-15.html
keep her room. She remarked how fortunate she was and how poorly some administrators make
decisions without understanding the music education issues:

The superintendent who was there before, who kept wanting to kick me out, he
came to the school and I had everything out of my class … he wanted me to teach
music on a cart. I had everything out of my cupboards; I had all the Orff
instruments out, (chuckle). I took everything out … “How dare you judge that I
can do this on a cart, and not really come in and appreciate what I have in this
room? … What kind of a call is that? That isn’t a very educated call that you are
making!” … All the kids in the school are involved in this music program, you
know. So when the new superintendent came in … he said, “And you are keeping
your music room.” So … people make a difference. It’s sometimes … politics, but
it’s who’s behind those politics … It’s people making decisions that make a
difference. I would say that man has made a difference in our school, because if it
wouldn’t have been for him, I was losing my music room. No if ands or buts about
it. So he made that decision. He took upon himself to make that decision that we
were getting a portable and it wasn’t music that was going into a portable, it was a
classroom. So there are some good politicians. (personal communication, August
13, 2012)

Germaine and I also discussed the issue of political decisions that make the music program
a disposable commodity when the music room is taken away due to changes in enrollment. We
both were fighting a similar battle at the same time. Germaine and I commented,

Germaine: You and I were fighting a similar struggle at the same time without knowing it …
Janet: And isn’t it unfortunate that there wasn’t enough professional development within our
communities …
Germaine: Yep! To give each other support! Nope. It’s just the board, you know, and in my
board there is very few music teachers!
Janet: The same with me! And I was fighting a fight that you were fighting in a small school
and …
Germaine: Not even aware … and it was so close
Janet: And yet so far away! (personal communication, August 13, 2012)

Juxtaposition of Cultures: Cultures in Friction and Discord

Germaine addressed some very pertinent issues in regard to cultural friction and discord
that occurred in her rural schools. While the French area schools are situated to service the
Francophone community (the Franco-dominant sector of the population), and provide them with
their native language and culture as set out in the constitution, they are nevertheless under threat
of losing their first language. This is a significant issue, for first language students are mixing with Anglophone students who do not follow the rule that French is the only language spoken. Speaking English in the school or the schoolyard is forbidden. Yet English is spoken, and the rules are broken, despite the constant reminders and reprimands from staff members who insist that the cultural expectations be followed. This issue is compromising the first language students who pick up ‘bad habits’ and/or break the rules, as Germaine called it, ‘to be cool’. Germaine explained how the students who do not come from French first language families are offered concessions, and are admitted into the first language program in both Lafontaine and Penetanguishine. She described the two pathways of admittance that bypass the first language requirement:

They called it – missed generation – where somewhere in their background there was French speaking. Because of relocation or not having access to the French schools, one of the generations missed out on it. So there was no French for maybe one or two generations and now they want their children to be educated in French. So that is one. Another one is just parents who have made the effort to maybe take some evening courses to learn French and they want to have that for their children. They want their children to learn French … good will … have them exposed, you know they vow that their children will watch French TV and take part in extracurricular activities in French. That’s another way to get in, because … we have some kids at the school … that have to come in through an admission committee. (personal communication, November 16, 2012)

Germaine however, believes that sometimes the parents of students who are admitted under these two conditions are more supportive than the first language parents. She explained:

But mind you, we have always felt, those kids whose parents are really adamant about their children learning French are usually more supportive than a lot of French parents that … have the right to educate their children in French but “don’t shove it down their throat” … type of thing. Like, “Give the kid a break!” I have seen it too many times! One instance, I can remember a couple of years back, one student was talking really loud in English right at the entrance of the school after the bell rang. And one of the teachers said, “Would you speak French please, you are still in the school.” The mother said, “Well the bell has rung you know” (sigh) as if it was ok. School was out, didn’t have to speak French! (personal communication, November 16, 2012)
However, sometimes staff as well as students do not follow the rules. She believes that although parents and students may have good intentions to speak only French, as time goes by, they become careless and negligent. Other staff members who strictly follow the rules are fighting an uphill battle daily. Directives that come from her board that remind staff members that they must enforce the rules are also discouraging to those diligent staff members. Germaine remarked:

I don’t think it’s our goal trying to educate students who don’t value [French] and it doesn’t matter how much we try to make it seem valuable to them. It’s not obviously reinforced at home! At home it’s like ... you will go to that school so that you can get a better job later on, not because you should be proud to have this French heritage! You know you get just a little bit of French there and when you go off to a job you will be able put it on your CV, you know your curriculum vitae that you are bilingual! But heaven forbid that you may need to use it on the job because if you haven’t practised it, your French isn’t acceptable in the workforce. (personal communication, September 10, 2012)

In Germaine’s small community, negative attitudes and actions as described above whittle away at a small rural community’s cultural heritage. These issues are also augmented, due to the distance factor, and the issues of transportation.

As a result, Germaine feels often that she was teaching in an FSL school instead of a first language school. Germaine believes that the Francophone students are being marginalized when English is spoken regularly. Instead of progressing with their Francophone skills, they are learning English from the Anglophone students. In addition, the teachers are spending a significant amount of time at the early primary level to teach the younger children to speak basic sentences in French. Germaine stated, “So what are the Francophone students doing? Learning ‘je marche’ ... I don’t know… that’s not a French [first language] school” (personal communication, September 10, 2012)!

These linguistic cultural challenges in Germaine’s three schools stem back to over a decade, when decisions were made to satisfy both the Anglophone students and Francophone
students so that each group would receive the necessary French language education specific to their backgrounds. Germaine related how each student was tested and placed in the appropriate group. She explained why she and other parents felt that the cultural split was necessary:

It was more my group, my peers, that we wanted this because our kids were speaking better French before they started school than after they were going to school because they were playing, they were interacting all day long with the English speaking students. So they were picking up a lot of the English language and all the English students were starting to converse and they were conversing wrong. They were not conjugating the verbs properly and then our kids would come home and they’d pick up these weird sentence structures. We said that it was not fair, we were sending our kids to a French school and they’re not learning, they are getting [improper] language … their language skills are getting worse.

(personal communication, October 1, 2012)

To satisfy both groups, after a few years, one school, Ste-Croix, was designated as the school to continue the two programs; the Anglophone students were separated from the Franco-dominant students from Junior Kindergarten to the end of Grade 4 and were back together from Grades 5 to 8. However, the Anglophone parents began to complain, for their children were grouped into triple grade classes due to numbers, whereas French-speaking students were in double classes.

The troubling issues continued. Germaine commented on these:

English parents were yelling segregation so they started leaving the school and then the numbers started to dwindle. That’s … one of the big reasons the numbers are dwindling at Ste-Croix. [At] Ste-Croix some of the English-speaking parents felt like second-class citizens there and they started changing [their children] back to either St-Louis or St-Joseph. So they stopped the program. So … then after they stopped the program the Francophone parents weren’t happy and they started moving their kids out too! So that’s one of the big reasons that the numbers dwindled so much at Ste-Croix. I don’t know what the solution is. (personal communication, October 1, 2012)

I asked Germaine what her opinion is on the success of French schools for Anglophone students and she remarked:

Good question! If students continue on to a French high school, their chances at remaining bilingual have greatly increased. I have seen too many students leaving the elementary schools to go on to an English high school and a few years later,
unable to converse with me in French. If they don’t speak French at home, it is critical that they continue their education in French if they don’t want to lose it! ... Teaching French is a struggle for the teacher! … The worst thing for us as teachers, we struggle with them all the way to Grade 8 to get them to be able to read and write and function in French, to have them afterwards go to an English high school! If they are not speaking French at home they can’t expect us 10 years to make Francophones out of their kids! (Personal communication, August 21, 2012)

In relation to the problems that Germaine discussed above, a review of current academic literature (Blais, 2003; Cardinal, 2004; Makropoulos, 2007a; OCOL, 2008; Roy, 2008) suggests that there are many concerns related to French immersion versus French First Language studies for Anglophone students and Francophone students, as well as the whole notion of learning French, and to what end for many students. Makropoulos (2010) completed a study in a high school in Ottawa, Ontario, which investigated students’ attitudes to the secondary curriculum. The author relates that academic literature on the topic of French as a Second Language (FSL) versus French First Language (FFL) programs shows that Francophone parents are more satisfied with a French immersion program (FSL) than a French school (FFL) experience (p. 1). Makropoulos (2010) found also that the curriculum related to French immersion was “designed for university oriented students interested in acquiring English-French educational capital and contributed to the marginalization of students who were not pursuing that goal” (p. 10). The study also proposes a change in French programs in schools to highlight social and cultural aspects so that students are more engaged and interested in studies conducted in the French language. Cardinal (2004) on the other hand, substantiates Germaine’s opinion in two respects. Firstly, Germaine discussed the issue of the ‘missed generation’ as being a problem; descendents are now trying to recapture their language and culture. Cardinal (2004) corroborates this notion by remarking, “The problem of intergenerational loss is crucial and determines the future of the French language in Canada more than any other factor” (p. 100). Secondly, Germaine considered
the issue of the Francophone families losing their heritage, their language, and culture. Cardinal again concurs that there is a “bleak future for the French language outside of Quebec” (p. 79) and refers to the tensions that exist between Anglophones and Francophones where language is concerned. As Germaine indicated, these tensions are felt every day for French first language teachers who deal with these issues daily in the classroom and in their communities, particularly in small communities where residents are isolated from larger centers, lack crucial resources, and are regulated by absentee policymakers.

**French cultural challenges in the music and regular classroom.** Working with choirs from year to year, presents many challenges and problems for choral music educators and extra-curricular choir directors, such as finding new music that is current and of interest to the students and locating music that is appropriate for the students in the ensembles. The student population in the choir changes each year so the music educator must constantly be looking for new repertoire to satisfy student needs and appropriate music for each new festival or performance event. Not only did Germaine experience issues to contend with each year, but she also had added problems with language that complicated her praxis as choir director. She remarked on these challenges:

> It’s a big challenge to teach music in an elementary school, but it is doubly challenging to do it in a French school because there are not many resources. You have to translate everything. You REALLY have to search. Because when I go to choral reading sessions, and we read through all this music … I am thinking, “Oh this is so beautiful! Can’t do it. This is so beautiful! Can’t do that.” You know, to find good French music, is difficult! Ya so that is one of the biggest challenge teaching in the French school. (personal communication, August 13, 2012)

I asked Germaine about using English choral arrangements to fill in some of the gaps in the program and she said that she was forbidden to do so, unless it was for a very special occasion and she was granted permission from the board, the administration and parents. I asked about
attending special events. “Do you ever take your students down to the Toronto Symphony Orchestra Student Concerts” (personal communication, August 13, 2012)? Her answer was, “No.” Unfortunately their students are not able to participate in any extra-curricular field trips, regardless of their value unless they are conducted in the French language. Germaine also commented about the issue of having the nearby French public high school band to come and play for her students. She was able to invite them for a few years, but when the board changed, so did the policy of fraternizing with the public schools, even if it were beneficial for students. If she wanted a high school band to perform for her students, she was expected to invite a band from the closest French Catholic School, 60 kilometers away. The cost would be excessive. Germaine commented that the students and teachers were losing an excellent music education opportunity. She remarked:

It is really unfortunate. And he [the high school music educator] LOVED it! Because it got the kids motivated because they were playing for their brothers and sisters … And they got to see the instruments face to face whereas in a small rural setting, they don’t get to go to … a theatre and see all these instruments, you know? They see them on TV. (personal communication, August 13, 2012)

Germaine noted how this policy is detrimental to rural music education. Many students living in isolated areas are not afforded the music enrichment opportunities due to isolation, as well as board decisions that are made in abstention, not taking rural logistical issues into account. Certain exceptions should be made in terms of policy that relate to schools operating in isolated areas.

Logistics in terms of provincial testing is another issue that concerned Germaine and her fellow teaching colleagues. Tests are written in an urban area (Ottawa or Toronto) and fail to accommodate students in rural areas who do not understand some of the culturally specific terms and expectations of the tests. She commented on the fact that students cannot relate to the tests
and that the writers of the curriculum testing materials do not consider demographics or place:

With the provincial testing … there are some terms in there that the students cannot understand … I can’t remember the specifics, but the teachers were talking about it. And they’ll say they don’t even know what that means because it doesn’t relate to our area. It is obvious it was written in Ottawa because there were some landmarks there that the kids would have no idea what they were! (personal communication, September 10, 2012)

Children in isolated communities are writing the same test as students in urban areas. There is a great amount of difference in learning environment, in place, and in the context of learning between urban places and rural places. As Germaine commented, the tests do not generate knowledge or build community. They are merely data and statistics – gathering vehicles for political reasons, instead of teaching about and addressing issues of communities, in both rural and urban areas. The tests do not advance student knowledge. Ladson-Billings (2009) discusses how excellent teachers go beyond teaching to the tests, advocating for community. She states, “The kind of teaching advocated by these teachers seeks to help students see community – building as a lifelong practice that extends beyond the classroom” (p. 78).

**Narratives from the heart: Musical emotional experiences.** I asked Germaine to recount some musical emotional experiences that exemplified her music education praxis in a rural area – emotional experiences that grounded her in her ‘place’ and that contributed to what she believes to be her feelings of ‘sense of place’. She told about some of her emotional experiences, the positives, and the negatives.

**A lack of caring**

One morning I got [to school], and I think it was… a drop of water that made the cup overflow – la goutte d’eau qui a fait renverser le verre – this is a French expression: the last straw. I got to the school there on the Tuesday morning because Monday I was at the other school. I got to my classroom and I opened the door and there were garbage bags all over the walls, over all my resources, the piano wasn’t there and the xylophones weren’t there. My desk was still there, it was all covered. They were doing a project on recycling in my classroom without
asking or telling me, so I was just appalled because there was garbage all over the place. To me it was garbage – recycled stuff. I didn’t know where to turn! I went to see one of the teachers and I said, “What’s going on in my classroom?” She said, “Oh! Nobody told you?” “NO!” “Oh well, we have an artist, (you know one of the artists coming into the classrooms in the schools) … We have an artist coming in to do a week’s work, doing art with recycled items.” I said, “Why in my classroom?” Why not in the … one classroom that was empty, and it was just junk in there. “Oh well, because we just programmed the ICON computers, (this was going back a few years) and the kids are just getting used to using them and we didn’t want to interrupt them.” I said, “You wouldn’t want to interrupt them for using it for one week, but you would interrupt them getting music in my classroom?” She answered, “Well we took out your piano and your xylophones.” Resources, all my evaluation books, everything, were all behind those garbage bags … It was the week before report cards were due. So I was evaluating at that point. I was so mad … and she said, “Oh your xylophones … we didn’t quite get them into the other room. They are in the library and there’s a meeting going on there in 15 minutes so you had better hurry and get them out.” “Meeting?” “Ya, superintendent and all the school trustees are meeting there.” In 15 minutes, so I had to get all my xylophones out of there. I’m going, oh my God this can’t happen, this can’t be happening. So I just beared [put up with it] it for the day, because I was ready to explode and at the end of the day I went to see the principal. I said, “I cannot believe what is being done here to me today!” No other teacher would have put up with that, arriving at their classroom and having that go on in their classroom without anybody letting them know? And so, he said, “Oh I forgot! I forgot to mention it to you. I was away last Thursday I am sorry. It is not an excuse but I forgot.” And I said, “You’re not the only person working here.” Everybody else who works here, I thought they were my friends. Somebody should have mentioned something. Is this something that was decided at a staff meeting? I should have been aware of it. But anyway … you don’t do that! (personal communication, August 21, 2012)

Time and time again, music educators must deal with issues of facilities that are considered ‘expendable’, or the lack of a physical space to teach in. Isbell (2005) discusses this issue (citing Mullins, 1998) “Performance spaces and rehearsal facilities, if they exist, may be inadequate or out of date” (p. 1). In our large county, most elementary schools do not have a music facility. Many music teachers resort to teaching music in gymnasiums, on the stage, in dressing rooms, foyers, storage closets and/or church basements or students’ homerooms.

A very proud moment

I think it was the thing that got me the most – to the heart this year was when we
performed. My adult choir opened the Festival of Stars and we sang *Hallelujah*, by Leonard Cohen, which I had written the French words in! We sang it in French and we sang the O Canada and we sang that at the … opening for they always want some representation from the French community so we were the French involvement that evening. When we were finished, I went to step off the stage and the presenter said, “Could you take centre stage please?” because my choir was singing in a semi-circle. We weren’t a big group this year … so they made me go up to centre stage and they did a presentation because I was retiring. And they gave me a standing ovation and I thought this was so special – they were all my peers and my parents! (personal communication, August 13, 2012)

For Germaine, this presentation demonstrates the gratitude the musical community in her area feel towards her for her excellence in and dedication to music education in a rural area. It also shows the support that Germaine received through her involvement in her local French culture.

When I asked Germaine if she had ever considered moving boards due to the negative issues she was facing in her teaching praxis, she discussed the importance of her faith in her music teaching. Again she mentioned the tensions that occurred in her area (in the French school that was French Catholic school but was switching to become a French public school) when the dominance of one religion (Catholic) was declared unconstitutional as guaranteed by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms of 1982. The services and sacraments were halted and all crucifixes were taken out of the schools, even though at the time, Catholic nuns were administrators of some of the schools in the area that serviced the French-speaking people. She recalled how upset the music teacher at the school was when she was no longer allowed to have any reference to religion in the music she taught. Germaine commented how upset she would also be if she were not able to use music to glorify God. She believes that every musical experience is intertwined with her religion – her faith, the Catholic Church, her French culture, and her local community. She therefore could not teach in a system where religion is not an integral part of education.
My music and my faith

I could not imagine teaching without being able to involve religion in it … faith, you know because almost every lesson I teach, revolves around who we are as Christians … Yes my faith. I would say … all the songs that we sing are … except for the folklore, are faith oriented, even Prayer of the Children, it doesn’t specifically say God in it … (Germaine hums the song with the words). Even though it doesn’t say it, it implies it. And I always say, when you sing … I am sure. I know it … I can feel him … Jesus is sitting right on the risers right behind you and he has got a smile from ear to ear because you are using the voice He gave you. You don’t all have the best voice in the world but that is the voice He gave you. And He is happy to hear you sing with that voice. And when you get older, you’ll want to sing. You will want to be able to continue to sing because you will want to sing to your children. It doesn’t matter if you have the best voice in the world, as long as you have worked at getting it the best shape that you can, that’s all He asks of you. So I would be lost in the public board. I wouldn’t be able to teach without my faith. (personal communication, August 21, 2012)

Negotiating diversity in a small community. Germaine related that in terms of race, her community is approximately 99% Caucasian, with only a few families from Vietnam, China, and Japan who have settled in her area. Seeing that students are not exposed to different cultures in her community, Germaine incorporated songs from different customs, particularly if they were choral compositions representative of the cultures of her students. She carefully researched the repertoire herself and was able to present songs in other languages, as long as they are not in English. However she has a great concern that we are losing our own French Canadian culture. She explained the cultural tensions she feels:

We might lose our own culture, our own Canadian culture! … I do a lot more Canadian cultural music than anything else. When I … go to choral reading sessions, they will say, “Oh I will do this, I will do this, I’ll do this!” You know, Israeli songs, and I think, “I can’t do that,” because I will be losing what the kids need. They need to know their own roots! And I find that I don’t have enough time to do French folklore, you know to diversify too much so and the teachers will even say to me sometimes, “The kids don’t even know this song! Why don’t they know this song? It is part of our heritage!” “You can teach it to them! You know it!” You know, I am busy teaching the curriculum and trying to diversify and get a little bit of multiculturalism in there and it’s … I only have so many minutes … A conflict [occurs] between the curriculum – multiculturalism and our own Canadian heritage [of our area]. (personal communication, August 13, 2012)
Providing students with appropriate and interesting choral repertoire was very important to Germaine as well as having high expectations for them and insisting on excellence. In terms of satisfying the girls and boys with repertoire that they enjoy, she commented:

I have seen in the past that I have chosen a repertoire for the girls, that is fun … like a lullaby or something and I will find something that is funny, fun for the guys and the girls are jealous. The girls say, “Why did the guys always get the fun songs?” … You know sometimes we worry too much about the boys and we don’t worry about the girls. (personal communication, August 13, 2012)

Many music education and motivation researchers stress the importance of providing appropriate learning conditions, motivational strategies, appropriate repertoire to encourage intrinsic motivation, provide students with enjoyment and hence a state of flow, (Asmus, 1989; Czikszentmihalyi & Rathunde, 1992; Eccles, 2004; Hall, 2005; Nurmi, 2004). In addition, music teachers should recognize the issue where boys’ behaviour may marginalize girls’ learning (Nurmi, 2004).

In terms of sexual preference, Germaine comments that in her elementary school setting, it is not always apparent if and when students question their sexual orientation at this level, nevertheless “all students are part of a [music] group; they don’t always know at that age in the choir, they just feel they don’t fit.” Yet in the music programs Germaine commented that they are all together as one – as musicians in an inclusive community. She emphasized this conviction throughout all of our conversations.

**Germaine’s narratives of the future: Next steps in rural music education.**

**Celebrating place through heritage and environment.** Germaine believes that her rural music education praxis is very important to her region, for it provides students with the opportunity to participate in a vibrant music program. But most importantly, her music teaching and the repertoire she chooses celebrates the distinct French culture that is so intertwined with
her community’s history and heritage. She discussed how important studying and performing culturally related compositions are, and teaching about the background of our ancestors:

I did a concert one year and it was all about Acadian culture and with the choir. But still I took one of the pieces and I … taught it to the school so that I could give my lessons to everybody about how the Acadian people felt and what happened, because I think that it is important to know that atrocities like that have happened in our country, and where Cajun music comes from … because we do some Cajun music sometimes for the music festival. We have a couple of pieces, which is … in their dialect from Louisiana – Creole. I taught about Creole music and where it comes from and then I went back into the deportation and where they settled in the States and Louisiana and make sure of the different people who were there. And they are unaware and even older kids … “Didn’t you learn this in school? Didn’t you learn this in history?” “Well a little bit! We didn’t get a whole story or anything!” And I said, it is so important, so a place-based curriculum is desperately needed so that the children know their heritage! (personal communication, September 10, 2012)

In addition, Germaine remarked how educators must encourage students to inquire into their own backgrounds and heritage, for some are unaware of their roots:

Even when I ask who has Métis heritage, at least half of the school would lift their hands … and some will say, “I don’t know.” And I will say, “Well what’s your last name?” “Lalonde.” “Oh I am sure you do! You check with your parents.” And I’ll say, “It is important that you know that!” But they need to know how that ties into where they are now though … They need to know about our history as well because it’s not just them bringing their culture and their heritage here but how they can live in our society. (personal communication, September 10, 2012)

Germaine is a great advocate of the Arts, physical education and the environment. She said, “Have the Arts, have phys. ed., have the regular subjects but have them while celebrating your heritage … going into the environment. We have the big ecological gardens right there, right beside it [the school]. So going into more agriculture, have the kids do more hands on things with the earth” (personal communication, September 10, 2012).

Celebrating place through faith: Keep an affiliation with the local church. Germaine believes that for her local area and community, keeping an affiliation with the church is most significant for students to understand their roots, their heritage, and their place. She commented
how important the rural church is to her school and community. The church’s sustainability is directly related to the future of the school and community. She stated, “Because if we lose the school … if we lose either the school or the church, the other one goes. Usually they go hand in hand. (personal communication, October 1, 2012)

Celebrating French culture. Seeing that Germaine’s community is so invested in their French culture through their French only speaking church and school, the longstanding French agricultural community, the French artisans, and the local French festival – the Festival du Loup – she believes that the school plays a significant role in binding these factions together. It is therefore imperative in her opinion to keep the Francophone schools in rural areas open to celebrate place, and culture, two facets that are so interconnected. She also feels that through her music education program, she was an advocate for the survival of French culture and school in her area. She discussed the importance of the school’s continuance for setting standards, advocating for the benefits and the issues of keeping it open due to rising costs and limited enrolment:

That’s probably the only school in the area that it’s … French only speaking. You have to set some standards … it would attract some Francophone families … Ste-Croix was the first French language Catholic school in the area. Then there was Penetang, then there was Barrie, then there was Orillia. Lafontaine was the first one. So … we are at risk for losing. The first school in Francophone … and it’s costing the government a lot of money to keep the school open. Because there are some classes there are only 8 kids in there … 12 kids. In JK/SK there is only 8. It is costing … It’s an expensive school to run so … I don’t know what they are going to do. (personal communication, October 1, 2012)

A Cadence: A Music Composition that Represents Germaine’s Rural Music Experience

I asked Germaine if there was a composition that she feels represents her music education praxis in a rural community. She immediately thought of one that she believes brings together all
of the values she holds dear to her heart as she educated her students on the value of music, culture, religion, community and children. She told her story:

I always had one piece that was … going to be a hit with the parents and the kids would think was fun … most of my repertoire was down the middle and then one was very inspiring. Sometimes it would be a Latin piece. But by the end, when we rehearsed them, it was always that one piece, the kids would say, “Ah I love that piece!” … When we finished it, I said, “This is the piece that your parents are going to take their tissue out!” … They would always watch and when they saw a Kleenex come out, they would say, “Ah yes!” *Prayer of the Children*. We did that right after September 11th, and it was an English piece. I sent a note home [for permission to perform it in English]. I was working in the preschools and … we had sang through it at the St. John’s choral reading session and … it was written for children who have perished [in war] and when I read through that piece I couldn’t sing it. It was just that kind of piece. And I thought, “Oh would I like to do this piece some day, I would love to do this even though it is in English.” And September 11th happened. I thought I don’t care. I sent a note home saying, “We are doing this piece.” I didn’t want any parents to … get on the bandwagon because we are doing an English piece so I sent a note home ahead of time. We did it in conjunction with an adult choir because one part of it was … I had it in SA [soprano, alto] and I had it in SATB [soprano, alto, tenor, bass] so the adult choir sang the SATB part in the middle when they were talking about angry guns. It starts off … we started off a cappella. It starts off, “Can you hear the prayer of the children?” You know at the end of the piece, when there is that silence, people wait for the applause? … It was a deadly silence for a good minute. It was like total suspension when we finished this piece. It was … I would think the best piece I have ever done! The MC had mentioned that it was for all the children who lost their parents. It was for all the people who suffered because of the bombing and she said, “Tears are permitted.” Then the children started. “Can you hear the prayer of the children?” It was probably one of the better pieces because of how important children are and what the decision some adults take that have an influence on the children … And it had that contrast with the adult choir doing this angry part in the middle. And then the children who are doing the soft, prayer … they were excited because it was in English because I was never permitted to do anything in English. They were excited because they were singing with the Ste-Anne’s choir … and excited because it was something new and it had a meaning to it. They learnt it really fast. It was just SA and a very simple melodic line. I went to the Ste-Anne’s choir rehearsals to direct that SATB part in the middle. The day before the performance we got together and we rehearsed it, some of the adults couldn’t sing. When the kids started singing the adults were all choked up and they had a hard time with it … because I had the three schools at the time. I had about 50 from St. Louis, I had about 20 from Perkinsfield, and I had about 30 at Ste-Croix, so there was close to 100 all the time when I was at the three schools – my combined choir. And when we did *Prayer of the Children* it was my combined choir and when the children started singing, there was volume in that church!
Germaine chose the piece that instilled emotion in all of the participants, which brought her community of musicians’ together – her amalgamated choir of three French schools and an adult choir.

**Coda: Making Meaning of Place: Germaine’s Sense of Place in Perspective**

After having many in depth conversations with Germaine about her life’s story and teaching praxis, I believe that Germaine’s sense of place is related to her sense of being, her personal identity as a music educator, musician, choral director, community member, and parent, as well as the relationship she has forged and shares with her community. Nigh (2011) states that “Place includes the notion that an individual feels a sense of being called or drawn forward into fulfilling their responsibility in the world” (p. 5). Germaine feels a sense of responsibility to her heritage, culture, and religion that define and shape her teaching praxis. Germaine manifests a sense of place that is polysemic (Williams, 2006, p. 69) in nature, where many elements combined, generate a sense of belonging in her community. Firstly, Germaine’s heritage is important to her and grounds her in her place. Williams (2006) refers to the importance of heritage – of history, for, “The past has become important in establishing a sense of who we are and how we connect to place” (p. 61). Germaine connects to her place through her heritage and to her French culture, which is an integral part of her life and teaching. The third, the church – her faith – is interwoven with her history and French traditions. Her sense of place however, is constantly evolving with local and external influences – political, personal, and economic. Hence the metaphor – the legend of the wolf as embodiment of the cultural tradition comes into play in which running with the pack and advocating silently and/or assertively, will protect the community to some extent, keep the rural community intact, and protect the French culture of
their rural area. Germaine’s culture therefore needs to be celebrated and saved. Through advocacy for culture within her music praxis, Germaine has made a remarkable influence on her students, providing them with knowledge, opportunities, and relationships that will assist them in constructing their rural identities and their own personal ‘senses of place’.
Chapter Five: Lenore

The Stories Between Us

Lenore and I have had a longstanding relationship for many years, not a constant one, but a relationship that has continued through the social network of teaching and learning. Teaching is a remarkable profession. We meet so many new colleagues, yet they come and they go, moving from grade to grade and from school to school. But many old acquaintances are not forgotten and are renewed very quickly. With Lenore, we seem to come and go out of each other’s lives, yet pick up where we left off despite the lengthy period of time apart. It is as if we had not been away from each other at all.

I first met Lenore when I came to teach in my second rural school. She in fact was my first teacher mentor, a role not formally assigned, but one that she assumed the minute I arrived at the school. I was assigned to teach Grade 2, a position that had begun in February. It was a rather difficult transition for me, because I had recently moved to the rural area from Toronto. I did not know the demographic area; the students, the school or the community, and the daily classroom routines had long been established. The young students welcomed me, but I still felt out of place in this new environment. Lenore was the teacher in the next room and my first teaching partner. She guided me through Grade 2, through the curriculum, informed me about the children I was teaching and their family backgrounds and most importantly, advised me on the important points of living and teaching in a rural school. She filled me in on the do’s and the don’ts and the expectations – the hidden curriculum of teaching and learning in a small community. “Janet, you must remember that everyone knows you, but you do not know them. It will take time for you to adjust. Don’t forget you are an outsider to the community. You were not born here. Through your teaching role you will be accepted, but it will take time” (unpublished journal entry, 1984). I learned that Lenore had many words of wisdom for this newcomer.
The following school year I moved out of the Grade 2 position. I was offered a permanent position as full time music teacher in the same school, teaching vocal music to students from Grades Kindergarten to 8. I was also expected to continue the longstanding tradition of the school marching/concert band and became the conductor. Two teachers were ‘assigned’ to assist the conductor, one of whom was Lenore. She became my mentor once more in another capacity; to advise me of the longstanding band tradition, assist me with band repertoire and be a ‘band mother’. This was a very important position that consisted of assisting at band and marching practices, and accompanying the band on the many weekend parades scheduled throughout the year. Lenore later moved into a new role as Kindergarten teacher, yet continued to help in her band capacity.

Lenore taught my two eldest children in Kindergarten where I came to know her yet in another way, the teacher of my own children. My children came home daily with words of wisdom, “Mrs. M. [Lenore] says …”. Lenore also inspired me to get involved in community music by suggesting that I join the local choral society of which she was a member. Our relationship did not end when Lenore left the school to assume another role. We met at teaching functions, community events, and in other teacher roles. Lenore returned to fill my music position when I was on maternity leave with my youngest child.

As I began to formulate my research topic related to rural music education, I often discussed issues that arose with Lenore, seeking advice from her on matters related to my courses, juggling my teaching load and coursework and on who my potential research participants might be. She became my advisor once again in this capacity. When I met with her to ask for her assistance in testing out my pilot questions, I asked for her participation in my research. I was delighted when she enthusiastically accepted. We have since met many times, to
discuss my progress, my participation at conferences and the outcomes, and to hold our interview/conversations.

Our Research Conversation Moments

Lenore and I met informally over a six-month period in places that were mutually agreed upon. Our conversations were very laid back, and oftentimes a month or so would pass until our next meeting, so at the beginning of each meeting, we caught up on news of community and family members before we began. Sometimes the conversations would get off topic, and these portions were not transcribed. Yet we inevitably returned to the business at hand – rural music education. The first meeting we had served as a pilot study interview, where I outlined my questions for Lenore and she discussed their feasibility and relativity to the study. From that initial meeting, I was able to revise and rewrite one or two of my interview questions. This interview was held in Lenore’s lakeside condominium, overlooking Lake Simcoe in February. As we discussed the meaning of rural, rurality, and rural education, we watched the fishermen working from their ice fishing huts in the winter sunshine. Three subsequent interviews were held in local restaurants where we could have a long interview conversation over a slow, leisurely lunch with very little background noise or interruptions.

A Metaphor: The Story of a Musical Place

I asked Lenore if she could relate to an image or a metaphor to exemplify her rural music education praxis. Automatically she answered that she always thought of a particular musical composition when she reflected on her teaching experiences in her communities. To Lenore, teaching is learning, so her metaphor relates back to when she was a music student many years ago. One piece came to her mind. She tells her story of a music learning experience, which she feels led her to a memorable career in teaching music:
When you say that word *Finlandia*, I can hear that music in my head. We played it with the band. It was such a picturesque piece of music that I could picture Finland from the music. It was amazing music! So I am guessing that music does the same thing to people. When children hear certain pieces of music they are transported into a different place and if they played a certain piece in school, they remember it and perhaps the time and the place. Music inspires and not only does it inspire, it transports you to a memory, or a place or a person. I like to think that the music I taught does the same thing to the children. It takes them out of today and into the past somewhere, and then later where they have been involved with that music somewhere through their learning experiences. Or maybe it gives them a look into the future, some way, I don’t know! So music is my metaphor for community … and place. (personal communication, June 24, 2012)

Hudson (2006) comments that historically and contemporarily there are strong links between music and senses of place and identities, both of people and places. Lenore’s link to music and sense of place also includes a link to an educational experience, a learning moment. The actual learning occurrence has some representation in her sense of being, or sense of place. The following tells Lenore’s story and how her love of music truly relates to place in different times, past, present, and future.

**Lenore’s Story**

Lenore was born in a rural area in Northern Ontario, in Port Arthur, and then her family moved to Ottawa, Carleton Place, and then again to Sault Ste. Marie. These moves resulted from changes in her father’s teaching and administrative positions; he taught technology in secondary schools in these centers. When her father was offered a principalship in the northern town of Sault Ste. Marie, her family settled there for some time. Lenore attended elementary school in the town. The only high school in town serviced the students in the village as well as those living in the outlying rural areas.

When her father accepted another position as principal in a small central Ontario town they moved again. Her father believed that the principal of the school should live in the same neighbourhood as the school in which he taught. Lenore related, “My father walked to work and
walked home for lunch and walked back to work. It was important to him. Whatever school he taught in, wherever he taught, he always lived within walking distance to his school” (personal communication, June 1, 2012). bell hooks (2009) believes that being able to walk to work grounds a person in their home, in their own place. She states, “I need to live where I can walk. I need to be able to walk to work, to the store, to a place where I can sit and drink tea and fellowship. Walking, I will establish my presence, as one who is claiming the earth, creating a sense of belonging, a culture of place” (p. 2). Lenore’s father also believed that it was important to know his school neighbourhood as a member of the community. Lenore attended this same high school in which her father was principal. She believes that her rural roots grounded her in her love of living and teaching in rural areas.

Lenore described her rural upbringing and how her love of music stems from her family’s interest in music:

Well I guess my music history starts with my grandparents on my father’s side. And they were always a musical family. In fact they were the first people in their neighbourhood to have a piano. They went by train from the Mount Forest area to Toronto to, to the CNE and they bought a piano, which was delivered by train and my grandfather picked it up with his wagon, with his horses and took it to their home and they were the first people in the whole neighbourhood to have a piano. Every Sunday, my grandmother’s cousin and his family who lived across the road from my grandparents would come over in the afternoon and they would … spend the afternoon, singing songs, mostly hymns, with the piano. So that is where my father’s interest in music started and all during my early childhood … he was interested in music and would sing songs to me, and play on his guitar and my mother would play on the piano and she would sings songs to me. I always had music in my life from the time I was just a little child. I finally took piano lessons but that didn’t work out very well because I was an outdoor child. I didn’t like to stay indoors and practice! But … the piano was always there. Sometimes I would go and play and my mother would play on the piano quite a bit. She enjoyed that. So all through public school I was interested in singing and belonging to the school choir. (personal communication, June 1, 2012)

Lenore also gives credit to her mother for her love of music and interest in teaching music to primary children. She discussed her mother’s influence during her early childhood:
Music, singing, music education … it just comes naturally to me … my mother was a primary teacher and she loved to sing songs – primary songs to me – and I can remember that right from when I was a little child … my mom and I would be singing together, all these little songs that she had taught, when she was a primary teacher. She taught songs to her classes then she taught them to me and it just seems to be a natural thing for me. (personal communication, June 1, 2012)

Lenore’s family soon moved again and settled in a southern Ontario town with a population of approximately 20,000 (Barrie – one of the fastest growing cities in Canada24 today). Students who attended the high school were town children as well as the rural students who were bused in each day. Here, Lenore continued her music education, playing in an award winning prestigious band, which her father strongly supported throughout his administrative position at the school:

Then when I went to high school, I went to Barrie Collegiate Institute and there was a wonderful band there. Now my father was principal of Barrie BCI and the reason he … accepted a principalship there … was because when he went for an interview he had an opportunity to sit at the back of the auditorium and listen to the band play at that time, and he thought to himself, I would like my children to be in that band. And that’s why … he … accepted the principalship at BCI at that time. But spending that part of the day listening to that band perform was the thing that drew him to Barrie because he … just loved music. He supported the band in every way that he possibly could. Even to … to timetabling the classes so that all these kids would be together and have their music program. (personal communication, June 1, 2012)

Lenore flourished in the music program and believes the music education she was afforded made a significant impact on her personal and professional life. She remarked:

The five years that I was in the Collegiate Band were wonderful years for me. I really believe that our bandmaster, W.A. Fisher25 who was also our history teacher, Grade 13 … was the teacher of all … my school years that made the most impact on my life … because the fact that I could read music well, came with me

http://www.tourismbarrie.com/about_barrie.aspx

25 http://bccimusic.com/history3.htm
into my teaching career and I ended up mostly teaching kindergarten, teaching primary. And I used my music ability to its fullest. I would use music to teach almost everything that I needed to teach in Kindergarten. (personal communication, June 1, 2012)

Lenore related that her high school had a similar rural flavour to her elementary school in terms of demographics and social activity:

[At my high school], there were about 350 [students] when I first started there. It was a small school but it was a catchment school. Kids were bused in and it was the only school. Kids were bused in from all around. The country kids were bused in. (personal communication, June 1, 2012)

When Lenore finished high school, she went to Toronto Teachers’ College\textsuperscript{26}, and lived there for two years. She then accepted a teaching position and taught in two different school boards. In her first board, she taught in an urban area then moved and settled in another, teaching in three rural schools.

During Lenore’s initial years of teaching, the itinerant teachers and ‘subject inspectors’ provided guidance to teachers who were isolated in rural areas. She remarks on the role of the itinerant music ‘inspectors’ who traveled from rural school to rural school to oversee and advise teachers of best music education practices. She commented:

At that time we had … an itinerant music supervisor and in my case, it was Lloyd Tufford, who happened to be the organist and choirmaster of the church that I went to. I knew him so when he came in … he didn’t have a timetable. We never knew when he would appear. He would just appear in the school and he would come to the classroom door, knock twice, walk in and at that point the kids all knew that they just put their books away and took out their music book. And Mr. Tufford would teach a lesson and then he would listen to the songs that … he had left … from the last visit and then he would leave another list of songs and theory, I guess you might call it, that we needed to do, like I as the teacher needed to do. I can still hear him teaching the song, Bendamere’s Stream! … I did very well… (personal communication, June 1, 2012)

As a primary Kindergarten, Grade 1, 2, and 3 teacher, Lenore incorporated music into her

\textsuperscript{26} Toronto Teacher’s College was one of the predecessors of the existing Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto.
lessons, and often traded other subjects so that she could provide music education for other
classes in the primary and junior grades. She also accompanied for school concerts, assemblies,
and assisted with the instrumental music programs. One of her most noted music education
experiences was when she team-taught with an ex-music teacher who had been placed in a
regular classroom due to the discontinuance of the itinerant music program. The rural schools
were particularly hard-hit by funding cutbacks.

Lenore continued to teach music through the many different roles she fulfilled as a
regular classroom teacher. In her last ten years she moved into the Kindergarten role and assisted
with extracurricular assemblies, musicals, concerts, and as an assistant band instructor. As her
last teaching assignment, she accepted a long-term occasional\(^\text{27}\) music teacher role. Having
taught most of her career in rural areas, now she is a retired teacher who is still involved in music
in the community and has a vested interest in rural education.

**Rural, Rurality, and Sense of Community**

Lenore and I both taught in the same rural community for most of our teaching careers;
when she discussed what the terms rural, rurality and community mean to her, I can clearly
envisage the picture that she was painting. Lenore defined ‘rural’ as “a centre that … services
farmland, and farming people, basically more than industry” (personal communication, February
18, 2012). The community where we taught is surrounded by farmland and farming operations of
dairy, beef, poultry, and cash cropping. She also understands the term from a demographical
perspective, as a place where people are isolated and must travel outside of the community for
many services. There is movement to the outside to receive health care and to specialty shop. She

\(^\text{27}\) http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/teacher/faq.html
I would think of a rural place as some somewhere people had to go out, make a trip out in order to access shopping and … services like doctors and dentists … I would define it in both of those ways combined [economically and geographically] … because living in a rural area, is quite different than living in a city. (personal communication, February 18, 2012)

Yet Lenore does not see living in an isolated community as being a disadvantage. She actually found it quite comforting for she felt, “Protected, insulated, from the outside world … because so many people were … friends or more than friends there. And if … they needed to look out for you, they did” (personal communication, February 18, 2012). Lenore said that she felt very comfortable living in her rural space. She remarked that through her school and community:

I have friends that I made at that school that are still my friends, years and years later and I appreciate them very much … for their talents and their interest … We are still part of that school … and still part of that community too, even though I don’t live there anymore. I still feel [a part] I am still involved with the people in that community, still. (personal communication, February 18, 2012)

Community demographics: Impact on the personal and the professional. Lenore believes that the place where you live and teach is very important in shaping a person – both personally and professionally. She stated, “what defines a person and her teaching practice is the place and the environment where [she teaches]” (personal communication, February 18, 2012). She also believes that the rural community in which she spent most of her teaching career “is very unique” (personal communication, March 31, 2012). She explained why:

I belonged to the choral group in [the community] and I was considered an outsider [Lenore moved to the area to teach at the school and was not born and raised there] … Now we had a heavy snowfall and one of the people in the choral group, … Allan – somebody or other – came and shoveled my roof off for me. And another time I had the drain outside my basement door freeze over in the winter and I had water back up into my basement. He went and got a pump and pumped water out of the basement for me. Community people are so helpful to one another in a rural area because they are so … just tied up with each other in many different ways! (personal communication, March 31, 2012)
Even though Lenore did not really know the gentleman, he knew of her because she was a teacher at the school, as well as a fellow choir member. Lenore also discussed the uniqueness of the situation, as she never had experienced such an outreach of friendship in other communities, urban or rural. She added that every community is unique in some ways, and this experience could have occurred elsewhere. Yet this type of outpouring of helpfulness happened regularly in her community.

Lenore believes that the strong bond she felt with her locale was due to the fact that she lived and taught in the same community. She said, “There is something to be said for teaching in your home town” (personal communication, February 18, 2012) because it binds people together. She qualified this statement:

I knew everybody. I knew everybody in town and I knew lots of people in the country too because they were involved with the school, therefore they were involved with me. And after teaching in a rural school for a number of years, you taught … not just one child from a family, but every child in the family, or almost every child in the family! So that you would know basically a lot of the children before they got to your doorstep, having this [close relationship beforehand] … I knew people and people knew me. (personal communication, February 18, 2012)

Connections to the people: School as the centre of the community. Academic literature highlights the importance of the school in a rural setting as being the mainstay and foundation of the community (Barley & Beesley, 2007; Du Plessis et al., 2001; White & Reid, 2008). Lenore defined her rural school as the heart of the area, or “the centre of the community” (personal communication, February 18, 2012).

The school was and still is the centre of the community … all of the … parents were involved in both the elementary schools and the high school to a very great degree and they knew the teachers and the teachers knew them … And as … more than teaching their child, but as their neighbours, and as their social. … friends … and the school was at the centre of all of these relationships. (personal communication, February 18, 2012)

Lenore also discussed how the school binds generations of families together and how that
influences the relationships that teachers have with their students and parents.

They [teachers taught two generations of families and] started in that school and they finished their careers in that school. They didn’t move around. That’s another thing about … rural communities that I noticed as an outsider having lived in the cities, that when I got to [my rural school], everybody knew everybody and they were related and some went back generations. They were related to everybody too. (personal communication, February 18, 2012)

Lenore felt that teachers’ familiarity with their students, their parents, and their backgrounds provided a more meaningful understanding of the ‘stories’ that the children brought to the classroom. Oftentimes teachers are aware of family histories, going back one or two generations, and this knowledge enables them to more fully understand some of the issues that their students may be experiencing in the learning environment. Such knowledge however, can also be detrimental, particularly if teachers view their students through the past performances of other family members. Lenore believed that the staff members were grounded pedagogically in their place as it related to their community of learners (Spring, 2011), mainly because they lived in the same place where they taught.

As a new teacher joining a staff in a rural school in Nova Scotia, Corbett (2010) experienced a situation where as an alien to the area, he realized how well the staff knew their student families. He remarks that the staff room conversation over recess or the lunch period, “often seemed to me to be more about historical community narratives and genealogy than about running a school” (p. 116). Lenore believes that this can be a very positive situation, where the school relationships promote a strong ‘sense of place’ and strong feeling of community. Yet these relationships and assumptions could also cause tensions within the community. This notion will be discussed further in tensions.

**Networking and ‘knowing’ in a small community.** Lenore commented on the ways that
people in a rural community network through their neighbours and the other support groups in the community, such as the school, the church, Lions Club, Legion, etc. Du Plessis et al. (2001) relate that in small communities, people are more likely to know their neighbours, offering assistance when necessary and networking through local relatives and friends. Lenore discussed the “friendship of knowing” she experienced and how that made relationships strong. When she lived in an urban area, this close relationship to her neighbours in her apartment building did not exist. She said, “The only person I talked to was the [landlady] superintendent” (personal communication, March 31, 2012). She explained the extent of the rural networking that existed:

Your networking is much tighter because you are, you are teaching your neighbour’s kids and so there’s … knowledge, a friendship of knowing, of knowing these people, in more ways than just your next door neighbour. If you are teaching their kids you know more about them than if you are living beside them or living down the street from them. You know people in many ways and in a small community even rural community, as you said before, people who wear two hats or three, so you know a person in one way but you also know them in another way. It makes the relationship stronger. Rural areas are very nurturing to their own. (personal communication, February 28, 2012)

**Aspects of community.**

**Fishbowl.** Lenore described some of the issues of living in a tightly knit community where neighbours are close; many people are related and everyone knows your actions. She remarked that some aspects are very positive yet familiarity in a small locale can also breed hurtful, critical, and incorrect assumptions. For example, if a teacher makes a mistake, or people believe she has done something wrong, it is very hard to reverse their opinions, seeing that parents in a small community talk amongst themselves regularly at church, at the hockey arena or baseball diamond, in the grocery store or the bank, where the news of the week is spread and discussed to its fullest. The rural residents always meet someone they know to talk with, because they know everyone in the community. If a newcomer moves into town, they make it their
business to get to know their background. This familiar and critical talk through gossip channels spills into the school environment:

So as far as … teaching goes, it is … you have very many critics … So the thing is … that’s the negative [of rural] so many people know your business and feel that they are … obliged to criticize you! And I know that parents requested certain kids not to be in my class when there were two Kindergartens! I know that and I never knew why. And in a rural area, sometimes that is hurtful because they might be misinformed. (personal communication, March 31, 2012)

‘Hurtful’ is a term that Lenore used in her discussion of her rural place more than once, especially in terms of making a mistake, something that everyone does on a regular basis. So ‘keeping on your toes’ at all times is something that a rural teacher must do as well as growing ‘a thick skin’, according to Lenore. If not, a teacher must deal with the hurtful consequences. It is expected that she is an ‘icon’ of perfection in her role as educator:

The flip side is everybody knows your name so … you have to be aware that everybody knows what’s going on with you. If you screw up in your classroom or you screw up in your music, you’ve got somebody out there, watching and waiting. And they can be very critical and they can be very hurtful. (personal communication, March 31, 2012)

There are some positives living in a fishbowl environment that far outweigh the negatives, according to Lenore. She remarked how small community members knew each other intimately through the multiple roles they assumed. In a rural locale, a co-operative spirit is needed to get all of the jobs completed. Many residents take on different jobs, volunteering during their time off to fill in any gaps that are there. She described how many people in her rural community volunteered their time to plan, organize, and run the two rural events – the Fall Fair and Maple Syrup Festival. Some residents fulfilled multiple roles as they worked at two jobs and interacted with those around them. It is therefore difficult to have any privacy. Everyone’s personal life is on display, yet when a problem arises, people are there to help:

The community is so tightly knit and because people in the community have more
than one hat … the fire chief being the postmaster. And … you know people who are involved in one area, you are also involved in another area, like the [pharmacist] … the doctor; they are all involved with you in your community and you are also involved with them in different ways, being a teacher of their child or being a friend of their son, or whatever. Seeing them in church, meeting them in the grocery store, standing in line doing a parent interview – parent-teacher interview with one of your children’s parent who happened to be shopping the same time as you. All of the people in the community know you and sometimes take advantage of that but another time, it’s really important when you fall on hard [times] … into problems yourself. You know very well that your community is there behind you and somebody from the community is going to help you out and sometimes you know just who to choose if you have a problem, because everybody, everybody knows everybody else … and if they don’t, they know somebody that will help you. I’ve had that happen several times. (personal communication, March 31, 2012)

**Isolation.** Lenore and I discussed the issue of isolation in rural areas and the unique isolation that is inherent in the position of music educator. Feelings of isolation are well documented in academic literature as being a negative aspect to contend with (Bates, 2011; Bowen, 2009; Brook, 2011; Isbell, 2005; Nadel & Sagawa, 2002). Yet Lenore does not see isolation as a negative factor personally speaking. In fact, her opinion refutes the popular conception that rural areas are such. Lenore believes that sometimes the geography may be perceived as being isolating, particularly in winter, when bad weather and road closures inhibit travel and access to outside of the community, but not from a sociological perspective. She explained her view and the ways in which the school relationships she forged influenced her belief:

I didn’t feel any isolation in my rural community, and I never did. I think that it could have been the nature of our school, because before I became a member of the school staff, I had already made friendships amongst the staff members because I had done supply teaching at that school. I had also traveled to Orillia to complete my degree with some of the staff members. People in a rural community reach out to newcomers and to strangers and gather them in and take care of them. (personal communication, June 4, 2013)

Lenore felt so immersed in her school and community that isolation was not a factor to her, yet
her fellow rural residents may have disagreed with her. Budge (2006) comments on the importance of place and even though there may be challenges, often rural residents see the positive aspects that make other issues seem very small. (Citing Nadel & Sagawa (2002)), Budge states, “There is something very powerful about the sense of place in rural communities that helps them transcend the challenges of poor infrastructure and few resources” (p. 4). Isolation, geographically speaking can help a community bond together, and in Lenore’s experience, the positives minimized the challenges that isolation can bring.

Teacher Roles

Teacher and place in motion. Lenore taught in many different schools in urban and rural areas throughout her career. As she reflected on the various roles she assumed in each school, she stated that music was always woven into her programs, whether she was teaching a grade or in kindergarten. She stated, “And no matter where I teach, no matter where I taught, whether it was in a large city or when it was in a small city or whether it was in a village, I always used music as a way to interest the children in what we were doing” (personal communication, February 18, 2012). Even though music was always a part of her program, she was never called the music teacher, despite the fact that she was called upon to accompany for special events in the school, or assist with the extra-curricular music program. She believes, “That was my place within the community because any way I was involved with the community it was always through music, through the band, through the choral society … (personal communication, February 18, 2012). Lenore therefore made ‘her place’ in her community through her music and her talents.

Primary teacher. Lenore has seen a great deal of change in teaching – in curriculum, curriculum delivery, and particularly in the emphasis or importance that is ascribed to the various
subject areas. When she began teaching, music was a very important part of the curriculum in the primary division. She spent most of her time teaching classes from Kindergarten to Grade 3. During the first decade of her career, music was a protected subject and each teacher was expected to teach according to the Ministry guidelines. To ensure that teachers were teaching to the expectations of the curriculum, a Music Supervisor, hired by each board of education, visited each classroom in the school and the schools in his district. He (Lenore relates that in her experience they were all men) observed the classroom instructor teaching a music lesson, and then taught a new lesson, which would serve as a model for the following week’s music expectations. The classroom teacher was expected to follow his guidelines and reinforce the new concepts that he introduced. Lenore related that it was very controlled and teachers were expected to strictly adhere to the expectations, or they would be reprimanded. After the formal lessons were over, the students were expected to perform a song for him, so that he could monitor their progress. Often the music supervisor came in unannounced to check on the music situation in the classes. Many teachers feared this surprise visit. Lenore told a story about one of her experiences:

I remember one time when I was in my third year of teaching and I was in the Kindergarten and the superintendent came in. They used to … in those days come in by surprise. They would come in, sit down at your desk, look through your register and look through your daybook. One of the children mentioned that we were having a show and tell – our discussion time … mentioned something and I said, “Oh I know a song about that.” And I immediately taught them the song right in the middle of everything. My superintendent was sitting at my desk looking at me, with a very bemused look on his face, … because I, off the cuff, used music to reinforce an idea … Little boy blue … I was able to just go into a … song and teach it without knowing, without preparing … or without planning to do it … My whole approach to teaching was through music. (personal communication, March 31, 2012)

During the days when there was a music supervisor, Lenore felt very comfortable teaching through music and using music to enhance a lesson in any subject. She related how other
teachers found music a difficult subject to teach, and who were always under the watchful eye of the music supervisor.

**Music teacher: Switching off subjects to teach her specialty.** After a few years of teaching, the music supervisor became a ‘thing of the past’. At this time, Lenore taught primary grades in rural schools. She taught Grade 2 and 2/3 in one very small school located in a rural transient tourist area. She recounted that many of the teachers were not comfortable with the music portion of the curriculum, so she traded off her physical education so that she could teach music to other classes. In one school she taught with a teacher who had been music specialist – an itinerant music teacher, who was placed in the classroom after her position had been declared redundant:

> In certain schools I would switch off and teach the music for another classroom teacher … we would switch. I would take her music and she would take my phys. ed. That was fine with me. Then at another school I taught at, there were three of us in a pod and one teacher that was in the pod with us … I had a Grade 2 and 3 and Noreen had a Grade 2 and Iola had a Grade 3. So we were in this pod, the three of us, and Iola had been the itinerant music teacher I told you about so when it came time for music … Iola and I had a wonderful time because I played the piano and she would teach the songs. And Noreen would have a spare. And that was great. We just had a really good music program with two of us with the [same music] interest. (personal communication, March 31, 2012)

Lenore related how disappointed the teaching staff was when music specialists’ roles were cut, for many regular classroom teachers did not feel comfortable teaching music. She also mentioned how upset the rural itinerant teacher was when she was told that her program was cut and that she was expected to assume regular classroom teacher responsibilities. The music specialist felt that she was very qualified as a music educator, but NOT as a regular classroom

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28 Many new schools that were built in Ontario in the 1960s and 1970s were open-concept in design. Classrooms did not have walls. Teachers instructed in open areas called pods where same-grade classes or divisions – primary, junior, or intermediate grades were grouped together.
teacher. She was distressed when this occurred, for she had been teaching music for many years and was very reluctant to change roles so late in her teaching career. Lenore also mentioned that other itinerant teachers’ programs were cancelled – physical education, science, etc. – and that put many of them back into a rural school. Lenore believes that “Itinerant rural teachers played an important educational role until they were put into the classroom” (personal communication, March 31, 2012).

**Kindergarten program.** As Lenore stated, her kindergarten program in particular was “full of music” (personal communication, February 18, 2012) because she integrated music into each lesson. For 21 years she was the kindergarten teacher:

I wasn’t the music teacher. I was the kindergarten teacher, which is almost the same thing because in my program I used music as reinforcement for practically everything I taught. We sang the alphabet; we sang songs about numbers. We sang songs about the seasons (personal communication, March 31, 2012). Music was based on different times of the year, different important occasions, and different seasons. Always, the music was the way to educate the children in other subjects – to draw their attention to the things that are going on around them (personal communication, February 18, 2012).

**Intersecting Roles: School and Community**

**Community outreach: Band ‘mother’.** For 21 years as a kindergarten teacher, Lenore assisted with the school marching and concert band. She said, “it is my background that had a lot of music in it, and even though … I didn’t have any degrees in music; I had so much music in by background that I did it automatically. Music was … something that was, that was born in me somehow or other” (personal communication, February 18, 2012). So for twenty-one years, Lenore was a ‘band mother’, assisting students with their music scores, and teaching marching, drilling the colour guard, and supervising their practices. On many weekends, Lenore marched with the band in any kind of weather, starting with the community Fall Fair parades, the Christmas parades during November and December, the Winterfest parades of February, and
finally the Maple Syrup Festival parade in April. As a very dedicated teacher and band mother, she also helped to sew on needed buttons on the band bus en route to a parade, helped to fit students at the beginning of each school year with their uniform, and even comforted cold and upset colour guard members whose fingers had been frostbitten during a cold parade. She marched in the parades, giving her support to her students and to the community that funded the music supplies, band uniforms, and instruments.

**Accompanist.** Another responsibility Lenore assumed during the school year was assisting other teachers who needed an accompanist for their classes during assemblies and helping with musical productions. She also played for the ‘annual Christmas caroling in the gym’. Lenore believes that through the band, assemblies, Christmas caroling, and musical productions, the school music program was a community outreach program that was enjoyed by all. She discussed this perspective:

> I think that a music program didn’t just benefit your particular classroom but it benefited EVERYONE in the school and also in the community. Because we had … when we put on a music presentation at our school or even just an assembly with music in it, and I must say that the assemblies that had music, involved music, were very well received by the school, by the rest of the children, and staff and parents. I think more so than other kinds of presentations like drama, straight drama. Most of the assemblies had lots and lots of music and of course the productions, the musical productions in our school … Every year. (personal communication, March 31, 2012)

**Building a musical ‘sense of place’**. Lenore believes that many students, staff, and parents were so involved in their children’s musical endeavors in the rural area that their feelings about music became entrenched in their sense of place. She refers to this as a ‘musical sense of place’ for the whole community celebrated the music program through their attachment to the many music activities that were offered. We also discussed the fact that many parents chose their children’s school based on the music program, for when they heard that the local rural school
offered a band program, classroom music and an extracurricular musical theatre program at the elementary level they enrolled their children there. The high school also continued the music tradition, offering students band and choir.

Lenore remarked on the community support both schools received for the music program, particularly the elementary school. The proceeds from the two rural fairs, the Fall Fair, and Maple Syrup Festival were dispersed to community groups, charities, service clubs and the schools. The band program was a recipient for a large sum of money each year. Lenore commented on the mutual reciprocation – that the music programs in turn – also supported the community events:

The Lions Club and the Maple Syrup Festival organization supplied [the band] with instruments and kind of a reason to celebrate the aspect of being rural, like the fall fair, is definitely a rural, a fair, that they … the rural people get involved in and the band was also a major part of that. So were all the children. The children both at the public school and the high school … the children were very much involved in the fall fair so … they sort of complemented one another. And the Santa Claus parade … they provided a venue for people to reconnect. Everyone works together, the schools, the farmers, the town people, everybody! (personal communication, March 31, 2012)

Lenore and I also talked about the individual students who graduated from the elementary school music program, continued their music studies in high school, then later in post-secondary education. Some of the students continued music learning on their own, forming their own contemporary bands in informal learning environments. Lenore is always proud when one of her former kindergarten students pursues further studies in music education. She remarked, “Interestingly enough! Here is the thing I feel has the most benefit from the music program. It’s those few kids that have taken it and run with it … all through community and school support, building ‘a musical sense of place’ where students carried it on through high school and onward” (personal communication, February 18, 2012).
Juxtaposition of Purpose and Space

Narratives of conflict: Local versus regional jurisdiction: Dissonances and tensions.

Some of the difficult issues to deal with in a rural community stem from tensions that occur when local initiatives and special needs of a community are not adequately considered or supported by the regional school board and Ministry of Education. Lenore discussed the impact that some of these problems had on her teaching praxis and on her colleagues’ praxes at different rural schools.

Lack of regional support and knowledge and understanding of rural areas. Lack of support at the school board and Ministry level in terms of knowledge and understanding of unique demographical and geographical issues that impact rural schools cause a great deal of hardship for rural school communities. Particularly noteworthy are issues of transportation, when board officials make decisions that affect students and cause them to endure long bus rides to and from their school. Usually the board’s decision is based on fiscal considerations of bus costs and does not take into account the ways in which long trips before and after school compromise student motivation, hence learning. Lenore commented that in one of her rural schools, principals had held responsibility for organizing the transportation routes for the large number of buses that picked the children up each day. When board officials decided to assume responsibility for the organization of the busing routes, chaos ensued, making some students’ bus rides as long as one hour each way, instead of the previous seven minute trip to the local school from their homes. She described a situation in which one school principal, who was born and raised in the community, knew all of the residents and where they lived, without consulting a map:

[One of my] local rural principals, he would do the busing out of his head at the beginning of the year because he knew every road and every highway and every corner and every stop and practically every family … who owned the farm before them and who owned the farm before them! And he also knew where the roads
went through and where they didn’t go through, unlike [school] board officials. (personal communication, February 28, 2012)

Lenore believes that teachers and principals who live and teach in the area are better acquainted with transportation issues than the board, which sits in an urban office. That belief also pertains to board support for unique, local music education programs that are operating in rural schools, far away from the offices in the urban centre. Corbett (2006) states, “The fact is that we do not know a great deal about rural schools and how they operate in their communities, partly because they are largely absent from most Canadian educational policy discussion” (p. 297).

**Lack of board fiscal support for localized programs.** Lenore taught music in many different capacities for three decades. During that time, she witnessed a great deal of change; some changes were positive, yet for music programs, change to her only cast a negative light. As a product of an award winning Barrie Collegiate Band under the direction of W.A. Fisher of the 1950s, Lenore has witnessed a steady decline in public music education in Ontario, which is well documented in Willingham & Cutler (2007). Lenore discussed the deterioration of music programs in rural schools from a historical perspective – from music supervisors, to itinerant teachers – to the present day. She talked at length about how in the days when she first started teaching, music educators and regular classroom teachers were provided with support from music supervisors who came around to each school to monitor the music curriculum that was being taught. After their demise, rural itinerant teachers traveled from school to school to deliver a music program to all students, replacing the music supervisory roles. Then the itinerant program was cancelled, leaving the teaching of music to regular classroom teachers, some of whom either did not feel comfortable teaching the subject and/or were unqualified to do so. The music consultant was soon also declared redundant and was replaced by an Arts resource teacher. This teacher is responsible for all of the Arts (music, drama, dance, and visual arts) on a
part-time basis in a large geographical board for teachers from Junior Kindergarten to Grade 12 – an impossible task for one person. The only schools in the elementary system that offer music now are those that have a qualified music teacher by chance on staff, or one who has an interest in the subject. Otherwise, many students do not receive a formal music education program in their elementary school. Music and the other Arts subjects are not protected in her board. Furthermore, in rural areas, the distance to the next school is so great, that even if there were a fellow music educator to collaborate with, it would be difficult to do so. She described this serious issue in music education today:

I think it has deteriorated to a place where I just can’t believe what the kids nowadays don’t get like … Back in the day when I was teaching in [an urban school], we had a music supervisor who came around to every school in the city. Came into the classroom. You had at least half an hour with him. He took over the class and then outlined what he wanted you to prepare for his next visit. Went to every classroom in the school. We also had a phys ed. supervisor who did the same thing … Now they don’t have anything. You know you sort of look back on the good old days with a bit of disdain, thinking that they really progressed over the years, education’s really progressed over the years, but I don’t think so … Somewhere along the way, education, particularly in rural areas, has gotten off the track. (personal communication, March 31, 2012)

Willingham and Cutler (2007) remark on the situation in rural areas and the ways in which these areas are particularly affected by changes in music education policy, and by funding models that do not take the needs of rural communities into account. The above authors state, “A rigidity of the funding model template was applied universally, regardless of special needs or unique community values” (p. 7). As well they point out the issue of the lack of a population base, which compromises rural areas, due to the lack of ‘voice’. “Rural programs experienced an even greater loss because of a lack of critical population base; many schools can only offer ‘basics’ in some jurisdictions” (p. 7). Lenore now believes that most of the financial support for her program comes from the rural community, and if that community were not able to provide
for Arts programming, there would be no financial assistance available from other sources. She said, “Thanks to the community for stepping in” (personal communication, March 31, 2012)! She remembers a time when the community “built a music portable for the use of the music teacher … that was how supportive our community was, of the music program in our school.” She stated, “We got amazing funding for that, not from the school board, not from the principal, but from the community … they were really behind the music program in our school.” She asked, “What would happen if our community were not there for us” (personal communication, March 31, 2012)?

**Lack of rural voice.** Lenore commented on another issue – the absence of rural voice – at the school board and Ministry levels (as mentioned in Willingham & Cutler (2007) report). She feels that the rural voice is heard, but not considered at school board level, because the region is mostly rural, with only two major urban centres. Lenore believes that negativity toward teachers is counterproductive, particularly in today’s political climate, and in rural schools that already seem to be lagging behind their urban counterparts. When neither proper representation nor consideration is given to rural areas from all levels of government, further troubles develop:

Maybe that is part of the fact that [our board] is mostly rural and they don’t have enough give [influence]. They don’t have enough people who will stand up for what they believe in. Some trustees that are elected to represent the urban areas in our board, get elected with their own axe to grind, against teachers and principals. (personal communication, March 31, 2012)

**Lack of celebrating education of the ‘natural place’**. Lenore was amazed at her kindergarten children’s knowledge of their place, particularly their natural place; their farms, animals, and the nature around them. Rural children often came to school with a strong sense of their natural environment and were able to carry on a conversation about their world around them. Lenore told a story about one kindergarten child who carried on an adult conversation for
the whole winter season about a bird that was living in their barn:

I remember that little boy in kindergarten – his first name I can’t quite recall, but his face is in my heart. He was a really sweet boy and every morning he and I would have a conversation about a snowy owl. Their family had a snowy owl one time that spent the winter on their farm. And I said to him one day, “Did you see the snowy owl on your fence?” And he said, “Yes I did!” “I think it’s staying in our barn!” And it was there all one winter, the snowy owl. He and I continued the conversation all winter and every day he came in and gave me an update on the bird, with all of the facts about snowy owls. Some of my children had such an amazing sense of nature and were able to tell their stories to me. (personal communication, March 31, 2012)

Lenore believes that this child, and many other children like him have a keen sense of place, related to their community, and most importantly to their rural environment – the farm, the land, and nature. She asked, “Is that kind of knowledge highlighted and celebrated in our curriculum documents and expectations? Certainly not” (personal communication, June 24, 2013)! Lenore contends that we have lost the notion of the seasons – of seeding, tending, and harvest – which is so important to rural areas and to all who partake in the consumption of local foodstuffs.

**Narratives from the heart: Music and ‘rural’ emotional experience.** Throughout our conversation/interview moments, Lenore recounted some of the emotional teaching experiences that she felt impacted her professional praxis and were related to the joys and sorrows of teaching in a rural area. As a longstanding, well-respected teacher of three decades, her first narrative is historical in nature, as she told of a music mentor whom she felt positively influenced her musical pathway in life. She told her story:

*Looking to the past for a path for the future: A musical mentor*

In the five years that I was in the Barrie Collegiate Band were wonderful years for me. I felt that our bandmaster who was also our history teacher, Grade 13, was a wonderful role model. I really believed that he was the teacher of all, of all my school years that made the most impact on my life. Because of the fact that I could read music well, it came with me into my teaching career and I ended up mostly teaching kindergarten, teaching primary. And I used my music ability to its fullest. I would use music to teach almost everything that I needed to teach in kindergarten. And I also taught … music for other teachers who were not [as
talented] in music but they were better in other subjects. So I would switch phys.
ed. for music and take my friends’, my colleagues’ music classes. So I kept being
involved all through, all through my teaching career. My high music teacher,
W.A. Fisher was and is my music mentor. He was a rural music teacher, an icon
who should be studied. He took students coming into Grade 9, some with very
limited experience in music, put an instrument in their hands and started their
pathway to music learning. Board officials should look to the past at these iconic
music educators to model their program for the future and encourage their rural
teachers to get involved in their community. (personal communication, May 31,
2012)

Lenore believes that it is very important to discuss what children from rural families deal
with in relation to their responsibilities at home. Many rural farm children have a keen sense of
being in their role in a very important primary industry – agriculture and food production – and
this role is not acknowledged in educational curriculum. Their ‘sense of place’, related to the
educational experiences they receive at home, working the land, operating farm machinery,
working with livestock, and the knowledge they gain in animal husbandry at such an early age, is
not taken into account. Their stories are not heard at the academic level. Lenore discussed what
rural meant to a student living in the country. Throughout her teaching career, many of her
students came to school to learn; yet their knowledge and skills were already advanced due to
influences at home. She believes these children have a keen ‘sense of their rural place’ at an
early age.

What rural means to a farm child

Many children who live on a farm do not have playtime. They just do farm chores
and schoolwork. They have many responsibilities at home and when it is seeding
time in April/May and haying season in June, sometimes they miss a school day or
two. They are needed on the farm. Their evenings are filled with chores, dinner
then homework, then bed. Many have a hard time fitting in the extra-curricular
sports like baseball and soccer. They are only able to attend practices and games if
the work is finished at home, or if they can be spared in the busy farm season.
Sometimes they would watch a bit of TV or be on the computer, but often they
would have to be up early and go out to the barn before they went to school.
Teachers are always aware of these responsibilities that their students have if they
come from a farm. To a farm child, ‘rural’ means hard work with little time to
spare. It also means working closely with your family. ‘Rural’ means responsibility. It means dedication. It means working on the land and with animals. (personal communication, June 24, 2013)

To Lenore, the common issues of children from the farm are not necessarily ‘known’ to those who are not living in rural areas. She noticed that farm children can celebrate real successes related to their involvement in their family farming operations and at the same time struggle with the challenges of juggling their school and home responsibilities. As Corbett (2006) remarks, “We need to understand better the educational realities, challenges, and successes in those communities that contain a large part of the population of [rural] places like Atlantic, northern, and western Canada” (p. 297), and of course rural Ontario. Barter (2008) contends that more research is needed that focuses on “the context of rural models and values” because “the issue of rural education, and rural life in general, is under-developed in scholarship” (p. 477). Lenore also stressed the need for curriculum change to accommodate rural life and rural ‘learning’, and to do justice to educational values so pertinent and real to rural children.

**A fishbowl story: When assumptions are wrong.** Nothing is more upsetting than being on display in a rural community school when individuals who volunteer in the school make judgments about what they see and hear without knowing the facts and understanding certain situations. Lenore talked about a difficult circumstance that occurred with a child in her kindergarten class, where the parent made a wrong judgment on her actions. This is an example of a wrong assumption made in the fishbowl environment:

So far as teaching goes [in a rural school] everyone knows you, and knows your business. And there’s always somebody to pull the rug out from underneath you … it seems. Sometimes there were volunteers in my kindergarten for some reason or another. One time I had a parent in my class looking through my children for head lice, which went on in our school fairly often – head lice checks! And I had a boy in my classroom who was hard to handle – who was shouting and yelling at me. And the parent went to the principal and told him that he had better be aware that … of the lack of discipline in the Kindergarten, when the child could yell and
scream and shout and she [the teacher] would do nothing about it. So the principal came to me and repeated it to me. I said, “It was so and so.” He would just explode sometimes for no reason and the kids were so used to him exploding and I was so used to him exploding that we just carried on. That was the suggested action of the special education teacher, because he would eventually calm down. Of course my principal knew all about the child; we [the staff] all knew. Yet that was a black mark on me because the parent would not understand, and it wasn’t her business to understand or meddle in school disciplinary affairs. So the thing is that … that’s the negative of rural. So many people make it their business to ‘know’ your business and feel that they are obliged to have that right! (personal communication, March 31, 2012)

**Negotiating diversity and individual needs.** In regard to negotiating diversity in a rural area, Lenore commented that primary students, particularly Kindergarten students, were well accepting and friendly of all. She believes that children from that age group were not mature enough to understand what diversity in terms of race or gender meant. She felt that her students were not involved in bullying, where one was cruel or condescending to another. At that age, students mostly play alongside each other on an individual basis, not together. She said, “In Kindergarten, we just all helped one another” (personal communication, February 18, 2012). However, when she was working with students from the junior and intermediate classes, students were not as accepting of others or tolerant of anyone who acted differently, were anti-social or who had bullying tendencies. She mentioned one incident when bullying was a problem. A child who was not accepted by his Grade 3 classmates often would come and play with the kindergarten children. Sometimes his behaviour toward the youngsters was negative; he tried to exert his authority due to his age and size. Lenore discussed this as being a problem, for his mother was a teacher on staff. She said, “And that’s another problem of rural – teaching teachers’ children. It is difficult to deal with a child if his or her mother [or father] is on staff” (personal communication, March 31, 2012).
**Narratives of the future: Next steps in rural music education.** Lenore believes that music education policy and other Arts education policies have deteriorated to an extent that is detrimental to student success in rural areas. Educational priorities in Ontario are focused on testing in the areas of Mathematics and Literacy and not on the Arts in any way. Music is therefore almost redundant, unless there is a dedicated teacher on staff who strongly advocates for music. Standardized testing which drives learning does not allow for any give to make room for creativity. Willingham and Cutler (2007) remark that after outcomes-based education and testing were “imposed”, which produced “publishable results” that could be used to highlight the best and chastise the worst schools, “these changes alienated the Arts by placing them outside of the core of teaching and learning” (p. 7). Lenore commented that in the past decade and a half, students have lost out where music education is concerned. She felt that it is too difficult to backtrack and try to regain what has been lost. However, she believes that with the following next steps, teachers can make a positive move toward celebrating history, ‘place’, and community through music.

**Celebrate our history through song.** According to Lenore, one of the important roles that music education plays is celebrating our history and culture through song. In her opinion, this role is absent from classroom music. She related that many teachers do not have these resources and are not even familiar with them. She was referring to songs that are part of our Canadian heritage. Lenore said, “Let’s go back through those old songs that celebrate our British, Scottish, Welsh, and European backgrounds and teach the children through music about the history of our Canadian culture that somehow and for many reasons has been lost” (personal communication, June 24, 2013)! She added with frustration:

They seem to be absent from any new resources (if teachers even have the monies
to purchase any new resources) and many of the old music books have either been tossed away or frowned upon! Remember the good old \textit{High Road of Song}? Just because a song is old, doesn’t mean that it is not a good one! When they were replaced with songbooks like \textit{Song Time}, students were singing American folk songs, and leaving the Canadian heritage songs behind. Of course they have to get the music back first! Music is in the curriculum but not in the schools! (personal communication, June 24, 2012)

\textbf{Celebrate the local.} Another important ‘next step’ in Lenore’s opinion, is highlighting the ‘local’ and celebrating community in all subjects. Since she lives in the historical area of Huronia, Lenore also believes that recovering and celebrating the heritage of the aboriginal peoples – native Canadians – before the arrival the colonists is important. Corbett (2006) makes a very relevant point regarding the current curriculum as being ‘placeless’, and this is documented in Canadian and American academic literature. He remarks, “A number of rural and urban educators have begun to suggest that a place-based approach to education is superior to a generic placeless curriculum and pedagogy” (p. 291). Gallagher (2004), Gruenewald (2003b), Shelton (2005), and Theobald (1997) advocate for educational policymakers to adopt a curriculum that celebrates place. Wallin and Reimer (2008) take this notion one further step further and remark that the purpose of curriculum in schools tends to satisfy “provincial and national reform leaders [who call] for schools to prepare students to contribute to national interests, while rural scholars and educational stakeholders believe rural schools should serve local community interests” (p. 593). Lenore corroborated these viewpoints and believes that if rural specialties such as agriculture, community fairs, and traditions that are unique to each community are not highlighted and preserved in current curriculum, then rural areas will soon lose their identities. Corbett (2006) states, “intimate connections to place-based history, culture, and tradition and the need to protect that land as a productive, life-sustaining infrastructure is precisely what education ought to enhance rather than erode” (p. 291). Lenore said, “Get this
back into our lessons for the children. They need to know their roots and how they [the students’ interaction with their place] are important to the world” (personal communication, June 24, 2013).

A Cadence: A Music Composition that Represents Lenore’s Rural Music Experience

I asked Lenore if there were a composition or a song that represented her music education praxis in a rural community and she replied:

Do you know what I would say right off before you even finish the question? *Morning Has Broken!* I don’t know ... It’s a song about beginning. It is the start of everything; that song just sort of represents my outlook on my life. That exemplifies my teaching life, and my personal life. You start fresh every morning and start the new day with the students, forgetting the sad parts, and running with the students’ accomplishments. And it relates to the environment, the birds, the sun, rain, … all of the things we sing about in Kindergarten. That kind of defines what I think about rural. (personal communication, February 28, 2012)

Coda: Making Meaning of Place: Lenore’s Sense of Place in Perspective

Lenore’s many conversations/interviews and phone conversations produced very fruitful data. After analyzing the transcripts, writing this chapter, and in discussion with Lenore, I realize that Lenore’s sense of place is a musical one and sincerely formulated and celebrated through a sociological perspective. Deeply ingrained in this ‘people’ perspective is an understanding of the importance of relationships and dedication to community through her love of music and attachment to her geographical rural place.

Reflecting on her metaphor of ‘music,’ Lenore views her rural area as a relationship that began with a memory of a music learning experience from the past, then evolved and blossomed as she interacted in her school and community, professionally, personally and musically. It is interesting that when talking to Lenore one appreciates how passionate she is as she looks back on 30 plus years of education and rural life. As Leyshon and Bull (2011) state, memories create
identity and are deeply interwoven with place. “Memories are crucial to our construction of place ... Memory allows different spaces, pasts, and futures to become embedded in particular locales” (p. 159). Lenore’s locale is her rural community but her sense of place is dynamic and emotional.

**Finding My Place**

I really, I really found my place when I moved to my rural area. I am sure! ... I lived there for a lot of years. And I ... still am involved with those people; I still keep in touch with people from there. It’s really not the same in my new place. I find it different. I do know quite a few people but I don’t know them as intimately as I did the people in the rural area. It’s a very weird phenomenon. (personal communication, March 31, 2012)
Chapter Six: Natali

The Stories Between Us

I first met Natali when she transferred to the rural school where I was teaching. She assumed the FSL role for the junior and intermediate grades and as a few years elapsed her role changed to part-time FSL, and regular classroom. When my daughter started Grade 3, Natali was her part-time teacher. My daughter enjoyed that year because Natali enhanced her lessons with music and French. The Grade 3 class received an education from an arts-informed lens. With Natali’s music background, she offered to assist me in any music capacity that she could, despite her busy regular classroom and French schedule. Our relationship began there, with trips to musicals in Toronto, to working together on the school musical. Natali was eager to assist wherever she could. She was also very interested in affording students the opportunity to sing in a French choir, which she offered to the junior and intermediate students.

Living outside of the school area, Natali was excited when the opportunity arose for her to transfer to a small rural school closer to her home community. At her new school, she became teacher librarian and taught music on a planning time basis. She was also involved extensively in the rural fair with her students and entered her school English and French choirs into the local music festival. During this time, our paths did not cross, except to wave to her as my marching band performed along the main street of the community where her school children participated in the fall fair activities. When I assumed the teacher librarian/music teacher role in my latest school, I turned to Natali for guidance to assist me with my new library expectations. She became my library mentor and provided me with music teaching materials, because my new school seriously lacked adequate music supplies. Since then my relationship with Natali has been rekindled, through our music and library position, as well as this doctoral project.
Our Research Conversation Moments

When I began my doctoral studies with the notion of researching rural music educators’ perspectives, the first person I thought to approach was Natali, due to her extensive involvement in rural music education in the Southern Ontario Board where she and I worked. Not only did she teach primary music throughout the school year, she was extensively involved in the local music festival, engaging all students in the school in the choral sections of the competition.

When I called Natali to ask for her participation, she was very interested and eager to begin the interview process. She asked that I email her a copy of my thesis proposal and research questions. We decided to meet at a mutually convenient location so we chose a restaurant close to her home. We met five times at different restaurants and conducted our interviews/conversations in very relaxed atmospheres over long lunches. We still continue to meet now, long after the interviews have been recorded, transcribed, and verified. Natali is very interested in my research dissertation process and the other participants’ viewpoints.

A Journal Entry: Natali’s Metaphor for her Rural Teaching Role

Today’s lunch meeting with Natali was very fruitful. Initially intended as merely a social, get-together, our lunch turned toward my thesis work and my progress in my writing stage. As I began to tell her of my progression in relation to Germaine’s story and my mention of a metaphor, Natali began to relate to her story. If she were to pick a metaphor to represent her teaching praxis, she knew exactly what it would be. She explained:

Well I would fancy my story represented in a picture book like Jan Brett’s\(^{29}\) books. …You remember the picture books with the main story in the centre of the page and other little stories written at the bottom and at the sides of the page, encircling the main story? That’s how my metaphor would be represented. Take the picture

\(^{29}\) Jan Brett is a best-selling American author and illustrator who has written many picture books for elementary school children. www.janbrett.com
book *The Mitten*, with the beautiful illustrations. Jan Brett’s books are full of those beautiful illustrations of animals, of landscapes, particularly snow, and of nature, and all representing what is going on concurrently as the main story unfolds. I can see me represented in the middle of the page, as a teacher-librarian, and my other roles at the bottom and sides – as the music teacher, planning time teacher, administrative assistant, choir director, choral festival helper/organizer, mom, and homemaker. All of the parts of my story are running alongside each other because I fulfill so many different roles during the school day. So I think a story, in the same form as Jan Brett portrays it, would be a relevant metaphor. The story of *The Mitten* takes place in winter with lots of snow, that’s me! I grew up in a snow belt, and now live in a snow belt. (personal communication, November 7, 2012)

As I looked through the picture book, *The Mitten*, I understand why Natali chose this particular book as a metaphor to represent her rural music education praxis. The story takes place in the countryside, a place where she lives and teaches. The mitten is the refuge for all of the children and animals in the story where they can keep warm and have the comfort of the mitt for fellowship and community. There are concurrent multiple stores happening. At Natali’s school, she was a constant, the facilitator – the keeper. She taught music and library to all of the students in the school and fulfilled multiple roles. Sometimes she taught more than one group at once. Natali is the person who held the music narrative together in her small community. The following is Natali’s personal story and stories of experience that portray her as a multifacilitator and community spirited educator of the near past.

**Natali’s Story**

Natali was born in Italy and moved with her family to the Northern Ontario mining town of Copper Cliff in the early 1950s. She was just a baby. The situation for immigrants, particularly Italians at that time was harsh, due to Canada’s strict immigration policy and the strong feelings of xenophobia. Post-war Italy was experiencing difficult times, and many people like Natali’s family were fortunate if they had relatives in Canada to sponsor them. Natali’s great uncle lived in the mining town and he offered to sponsor the family – Natali and her parents.
Times however were very tough for all Italian families; they had to be frugal and very hard working. Natali’s father worked for the mining company at the smelter and her mother was a cleaner. Neither parent was able to find work in their previous occupations. The company owned the town, which had a population in 1956 of 3,801. It administered the police service, the hospital and its doctors, town council, the roads crews, and landscapers. They owned all of the land that every building stood on – the schools, the stores – and it seems they owned their workers as well.

The elementary and secondary schools that Natali attended were funded and operated under the jurisdiction of the mining company. The teachers at the schools were static, remaining there for their entire careers as employees of the company. The company formed their own school board and the teachers taught to a curriculum that operated on a unit system, where students could complete two grades in one year if they so desired. Religious and music instruction was mandatory for all students, except for the few Jewish students who were exempted from religion studies.

Natali’s school memories are mixed; some good, some were unpleasant. She talked about teacher attitudes in the mining school and remarked that some teachers felt that upon graduating students would merely continue working for the company as their families did. They were not expected to get salaried jobs or attend post secondary education. This attitude gave the students the marked impression that they could not advance, particularly if they were Italian. But Natali recalls three teachers who pushed students to reach their potential. These teachers made a strong positive impact on her educational pursuits.

Natali described the discrimination present in the town culture when she was growing up. She discussed the ‘two sides of the track’ mentality that was blatant in the mining town; white
Anglo Saxons against the Italian immigrants, and second and third generation Italians against first generation. She also referred to gender bias:

I felt safe and part of the community as long as I was on the right side of the tracks. I was very rarely invited to anyone’s home if I was on the wrong side of the tracks. Very few people took you for who you were, but where you came from [Italy]. Unless you were of the right ethnicity, and high up or male, you could not get a job in the company during the summer. If you were Italian, lived up the hill or a girl, you couldn’t get a job in the summer with the company. It is not always goodness and light in a small rural area … So, I had lots of friends and we were all in the same boat, up the hill although there was even discrimination there! … The first generation of Italians was frowned upon by the second-generation kids because our English wasn’t up to snap and we because we had just come from the old country. So the second and third generations kind of picked on us a lot. But I was fortunate to have some really, really good friends… we were just friends because we liked each other, not because of who your father was or where you worked or how long you had been in Canada. And so the town was all sustaining and isolated, even though it wasn’t that far from the city. (personal journal, October 26, 2012)

Natali talked about the special privileges that were given to children who were ‘the accepted group’, the children of salaried workers at the mine:

And the children of the non-Italian workers in town … oh we had the same education; we went to the same elementary and secondary. But they had clubs and things and especially the one employees’ club that had a swimming pool and it had excursions and a place to meet and meeting rooms and kids could hang out there. It was great for, for you know, games rooms and all of that sort of thing. And you were automatically a member of that if, if your parent was a salaried employee, unless you were Italian. (personal journal, October 26, 2012)

Natali disclosed that her family was very interested in music; both grandmas were very musical and her father was a great opera buff. Consequently Natali grew up in a family that gathered for musical events, such as when her cousin, the self-taught accordion player and collector came for visits. Her parents could not afford a piano so Natali practised on a paper keyboard, for the school gave each child one period of music instruction daily and in the intermediate grades, two half hour periods a week. When she attended a boarding school during her secondary school years, there was no music instruction, but students were able to participate
in the annual musical. Her mother decided to send Natali to this particular boarding school in a northern town, because the school was known for its strong musical program. Natali believed that this decision made a big impact on her future music education endeavors.

After high school, Natali enrolled at the University of Windsor, then transferred to Laurentian in her last year. During that summer she met her husband who also had decided to leave McMaster and transfer to Laurentian to complete his undergraduate degree. Natali then went to Queens to complete her Bachelor of Education.

Natali lived in several urban centers, Mississauga, Toronto, and Ottawa, yet she and her husband missed living in a rural area. Both natives of a rural Northern town, they decided to move back to the country. Natali had previously taught in Mattawa and Sudbury, but since her husband’s job took them around the province, she took a leave of absence from her position in Sudbury. When they moved to a rural area, Natali taught in two rural schools near to her home community. In the first school she taught FSL (French as a Second Language) and Grade 3. At the second, her last school, her dual assignment was as teacher-librarian and planning time. Through the primary planning time role and through numerous extra-curricular activities, she delivered a music program. Natali at present is on a long-term disability leave from the board.

**Rural, Rurality, and Aspects of Community**

Natali and I discussed what the term ‘rural’ means to her. The definition of ‘rural’ in Natali’s opinion is related to what is ‘not there.’ Firstly, she discussed it in terms of demographics – meaning remoteness – geographically as well as socially. She explained:

> Well there’s nothing in the community! There really isn’t! …. There is a corner store, there is no bank, there is no post office per se; there are mailboxes inside the corner store, there is no grocery store, there is no … the fire department … there is a fire station down one of the concessions but it’s, it’s from what’s not there, rather than what’s there! (personal communication, March 6, 2012)

She also described it through the phrase of ‘the lack of’ – the lack of facilities – and difficulties
with transportation, where students must be bused or driven everywhere and in her case, where
the school is the only building in the community:

Most of them … were bused and driven everywhere. In relation to my home life and also my school life, the kids have to be driven everywhere … they’re stuck there. It isn’t that they can walk here and there, if you’re not a stay at home mom, you pretty well have to juggle getting your kids anywhere to do anything … And they have to be driven to other cities to participate in sports, and extracurricular activities, music lessons, everything … that’s any other after school activity. They have to go some place else. Nothing happens in the community itself. There is a small neighbourhood, maybe three streets, but then the rest of the kids are bused. On snow days you’d be lucky if there were 20 kids in the building just because everyone is bused. You could never do anything after school because the majority of kids were bused. And so there was co-ordination of drivers for any extracurricular event. (personal communication, March 6, 2012)

Since her school is a long distance from a larger centre, Natali believes that the community lacks connections to the business world and does not come with its own identity. It is merely “a bedroom community … it gets left out”. (personal communication, April 2, 2012). She added:

The school community does not have an affiliation with a ‘place’ or larger centre. The other thing too was that we don’t identify ourselves with any, you know how some restaurants have … you can give your points to a specific school, because … you are from that area, but Moonstone doesn’t fit in anywhere. It’s not Orillia not Midland, it’s not Barrie and in October … some of the stores will give pumpkins to specific schools here in the area, but again, Moonstone doesn’t fit anywhere. The parents work everywhere. The kids attend activities everywhere and people shop everywhere. It’s kind of a middle point – all by itself! (personal communication, March 6, 2012)

**Community demographics: Overview of the school and community.** Natali considered the community aspects as they related to the multiple roles she fulfilled in her community school, as teacher-librarian, music teacher, planning time teacher, and administrative assistant-principal relief. The community, with a population of approximately 600 (which only warrants a sign without a population statistic), is made up of two subdivisions, “one within walking distance of the school and another one going down toward the ski hill” (personal communication, May 12, 2012) and the surrounding concessions of farmland. She contended that
the school population of 220 students is fairly large as compared to other schools in the nearest town, and for that reason, parents want to keep the school open, which at present is under threat of closure. She stated, “This is why the parents at Moonstone really want to keep the school open … it’s a huge population actually by comparison to other schools” (personal communication, May 12, 2012). A few years ago, the population of the school was over 320, when intermediate students still attended there. However due to poor septic system facilities, the older students were moved to the nearest elementary school, 10 kilometers away. Natali believes, as do parents of the younger school children, that this move was the initial step to closing the school. Just recently, the board announced another plan to move the junior students – Grades 4 to 6 – to the town school, a move that will further jeopardize the viability of the rural school. Yet the school is the mainstay of the community. Natali said, “It’s the one place to gather. There is nothing else in the community. It is the only public building, except for the Ministry compound with their trucks and mountains of sand and salt” (personal communication, May 12, 2012). Further issues on small school closures and the negative affects on their communities will be discussed later in this paper.

Despite the threat of the closure of the school (the one and only public building in the community), the school community has a vibrant affiliation with the school population and surrounding residents. The student population is stable, with parents who are very supportive of school curricular events, and extra-curricular activities. The children are also very well behaved and demonstrate exemplary behaviour. Natali believes that in a small local school, discipline issues with students are comparatively minimal, and even the smallest offences are treated as ‘terrible events’. Parents for the most part support the teachers in regard to discipline issues, if there are any. Consequently, when she took her choirs and/or library classes to see a performance
at the closest city’s ‘Opera House’, the students “wouldn’t dream of misbehaving” (personal communication, March 6, 2012). Natali talked about her students’ behaviours, for as a principal assistant, she was involved in issues of discipline:

The types of problems that you see with kids and discipline weren’t there either. There wasn’t a big transient population. That’s the one thing. It’s very stable in population, so you don’t get the problems that you get with the children of people who are transient who don’t have a sense of belonging. And discipline was non-existent. And unfortunately, the incidences of the discipline that were there were made to sound bigger than they were, just because you had nothing to compare it to. As one principal would say, she came and she had been at the school for a whole week and Children’s Aid and the OPP [Ontario Provincial Police] hadn’t been called once! … It was the things like, on the other hand, woe were you if you threw a snowball! It’s you know, the wrath of God comes down upon you because there is nothing worse to compare it to. (personal communication, March 6, 2012)

Natali believes that her small community school exemplified inclusivity, for students had the opportunity to get involved with all of the activities offered during the school day, and extra-curricular activities after school. There were usually only two activities offered and students were not considered ‘elite’, for all are treated equally. In terms of her extra-curricular choir program, she stated that all students were welcome, no matter what level of musical expertise they came with. She compared her small school to another school in the nearby town:

We don’t stress the elite part of it … we stress the participation and so if you can’t sing, that’s okay. Come on out and you will learn timing, you will learn dynamics, [you will experience] … being in a group and practising together and there is always something to be learned even if you are not part of the elite. And the same thing goes with sports. Come out and do it with us anyway! You are important … it’s kind of unfortunate in a big school, where if you have a basketball team, the most you have is 10 kids that will end up doing it for the whole season, whereas in a small school everyone is welcome … so more people get to participate and get to be part of something and I think that is the beauty of a small school – it is the participation! And then what happens when you are there … depends on who is doing it. They would be working to perfection … that’s always a big thing with me. But first you have to come out and in a small school, they DO come out! (personal communication, October 4, 2012)
Natali is certain this inclusive spirit builds her rural school community, for students and parents feel that they are very much a part of the school and the locale. She felt that there was a sense of community, of togetherness. This was particularly evident in the way in which parents volunteered at the school and continued to do so long after their children had graduated and left the school. She remarked:

I know the parents on a first name basis and I don’t think you get that a whole lot in a bigger school. Because if you have a class and the class moves on, you never see that parent again. That’s not what it is like in my small school; they tend to stay and volunteer for different things in the building, wherever they are needed if they have the expertise. (personal communication, April 2, 2012)

Natali viewed the students in a rural area as being “quite different” (personal communication, May 12, 2012) from the town students who attended the school in the nearby large centre. She believes the rural agricultural area is a more positive environment for children due to the socioeconomic levels as well as the attitudes of the parents in regard to education, discipline, and expectations. She described the differences that she experienced as she worked and interacted through choral activities with the two groups:

Rural school versus town school - They are quite different. The other kids are a little bit worldlier. I know the town isn’t very big, but enough that there are more problems there … and I think the socioeconomics of it. [In my community] It’s single-family dwellings whereas in [the town] you have the kids who live in apartments and whose parents don’t always have jobs and that sort of thing. And so it’s a different makeup and how kids react. And lots of stay-at-home moms, I think in [my school] because they are younger and they have larger families. [In the town] – even when they end up at high school – the ones from [mine] are more academic. They are better behaved even, and that’s how useful that phrase is … they are different because I think we have prior expectations of them. I think in a bigger school, you don’t have an entire group [staff] having the same expectations for that one child, whereas in a smaller school, I think you do. (personal communication, May 12, 2012)

Natali also believes that in a small school and community, the children are monitored more closely. High expectations in her school are more easily met because the staff is more familiar with the specific needs of the families, hence their children. It is much easier to be a watchdog
and advocate of a few, than for a large group.

**Community connections to the people.** Natali’s choir program involved the whole school population and as teacher-librarian she interacted with all students in the school. She therefore knew the children and their parents well, and believes that the school and community were really one entity. Parents as well as other community members supported all of the activities:

> It isn’t just school … parents that come to the activities; there is … people in the community as well. They support yard sales … they come to our concerts. They … I am thinking … we have a craft sale pretty well every year and the community will come and support that because it is the focus of the neighbourhood. (personal communication, March 6, 2012)

Natali also strongly supported individual and group interests and needs through her music presentations and library activities, which she believes brings the community together in support of each other. Strong bonds of friendship and togetherness were built, which to Natali was “so important in a small community.” She remarked:

> We [her choir and library students] supported any time that there was a special occasion, like a retirement. And one year we did some presentations to people who … like we had some children in the school whose grandparents had become ill and passed away. We presented books to the library in honour of the people and … our choir would do something to honour them. (personal communication, March 6, 2012)

A reciprocal relationship existed between the school and community, which united all into one. Natali said, “They [community members] have got a connection to the school because of these close relations” (personal communication, April 2, 2012).

**Aspects of rural community.**

> You have to find a happy medium; a sense of community is a good thing and it can also be a bad thing. . . . You sneeze at the hardware store, and they say ‘Bless you’ at McDonald’s … across town.  
> (Hunt, 2009, p. 39)
**Fishbowl.** Current academic literature calls attention to the positive and negative factors of living and teaching in a rural community (Bates, 2011; Corbett, 2009; Hunt, 2009; Isbell, 2005; Ralph, 2002). Negative aspects include lack of privacy, isolation, lack of resources, and inadequate teaching facilities, etc. Positive attributes include safety, knowing your neighbours, close-knit community, etc. Natali’s viewpoints corroborate these findings. She commented on some of the negative aspects, yet believes that familiarity fosters community in a fishbowl environment. Natali related that “It’s the familiarity of not only your personal life inside the school but outside the school as well” that is for all to know – even a trip to a doctor on a school day is critiqued. She added, “Running into a parent you know who says, “What are you doing here?” And I said, “Well you know, this is this”… But it was like, “What are you doing here today? School hours and you should be teaching” (personal communication, April 2, 2012)! However, Natali commented that the positive aspects of being on display far outweigh the negative experiences. She told a story about how the lack of personal privacy was heartwarming:

> When my husband was sick, I had people going out of their way dropping casseroles at my house [even though Natali lived 30 kilometers outside of the school area] On those days when … I would be at emergency until 4 o’clock in the morning and then dragged myself to work … for 7 o’clock and then had to go home in the afternoon because something had come up or whatever. People – they knew everything about [me], they knew what was going on in my personal life, and they were very tolerant, very accepting and, and they were very kind to me … I don’t know whether that would have happened in a larger community … But if it wasn’t for my staff and my school community, that is what got me through that horrible year and a half… I couldn’t have done it myself … I am thinking of one parent in particular who just showed up with some flowers one day with a little note from her son and sending emails, casseroles and a salad… you know coming in to school and bringing me things. “Oh don’t cook tonight. Here is whatever”… I don’t think that it would have happened in a big, a big school, because I wasn’t a classroom teacher … And even now when I am downtown – I haven’t been in a classroom for two years … I have had parents stop their cars in the middle of King Street and honk and holler out the window at me. I don’t think that that would happen in a bigger, in a … bigger school. (personal communication, April 2, 2012)
Natali also believes that familiarity in a small community instills a sense of community and gives students a feeling of closeness with their teachers, unlike the negative sentiment she experienced when running into students when she taught in a large town. She commented on the two experiences of meeting students when teaching in urban and rural schools:

I like the … fact that it’s isolated and if you see your students [from the rural school] in town somewhere, it’s very special! …When we first moved here and I worked in the town, I didn’t like my position. I saw those students everywhere! It was horrible. Whereas if you live in a rural area and you meet the children in any situation outside the school, it’s special to you and to them. The kids would always make a big deal about seeing you, and then they would talk about it on Monday. And they would say, “Remember when I saw you at the movies?” You know this sort of thing? There’s a special bond there! There’s a bond, ya! (personal communication, April 2, 2012)

**Isolation.** Natali defined isolation in rural communities in two different ways: geographic and social isolation. Residents are dependent on their own vehicles for transportation to negotiate the long commutes to stores, banks, and medical facilities and are immobilized due to the lack of public buses and even a local taxi service. They are also isolated socially, for they are far away from amenities that a large centre offers – concerts, shopping, cultural events, music lessons, sports facilities, etc. Residents must manage and plan their trips carefully, due to the ‘lack of’ many things that for urban residents are very close at hand. Natali therefore believes that the school is an important building in the community – her library was a facility for community members to utilize – for even a library is many kilometers away. She commented about the isolation that all residents of small communities and those who live on the farms along the concessions experience daily:

There are so many communities that … are rural and they don’t necessarily have to be geographically isolated … you’re kind of geographically isolated but if you have a car you can go but in other terms almost socially isolated when you are living in that little community if you try to stick to that community and not go out for anything else. It’s an impossibility so you really, really are isolated. …Those
places … you have to be out for everything – food, banking, all of the important things you have to go someplace else. So you almost need a second car, if you are a stay-at-home mom. In our little spot there are a lot of stay-at-home moms, because it is a very young community and a lot of them don’t have second vehicles too, so they are pretty well marooned there during the day. (personal interview, April 2, 2012)

Isolation hinders opportunities for music educators to seek professional development, collaborate with other music educators, and obtain and/or borrow music supplies. (The rural music festival was the only occasion where Natali was able to interact with other music teachers, but only through competition). She felt that isolation is also a setback for the music students who do not get the chance to hear other musicians and/or perform with them. So when her students had the opportunity to compete against other rural schools, they appreciated the chances perhaps more than students in urban areas. She also greatly valued the rural music festival that brought the choirs together from the few rural schools that offered a music program. Parents and other residents, who did not have any affiliation with the school, were very supportive of the music program and came out regularly to support the music program activities, particularly those that highlighted the choirs and individual students who were participating in the festival.

However Natali firmly believes that isolation is sometimes a positive factor, for it brings community members together and cultivates feelings of togetherness; residents foster shared values, particularly in relation to the school and to the music program. She remarked:

Isolation promotes community involvement with the school. The [school] … again because it’s the only thing going, we have a lot of parent participation, a really big group who volunteered for just about anything you needed to have done, there was always a group of parents that was available. They tended not to do some of the traditional volunteering … at hospitals or anything like that because it was too far away. The closest hospital I think is Orillia. So they focused their volunteer efforts in the building. (personal communication, April 2, 2012)
Hunt (2009) reports that rural parents and community members strongly support the school children, who perform in community events. They also support the local music educators who offer Arts-related activities in their locale. This is a clear example of the strong liaisons that exist in isolated areas. The dedicated investment in the school through parent volunteering and assisting and advocating for programs, bonds the school families together, especially when the threat of closure of a small community school becomes real (as is the case in Natali’s school). Davis (2010) discusses how rural parents in the U.K. rally together to fight school closures. She remarks how parents are adamant to keep their rural school and work together to achieve this goal. Parents comment that all of the local residents must oppose any moves, for not only parents will suffer, but children and the local community will as well – “it will be a huge loss.” If a rural school closes, students will be bused elsewhere. They ask, “how far is too far for a young child to travel”? (Davis, 2010)

**Maintaining and/or breaking traditions.** Natali and I discussed the traditions we have encountered at our rural schools and how difficult it is to break or modify them, or if you are a newcomer – how hard it is to fit into them and uphold them. In particular, Natali mentioned her music program and the involvement of her choirs with the music festival. She wondered – if she were not there, what would happen to the tradition that she, herself had begun and had built up? As Natali is presently on a leave of absence, she is very pleased that a local student, now a teacher, is working at her school as a music teacher. This teacher is continuing the tradition of the choir, but not to the same extent, for she is not the music planning time teacher. The local music festival has also folded. Natali remarked however, that if that particular teacher left, her position would not be filled by someone with music experience, unless by chance.

In one of our interview conversations, the topic of traditions related to teacher and principal transfers was discussed. Natali reported that while she was there, and as new teachers came, she coached them on the value of the school’s historical traditions, particularly those related to the school participation in the nearby town’s fall fair celebration. Seeing that the school is very isolated and small, many new teachers and principals came for a short period of time, became discouraged with the locale, and then transferred to schools that are in larger centers. Natali commented:

There was only one other teacher that had been longer than I had. Everyone else came and went, came and went, especially young people. They didn’t like living in a small place … So they tended to come and go … and because I was on school council for a very long time, I had that sense of history with the building and what activities had gone on and so I could remind … people, well … you have to get ready [for these events] … whether you want to do it or not, I am telling you about it… this is what we usually do at this time of year. … I was the oldster on staff! (personal communication, Sept 7, 2012)

Another detrimental issue of longstanding traditions was addressed in a conversation between Natali and I. We discussed one principal’s intention to put an end to our rural traditions.

**Janet:** I can remember we had a certain principal who moved into [my school] in 1999, just when that crackdown occurred in the Conservative government and the strike. She said that she was there to break a lot of the traditions.

**Natali:** Isn’t that clever! (Sarcastically)

**Janet:** And at that time, I thought that it was very cruel because she was saying that a lot of our rural traditions needed to be broken.

**Natali:** Weren’t worthwhile?

**Janet:** But then on the other side of it, she qualified that and said that in many circumstances, the traditions were great but so many traditions had built up at the school that were hard to keep going because the staff wasn’t there anymore to support that because they were from outlying areas. (personal communication, April 2, 2012)

New teachers were assuming positions in rural schools with longstanding, community-based traditions, many of these, which were conducted outside of the regular school day and on weekends. New teachers who did not live in the same community as the school did not have the same vested interest in maintaining these traditions. Tensions therefore occur when longstanding
teachers (who had taught in the same community that they lived in) were being replaced with teachers who lived outside of the area. The new teachers did not wish to volunteer their time to participate in the local weekend fairs in an area that they did not call home.

**Teacher Roles**

**Images of Natali: A metaphor enacted.** The metaphor that Natali chose to represent her role in her community school – the model of a Jan Brett picture book – (visual complexities of a Jan Brett picture book, and its structural layers) represents her story as she assumed many different roles in her school. In a rural school, teachers have many responsibilities. In addition to their teaching duties, they try to offer as many different activities as possible to satisfy student needs and to compensate for the very small staff, limited materials, and lack of physical space. Bates (2011) supports Natali’s perspective remarking, “Teachers in small rural communities, as they say, ‘wear many hats’; they serve in multiple roles especially when teaching K–12 music (and sometimes additional subjects) or serving in leadership positions within the school or district” (p. 92). The following narratives and discussion demonstrates the many hats that Natali wore in a typical school day.

**Teacher and place in motion.** Throughout Natali’s teaching career, she has assumed many different roles. When she moved to the rural school where I was teaching, she was the FSL (French as a Second Language) teacher, and core French teacher for Grades 4 through 8. She directed a French Choir and maintained a French club and choir, involving her students in any second language opportunities that arose. After a decrease in enrolment, Natali’s role changed somewhat, teaching only FSL and regular Grade 3 classroom. When a teacher librarian position came up at another school closer to home, she transferred there, assuming the library position. The teacher librarian in a small school is not only responsible for managing the library, teaching
literacy and research through book exchange and library time, but also for providing planning time for teachers in the primary grades. Seeing that Natali is musical, she offered to teach music through planning time, a role that she assumed for many years. As principals came and went however, her role may have included teaching other subjects during her planning time allotment, such as science, social studies, math, literacy, etc. Consequently, as teacher librarian she wore many different ‘hats’. In addition to her regular library/planning time responsibilities, Natali was also ‘Principal’s Assistant’, which is a term used to denote the teacher who assumes the principal’s responsibilities when the principal is not in the building. She was often in charge of disciplinary issues and the management of the daily school routine. Natali was also very dedicated to her extra-curricular choral activities, which involved most of the students in the school. She ran these events during recesses, lunches and after school, depending on the bus scheduling. Natali also assumed the role of school council teacher advisor and was responsible for purchasing new books for the library and resources for the Arts. Periodically Ministry of Education or school board grants were given to support the Arts. She was responsible for investigating the new Arts materials and purchasing those she felt would service her school effectively.

**Teacher librarian.** Natali described her teacher librarian position as very rewarding, for she was able to interact with all students in the school. She taught information literacy, assisted students with book exchanges, and partnered with the regular classroom teachers. She instructed and facilitated research assignments and projects that were pertinent to all parts of the

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31 In Ontario elementary schools, a school council is formed each year, consisting of a group of volunteer parents, the school administration and one teacher advisor. This group works together in partnership to monitor school procedures and protocol. Natali was the teacher advisor in her school. This role is voluntary. More information can be found from: http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/council/
The population of the school is approximately 230, from Junior Kindergarten to Grade 6. There are split classes in the primary grades and straight classes for the juniors in Grades 4 through 6. Each class had a library time, which included a book exchange and instruction in literacy skills. Natali purchased the library materials and any teaching resources that were needed for the staff. She also monitored the list serve (the board email correspondence between librarians) and kept teachers apprised of any curriculum information that came across her library list serve. As representative on the school council, she was the liaison between the staff, school administration, and parents.

**Music education planning time.** Natali taught music in her tiny library in a carpeted area (the library was once a small regular classroom). Students sat on the floor and were surrounded by library shelves and music education resources. She described her music program:

> I stuck to the curriculum! We actually sang, we made instruments and then we played them and we … I had music. We had textbooks, we had workbooks, we did recorder. We actually DID music according to what the curriculum said. And I followed it and even now my favourite mentor was the … what’s the most important thing? … It’s BEAT! That word beat shows up in Grades 1, 2 and 3! And I was very true to the curriculum! (personal communication, March 5, 2012)

Seeing that Natali had other responsibilities, classroom teachers in the junior grades were expected to teach their own music, yet Natali believes that only a few were either capable of teaching music or were comfortable with the subject. She explained:

> Classroom teachers taught the music for Grades 4, 5, 6 … depending on what kind of musical background they had … we had one teacher who played trumpet … as a high school student. And he played guitar so he actually did a couple of things! We had one teacher that had no interest whatsoever, and he was the ‘do your research’ … ‘write me a paper on Chopin’ type of music teacher. Another teacher … whose mother was a fabulous music teacher in the town area; her daughter got all her materials and resources … she had a fabulous music program in her grade. But I think what the others did, was they relied on … Christmas concert time as their music program, and usually Christmas concert meant someone else did their presentation and it was usually me. (personal communication, March 6, 2012)
Unfortunately in many elementary schools, music is not taught through the expectations of the curriculum and is only delivered correctly if a music educator, or another interested teacher with music skills happens to be teaching in the school. Those who can deliver an effective music program are often restricted by school administrators who place them elsewhere with other teaching responsibilities. This issue is addressed in Willingham and Cutler (2007) (cited in Bolden, 2012) who present a point made by a music educator in a survey. “Sadly for non-music specialist teachers, [and also for those who are qualified music specialists as in Natali’s and my case], they are overwhelmed with the many other (and mostly considered more important) teaching subjects in literacy and numeracy” (p. 14). The fact that a music specialist is present in a school does not mean that they will be teaching music – their area of expertise.

**Music education on demand: Concerts, assemblies.** Natali was fortunate that through choir and special occasions, all of the students in the school did somehow receive music instruction from her, even if it was for a brief period, or during irregular times throughout the year. She described the means through which she reached the junior students and commented that some teachers relied on these brief music experiences to provide a needed music mark for the report card:

I taught them music through … not just the choir – through working with that class … on what they were doing for Christmas concert, so it usually meant singing a song and doing some kind of performance with it, and maybe playing an instrument, playing some kind of minor percussion, with… like Little Drummer Boy, or something for Christmas. … Actually I did that for quite a few people even if I wasn’t doing music for them! They would come to the library for library twice a week. We upped it … one would be library and … the other one as a music time and then I remember giving some anecdotal comments to that teacher and they would incorporate it into a total music mark. (personal communication, March 6, 2012)

Special days were also times when Natali was called upon to teach something for a school and community event, for celebratory times or service. She described some of these
instances:

Every Remembrance Day … was the Grade 6 assembly. And so I would do a song with them – *In Flanders Fields*, … that was lovely … and one year … the Bette Mittler Song … *From a Distance*! So the Remembrance Day [service] with the Grade 6s, and invariably if a certain grade had an assembly, and they didn’t know what to do, I would offer to do a song with them. Because it was fun for me, I loved doing that kind of stuff … and the kids loved doing that … too. And at least three times a year, I did something with a specific grade, maybe the same grade twice, just so that [they would get the experience of performing for others].

(personal communication, March 6, 2012)

Natali and I discussed the misfortune of so many students who do not receive a regular comprehensive music education program throughout their formative years in elementary school, but instead must wait for an opportunity to perform at special events as Natali mentioned above. In addition the music program is directly dependent upon who is teaching in the school and how convenient it is to incorporate music into the schedule. Without proper facilities as well, such as Natali teaching music in her library, circumstances (and inadequate facilities) are not conducive for teaching music on a permanent basis.

**Intersecting Roles: School and Community**

**Teacher-student-parent relationships.** Natali believes that her music program developed students’ relationships and promoted the importance of the school in the community. Particularly important to Natali however, was the fact that she was able to reach most students and provide them with the joy of music. Every primary student was involved each year and junior students were afforded the opportunity to participate. She not only felt close to the students but also to the parents. She knew them well and was on a first name basis with many. She was very proud that she was well thought of in the school community. She remarked, “this is a bit of humble brag, but I had a parent who dedicated … I was on the dedication page of a book that she wrote. And I told you about the former student who dedicated an album to me” (personal
School, community and beyond. Through Natali’s involvement in her extracurricular choral program, she provided students many opportunities to perform and reach out to the surrounding music community.

Choral preparation and concerts. One of Natali’s joys of teaching was the preparation for the local choral festival, particularly because she was able to work with every student in the primary division and involve them in the festival. She also prepared junior choir students for the competition. It was a very busy time for her, as she managed all choir practices alone. Close to the festival date the choir worked with an accompanist who was a volunteer. She explained:

It was everybody in the building because we had primary one and primary two. So that meant Kindergarten to Grade 1 was primary one, and then [Grade] 2/3 was primary two ... Every student in the school was involved in primary choir – everybody – because then we took them to the music festival. And depending too on … who their teacher was; if I was doing their music I would sometimes do a classroom choir with that group as well. So I had primary one choir and primary two choir, maybe 40 kids in each one, and then I would have done a Grade 3 choir. And … the grade 3s, the way that the music … festival worked … wasn’t Kiwanis or anything like that. It was run by a committee and they chose a song and we had to choose another song with a totally different feeling. So if theirs’ was [in] a slow minor key … we would have to pick a more upbeat … song, and so the kids ended up doing two pieces, two performance pieces. So … ya… Most years I did … primary one, primary two, at least one Grade 1 classroom choir, and then there was a junior choir, and then maybe a school choir, usually a girls’ choir. And the junior choir was just the junior kids, whoever wanted to come, It was totally extra-curricular and the same thing with the school choir, whoever wanted to come from Grade 1 onwards. (personal communication, March 6, 2012)

Natali remarked that the practices would begin in the first week after Christmas break until the first week in May. She named festival week “hell week” (personal communication, March 6, 2012).

Choral repertoire. I asked Natali what types of music she chose for her choirs and she remarked that she liked to introduce students to musical repertoire that was new to them. She
said:

I like to be unique. I liked Broadway pieces … And again it was music that kids never did in school. They never listened to anything like that. [Choral music] that I borrowed from [a local adult choir from Midland, Ontario] and you could really get lovely, lovely bits that I could get away with two part harmonies, instead of the four parts … some of the Rutter … something different. I really thought that if we were going to spend a lot of time practising and performing that it should be something that they hadn’t heard before … it should be something different and special and have a bit of a wow factor to it! “Oh wow, I didn’t know that Grade 3s could sing in three part harmony,” that sort of thing? I always chose something that I knew that the kids would be confident with. That was my choice and I just did that as a professional. You find something that you know your group is going to excel with. (personal communication, April 2, 12)

**French choir: Commitment to French culture.** Natali also felt it was very important for students to have the opportunity to be exposed to French choral repertoire to celebrate the history and heritage of their local community and county as a whole. She also extended the invitation to the town school – to the students in the intermediate grades who were residents of the community and who were bused to the town school 10 kilometers away. The French choir students were from Grades 3 to 8. She discussed the logistics of preparing students to sing in French:

That would be after school but that was … such a small group that usually I would … work with them after school, the French especially was mostly the pronunciation and then I would make practice tapes for them with the pronunciations so they could hear. And then there would be … an accompaniment tape so they could sing along with it afterward. I would make all of those tapes and send them home with the kids. (personal communication, March 6, 2012)

Natali had three different volunteers who made accompaniment tapes for the students as well as play for the choir during rehearsals. She believes she was very fortunate to have such supportive community members and ex-students to assist her in that aspect. She also reached out to the music educator in the French school for assistance with French choral repertoire, to borrow French music that was ‘tried and true’ and cost effective. As her own children attended a French
school in another small town, and her background was originally as a French teacher, she remarked, “I had access to good material … And I knew that it worked for choirs of that age in the French system so I would borrow them for [my school]” (personal communication, March 6, 2012).

**Community liaison: Invitation to the community.** Through the regular classroom music program and her choral program, Natali reached out to the community, providing Arts entertainment to the residents of the area. She believes that, “The personalities [of residents] and the time and space of what’s going on in that particular place, and especially what’s important to the community” (personal communication, April 2, 2012) must be celebrated through the school, the only venue in the locale. As a music educator, Natali highlighted special occasions, such as the Easter egg hunt, a traditional community event. She described the residents’ participation in other important celebrations, such as the annual Christmas concerts and music festival ‘practice’. She believes that the school and her concert events were very important to all:

At least twice a year they would come to … concerts. It was usually the community that turned out, not just the people connected to the school. And then in the springtime, we had … a venue presented to [the residents] … so that the children could have an opportunity to practise for their pieces for the festival. And that was usually … depending on who the principal was, sometimes it was before festival so they would have an opportunity to practise in front of an audience or sometimes it was after the festival as a spring kind of thing … We would have … all the soloists singing unison together so it wasn’t focusing on anyone unless they actually wanted to sing by themselves. But it was just another opportunity to bring people into the building and we did that a lot. Also the school was used for voting, and … things of that sort so that the community was used to coming to the building for other reasons! (personal communication, April 2, 2012)

Natali contends that the music program presentations for the community residents were excellent liaison opportunities. Through her work in the local music festival, she could also network with other participating music educators in the region. She was an excellent resource to
contact for any needed information on music, music supplies, library, and Arts resources.

Through Natali’s role as teacher librarian, she monitored the library list serve and was available to provide professional guidance to teacher librarians. After the school board eliminated the music consultant role and closed down the music library, Natali retrieved most of the choral resources. She commented that it was “such a shame” (personal communication, March 6, 2012) that the resources were going to waste. She was therefore available to assist with choral repertoire and monitor any contractual issues that impacted library positions and music in the schools.

**Juxtaposition of Purpose and Space**

**Narratives of conflict of a multifaceted facilitator.** In the following passages, Natali discussed the tensions that impacted her teaching praxis, and in particular her music program. As her rural community and school are influenced by the changing demographics of the area, Natali believes that the future of her school is in jeopardy.

**Local versus regional jurisdictions: Dissonances and tensions.** During Natali’s 15 years at her rural school, she witnessed and experienced many changes that negatively affected her music program and her teacher librarian praxis. Many transformations were the result of decisions made at the Ministry and board levels. She was forced to revise schedules, decreasing music, and library instructional times due to cuts and revisions in planning time – revisions that negatively impacted the viability of the school. Policy makers and funders are unaware of the issues that are pertinent to rural schools and how decisions made at these levels threaten the rural educational landscape.

**The politics of schooling: Changing demographics: Threat of school closure.** When Natali started to teach in the school, the community was vibrant, active, and growing in numbers.
Two subdivisions were built that continue to attract young families. Her newly established music program (only a small music program existed at the school for intermediate students when she came) grew immensely. Pretty soon, every student in the building had the opportunity to participate in the festival and receive a comprehensive music program, including those in the primary grades. Yet over the last 15 years, she witnessed a decline in interest from higher levels to sustain and support her growing program. Instead, the school area and the school building itself has either been neglected in terms of its upkeep, or has been the topic of amalgamation or closure, without considering its importance to the area. Beeson and Strange (2000) discuss the issue of neglect and ignorance of rural places and schools at the beginning of the 21st century. Since then nothing has changed – policies still tend to marginalize rural schools and communities, and work in favour of their closure. On the other hand, urban communities and schools receive discussion, attention, and funding. The authors comment:

While policymakers, advisors, and scholars debate – and they should – the wisdom of alternative policies for urban schools, and for special education students or second language learners, or for poor and minority students, we rarely read serious analysis of the particular policy issues faced by students who live in rural places (p. 63).

One of the most upsetting situations that Natali and her school community have encountered in the last five years is the constant threat of school closure. Seeing that the school is the only building in the community, apart from the corner convenience store that also houses the residents’ mailboxes, and a church, which is located outside of the community ‘burg limit’ on a concession road, the school is the community and is the only meeting facility within a 10-kilometer radius. Natali explained this serious issue:

The school and the community are really one thing in my particular case. If the school dies, the community will lose quite a lot. The house prices will go down; the school is the focus and the community supports the school with participation in different events that we do. It isn’t just school parents that come to the activities;
there are … people in the community as well. They support yard sales; they come to our concerts … It [the school] is the focus of the neighbourhood! (personal communication, March 6, 2012)

In a study on rural stress in Canada, Brannen, Emberly, and McGrath (2009) discuss the negative sociological and economic issues that affect a community when a community loses its school. They state, “Social infrastructure and social capital intersect at the point where actual community services merge with individual activities in a community to include the associated ‘spin-off’ activities and facilities, such as the availability of a school for community meetings or the volunteering that a teacher used to do. All these things cease in a community when a school closes” (p. 224). This will be a serious issue in Natali’s school community if and when the school finally closes.

Natali described how the community has rallied together to fight the board-based decisions. Unfortunately the school board has eroded the school population, moving the intermediate students to the local town 10 kilometers away by arguing that the septic system cannot handle the whole school population. Now the board is going one step further and discussing the feasibility of busing the junior students to the local town school as well. Some parents are afraid to enroll their kindergarten children in the school in case they have to be uprooted later. She explained their dilemma:

Because of all of the accommodation review\textsuperscript{32}, and committee meetings and things, … a lot of the younger parents have jumped the gun and have taken their kids out already … if they knew they would be switching and if they didn’t want their children to undergo that trauma so if they were in Kindergarten or Grade 1 they had already switched [to one of two other schools]. (personal communication, October 4, 2012)

\textsuperscript{32} Accommodation Reviews are completed by boards of education in Ontario to address enrolment changes and challenges that are occurring in their school facilities in regard to repairs and student accommodations, programming, and school closures.
Parents, community members, teachers, and the local school board trustee are involved in the fight to stop the school closure. Yet Natali believes that the decision had already been made years ago when the board neglected to upgrade the septic and heating system. They began the process of gradually reducing the student population, sending groups of students to the ‘town’ school, and not fully addressing their future plans. Natali believes that the school is the mainstay of the community. The decision to close the school will be a disservice to the residents who have built houses in the two local subdivisions. She feels they came there in the first place because of the close proximity to the school and the fact that the school is a rural community school:

Right now they are fighting tooth and nail to keep the school alive. I don’t know how successful that is going to be with the board, the … accommodation review committee! Really if the school dies, the community will as well. Every single child will have to be bused to Coldwater or Warminster; they don’t want that. The parents like having their own little place. Right now that is the only thing that is there [the school]. But it is huge, if you have got a small family and you can walk your children to school, how wonderful! Or if you just live down the road and it’s a two-minute ride for you, or you know, just a short bus ride … I think that will be a really sad, sad day. I do see it coming. The school has been left … let to be run down quite a lot. I think it is the only school left that has a specific kind of … an electric boiler … if there is such a thing. The heating system is unique in all of the county. Just to bring it up to code and to speed to modernize it would be prohibitively expensive. And whereas they have got empty rooms in other schools to which the children could be bused, so I see that coming [to the detriment of the school and community]. (personal communication, April 2, 2012)

When a rural school closes, students must be bused to the nearest ‘town’ school, which might mean that children as young as three and a half are spending up to two hours per day on a school bus. Corbett and Mulcahy (2006) challenge the insensitive attitudes of education policymakers that make these decisions, based solely on fiscal concerns. The authors contend that while dealing with issues of rural school closures in the Maritime Provinces that negatively affect children, policymakers are not looking through a caring and humane lens. They state:

Parents whose children currently attend small schools do not need scholars or
billionaires to tell them they have a good thing going and that they should fight to preserve it. They know intuitively that small schools situated close to home are the best educational sites for their children’s education. They do not need research evidence to convince them. They know it because they feel it and they experience the benefits on a daily basis. They do not need research to tell them that closing their school and busing their children down the road to a distant school will not be a good experience for most of them. They know their children as human beings and know that such an experience may be harmful and hurtful for many of them. They can imagine the difficulties busing may create for students and their families; they can imagine the negative impact on the community; they can imagine the potential deleterious effects on their children’s education and their ability to participate fully in the life of the school. (p. 8)

In current academic literature the positives of small schools for students and staff are noted (Barley & Beesley, 2007; Bates, 2011; Isbell, 2005; Lindsay, 1982, 1984; Ralph, 2002) as well as the significance to the community of keeping them open. The positives include: 1) low enrolment that allows teachers to interact and know their students better, to know the history of families and to be cognizant of any family problems, 2) students know their teachers on a more personal level, 3) fewer disciplinary issues, 4) community fiscal and volunteer support, and 5) an opportunity for students to participate in more activities. Natali spoke to this last point in relation to her own children who at one time attended a large town school, then moved to a small rural high school with low enrolment. She remarked:

There is actually a disservice [to students] in bigger schools. The one time when one of my daughters went to a HUGE high school, she would have to fight to get into things [extracurricular] and discover that she really didn’t … like that. But she never had to fight before. She still succeeded but it wasn’t worth it to her. … She said, “Why can’t we just go out and … do things?” Well no! When there are 1500 kids, there are not spots for everybody. “Well I just don’t want a spot, I just want to DO it! I don’t want to compete I just want to do it!” (personal communication, May 12, 2012)

In small high schools, students can be part of a team, for they do not have to compete for positions. Natali believes that positive aspects of small rural schools must therefore be highlighted and taken into consideration. Not only do rural communities suffer if the local
schools close, but student interest, participation, motivation, and consequently student learning also suffer.

*The importance of giving and receiving: The demise of the local music festival.*

After Natali went on a leave of absence from the public school board, the rural music festival that serviced the schools in the region decided to fold, due to the lack of volunteers who planned, organized, and raised the necessary funds to support it. Many of the music educators like Natali, Germaine, and others had retired, and were not replaced, so many of the schools that had enrolled choirs in the competition in the past, no longer ran a music or choir program. Natali discussed the demise of the local festival that serviced over 1000 children from at least four schools in the area since 1951. She explained:

Lack of volunteers – They just … lack volunteers. It takes a lot of time and energy to organize … budgetary things I think too. Because they really did need new music and it went by the wayside because they just didn’t have the manpower … It was all womanpower except for our accompanist. And he was elderly and he really needed a break. Everyone else was getting up in age. People’s spouses had passed on and they wanted to retire in other cities. Just attrition. (personal communication, April 2, 2013)

In 2008, after the music festival organizers announced its closure, a few volunteers came forward to try to save the competition. It ran another year, but did not continue after that. Natali feels that the festival has given many of her students over the years a chance to showcase their talents in vocal ensembles, in choirs, and through solo competition.

*The politics of learning: Curriculum tensions.* Natali defined the term ‘rural’ as ‘the lack of’, or “what is not there” in regard to facilities, resources, and most importantly curriculum. She believes there is a lack of understanding of rural schools and learning related to the curriculum documents. She qualified this:

Well I used to find it really difficult teaching the community portion of the grade 1 social science curriculum because ah, they would talk about, you know … what’s
in your community? There ... are no sidewalks … and again the Grade 1 
curriculum. What type of house do you live in? Well the apartment buildings? 
There are no apartment buildings! The kids live in single-family dwellings … or if 
they are renting, usually renting a single-family dwelling. I don’t think that we had 
any kids living in apartment-type buildings; they are all single-family dwellings. 
Stop signs they had … but there are no traffic lights, there are no … just things that 
again the grade 1 curriculum comes to mind perfectly. Because … that is one of 
the things that I actually did teach and you wouldn’t … have the kids drawing a 
picture of your community. It was usually one long concession road and one tiny 
house and then a whole blank canvas because there was nothing there. (March 6, 

Natali feels that the curriculum is “so urban-based” (personal communication, May 12, 2012) 
and does not take into consideration that in urban areas, things that are so prevalent such as 
shopping malls and high rise apartment buildings, are not found in rural areas, yet students are 
expected to understand how they ‘fit’ into the social aspects of a community. Many students 
have never visited a city, or used public transportation or been on a subway. Edmondson and 
Butler (2010) discuss the issue of how the curriculum documents do not satisfy rural areas. They 
claim that students in rural America are asked to compare house numbers with their neighbours 
and determine if they are even or odd. They state, “Textbook publishers do not understand that 
rural children sometimes do not have numbered houses, and they often do not have neighbours 
across the street”. They conclude, “this is one example of many in which the lives of rural 
children do not match up with curriculum or expectations imposed by outside authorities” (p. 
154).

Natali concurred with Germaine, who is of the opinion that students are expected to 
understand urban terms, particularly in the provincial EQAO\textsuperscript{33} tests. In a conversation, she

\textsuperscript{33} The Education, Quality, and Accountability Office (EQAO) is a regulatory body that administers, monitors, and 
assesses student achievement results through standardized testing procedures in the Province of Ontario. EQAO tests 
monitor student success in mathematics and literacy. Further information may be retrieved from: 
http://www.eqao.com/
agreed with Natali saying:

The Ministry wants everybody to be the same. That’s why they have standardized testing and curriculum … they think everything is mobile, that you move and that everything is the same. Students don’t understand the EQAO testing terms. Rural areas are all different … how can students relate to terms written from an urban perspective? (personal communication, May 4, 2013)

Not only does the curriculum fail to relate to rural education and rural students and their place, or their sense of their place, the provincial tests that grade all students do not take aspects of rural communities into perspective. It would be interesting to grade all students on a curriculum, based on rural aspects and expect urban students to understand it! Barter (2008) completed a study with graduate students at Memorial University on educational issues that rural students believed to be detrimental. She commented:

According to them [her students], the current structure of education was unable to meet the needs of rural schools. They felt that there was a generic approach to education that is more pertinent to urban schools than to rural. Discussions introduced a much larger sociopolitical picture: that of their sense of place – not only their sense of place as rural teachers living out a generic curriculum with an urban focus, but also as rural communities living out policies which are shaped by a provincial urban mind-set. (p. 475)

As in Natali’s previous discussion on rural school closures, which would require students to ride the bus for up to two hours daily in order to balance the fiscal budgets of the board and the province, rural communities may indeed be “living out policies … shaped by a provincial urban mind-set” (p. 475).

Politics of learning: Curriculum tensions: Hidden meanings. In our discussion on the provincial curriculum, Natali remarked about how many students leave their rural areas after they finish their high school years, attend universities and/or colleges, and for the most part do not return. In her opinion, the curriculum teaches students to leave for better prospects.
“Learning to leave” (Corbett, 2007) is one subliminal message that is reinforced. Curriculum documents and the mandate of the provincial tests encourage students to achieve high marks, then move to urban centers for employment opportunities, instead of highlighting the importance of their home communities. Those students who return to their home communities are not considered as being successful. Corbett (2007) (cited in Ching & Creed, 1997) remarks, “Wallace Stegner wrote, ‘I was educated for the wrong place’” (p. 68). Natali commented about this issue from two different perspectives:

This is a very clear case where that is absolutely true. Two kids who grew up … again … in my first year there, so they would have been 14, they are in their mid-to late 20s now. The one stayed back to farm, and the other one … went off to university and now is doing very well someplace else. And he is considered to be the success where as the other one who stayed back isn’t … and yet you know, it’s a big farm, it’s a prosperous farm, but by society’s views, he is not as successful as the other one. And I hear … sometimes a comment, oh ya, she’s moved back to the area as if she is less a success … than other people who maybe got a teaching job somewhere else. And for some reason that rural area entices people back who have gone to school and who have come back and decided to seek employment in that rural area or in the outskirts or in the urban areas that are close by. But sometimes they are not considered as successful … Ya the coming back – you have failed at what you are doing so you have to come back to be nurtured some more with your family … In your comfortable known, home environment. (April 2, 2012 as cited in Spring, 2013) … So … people do seem [to feel] that success is gauged by how far away from your roots you have actually traveled … because the curriculum is so urban-based … Maybe it does! (personal communication, May 12, 2013)

Corbett (2007) discusses the issues of rural students, their communities in relation to the curriculum and students who move away from their rural areas. He states:

I am deeply ambivalent about the way that young people in isolated and rural communities are put in a situation where a serious engagement with formal education pretty much always leads away from home. Education failure and immobility is often tragic at the individual level in contemporary Canada, but so too is education success and the depopulation of rural places. (p. 5)

Natali therefore believes if the value of rural areas were highlighted and emphasized, perhaps students who moved away to pursue higher education would return to support the viability of
their community.

**The politics of learning: Boundaries.** Since Natali first moved to her rural school, the topic of school closure and boundary changes was a frequent one. Seeing that the cost of transportation is an issue in rural areas, where distances from one student pickup to another may be great, school bus routes are planned to minimize costs. Natali described a situation that occurred in her school, where there was a double bus run. In her role of principal assistant, she was expected to do a bus duty each day and wait for students to complete the ‘double bus run’ transport. This stopped her from holding extra-curricular choir practices after school, which she believes marginalized her music education opportunities. The bus run was arduous for students who spent over an hour each way to and from school. She explained:

> There was co-ordination of drivers [for the bus run which serviced the nearby town students first then the rural elementary school] … it just got to be an onerous task and for a lot of years, maybe up until … the mid - 2000s, we had a double bus run. The school board lightened up on the buses so that they had one bus … did its run whereas a group stayed back at the school … then they would come back for them. There would be days when I would still be out on bus duty at 10 after 4, when the second bus run would come. So … for me … even doing things after school were impossible because I would still be out on bus duty … some of the kids are on the bus for over an hour, ya, quite definitely an hour or so … they had a 20-minute outside wait [at the end of the day for their buses]. (personal communication, March 6, 2012)

Even though the students may have been as close as a five-minute bus ride away from the elementary school, the students were forced to wait until the bus run from the town school was complete. It brought students back to their rural community from the nearby town school they had been moved to – they were moved there due to the lack of sufficient water and sewer facilities in the community school.

**Politics of learning: Physical space.** The physical space in Natali’s school is an issue for, not only did she teach music and library in a very small classroom, the physical aspects of the building such as the water and septic is an ongoing concern. She related that:
Sewers … were a HUGE issue because that was why the Grades 7s and 8s ended up going. Everyone’s on septic. The water issue is a really big deal there. My last year there … there was found to be … lead in … all the water … and all the piping had to be replaced so that there was only one stream of … one treated line coming in … things like that you wouldn’t find in a regular … town type school, because you would have treated water. This was treated water but it was just weird. Things like that you wouldn’t hear about. It wouldn’t matter … Don’t flush your Kleenex wads down the toilet … this kind of stuff. Being on septic is really quite different than being in town. (personal communication, March 5, 2012, cited in Spring, 2013)

Natali also described her teaching area as a place, which limited her capabilities of teaching any subject other than music. She considered this an asset for her music program, but some administrators believed she could teach other subjects such as science in her library/music space. She was adamant that that would not happen:

I was slated to do science and math and everything else and I got to reason with somebody that you know we can’t do science in the library! We require setup! … When do I do this? You know it isn’t like I can do this in the room! It is used for other purposes. It’s not a classroom. And I was really concerned that the [music] program would just go away and that … would mean the teacher, the classroom teachers would be doing their own music and you know what happens when that comes about! … It was hard enough setting up for music. The books were all on casters and so I would have the custodian help me move them aside when we did the xylophones and … Basically it was one big large area, but can you imagine doing that for science, setting up science stuff when other people are coming in and using it for other things? So finally I was able to point out that well I don’t mind doing math but science? Please! It is a disservice! Either that or … Let me do it in the foyer! And leave my room intact. But then I said, but then music doesn’t get done. There is no opportunity. But then the classroom teachers will do it, because we have all that lovely curriculum! But think about it! I mean really! Will they be doing anything at all with it? … The physical space is a small, small place. And you make do, but sometimes you have to be realistic. But it’s not going to happen. (personal communication, Sept. 7, 2012)

Teaching music in a rural school with the limited resources and facilities forces a music educator to think of creative ways to deliver her program. She must constantly advocate for and protect her program from those who wish her to teach other subjects. Isbell (2005) discusses this problem and comments that many rural music teachers often assume different roles in their rural school that are totally unrelated to their subject area. They must also support the continuance of
their music programs and advocate teaching their preferred subject.

Although music is a very expendable subject in rural school communities, Natali’s parent community rallied and complained when there was a possibility that she was going to be teaching a subject other than music. She described the school council’s efforts to advocate for the music program throughout the years she was there:

School council talked about hiring somebody to come in and … help with the music because they thought I wouldn’t have enough time. So I thought that was an amazing, amazing thought. Support … I think also because people tend to carry over their support … it just wasn’t one year… it was like, “Oh next year can I count on you?” “Oh absolutely!” The support was ongoing; it wasn’t just a hit and miss thing, but you know this year I have got five people [to give support]. (personal communication, May 12, 2012)

Another year, Natali’s music/library room was under review to be used as a special education room to save money on a portable. Natali was horrified at the fact that the administrator and board believed that she could deliver a library and music program on a cart. She described the situation through conversation:

Natali: One principal one year, said that the board realized that one of our portables was being used for special education. And so they were threatening to take it away, which [meant that] special education had to come inside the building. And she was going to let them take over my room. And then have me operate as an itinerant, moving from here to there or whatever!
Janet: An itinerant librarian?
Natali: Not itinerant, but moveable! Like the French teacher with the cart? And I would have no place and, and so I …
Natali: The book mobile! Except all the materials are still back in the room and I couldn’t see how I could deliver a [library and music] program in peoples’ classes! (personal communication, September 7, 2012)

Natali quoted the contractual agreement to stop this action. Librarians must remain in their library to deliver their program according to the collective agreement. If Natali had been solely

34 A collective agreement is a contractual, negotiated agreement between the board of education and the teacher’s union.
a music teacher, she would have lost her room and been expected to be a traveling music teacher throughout the school and the portables that lined the schoolyard.

For the most part, Natali felt she had the support of the school staff, but like Germaine, she felt some alienation when she tried to include as many children as possible in her festival choirs, which often took them from other activities that were running at the same time in the school. Some staff members also did not see the value in the music program and were reluctant to have their classroom students involved in it, particularly when it interrupted class time. During festival time in particular, Natali always felt that some teachers resented the time spent in preparation:

I think there was some resentment you know because there was a disruption and I think that from some of them, because they didn’t care about music, they just thought it was unimportant, whereas the students thought it was important or they wouldn’t be giving up their recesses and lunches and after school times. I think more accepting from the students than from some of the staff members. Just depending whether they had any empathy for music at all. The people with musical background appreciated it and thought that it was a good thing, a useful thing. But from some … I am thinking of two people in particular they just had no use for it whatsoever. (personal communication, May 12, 2012)

_Juxtaposition of culture: Religion mandated restrictions versus the wish of community._ Natali and I discussed the issue of religion and religious freedom, particularly pertaining to choral and instrumental repertoire traditionally performed during the Christmas season. Oftentimes in small community schools such as mine and Natali’s, Christmas concerts do not have to be called ‘holiday’ concerts as they do in larger urban areas due to the fact that there is little, if any, diversity in the school population. She believes if music educators are expected to present a music concert at this time of year, then it should be called a ‘Christmas’ concert. She voiced her frustrations and how she presented Hanukkah songs instead to protest:

I was really contrary about stuff like that! And so I thought, you know, if we can’t
call it Christmas concert then they are making us do it anyway? I had better things to do at Christmas time than spend all of my free time and after school at my school concerts? If I’m not doing Christmas music, I am doing Hanukkah. And so we did, we did the Grade 2 social studies curriculum where they do holiday and traditions. So with the Grade 2 classes that I did music with, we did the Dreidel song, we danced a Hora, we gave out the golden money, just because I thought, ok … it’s not Christmas, I’m just going to call it ‘Holiday Concert.’ We’re doing Hanukkah. And, and the principal … she just wanted everyone to do one Christmas song. Parents would come in and sing. And there’s Natali wanting to do this production just because she’s contrary. And … it irritated me! You are going to waste my time with this … then … you know… come on … if it’s Christmas call it Christmas! If not, then let me get on with my life because I have better things to do at this time of year! (personal communication, March 6, 2012)

Natali polled the schools through the library list serve and “50 of the 72 schools were still doing something … at Christmas” (personal communication, March 6, 2012) – and many concerts were during school time. She qualified that the students and staff congregated in the gym for Christmas caroling, and called it that. She discussed the religious diversity in the population. “We only had one … family [from another religious denomination] and our … school secretary was [also a member of another denomination]. Other than that there was no diversity at all in our building … none whatsoever” (personal communication, March 6, 2012). However, small rural communities such as Natali’s must abide by the religious directives of the Ministry, despite the fact that the residents, parents, students, and staff of the area mostly are members of the Christian faith. Natali believes that this is another example of the urban mindset represented in Ministry protocol.

**Narratives from the heart: Musical emotional experiences.** In our last interview conversation, I asked Natali to recount some of the experiences that were representative of her music education experiences in her rural community that exemplified her sense of place and the ways in which ‘place’ influenced her teaching praxis. She recounted three experiences that made a lasting impression on her and were instrumental in shaping her ‘sense of place’. The following
stories demonstrate the emotional attachment she has to her ‘place’.

*An emotional revelation: A ‘wow’*

In one of Natali’s classes, there was a boy who was known as ‘the bully’ and who was constantly in trouble with the administration for picking on his peers. Natali explained how listening to one of her choral performances changed his attitude and actions:

Well that was when … I did *From a Distance* with … the juniors, so it was … for whoever wanted to come for this one song. And I had this one big … guy … really big for a 12 year old in Grade 6 and he came up to me after … the choir did this song, with tears in his eyes, and he said, “Can I join the choir” and … I looked at him and thought … “Wow this song really moved him!” And it did, he came out, he stayed with us for Christmas concert time and he came with us and I’ve got a picture of him in our choir at the Coldwater music festival. This is one of these hockey-playing kids you know that spends his entire life at the hockey arena and his parents are hockey parents and you know what they are like! And yet he was moved by the music enough to come and join us and brought two of his buddies with him. Now the buddies didn’t really stay but he stayed and to me, that is one of my ‘wow’ moments you know with this one kid and that was really special to me! That really was, ya! (personal communication, March 6, 2012)

Natali was very pleased that the student remained in the choir for the year and was amazed that he appreciated the opportunity to get involved in the choir. He did not return the following year as he moved on to the intermediate school, but seemed to make a conscious decision to change his “bullying ways”.

Natali’s school was very small in population, at its largest housing 350 students and its smallest, 250. The school is used as a ‘training ground’ for new principals, for it is an excellent location for them to begin their careers as administrators. The students were well behaved and the parents were very supportive, making the transformation to the administrator’s role a smooth one. On the other hand, a new administrator sometimes does not come to a school with a great deal of experience, therefore may make errors in judgment. Natali and I discussed an issue she had with a new administrator who felt that a choral festival should not be competitive, but participatory. Natali decided to put her foot down, oppose her view and take a stand!
Taking a stand

Natali: We had one principal who thought it was such fluff [the music festival] that she approached me one year that she was going to write a letter to the festival that the kids should not be ranked. There shouldn’t be winners that we should all just [perform] … And I thought … You are kidding me right? I am giving up every single … lunch hour from March until May and you don’t expect me to want to win? Excuse me? I’m sorry, that’s just not me! I am very competitive!

Janet: The kids enjoy the competition too, I can remember when we went to the Halifax Band Festival I asked the band … I said we could go in as competitive or non-competitive, and unanimously they voted competitive because of their … competitive spirit.

Natali: Life is a competition. I’m sorry! Everything you do … you are ranked and rated. Even looking for a job, crying out loud! And basically I ended up … I think it was the toughest I had ever talked to anyone. I said, “If that’s the case then I wasn’t doing it!” I wasn’t going to give up all of this and not have the opportunity to compete. Why would you do this and not compete? And … I thought, what kind of adjudications are they going to get? Like what are they going to say to me? “I liked your song?” Like, what, you know? And I actually was pretty firm about that … If that’s the case I am not doing that. No that will be the end of that. (personal communication, March 6, 2012)

In the end the administrator backed down, for she would have caused great distress within the choral community and made many enemies of the parents and students who all enjoyed the competitive spirit of the competition. In the small community, Natali’s decision to pull her choirs out of the music festival on principle would have spread like wildfire.

In her second narrative, Natali described how music is an important representation of her ‘place’.

A sense of music: A sense of place

I think in [my school], I carved a niche for myself; a sense of being in my place. And that was pretty important … I love music and I love sharing it. And it was fun, you know, especially if something was not going right in my own personal life, the music actually was a balm, and that the year that [my husband] was sick, … our year from hell, and I didn’t let choir slip, or any of the music experiences slip. For me it was like a soothing … therapeutic, experience – yep exactly. That was the last thing that I would have let slip. The extracurricular! Continuing with routine was very important both for the students and me. That year of health issues held so many bad surprises that something so predictably enjoyable as music was a wonderful escape for me. (personal communication, September 7, 2012)
Hudson (2006) sums up the importance of music related to a person’s identity and sense of being in a particular place, or their personal ‘sense of place’. He states:

There is no doubt that music – in both its production and consumption – can be an important influence in shaping the typically hybrid identities of people and places, of engendering a sense of place and deep attachment to place. In this sense it can help contribute in important ways to the well being of people and places and this is not without practical significance. (p. 633)

Natali added:

Because the bulk of music instruction was left to me, I was able to choose my own music and sheet music (most of which I purchased myself, before inheriting the bulk of the board music library). No one else really cared, so my own tastes were reflected in music that we sang – my sense of self – Broadway, pop music from radio, choral pieces culled from my own choir at the time – Serenata35. Music was the Rutter, Willan, etc., folk music, classical music for listening, rhythms from other nations. I loved sharing these with students. (personal communication, June 18, 2013)

**Negotiating diversity in a small community.** Natali commented on diversity in her small elementary school community as “never being an issue because our kids were so young” (personal communication, June 18, 2013). She has made an important point, for students who live in isolated areas are possibly not exposed at an early age to discriminatory remarks or racial slurs and not sensitive to cultural issues. Yet as the students matured, their exposure to discrimination was more apparent. She commented on the issue of sexual identity:

I think … small rural schools especially the younger grades are probably the last places on the planet where you can sing a song about “chickadee, chickadee, happy and gay” and no one will laugh at you. And I actually reveled in that, you know. I reveled that I could actually sing the old, old songs where the words meant what they were supposed to mean, not something to cajole about. Diversity as in gender, it never came up, maybe with the Grade 6s. But up until Grade 5 it just never came up. They are very much more accepting and I think the sexual diversification and race is just part of that! The acceptance … there was nothing

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35 Serenata is an adult choir, based in Midland Ontario. Further information may be retrieved from: [www.serenatachoir.ca](http://www.serenatachoir.ca).
negative or anything like that. And I don’t want to call it an innocence. I think … it would have been a different situation if we had Grade 7s and 8s. I think it was because of the fact that these are mostly pre-pubescence kids who … are basically nice kids. They are not tainted by the rest of the world yet. They are younger. I am pretty sure it wouldn’t have been like that if we had 13 and 14 year olds. (personal communication, April 2, 2012)

Natali described a family who lived in the community and whose children attended the school. The school population did not see their family “as being anything different” (personal communication, April 2, 2012). The students also believed that a blended family was ‘normal’:

And they… didn’t see it as being anything different. And it wasn’t an issue. We had one family grouping that had two gay dads. One was called dad, one was called papa. They had three children in our school and no one thought anything of it. Oh “Well that’s my dad, that’s my papa.” Sure, no problem. There was never any issue made … I can never remember anyone saying anything negative. Never! It was just how things were. I think maybe up until the age of 8 the kids don’t see that this is different. Lots of kids are in blended marriages and blended families, this is just another blended family that was … normal … In a situation where it’s controlled the way it is in a small school, everyone is just accepting … Race again, that wasn’t … we didn’t have a diverse grouping in [the school] … We had one family that was German. They were there for two years. It was just taken as normal. You are not really different. I like you because you are you. It’s not because you are so and so because of your background. I don’t see that the kids are blind to it, they are accepting until they get older and then things change. And I think they are accepting of kids … who have learning disabilities … developmental challenges … physical challenges and how they were so caring and protective. (personal communication, April 2, 2012)

Natali believes that age is a factor in shaping children’s attitudes and behaviours. Yet she feels that in small rural communities, the language of discrimination, bias, and beliefs may not be as great at this young age.

**Narratives of the future: Next steps in rural music education.**

*Celebrating place through heritage and environment.* Natali believes that it is important for music teachers to celebrate heritage, the history of the area, which is not a direct focus of the Ontario curriculum. It is also important to celebrate the local farming industry. She commented,
“The curriculum is lacking … by standardizing and it has lost a lot of its local appeal and personal appeal … that would make sense to the child. There’s not a lot of that if the child can’t identify her area and see where she fits … (September 7, 2012). The study of the history, culture, and environment of rural places develops an attachment to a specific area or locale, and builds place-identity and sense of place. This notion is noted in Cresswell, (2009), Panelli, Allen, Ellison, Kelly, John and Tipa (2008), and Riley and Harvey (2007).

Celebrating place and season. Natali feels that the curriculum lost some considerations for ‘place’ when references to the seasons in our province were removed. In Ontario, weather patterns paint such a diversified picture each season and are so representative of ‘place’. Why not highlight the changing of the seasons that impact our ecosystems, agriculture, and nature that draw attention to ‘place” to the level that it should be, particularly in the rural countryside? Instead teachers are working toward expectations related to the tests that satisfy the provincial mandates related to mathematics and literacy with no emphasis on ‘place’ or the Arts. She qualifies this viewpoint:

Place and time – a calendar for place-based music. One of the things that I treasure is a box of old music books that was left to me by a teacher who retired quite a long time before I had got there. They were old songbooks and they were awesome because they were songs from everywhere. Songs about everything! Remember how the old songbooks used to be by the season and we would go through them? I have never heard of that [song] and you would plunk it out and say, oh that’s a great little song. And celebrate local agriculture and ecosystems [through the changing seasons]. Wouldn’t that be nice if it were directly in the curriculum to celebrate your own areas as an important part of the ecosystem? It wouldn’t take much to add just a small segment – even if it were just two or three weeks of the curriculum! Spread it out one week in the fall and winter and in the spring. What’s happening in your community in that time of year? It is seasonal; everything is seasonal! … But somehow I think perhaps we should, or could highlight our area and place more. And the curriculum doesn’t leave a whole lot of room for that, because you have to move on, move on, move on, because there is EQAO and there are deadlines to meet. There are outcomes to be reached. (personal communication, September 7, 2012)
A Cadence: A Musical Composition that Represents Natali’s Rural Experience

Natali wore many different hats and taught a variety of subjects. I asked her if she could think of a teaching event that would represent her rural teaching praxis, in her case it could be library related, or music related. After giving it some thought, she chose a music experience when her choir performed a French piece for the choral festival. The composition she chose has significance to our region of Huronia and is related to a religious, historical event that occurred in 1984, when Pope John Paul II visited across Canada. One stop was the National Historic Site of Canada; Sainte-Marie Among the Hurons, Midland. During his visit, Celine Dion sang the song *Une Colombe* (Baillargeon & Lefebvre, 1984) for a large children’s audience in Quebec. Natali chose this French composition many years later to celebrate her historic area and French heritage and as an entry into the festival. She told her story:

We had a reputation, in choir in particular, of, of bringing such emotion to our pieces that, especially the French pieces where even if the audience didn’t understand music invariably, there would be some grandmother with tears in her eyes in the audience. And it actually got to be a joke; the kids would always look for somebody that … would get emotional. And … one of the things that really stands out, one of our performances that I really loved was ….We did a piece by Celine Dion, it was actually the song that was written for the Pope when he came to Canada, and it is called *Une Colombe* ... I included from Grade 2 up, whoever wanted to come because I knew I needed a lot more voices than just the 17 to 20 older kids that I would normally get. I needed about 30. So we included all kinds that would be willing to memorize the song and … they did a beautiful job. I think she [Celine] was 12 when she [originally] sang it so it is in that range, a perfect range for kids to sing, and it’s a beautiful song and … our accompanist did a lovely job and the kids really put everything they had into it. I think it was one of my proudest moments that number one, you could get these kids to memorize a song in another language and they wouldn’t have had the affinity to the language, not grade 2s anyway. And they did a really lovely job. So that was unique! (personal communication, April 2, 2012)

36 Information on this Ontario Historical Site can be retrieved from: http://www.saintemarieamongthehurons.on.ca/sm/en/Home/
Similar to Germaine, Natali chose a composition that triggered an emotional response from the audience, her students, and herself.

**Coda: Making Meaning of Place: Natali’s Sense of Place in Perspective**

Natali and I celebrated our mutual interests through many conversations, interviews, and email and telephone discussions during the data collection period. Naturally, we have a shared interest in music education, performance, and in teaching and managing our respective rural school libraries. I believe that Natali’s sense of place is deeply embedded in her relationship to her rural community; her students, staff and parents, and the great respect she has for the history and culture in her area. Particularly noteworthy in regard to Natali’s beliefs about her ‘sense of place’ however, was her reference to geography and demographics through the images she portrayed in her conversational dialogue and in the metaphor that she felt represented her music education praxis. Jan Brett’s books are often outdoor stories and take place in the country. The stories all highlight geographical aspects of the countryside. The settings for Jan Brett’s books provide a metaphorical link to Natali’s ‘sense of place.’ She is a custodian, or keeper of her geographical place and her ‘sense of place’ is strongly represented in that notion. To Natali, the geographical area where her school is located and the people she interacted with characterized her ‘sense of place’, and what happens in that certain place affects others’ ‘sense of place’ as well. Yet Natali’s metaphor choice of a Jan Brett picture book exemplifies the ways in which she fulfilled multiple roles that were symbolized by the big and little stories of a multifaceted educator that fill a picture book page. Unfortunately, Natali is no longer in her rural music education praxis to watch over her school; her library and music education legacy, as the driving forces of the school board and Ministry of Education gradually whittle away at the viability of the rural community.
Chapter Seven: Anne
The Stories Between Us

About ten years after I started teaching, I received a phone call from a teacher who taught in a rural school about 20 kilometers away from my school. She was very interested in starting an instrumental program at her elementary school and wondered how she could get started. She had heard about my extracurricular band program and was interested in raising monies to buy instruments and music to get the program up and running. She was wondering how my band program was funded and wished to model her program after mine. I told her how supportive my community was to fund my band program and how I received funding from the community groups, the Lions Club, the Legion, the Fall Fair, and Maple Syrup Committees. She believed that her community would provide similar support. She was very enthusiastic and dedicated to beginning this big project. This teacher was Anne.

After our short phone conversation, I heard through the rural teacher support network about a year later, that Anne had successfully started her program. Her community had funded her instrumental music program endeavors. A few years afterward, I was informed that Anne had moved on; transferred to another rural school as an administrator, yet continued to be very supportive of music education in her new school. She continued to advocate for music and started a new program in each school to which she was transferred.

As I began my doctoral research, I thought of Anne, after one of my ex-music teaching partners mentioned her as being an excellent research candidate due to her extensive teaching in rural areas and her love of music. Perhaps she would be interested in participating in my research, I thought! Even though I had never formally met her face to face, I called her by telephone to recruit her as a participant. She accepted with great interest and enthusiasm.
Our Research Conversation Moments

After our initial telephone conversation, Anne invited me to her home, which is located in a small community outside of the city of Barrie. I emailed her a copy of my research proposal so that she would be apprised of the expectations of the study. When I arrived, Anne had reviewed the proposal and had made copious notes to remind her of the issues that she had thought of and felt were important to discuss. Anne and I discussed the study, the research questions, and the notes she had made. Then we began the interview, which was in the form of a relaxed conversation. Since Anne and I had many beliefs, interests, and acquaintances in common, the conversation was heart warming and full of very interesting concepts, ideas, and concrete information. During this first meeting, Anne discussed her music education history and filled me in on the history of education at Base Borden of which I was unaware. Base Borden, often referred to, as ‘Camp Borden’ is a military base located in our county. After the two-hour visit, we made plans to meet again to continue the interview process.

Anne and I met for three subsequent interviews/open-ended conversations that were mutually agreed upon. All were held in local restaurants over slow, relaxed lunches. After the interviews were completed, Anne and I have continued to meet to discuss other participants’ viewpoints and catch up on our mutual interests. Similar to Germaine, Anne and I have found that we have many common rural connections and ties of which we were unaware. We both find it interesting that no matter how far away you live from a person in a rural area, there is always something that binds you together. In Anne’s case, my youngest son has a strong agricultural business connection with her family. We were ignorant of that relationship before we met.
Anne’s Story

Anne was born on a farm in Southern Ontario. Her parents were farmers; so were her grandparents. On Anne’s farm also stood the one room school and the church. Anne told her story about the influence her family made on her musical endeavors:

I have to give credit to the many people who were influential in my love of music as I was growing up. I grew up in a family where music was very respected. My Grandpa Ingram was the tuba player in the Salvation Army in Toronto, while my Grandma and Grandpa Giffen, were in the choir at Edenvale. I did not get to benefit from either of my Grandparents’ musical talents, since I was very young when they were both gone from my life. I think the love of music was passed down in my genes somehow though! I really can’t explain why I love music so much. My mom and dad did not do anything musical … My mother’s family would always sing on hayrides, and also for corn roasts, and I loved the harmony my Uncle Bill and Uncle Tom would put in on old favourites, (they would put the harmony in) like “I Found a Horseshoe”. My mother loved to sing and she told me of the time when her best friend, Lil Kennedy and herself performed for a radio show in Toronto. (So that’s the extent of my mother’s singing). My parents always encouraged music instruction, however, my oldest brother Robert missed out on this opportunity since he was always so busy with helping Dad on the farm. My older brother Warren was quite a good accordion player, while Earl played the guitar but did not last long at it. Dale ended up putting his focus on sports rather than a music instrument. My sister Connie and I were thrilled when my Grandma Giffen offered us the use of her piano if we took piano lessons. (personal journal, July 25, 2012)

Anne had an amazing story about her travels back and forth from her farm to the special music spots where her music education took place:

Starting in Grade 2, I would walk down George Johnson Highway about 2 miles to Maimie Grant’s farm and had a half hour lesson after school. The other school days I would get off the school bus driven by T.L. Young at my Grandma Giffen’s place (about a ½ mile away on the other side of the Nottawasaga River) and practise half an hour on her piano. She would always reward us with cookies and milk, and a game of euchre after our lesson. Then I would walk home (dodging the snow plough in the winter months), cross the bridge of the Nottawasaga River, and proceed to do my chores down at the barn and help to prepare supper. This was a routine until I was in Grade 9. It was then that my Grandma Giffen passed away and we were left without a piano. My mom persuaded Mr. Webb, a blind piano tuner to help us find a piano, and that was the first time we had a piano in the house. Maimie Grant had let me play with her on the piano and me on the organ at church, and I would fill in for her whenever she was away. Maimie also passed me
on to a Mrs. Maude Black Flemming in Midhurst who started me in Royal Conservatory music. My first exam was Grade 9 piano. So you see Mamie had taken me a long way with music, but I loved her so much … I did not like scales, and so she never made me practise ANY technique. My first scales were in Grade 9! (personal journal, July 25, 2012)

Anne’s musical interests were not only those experienced outside of school, but in school during the elementary grades. She told me about her formative years and the wonderful music lessons and choral experiences she was involved in, extending school music activities out into the community – the school, church, and community were almost one:

I cannot leave my elementary school time without mentioning Mrs. Maude Young, who was my Grade 1/2 teacher. In Grade 6-8 she started a gospelaire group, which was about 15 young girls singing three-part harmony. We would sing once a month at church. Doug and Dorothy Giffen helped me with my musical career by picking me up each week at the end of their road, which was about 3/4 miles away for choir practice. Mrs. Young and Maimie both were involved with it, and I joined the altos in harmony – singing. I loved choir practise with the good nature of the folks who belonged to it, and the wonderful harmony that was created. I continue to love choir practice to this day! Mrs. Bernice Beilby at school also influenced me by having choirs, and starting a ukulele group. I played ‘O Canada’ and ‘God Save the Queen’ every morning at Minesing Central School and we would all gather in the hallway (we didn’t have a P.A. system) to sing and hear the announcements. I was also influenced by people we had visit the church – especially Mr. and Mrs. Mulholland. I loved hearing him play the saw! His interest in strange instruments was definitely passed on to me since two Christmases ago my husband bought me a jack to start practising! (So I play the jack now!) I played the organ at Midhurst United Church and looked after a junior and senior choir. (This was in high school). I would get a ride with Mr. Brittain, our minister at the time, and after singing in the choir at Minesing I would travel with him to Midhurst to play the organ, and then catch a ride with him to Anten Mills where my dad would always pick me up. (This was a three-point charge). I got $5 for playing the organ. This paid for my piano lesson, which was $3.50 and paid for my bowling with my Uncle Gord, which was $1.50. By the time I reached university, they had moved my wage up to $25 and this, as well as teaching piano lessons helped me pay for university. (personal journal, July 25, 2012)

However when Anne started high school, the music education she received in elementary school was not continued in Grade 9. After Grade 8, her involvement in music was through her
community and church only. She remarked about her lack of involvement in high school music activities:

I never took music as a subject in high school; I did not belong to the band. [The music teacher who was very well known for her expertise in band] did not come to my high school until I was in at least Grade 10. I played a Rachmaninoff piece at the school’s talent show when I was in Grade 13 and I still have some of my teachers that remember me playing the piano that one time, and they were flabbergasted, since they did not even know I played! (personal journal, July 25, 2012)

After Anne graduated from high school, she was accepted at Waterloo University in an Honours Physics co-op program, but decided to switch to music after becoming discouraged with the courses offered and the very large class sizes. Waterloo did not offer a full music program so Anne cross-registered at Wilfred Laurier. Graduating with superb success in the music program, she began supply teaching after completing her Bachelor of Education. Due to the lack of jobs in Ontario at the time, and after supply teaching for a year, Anne accepted a position in a small rural school in Manning, Alberta. She described the circumstances that led to her first teaching assignment and her success in her new position:

After university, I ended up supply teaching for a year since there were no jobs here for new teachers in Ontario. The next fall still no jobs opened up so I phoned all northwestern Canada to see if anyone needed teachers. And I found a place … In Manning, Alberta, a Peace River superintendent phoned me. It took 9 hours by bus to reach Peace River where a superintendent met me and let me sleep overnight. The next day we drove for another hour north on the Mackenzie Highway to Manning, Alberta. There the principal offered me an apartment, and gave me blankets, sheets, pots and pans, if I would stay and teach the Grade 2/3 class. That year I had 17 children in my class. I started up choirs, ukulele groups, and taught another teacher private piano lessons at night and in payment she would give me supper. I loved my experience there! (personal journal, July 25, 2012)

In the middle of her year in Manning, Anne’s husband-to-be proposed marriage. She then moved back to her home county in Ontario the next fall to be married and accept a teaching position in a small school in a rural area close to her home community. She described the years that followed
and her interest and dedication toward music education in her rural schools:

I continued teaching for 31 years, and each year I would have choirs, soloists, compete in competitions, musicals, and concerts, which utilized my musical skills and knowledge. I took children to perform at seniors’ homes, school tours, special occasions and parades. I organized music showcases for all schools in Simcoe County. I have taken groups to Ontario Place and Wonderland to perform. I even had a group that performed at the Ontario Winter Games. I ended up teaching teachers how to teach music through Nipissing University AQ (Additional Qualification courses). (personal communication, July 25, 2012)

Anne taught in many different rural schools in her home county, assuming the roles of regular classroom teacher, music teacher, vice principal, and principal. In each of these teacher and administration roles, she taught music either as a classroom subject or offered extracurricular music activities outside of the regular school instructional day. She continues to be closely involved in community and church music, organizing events for the Folk and Classical Music Societies in her community. Anne is at present on the educational committee, organizing the school and community events for the International Plowing Match and Rural Expo\textsuperscript{37}, to be held in our county in 2014. She continues to be a student of music as well, expanding her instrumental skills on new instruments. She remarked about her beliefs as a music educator and community musician:

The networking of music is incredible. It is as vast as the teaching profession. The people you can meet are diverse. It truly is an international language. I have connections with bluegrass jams and people who come wearing overalls and guys in ponytails, to people involved in classical symphonies and orchestras wearing tuxedos. It ranges from solo voice or instrument, to many voices and instruments. You can play by yourself or play with a large group. You can play at any age. Music is able to convey all of the emotions of the human spirit – everything from anger, joy, surprise, sadness, mystery, and calmness. I truly feel that music is something that needs to be shared. And as a teacher of music I can do that. (personal journal, July 25, 2012)

\textsuperscript{37} Information on the Simcoe Plowmen’s Association Plowing Match can be retrieved from:
Rural, Rurality, and Sense of Community

Community demographics: Impact on the personal and the professional. Born, raised and still living in a rural area throughout her professional career, Anne has witnessed a great deal of change around her. Anne described the term ‘rural’ as meaning that “most of the children [are] being bused to school. Even though her area is also comprised of farm land, she stated that ‘rural’ is “a demographic rural… it is not [all] farming rural, it’s an isolation rural” (personal communication, May 11, 2012) for she lives in a small suburban area, which still has the rural designation in the postal address of ‘0’ as outlined by Statistics Canada. She qualified this further about the geographical and demographical aspect of her area, where there are more subdivisions surrounded by agriculture but the same restrictions in regard to transportation make it more ‘rural’ in nature according to Anne:

All of us, we got our … 90-day permit back then on our 16th birthday. All … 6 of us [Anne and her siblings] got that because driving was a necessity. There was no way we could survive, get jobs or anything without that driver’s license and a car. And the same thing with my own children, we are just in Midhurst, there is no bus system out here, so on their 16th birthday they all got that! … Isolation can happen within the city, but the geographical problem promotes all this other … in rural. (personal communication, May 11, 2012)

Anne explained what she needs to function effectively in her rural place. She commented:

How do I function in a rural place? With wheels! … With wheels! You have to have wheels, a good communication system, phones, a good network of friends, but definitely wheels are key. You can as far as music; you can get contacts in… places in Toronto that will come up once a week and service band instruments and stuff like that. But other than that, wheels! … I believe rural means you have to have some sort of transportation available to you in order to gain the same sort of

38 For information on the definition of the term rural:
equality for performance, repairs, professional development, etc. Skype and video conferencing are helpful now, but still, not everyone is adept at this technology, which continues to isolate some people. (personal communication, May 11, 2012)

Anne also described her rural teaching praxis through the phrase ‘the lack of’ in transportation, but also in terms of resources and of physical space to teach her craft. She remarked, “But another negative – there are no music rooms so we had to make do with storage, storage areas, practice rooms, and performance venues. So there is nothing set up for band and choirs in Simcoe County” (personal communication, June 12, 2012).

**Rural community: Anne’s perspective.** Community is a term that is rather ambiguous and problematic. Its use as representing a coherent, comprehensive group of people has been critiqued in academic literature as troublesome (Massey, 1994) yet it is a term that is often associated with small groups of people and ‘rural’ locales (Barley & Beesley, 2007; Barter, 2008; Khattri, Riley, & Kane, 1997; Smith, 1996). Different people also define ‘community’ in contrasting ways. ‘Community’ is a term that Anne referred to regularly in her conversations in regard to ‘rural.’ She said, “Community is made up of people in a specific geographical area. Community can also be made up of like-minded people” (personal communication, June 12, 2012). She also referred to community as ‘reaching out’. She commented that in a rural community:

There is more of an outreach … just like First Nations; we believe we are here to raise each other and help each other. And they have to share those stories and their wisdom with the children. I don’t have any native blood in me but I certainly believe that. And I think the rural community has taken that on. …. Don’t really know if this is community, or whether it is [rural] family tradition and culture. Maybe family tradition and culture have the direct impact on the sharing of the wisdom in the community. An example would be my mother helping to write the history of Vespra book. Many stories were passed down. Each of her children received one of these books from her. (personal communication, June 12, 2012)

Anne therefore has a deep affiliation with her communities through her past and present – her
home, school, agricultural, and church community, which is evident in her stories. Her community attachment is very strong. Yet as she looks back through her childhood and the 30 odd years she has taught in rural schools, she is well aware of the changing face of the rural landscape and how it has impacted rural education and will continue to do so more in the future.

**Changing face of the rural landscape and its definition: A historical perspective.**

One of the most significant features of the contemporary rural landscape is change. Anne called attention to this aspect through her relationship with the rural countryside and her thirty odd years of teaching in different communities. She related that “there is a uniqueness to rural – all rural schools had a different flavour” (personal communication, May 11, 2012). She also believes that the definition of rural has transformed greatly. She explained:

> My opinion of rural over the last 15, 20 years has totally changed. A rural school now is more … [related to] isolation than agricultural rural … [which] meant farm kids going to school, because those were the schools that were isolated. Now with the changing of economic times and … how people, society has changed, a lot of people are going to that rural environment, rural geography and living, making them estates instead of farms … So society has changed and so therefore … a definition of rural probably has to change because it’s not [related to] farming children. You’re isolation. (personal communication, May 11, 2012)

In the following paragraphs, Anne further described her different rural schools and how the influx of the city dwellers is influencing the ‘growing of houses’ instead of the ‘growing of crops,’ yet the areas are still rural in her view, because of the limiting geographical aspects.

Anne’s school when she moved back from Manning, Alberta to Ontario was a small rural school. She explained:

> There you are totally bused. You are out in the middle of rural sideroads and concession roads and it is at the top of a lovely hill. It is a beautiful sight! It is also the school I started teaching at [in Ontario]. Tecumseh had a lot of city influx … [people] bought the land, built huge homes, rented the land to farmers … rural mixed with affluent city influxers. They were Toronto … people that lived in Tecumseh South area that bought farms, per se. But they wouldn’t farm. They
would have that property like estates. (personal communication, May 11, 2012)

Anne’s next school was also very rural; she called it a “country school” because the only building in the community other than the school was “a little convenience store about ¾ mile down the road” (personal communication, May 11, 2012). The area was predominantly agricultural, with very little urban influx. Anne then moved to the school that she attended as a student during her elementary years. She described the community as agricultural, yet it is growing with young families moving there, making it a bedroom community to the nearest city. It is mixed with children from the subdivision and children coming from the surrounding farms (many of the farms are rented where families reside in the original farm house and rent the land to the larger family farm corporations). She has seen a great deal of change there, for when she was a child, the community was completely agricultural. It is interesting that she returned to teach in her childhood school and is still the organist in the United Church there, even though she resides elsewhere.

Anne’s subsequent schools (three) were at a military base. She held the vice principal role at each school. Anne described the experience of teaching on a military base:

A military base is isolated from the rest of society. While I worked at Base Borden, you had to go through security gates to enter and leave the base. Everything the families did was right at the base … the show, the Canex store which sold groceries, and household items. In that way it falls into a rural scenario since it was isolated. (personal communication, May 11, 2012)

A few years later, the three schools at the Base were amalgamated into one due to low enrolment. In 2010, the last school closed, forcing the students who lived on the base to attend a county school in the nearby town.

Another school where Anne taught was like a ‘rural subdivision’. She described the area:

It has a population of 10,000 … and it was not considered a town or anything and
no amenities, no transportation service, nothing. It was considered rural as well. Most of our children were bused there, even though the houses started to grow up around us. … Now I am not sure it would be considered rural. (personal communication, May 11, 2012)

When Anne returned as principal of the school 10 years later, the area had changed completely. She commented, “The town has just blossomed so much … there are all sorts of amenities down there. There’s transportation etc. being serviced” (personal communication, May 1, 2012).

I asked Anne if she felt that the rural area had changed for the better or for the worse. Fields of crops used to surround the school, but now the school is in the middle of a subdivision with a fully serviced community. She answered:

    It all depends on your perspective. More urbanization means more tax dollars and more amenities for people. In this case, it is better. However, quite often the sense of community is lost when this happens. In regard to music, the community then loses the sense of everyone pulling together to raise their children, and it becomes more of a individual family goal to provide music and performance events for their children. (personal communication, May 11, 2012).

Anne therefore believes that urbanization of rural communities is good and bad; a positive for infrastructure, such as services and amenities, yet negative in terms of community values, and the closeness and ties that are forged in rural areas. Communities are in a constant state of transformation. Theobald (1988) comments on this aspect of change in rural areas, ”you have a once rural community challenged by the values, attitudes, and belief systems of an incoming population” (p. 10). This can be detrimental to the rural community and the longstanding residents who may not wish changes to occur. A tension therefore develops between the old and new ways of living, and viewing place.

Aspects of rural community.

Fishbowl. Anne has lived and taught in many different rural communities and discussed the fishbowl environment as having both positive and negative features. With regard to lack of privacy, she finds that familiarity affords people with a built-in support system in times of
troubles, such as a barn fire, or natural disaster, where neighbours rally together to offer assistance and support. A closely-knit community also provides comfort and safety, where people watch out for their neighbour’s benefit. Yet on the darker side, she feels that when negative things happen, community members can turn on one another; it is difficult to change negative attitudes to positive ones. She remarked, “Lots of nasty things happen you know, and everybody knows everybody else’s business. It is a good thing but it is also a negative” (personal communication, June 26, 2012). It is also difficult to be anonymous when privacy is desperately needed.

In a fishbowl situation, Anne feels that the notion of connectedness is a positive one, particularly in the school environment, where educators may be teaching the children of former students or the children of their own school acquaintances:

I was raised at Minesing Central – Grade 1 to Grade 8 – because we didn’t have Kindergarten. And … when I was teaching there, I taught mainly Grade 7 and 8 but in my final year there, I taught JK/ SK. And I had a boy in … my class and the father came along. “You are starting your first day with Anne just like I did!” You know, we grew up together … so we have that affiliation together, that interaction, that connectedness. Familiarity in rural definitely fosters caring and closeness! (personal communication, May 11, 2012)

**Isolation.** Anne described the issue of isolation as detrimental to a music education program; teachers do not have the availability of music supplies and resources at their fingertips. She believes that rural schools must have special consideration due to the isolation factor. She remarked:

Special consideration to start: to repair instruments … Our first year, we struggled with that. Getting music, actually you have to drive to Toronto to do that. [For performances] everything is a bused event … so you’ve got your scheduling; you’ve got your children. If you decide to take a small group, you’ve got your instruments in cars or vans. To take a large group, the busing costs [are exorbitant], bussing is huge! (personal communication, June 12, 2012)
Another point for a music teacher to consider is the feasibility of having a co-op student, that is, a high school student who is enrolled in the co-operative education program in her later high school years. Anne explained how in a rural area, co-op students must supply their own transportation, or they are unable to be involved in an education co-op placement. She commented:

Rural schools: it’s … further for co-op students to come to. They need cars if you have a co-op [student] to help you with your band events, or vocal. In the city, they can get there usually with city transit. But when they are out in rural parts, they need their own wheels and then there is the whole issue of insurance. And one time one of my students ended up in the ditch. And she was transporting another student, so … all things changed after that. (personal communication, June 12, 2012)

Anne contends that special consideration is needed in this situation to provide equal opportunity to high school students and to music educators who value extra assistance from co-op students and desperately need their help due to their own time constraints. Most of the rural music programs are run as extra-curricular activities and are not part of the regular school instructional time.

**Teacher Roles**

Anne’s metaphor of a rural music educator. As Anne was driving me home from our focus group session, I asked if she could think of a metaphor that would represent her music education praxis and her musical involvement in her community, in her church as organist, as director of her church and children’s choir and as a private piano teacher. A metaphor came to her mind in an instant. “A pyramid” she said. “I see myself as a pyramid, where I lay the foundation of music for children.” To Anne, music is a community experience where groups of people build on the foundation together, just like the builders of one of the Seven Wonders of the World, the Pyramids. Each block represents a musical skill, or a concept taught and learned. It
takes a lot of hard work, Anne said, to be successful and only a few become the best and top their goals. Some students do not succeed but drop out along the way. Others pursue music for enjoyment throughout their lives with the skills they have acquired. But the music educator has provided the opportunity for learning and has enriched the students with a chance to be involved in a music community. Anne said that the shape of this structure succinctly represents the music education concept, particularly in a small community where often the music educator interacts with and encourages many members from different facets of life – adults and children. The following narratives therefore demonstrate the ways in which Anne indeed became a builder of the music community as she negotiated her music education praxis through many years of teaching. They also convey the diversified roles she has assumed. She has taught and continues to teach youth and adults of different ages and from many different walks of life. At the same time, Anne continues to work with children in her capacity as supply principal.

**Teacher and place in motion.** As Anne discussed in her personal narrative, she has changed teacher roles and responsibilities throughout her educational career, from classroom teacher, to special education, to planning time facilitator, then to administrator, fulfilling the roles of vice principal and principal. Since retirement, Anne has returned to the school board, as a ‘supply’ administrator, assuming the role of principal on short-term contracts.

**Planning time teacher.** Anne assumed the planning time role in several schools, where she taught a specific subject to a class or group of students in order to provide a regular classroom teacher or specialist teacher with planning time. In one role, Anne taught piano to a group of special needs students. The school had previously been under the jurisdiction of the Federal Military school system and possessed a wealth of music resources and supplies. In this particular school, there were six pianos that were not in use. Anne seized the opportunity to
move the pianos into a spare classroom and provide the students with group piano lessons. She told the story:

Well here’s some background. I believe it was 1994; the military stopped educating their youth – the federal government – so the public system went in. So that’s when [the school board] went into Base Borden and took over their schools, their curriculum, their teachers, everything … So they had … resources on the military base for anything … the books, new instruments, xylophones; things like that. What stands out in my mind … we had 6 pianos that were not in use. We had more pianos than were in use … uprights. So as vice principal at that point, I did some planning time and gave them some group piano lessons. And it was mainly the special needs children that I worked with. And they absolutely loved it. But I put all of the pianos in the one room … We never have to my knowledge, that kind of instant gratification with resources [in our board] for what we want we get … but the federal government [schools did] … So before I arrived that’s what happened. (personal communication, May 11, 2012)

At a few of Anne’s rural schools, the enrolment was low, so as administrator she was responsible for a small teaching component. In one particular school, Anne chose to teach Kindergarten to Grade 6 music. She related that as an administrator, she was able to get to know the students very well and through the music program, she developed an even stronger relationship with the school population. She discussed her music program and how the school received monies for musical instruments because it was a new school. In the schools that were built to satisfy the new ‘suburban subdivision’ built in a rural area, funds were set aside for certain programs that the new administrator deemed important:

At one particular school I did planning time so I taught Kindergarten to Grade 6 music and it was great because as principal I got to see EVERY child, I got to learn their names. That was at Alcona Glenn where we had some 650 students … So it was there and as vice principal I would run the choirs still at recesses and lunch hours. At [that school] I was instrumental in starting a band program there, getting the instruments. Now THAT was paid for … I can’t remember how we funded that one. I think because it was a brand new school we set aside money for that. (personal communication, June 12, 2012).

Band director. At every school, Anne immersed herself in a music program, whether it
was teaching Kindergarten to Grade 6 music, or in a planning time role. She also taught kindergarten at the school where she had been an elementary student herself. At this school, Anne was instrumental in raising the money to buy band instruments for classroom music use and for the extra-curricular band she started. Her enthusiasm and excitement about starting the program was the catalyst for success. Seeing that she was a community member and the church organist, the residents were eager to support her endeavor. She explained how she approached the community for the necessary funds:

We had the Minesing Minifest every year, yes and I remember … getting on the back of trucks, wagons, and oh it would be so cold in February and trying to play the trumpets and trombones; it was cold! Ya the kids loved it and the band was started at Minesing. It was through letters out to the community saying, “We’re hoping to start an instrumental band. Would you be interested in sponsoring an instrument? You could have your name on a case and if two or three people want to go in on an instrument we will put all three on.” And so they bought a lot of the instruments for our band program. That shows a lot of trust in whoever is running it as well I think! (personal communication, May 11, 2012)

Choir, musical, and glee club director: Participation in the local rural music festival.

Anne started a choir program and glee club at many of the schools where she assumed the roles of regular classroom teacher, planning time teacher, or administrator. She offered students an opportunity to sing in the choir and to participate in solos for the local rural music festivals. She remarked that these music opportunities provided all students with a chance to get involved and that their success inspired a particular group of boys to want to participate and form their own little group:

I had a girls’ glee club because that too was related to the choir often … and I called it the girls’ glee club. And the boys, the Grade 7 and 8 boys got upset that it was a girls’ glee club. And I said, “If you guys want to come, we can do a boys’.” And so we got a boys’ glee club going and we competed at Coldwater [Festival]! (personal communication, June 12, 2012)

Anne also mentioned how the annual musicals were also a very important way to
encourage inclusivity throughout the school. All students were able to get involved in the musical productions, which also brought out many of the intermediate students, particularly the boys. She stated, “I remember the musicals … they really brought out those intermediate boys” (personal communication, June 12, 2012). Anne also took the students to the nearest urban centre to perform for seniors at a nursing home. She feels that the students benefitted greatly from this opportunity:

They get to see some elderly people and some children never see that … with [the school choir] we’d go into Grove Park Home and … it would be performance time and then sharing time. They’d all go down, somebody would give them a craft that they had made, talk to them. So the benefits to the community were huge with something like that, and to our children. (personal communication, May 11, 2012)

Anne commented on the fact that as choir director in all of her schools, she rarely had help, particularly when her choir was performing at the rural festival or in the community. She was accompanist and director combined. She commented on the issue of being unable to release a teacher from her regular classroom duties to attend these performance events to assist her and how the students’ performance would be much more polished if she had the needed help:

I don’t have a director and that is hard. I accompany and direct. [During] most of my leadership in music, I didn’t have help, especially at school … the teachers, you can’t get them out of school for that … and oh what a difference [a helper] makes. But when you are on your own and if you are over to one side, they can’t see you. If you are in front of them accompanying, you can do it with your head. (personal communication, June 12, 2012)

In one of our interviews, another participant – Natali – discussed her choirs’ involvement in the music festival. She then commented about another school that annually entered choirs into the rural music festival. The principal of the school directed the choirs and she didn’t realize it, but it was Anne. (She did not know Anne personally until she met her through this study). Natali talked about her admiration of Anne and her dedication to music as she always brought her
choirs to the Coldwater Music Festival. Where other choirs would seek the services of the festival accompanist, Anne declined the assistance and accompanied all of her choirs. Natali commented that very rarely would you see a principal so dedicated to music education and who not only attends the festival performance, but actually brings and directs her groups there herself, without assistance. She admired Anne’s dedication to music education, her students and the continued support of the music festival. “Anne played – she accompanied all of her choirs and she would bring at least two or three choirs. She was big into music. She was the only principal that seemed to show any interest in her school’s performance, let alone be the director AND accompanist! Amazing” (personal communication, April 2, 2013)!

**Intersecting Roles: School and Community**

**Music educator as community leader and liaison.** Anne expanded her choral program to produce musicals at her schools and took her students to performances outside of the rural area. She believes that all of the music experiences she organized: musicals, choral performances, trips to professional productions, sponsoring special Arts concerts at the school, and taking her choir to perform at the nearby urban centre, provided an Arts opportunity not only for the student performers, but the parents and community members. Everyone benefits from the musical opportunities the music educator provides to the community and beyond. The music teacher is seen as a well-respected community leader who goes above and beyond her role in the classroom. As she involves her students in the community outreach musical events, her students also feel that they are valuable participants in community culture. She commented:

The music teacher is a major leader in the community and something they get respect for and everyone seems to value, and … everyone knows you, because you are out there with everyone. You are a leader in the community since you are taking an active leadership role in activities within the community. People go to [music teachers] with questions and concerns regarding music and music education. They see your face, and it’s a showy … public relations for the school.
They recognize you above a lot of other teachers. I have said, choir director, band director, leader amongst the teachers, because you … are so involved with the community. So I find you as a music teacher, a leader and also bringing good PR to the school and to the staff. You are representing the teachers; you are representing the school, the school board. And I know many times, when we performed for the board of education, I heard “Oh that school must be doing well.” We performed for the principals association on their retreats. “Oh that school must be doing well.” For the Warden of Simcoe County, and the municipality, the mayors and people like that. And it’s good PR that is just a huge ripple effect. So it’s a leadership in that way … we performed at Wonderland and Ontario Place and there are people visiting there from all over the world (personal communication, May 11, 2012)! Of course the positives for the kids, it is just learning, learning music for an instrument, learning to sing, learning harmony, theory, all that they can carry all their life…a very positive experience and music is something also that … stimulates interest in community, interest in the area. I think the kids when they go out in the area … feel a little bit more value for their community … The whole community feels good because they have support and they call on the music teacher of the school to help enhance their event, whether it be a Christmas tree lighting, a parade, some sort of talent show at night, at the church, whatever. They call on the children to come out and sing and perform and play instruments … You know all of those things serve them well through their life. (personal communication, June 12, 2012)

Anne therefore believes that a music education program in a rural school is one of the most valuable attributes a rural community can have. Isbell (2005) also remarks on the significance of the music program in a rural school and how it binds the community together. He states, “The local high school in small towns is very often the hub of activity. The culture of the community and culture of the high school often blend as one” (p. 33). In Anne’s situation, the elementary school was the binding factor, given that in the rural communities where she taught, there is no high school. Schonauer (2002) also comments on the importance of the music educator as the community leader. Anne was a provider for the Arts and a music community liaison through her school and church community. She was the connection between these groups. But the viability of the program is directly dependent on the individual who provides it. Anne

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39 A warden is a municipal elected government official of the county. He or she is elected by the mayors and deputy mayors of the county and presides over the County Council.
posed the question – “What happens when the music educator leaves” (personal communication, May 11, 2012)? When Anne left her last school, the music program folded. She was not replaced. She remarked, “A year after I retired, I had one of the leading classical people in Barrie come up to me and say, “It’s too bad you’ve left that school, because you know the music was there at that school” (personal communication, May 11, 2012). And they have noticed a change. Consequently Anne asked, “Once a music teacher leaves, who continues” (personal communication, May 11, 2012)?

**Administrator as music advocate.** As Anne moved from classroom teacher/music teacher to the role of vice principal and then principal, she believes that it was her responsibility to be an advocate for the Arts in her school as well as in her school board as a whole. When she was asked to sit on a hiring committee, she felt it very important to advocate for the hiring of music teachers, particularly in the rural elementary schools. Yet she felt that her board did not advocate for the Arts. She remarked, “Unless you have a real key person interested in music, in a school, they might be doing it in their own classroom or they might have a choir or a little band, it’s not supported by the school board … Music is not priority AT ALL (personal communication, May 11, 2012)! However on an individual and committee level, Anne continued to promote the music programs, especially when new high schools were built in the central urban area which housed the students from the surrounding rural schools:

When [one secondary school] opened, the year before that, we talked to the principal of the school and really, really urged him to have a music program. So when they opened, our students [from the rural school] went right into the music program. So I did a lot of work between elementary and high school … we worked on the feeder schools, getting music programs too, but when I [moved to a new school] then I had to start over … but it was a staffing issue because staffing totally changed. (personal communication, June 12, 2012)

Anne found the issue of staffing was detrimental to music education at the elementary
level, for even though music is part of the expectations of the Arts curriculum, administrators like herself cannot hire a teacher specifically for music, as music is not a protected subject in her board. Anne must abide by contractual legislation and hire according to teacher seniority. She reiterated, “Music is NOT a priority AT ALL” (personal communication, May 11, 2012).

**Church and community.** Particularly important to Anne is her continued affiliation with her rural community church through her role as church organist. She believes that her home church community encouraged and stimulated her interest in music and music education as a child, much more than her teachers at school. She remarked on the church’s influence:

> But you have to also take a step back, and realize that the community, which is where I was raised, was influenced greatly by the church and a lot of the music that I experienced didn’t really come through school to me. It came through church and guest performers and one thing or another… and that comes along with a lot of my background because I taught at Minesing but I was also raised there. So the church played a huge role in music there. And the teachers I was raised with, they were the choir directors of the church. They got me involved in the church, singing in choirs … Nowadays I have my piano students, piano at the church and the students all come across from the school and take piano lessons. (personal communication, May 21, 2012)

Anne also feels that the church was a strong community link, and when she requested support for her band, she was well known in her locale through the church, so the local residents and businesses were eager to donate to the instrument purchase proposition. Anne’s sense of place and sense of community is therefore linked to her strong affiliation with the local church and her faith.

As organist, Anne initiated a small junior church choir and entered them in the Kiwanis Festival. She remarked that this experience not only provided the children with an opportunity to perform, but to hear other choirs. She also believes it important to instill a sense of church community in the children that will connect them to their rural place. She described the event:

> This little junior choir that I took to the Kiwanis this year, they had the opportunity to hear another choir that came in. They were not in the same class but they were SO eager
to hear us and we wanted to hear them too … It was lovely to hear them because [my choir] aspired to other people … this is the church choir. So their repertoire was *Sing a Little Song* and *Shepherd Song*, two part, … *Child of the Universe*, was the unison. 
(personal communication, June 12, 2012)

**Juxtaposition of Purpose and Space**

**Narratives of conflict: Local versus regional.** In the following narratives, Anne discussed the issues that she believes to be affecting her rural area and teaching praxis and how the changes in her rural area are influencing rural communities and schooling.

**Breaking bonds: Outsiders as administrators in rural schools.** Anne and I discussed the occurrence of fall fairs and festivals that highlight the rural communities where we have taught. We both were very involved in supporting the rural events through our band and choral music programs. However we encountered principals who lived outside of the rural area, yet were assigned to a rural school. They did not seem to value the special community events that occurred throughout the school year, even though traditionally the school has been an integral part of these festivals for decades, maybe even a century. Anne suggested that some principals wish to break these bonds, because they feel that the events take away from literacy instructional time. She commented:

> That is an individual [sentiment]. I think community is very, very important, but I do know … there are many principals out there that it’s not! Their job is to educate those children in a self-contained shop. Ones that I know are all urban people. 
(personal communication, 2012)

I then asked Anne if her dedication to rural education stemmed from her strong rural background. I posed the question: “Does a rural background influence strong feelings of community?” She answered:

> I believe it does. I seem to have a greater sense of community than my husband who was raised in the city. Perhaps it could be how we were raised in the family. If parents were community minded, that helped you develop a sense of feeling for
your community as an adult. (personal communication, June 12, 2012)

Anne therefore concurs with Cuba and Hummon (1993) who state, “a person’s sense of community is influenced by his/her past – family traditions and values and the locale he/she was raised in” (pp. 112-113).

Isolation and suburbanization: ‘Rurbanization’. Anne described isolation through the demographic considerations of two of her former schools, whose students were children of affluent residents who moved to their rural area to build large homes. The students must therefore be bused or driven to school a fair distance, away from their rural, affluent, isolated subdivision to a school located in a field, away from houses, stores or businesses. Everything a family does must be accomplished by car due to the lack of any public transportation, and sometimes the roads in the winter are difficult to negotiate. She also commented on the idea that a rural school cannot be a community school when it is “in the middle of nowhere, in a farmer’s field” (personal communication, June 26, 2012). This type of rural school cannot have a ‘sense of community’. Neither can the school children who live and learn in two very different environments. Their ‘place’, or environment, is a mixture of rural and urban. It would therefore be difficult to formulate a ‘sense of place’, unless it were seen through a ‘rurban’ lens. Anne also commented on another school community in her county, where geographic and demographic isolation is a detriment to community members. In one particular rural area, students are bused to three different high schools, according to their location and the choices of the students. She said:

I believe that many rural areas are undergoing significant changes in demographics due the suburbanization of the communities. I introduce this new notion of ‘rurban’ where the traditional aspects of rural communities are blending with the new urban influences, hence rural areas are becoming rurbanized. Later in the discussion I further coin the term, rurbanization.
See we are in the middle of nowhere. Everybody is bused here and there … To say that it is a community school, I have a hard time saying that … talking about sense of community, poor … [community]! They are torn in three directions. You know, how can you make a community when the kids go here, here, here. (personal communication, May 11, 2012)

There is a lack of ‘sense of community’, or ‘sense of place’ when students are forced to leave their community to attend school. This issue is occurring more frequently now that small pockets of suburbanized communities are built in rural areas where the number of school children in the rural locale is too small to warrant a new facility. Not only are the new school children caught between an urban and rural environment, the children who have always lived in the rural area are experiencing change as they interact with children from urban areas and vice versa.

Anne believes the change in demographics of the school population poses additional challenges for staff and administrators. Parents come with an urbanized expectation of schooling, yet their children attend a small rural school that oftentimes does not provide the programs and facilities that larger schools offer. Howley (2005) comments on the broader issues that Anne has been exposed to in the suburbanization of her rural areas. The author states, “The district faces the challenge of crafting schooling practices that fit with suburban residents’ views of effective education. At the same time, it owes allegiance to its rural past and to those community residents who still pursue rural ways of life” (p. 11). Not only is the notion of ‘country living’ changing, the residents of this ‘rurban’ community - the urban city influxers mixed with the long-standing rural agricultural resident – would be adjusting to their ‘place’ that is itself, undergoing a stark transformation.

Corcoran (2002) refers to the feelings of discontent with community and landscape that residents experience when they move to a new locale. In a ‘rurban’ setting, their ‘sense of place’
is non-existent, for they feel a sense of ‘placelessness’ in their location and may not necessarily choose to immerse themselves in their place (Gruenewald & Smith, 2008). Corcoran (2002) states, “Community sentiment becomes more fragile and more fragmentary, and this has impacts on the coherence of a sense of place” (p. 216, cited in Spring 2014). In a study conducted by Howley (2005), she comments on the sentiments of the rural residents and how they must also adjust to changes in their rural area. She states, “long-time community members felt excluded from the ‘rural’ world created by the newcomers” (p. 2). Hopefully as time passes, the newcomers and original residents develop a more divergent ‘sense of place’, but in this changing rural setting, their ‘sense of place’ will always be in a constant state of transformation.

**Rural church community in transition: A personal glimpse.** Through one of our email conversations, Anne announced to me that she was involved in a dinner theatre event at her local church and one of her responsibilities at the dinner theatre was to accompany the adult choir. I expressed interest in attending, so she saved me two tickets at the door. My daughter and I attended. It was a very timely event, for I had just met that day with the four participants for the collaborative focus group session. Some of the issues facing rural communities that had been discussed in the collaborative session were manifested during this evening at the concert. I was witness to the concerns facing rural communities as I watched the dynamics at the dinner theatre and through a conversation that Anne and I had during intermission.

**A rural bittersweet experience: Dinner theatre.** The dinner theatre was held in the local community hall in the rural community, the closest center to Anne’s original family farm, which is only a few miles away. The dinner theatre was entitled Frocks and Jocks and was a presentation of the fashions of the 20th century to present day. The church that Anne grew up in and where she is currently the church organist and choir director sponsored the event. The
The audience was made up of mostly senior citizens, with some younger couples and a few children. The actors were of the same age group, with a few teenagers and younger children participating as well. They were all members of the church congregation. Anne’s church choir performed as she accompanied. It was wonderful to have the opportunity to be a part of this event, for it seemed to be a very closely-knit audience, of which I was made to feel very welcome as an outsider. It was enjoyable to watch the reaction of the members of the audience that undoubtedly knew each other very well and who appreciated the acts that were presented with enthusiasm.

During the intermission, Anne came into the audience to talk to us. She explained the makeup of the church population and mentioned that when she was a child and teenager, this church provided her with many musical opportunities. She also explained that the church was the heart of the burg when she was growing up and when her parents were young; it was the center of entertainment for all of the farm families in the area. She further explained that due to the dwindling population of the congregation, the church’s viability is now in jeopardy. She mentioned with concern that the local Anglican Church had just closed its doors for the last time earlier that year for the same reason. Despite the rising population in this area, the churches are suffering (a large number of new houses have been built in the past decade and the housing expansion still is occurring in the ‘hamlet’ with two new subdivisions). New families are moving in yet they are not attending church or sending their children to Sunday school. Anne discussed the dwindling population of the children’s choir, which was so small this year she was forced to reconsider its continuation. She mentioned that the children seemed to be interested in singing in the choir, yet their parents were not interested in participating in church activities. Anne said, “At first when I started the choir, the children were dropped off at the practices, then when it came to the concert, the parents would attend the concert. But for the past few years, parents dropped the
children off for the concert, but didn’t bother to stay for the performance” (personal conversation, May 4, 2012). She found this quite disheartening, for the children seemed to lose interest in the choir at that point. Due to the very small number of children interested this year – only 6 children – she disbanded the choir. However she still directs the adult choir, which also is dropping in membership. This concerns Anne, for she has witnessed the gradual decline in the church population and the importance of the church in her ‘home’ rural area. (Anne does not live in Minesing now – she lives approximately 12 km away in another ‘rural area’). This chat with Anne during the intermission put the issue in perspective as I viewed the affects of the decline first-hand.

**Wanting to leave: Making the choice.** Anne talked about the issue of rural students making the choice to leave their rural area to attend post secondary education. Oftentimes these children do not return to their home to settle and live there, but choose to move closer to an urban centre to find work. Corbett (2007) discusses the notion that ‘learning to leave’ is encouraged by our education system and curriculum. Anne described her viewpoint as ‘wanting to leave’. She related that when returning to Manning Alberta she realized how glad she was that she did not stay there. “I went back to Manning in 2000. I am so glad we didn’t marry and live out there. It is just too small, you, know, it is too small” (personal communication, June 26, 2012). Anne also commented on her decision to not settle in her home community, but live in another rural community only a few miles away. This way she is able to keep old friendships alive. She said:

> I truly believe that we need to change and get out and experience the world. It depends what you do. It could be just the people themselves and how they deal with it. Some people don’t change a lot. Is that good? Well it’s good on some, but it’s a detriment for others … I like where I am. I am away far enough away, I am not there, and I am not partying with those people. I am not doing everything with the same group that I grew up with but I still have those friends. (personal
Lack of following the curriculum. Anne and I discussed the similarities in administrative and board attitudes we encountered when trying to provide a comprehensive music program for our students. Anne believes that music is not considered an important subject and is one that is deemed “expendable”. We also expressed concern that the music curriculum is not followed in most schools, particularly those elementary schools that do not have a qualified music educator on staff. This issue is discussed in Willingham and Cutler (2007) who also note that music is not included in the EQAO testing; hence giving ‘evidence’ to the public that music is “not an essential subject” (p. 8). Anne relayed her frustration in the fact that many of her fellow principals cannot see the value in music and particularly in offering students the opportunity to perform. She added that many administrators believe that any extra music events that take students out of the classroom during the instructional day is detrimental to learning, even though students are excused during the school day to participate in team sports activities. Hunt (2009) also comments on the negative attitude of principals toward rural schools getting involved in their community through music performances. She adds that there is a “lack of administrator interest in music teachers interacting with community” (p. 38). Anne commented on her experience in regard to this negativity:

And I have certainly heard it said, well music is not literacy, it’s not math, it’s not numeracy. Where is the space that they should be doing this? [Music performances in the community] Where does it say in the curriculum that they should be doing this? Where does it say in the education act that they should be doing this? Those are ‘by the book’ people. I like to shake my head because why are they there? They should be there for the kids. They should really be there for the children. And they couldn’t see past what the board told them … the overall benefits and how it was good for everyone. And you know, the board is in that state [of mind] right now! Seriously! They don’t want to be … supportive! This is the norm, unfortunately. Those types of principals … and they are missing a big portion of their job … the community and what the community values. (personal communication, June 12, 2012)
Anne has a solution to this negative mindset of principals in regard to music, for she believes that music is a community builder, and the school is an integral part of the community. The school is actually the heart of the community, and the music program is the bridge between the two sectors (Bates, 2011; Isbell, 2005). Anne suggested important aspects that should be addressed in principal qualification courses in Ontario and in the interview recruitment process:

I think a section of the principals’ course should deal with their community, whether it is urban or rural, and how to meet people, get word to their community about events, etc. Some principals, I believe, think that the education – the school is an entity unto itself. Perhaps part of the principal interview process could address how they hope to work with the community. Most questions deal with conflict resolution, decision-making and literacy development. (personal communication, June 12, 2012)

**Lack of rural voice.** Anne strongly feels that there is a lack of rural voice and concern for rural issues in board policies, politics, and in the general sentiment of the media. She described an incident concerning three rural schools that were scheduled to close. When asked her opinion by a local school board trustee, she let her opinion be known, despite the fact that “the heck hit the fan then”. Anne was not at liberty to discuss issues pertaining to rural school closures. Yet when the issue was raised publically, the local trustee responsible for the school area where the closures were to occur took action. Anne stated, “Rural must advocate for their voices to be heard! I have found that larger urban centered newspapers did not cover the school issues as faithfully … and they are not as receptive to a school correspondent” (personal communication, May 12). Matters affecting the rural schools are not noted. She also believes that the rural schools should have a voice in the local newspapers about events happening in their schools. “When I started putting bi-weekly reports in our local newspaper about events and people of our school, all sorts of community members talked to me about how I had put [the school] on the
map and people were talking in the community about what we were doing at the school” (personal communication, May 12, 2012). Anne believes that this is a good community and school pride builder. It also develops students’ ‘sense of place,’ a sense of belonging and caring for their school and community.

**Narratives from the heart: Music and rural emotional experiences.** Anne described her love of rural community and how her sense of belonging has grounded her in her place and developed her keen sense of her rural place.

*My love of rural community through music*

I get totally involved with rural spaces because … I love rural. I love that whole thing with community and so I would always get involved with music performances … When I had children playing an instrument or [singing in choirs], I contacted churches to see if they would like performances because they would quite often have UCW [United Church Women] or some women’s group or some senior’s group who would love to have them. So getting involved with the churches, the retirement homes, was also really big because the seniors loved having the children there. Special events: I was involved with any that was going on in the community, special occasions whether it is Christmas, tree lighting ceremonies, just getting involved, find out what special things are going on and see if they would like you. And it gives the children a purpose to perform that it is not far away. It provides entertainment; it provides knowledge for the community, for the students and the school for their youth … that can be carried on through all of their life. Music is something that is not just learned and forgotten … you can do if from the time you are born to the time you die! You can do it with friends, you can do it by yourself, and you can do it with a large group, a small group. So the benefits are HUGE! It … builds self-esteem and like I said, something that can be shared with all ages! Rural spaces encourage involvement in different ways than urban spaces because rural schools and communities are quite often smaller; everyone knows everyone else, and helps to pull everyone along for a common purpose. There is more opportunity for everyone to take part and get involved. That is why I enjoy my rural place. (personal communication, May 11, 2012)

Corbett (2009) notes the importance of rural places and rural schools. He suggests that the connectedness between the community and the school can serve as a model for all schools, whether they are in a rural or urban area. “Rather than taking the consolidated, urban factory-school as the model of educational progress and modernity, we might actually reintroduce the
small, intimate, community-focused rural school as an appropriate model for the 21st century” (p. 8, cited in Spring, 2014). A similar comment appears in Bates (2011) who also believes that policy makers should look to the ways that rural schools connect with their communities and the importance of doing so from a musical perspective. “Rural schools have the flexibility to break ranks” (p. 94) with innovative practices that build community.

**Music education: Bringing out the best and giving them a chance.** Participants in this study believe that oftentimes music provides an opportunity for students to succeed; where in other subject classrooms they may feel inadequate. Anne told a story about some of her ‘little guys’ who were hard to handle, yet who blossomed and succeeded in music:

Little guys that I had, … I remember! Especially with vocal … And they were a handful, just a handful. This would be some primary children, but sing? Boy, could they sing! I would take them to festivals and they would get first place. I once met a bouncer in a bar here in Barrie and he said, “Mrs. A! [Anne] I still have my trophy that I got for singing!” And he was a BOUNCER! But they loved it and it gave them something positive. I had a little guy at one school and he was always in trouble, and … I had him sing at the festival because he had a good voice … you would hear his voice when they were singing “O Canada.” Where did that voice come from? Because the teachers would not bring these kids forward, not at all! So you would just find out about them by hook or by crook! And this little guy, he left our school … he came in first place in Coldwater Music Festival but he could not sit still! He was under the pew, he was all over the place and the festival organizer would say, “SIT DOWN, SIT DOWN.” But he was doing the best he could … He moved to Calgary and I still keep in contact with him. He is in Grade 8 … and still is very involved in music in the choirs out there in the Annapolis Valley … And wouldn’t even have happened … him interested in music, if I hadn’t overheard him somewhere, singing! I love bringing those children along. (personal communication, June 12, 2012)

Anne contends that her small rural school community allowed her to get to know her students very well. In her capacity as principal and music educator, she connected with groups of students as well as individuals. The following is a story about how she connected with one particular student in a music capacity and how music brought the best out in her, leading her to do great things in her studies in school and beyond.
An emotional ‘wow’

I had another student… you have probably read about her recently and I believe she was from India. That’s her parent’s background. So at [the school] that stands out, because it is quite a white Anglo-Saxon community and she came to me. She wanted to sing and she could not hold a tune. And so I worked with her and … when I gave her something to do, the next week she would come back, she ended up getting first place in the Music Festival. Every time I told her to work, she would go home and work on it. That student just clued me in with that because teachers have their own opinions. Oh they don’t want to give them special help or treatment … they think it is all racial. But it clued me in … she was extremely gifted. When you told her something she would do it … she was so interested. She won the award for gold for the national science fair, the science fair in Prince Edward Island in this past month. She had an interview… on CBC radio and her vocabulary and everything was way ahead. And [the interviewer] could tell that she was sort of past the interviewer’s understanding and this is a Grade 8 student now … Last Friday I heard that she is now been selected to be an advisor for the … Education Council … But it was through music that I saw her because a lot of … teachers kind of had a feeling with who they wanted to promote and, and if I hadn’t done that with her music, I might not have seen all that giftedness and the work habits she possessed. (personal communication, June 12, 2012)

Negotiating diversity in a small community. Anne evaluated the makeup of the rural populations that she worked with and stated 95-99% were of white Anglo-Saxon background. She also mentioned that students were not necessarily exposed to different cultures first-hand, which to her was not a desirable situation. In her view, students in rural areas should continue to be more informed about diversity and multi-cultural perspectives and these should be highlighted more through the Arts. Traveling to other areas – outside of their rural place – is important to expose students to different spaces and peoples. In terms of race and gender identity, Anne feels the music classroom is a place where everyone is accepted for who they are and for their special talents:

Music [gives] the students something to say … when you come into the music room, you are all musicians and it doesn’t matter who you are, and it doesn’t matter what age group you are. Everybody is welcome, everybody! … As far as diversities I said it doesn’t matter what race, gender, or sexual preference, music deals with all; [music] is something that makes you feel good about other people … all! (personal communication, June 12, 2012)
Anne also commented that in terms of students with discipline issues, the music room and certain performance venues are places where children often feel very comfortable and are able to express themselves in a freer atmosphere, away from the constraints of the desk-in-rows environment of the regular classroom. She mentioned previously that in her experience, students with discipline problems enjoyed the notion of performing, like the boy who now is a bouncer. He was given the chance, “because you don’t know that sometimes [certain individuals] may really click and they could be totally awesome” (personal communication, June 12, 2012). Anne therefore believes that rural music education under her direction, served all children in an equal, stable, free, and safe environment.

**Narratives of the future: Anne’s next steps for rural education.** The following are Anne’s suggestions for the future direction that music education should take in her rural area.

**Celebrate rural places.** Anne asserted that considering the uniqueness of each rural community would be very beneficial in developing attitudes of appreciation for rural places. Anne has taught in many different rural locales; she noted that rural areas in her county are all unique. She taught in a military base rural environment, an agricultural rural area, and in a ‘rurban’ area that includes a mixture of “urban influxers” and longstanding rural residents. She feels that celebrating the history of each community would be beneficial for developing appreciation for each community’s individuality. Yet in the curriculum there is not too much room or time to accomplish that. If we celebrate rural place, Anne believes that it will be perfect through music, “If you do that, then we can bring in history … I’m thinking especially of York, Simcoe County; focus on place, to bring back the music, like in Lafontaine [the area that Germaine lives in, which has a very vibrant folk tradition]”(personal communication, April 13, 2012). Anne therefore understands music as a medium through which community members’
sense of place can be validated and celebrated.

**Make room for the Arts.** In all of the rural schools where Anne either taught or assumed the administrator role, except for the military base, the schools do not have a proper music facility, a music room where music lessons can be conducted or music resources and supplies can be stored. She believes that a successful music program at the elementary level needs a music facility. Another way to make room for the Arts is to hire for music specifically, which Anne attempted to achieve in her administrator role, yet contractual regulations often cause difficulties for the hiring committees to make room for the Arts. As music is not a protected subject in many of the public boards, Anne does not see this happening in the near future. She also found it difficult to find qualified music educators through the interview process. There seemed to be a lack of potential music educators applying for positions in her board. She described an incident she encountered during the interview process when she was searching through applicants for any who noted that they were ‘music qualified’ or ‘interested in music’ or both:

> As I went through resumes, I always looked for ones with an interest or a background in music and/or the Arts, since I knew we were floundering in our board in regards to Arts education. Those were usually the ones I at least interviewed and usually hired. I remember one time; a fellow had said he had an interest in music on his resume. He had played high school football with my two sons, and I thought I had found a gem while reading the resume. You can imagine my disappointment when I asked him about his interest in music during the interview, and he responded, “Yeah, I have about 1000 tunes on my Ipod!”

(personal communication, July 26, 2012)

Anne believes that the board should specifically advertise for Arts teachers and this would perhaps entice qualified music educators to the board. Yet the board must change its attitude about the Arts, for in her experience, board officials do not value the Arts or demonstrate an inclination to do so. As she stated before, “music, it’s not supported by the school board …
Music is not a priority AT ALL!” (personal communication, May 11, 2012). Anne understands that there are many young, qualified beginning music teachers ‘out there’ interested in finding a position so it is up to the board to change its perspective, change its agenda and start looking!

Anne is concerned about the plans and arrangements to close five rural schools in the near future in her board. These closures are being considered because some of the rural schools are at capacity or are overflowing, yet need to be updated or repaired, such as Natali’s school. The board is of the opinion that it is more cost effective to close a rural school and bus students to a nearby ‘village’ school than make the necessary repairs and/or build the necessary additions.

Anne proposed a partial solution to this problem:

I often said, “Why don’t you take the Grade 7s and 8s? If you have room, why not move them into high school because right now you have ten years for elementary and four years for secondary?” And some of these high schools like Midland are sitting with rooms vacant, tons of rooms. Change your boundaries and whatever needs to happen and have Grade 7 to 12. Then they get the technology; they get all those things available to them that were taken away from the elementary school [years ago]. Then they would get music. And you wouldn’t have to worry about building on new rooms for the additional kindergartens, and stuff like that.

(personal communication, June 12, 2012)

In this way, students would receive a comprehensive music program and other special programs for that matter, similar to those that are offered at the high school level. The Grade 7 and 8 classes could possibly piggyback on these programs then receive a music education as required by the curriculum by specialist teachers with the added bonus of a proper music facility and all of the instruments and music resources. That way the rural schools would also remain open for Grades JK to 6.

A Cadence: A Musical Composition that Represents Anne’s Rural Music Education Experience

Anne chose a piece of music that was a favourite of her students to perform. Anne believes that music is ‘for the children’. What excited the children excited Anne!
I can tell you one that the kids loved performing the best. And that was *At the Hop*. It was nice, three chords, jazzy, easy to learn, and the kids loved it and the parents loved it and it was showy. Isn’t it funny that there is a returning theme here – one that kids like! [in response to hearing others choices] Isn’t it funny Germaine and Natali picked the more difficult piece and I picked one that was easy to learn, feel good, easy to learn right off the bat! A totally different scenario! (personal communication, June 12, 2012)

Coda: Making Meaning of Place: Anne’s Sense of Place in Perspective

After our many interview and telephone conversations and email correspondences, I conclude that Anne’s sense of place is strongly related to her sense of community, for that word and sentiment appears frequently throughout her discussions on rural music education and the notion of rural itself. Corcoran (2002) relates the feeling of place to an attachment to community. She states, “Residents’ sense of attachment to place is connected to the micro communities of which they form a part. This might be an area as small as the street on which they live or the balcony they share in a block of flats” (p. 217). Anne’s communities, or micro-communities are those she is deeply immersed in – her church, school, family, agricultural, and social communities. I believe that Anne’s sense of place is directly tied to participation in all of these. Cuba and Hummon (1993) claim, “social participation in the local community is essential for community identity” (p. 111). As a long-standing rural resident who has taught in many different rural schools, Anne’s identity is related to her strong commitment to rurality and living and teaching in a rural community. Furthermore Anne is not static, for she interacts with many different rural communities particularly through her rural schools and social groups; “these patterns of intercommunity spatial activity promotes her rural identity” (p. 111) which is directly related to her strong sentiment about rural education and her ‘sense of place’. The school board where she was administrator and teacher, recognized and appreciated her commitment to rural children as well, assigning her the task of opening and closing many of their schools. When
expertise on rural education is needed, organizations such as the Simcoe Plowmen’s’ Association, the local rural music festival, and her rural school and other related community organizations call on her to assist them with rural educational events, and/or writing and editing publications. In these capacities, Anne’s spirited and passionate rural sense of place shines through.
Chapter Eight: Discussion

Bringing the Voices Together: The Participants Meet

After all participant interview/conversations were completed, and the four participants had read each other’s interview transcripts and commented on each, we met for the collaborative focus group session. The group meeting was held at a convenient location and provided a relaxed atmosphere for conversation. The participants met at a restaurant over a very long lunch – spanning 2 ½ hours - and discussed issues that had surfaced, related to the interview transcripts. (To assist me in the transcription process, my daughter attended the focus group session to record observations on participants’ voice inflections, and body language). Natali and Lenore knew of each other; they had taught at the same school, but at different times. Natali crossed paths with Germaine and Anne at the local music festival but had not formally met them. Lenore had never met Anne and did not know of her, but after the focus group session came to a close, they realized that they both were connected. Anne’s niece was marrying Lenore’s grandson in three months hence. All participants thought this very typical of rural areas and made the comment that in the country, there is always some connection between people – whether it is through family, work, agriculture, or through the rural community network.

The Collaborative Session

To prepare for the focus group session, each participant read all of the interviews, a total of 16. They also read any email correspondences that occurred between the participants and me, and were made aware of any telephone conversations that had also occurred. Throughout the data gathering process, each person received a copy of all interviews, which were either delivered in person or through email. After reviewing their own transcripts and participants made
any necessary changes, the final copies were sent to all participants. To facilitate the discussion, I prepared three questions to stimulate collaborative conversation to critique and debate the issues raised in the interviews. I was also interested in finding circumstances or matters that either influenced or transformed participants’ sense of place. The comments could relate to their specific rural area and/or to the regional rural area in general. I found the questions kindled a great amount of friendly, yet serious discussion on sense of place and the way in which these issues have transformed the participants’ feelings of sense of place over time. In addition, participants expressed concern over the difficulties their rural area and schools have experienced in the past and present and voiced a strong desire to meet again to discuss how they might take their concerns further and to a higher level. They all felt very passionate about the problems that rural communities, rural schools, and specifically rural music educators and students are facing today.

I found the collaborative session to be an extremely rewarding opportunity to meet and hear everyone’s concerns over rural educational affairs. The participants all expressed a similar sentiment. As each participant had previously read and critiqued each other’s viewpoints, they demonstrated their eagerness to finally meet and share their perspectives. I also took part in the discussion. All very dedicated to rural music education and the communities we served, we thoroughly enjoyed each other’s company, the conversation, and the solidarity that we share in regard to the research topic. The following is a presentation of the themes that surfaced and our recommendations for rural communities, rural education, and rural music education, which we believe will influence and shape our students’ and their community’s sense of place.

A collaborative comment. Throughout the interview process, my four participants had the opportunity to read each other’s transcripts and comment on any issues they thought were
pertinent to their story or would add to the conversation on rural music education. Lenore noted that each person provided such a diversified perspective on what ‘rural’ means to them:

For Natali it was the geography, She was upset because … she lived far away and so that, the kids … all lived far away except for the few who lived in the village. They couldn’t take part in the many intramural, or school activities after school and … stores were far away. The school is the community … I just couldn’t believe that you asked the same question of the three of us … what was the most influential or important thing about the school music related to the definition of ‘rural’ … and we three all looked at it from three different points of view, completely! And all of them were right! And I was about the personal! … The personal interaction … with the teacher, with the music, with the kids and with the other staff members … And another was … industry and agriculture … looking out the window saying … It is what’s different … I look out, I see fields of green and cows and things … an agricultural centre. And another [said] it was the actual physical agricultural area and Natali’s was the isolation and the long distances and … the difficulties in teaching in a rural school. The space – kids had to travel long distances so they couldn’t participate. And what did I say? I said mine was a feeling I think! Of everybody… of everybody knowing everybody else in more, in more than one way. And being involved with them in more than one way … because it was a small community and the fire chief was the postmaster … Your teacher friends … you taught their children and it was all interconnected in a personal way with people and kids! (personal communication, May 31, 2012)

The Future of Rural Education: The BIG Issues: Rural Place in Transition

Regional versus local: Taking the ‘rural’ out of rural. After posing the question of “What do you think will be the future of rural education, and then specifically rural music education?” The topic of greatest concern was the issue of the planned closures of the rural schools in the county and how these closures will redefine rural areas, rural communities and hence people’s sense of community and sense of place. Natali referred to the closures as “centralization”. Anne compared the future plans to the closures of the small one-room schoolhouses in the 1960s. She commented, “With rural education, I think we’re going through the same thing as we did in the 60s, where we had … small schools and then we gathered them together for central schools”. She considered this a further extension to amalgamation, commenting, “I think we are going to go through another one of those” (personal
communication, May 4, 2013). She expressed concern, for three of the rural schools (close to the last school where she was principal) are scheduled to close. The board is considering building a mega school to replace the three smaller schools. In Natali’s area, a similar issue is occurring, where three small country schools are scheduled to close. Students will be bused long distances to larger schools in the towns. All articulated these moves as being detrimental to the rural communities, and particularly to the students who would be moved outside of their home areas to go to school in another community, as documented in Irwin (2012).

For decades the issues of rural school closures has been widely debated. According to records dating back to 1988, funding formulas projected by the Ontario government were detrimental to rural schools and needed to be reviewed (Irwin, 2012; VanDusen, 1988). To investigate the impact of the proposed funding formulas at the time, which were fatal for rural education and would also cause further rural issues, the Ontario Rural Council (TORC) was formed with a legacy spanning 1998 – 2010. Today the Rural Ontario Institute continues the mandate of TORC, to advocate for rural education, a situation that has not yet been resolved, amended, or even heeded to the degree necessary to make a difference.

According to Natali, the resultant effect of school closures is that more money is spent on transportation, causing students to be bused long distances to larger schools. Whereas these schools may offer more extracurricular activities and special courses, she believes that students do not always take advantage of these. She commented:

But they don’t seem to mind spending it on transportation though … children used to be able to walk to their local school, that is never [discussed] … and I don’t think people put a high priority on neighbourhood schools anymore. It’s what services can be offered … they want … those extra courses, and extra curriculars

http://ruralontarioinstitute.ca/
that they can have at a big school. And from some of those parents that I spoke to, never mind that their children will never ever take advantage … the thought that it’s actually there and is offered, it means a lot! (personal communication, May 4, 2013)

Anne and Germaine both concurred with Natali that oftentimes parents find satisfaction with the larger town school yet do not insist that their children utilize the extra opportunities. However they commented that geographical distance once again was a factor, for parents would have to travel long distances to pick their students up after school hours.

Another issue that Germaine brought attention to, is the fact that if the small rural schools close, a mega-school will be built. This move will have a great impact on the viability of the community churches. Germaine stated, “I am sure that if Ste-Croix closes, the church will no longer be in existence as well. Natali concurred with Germaine, commenting, “Churches have closed … and in the town that I grew up in, that church is now handled by another parish and it’s only a half time church and it’s on its way out as well, not because there isn’t the population, it’s all elderly people … and [the lack of young families] can’t support it.” Anne added, “In Minesing, the Anglican Church closed on April 1, 2013, and in the United Church, they are having a hard time struggling every month, more thousands of dollars they are in debt and they can’t keep it going either.” I asked Germaine about her church and she remarked that, “yes they are struggling as well” (personal communication, May 4, 2013). Of course the issue of church closures is also an urban problem, yet all participants remarked that in a rural area, the closure of a church makes a great impact on the rural community, for a church often serves many purposes; it is used as a community outreach centre providing youth programs and opportunities, assisting families in need, as well as a faith-based support system.

**French school closures and issues of class size.** Germaine also discussed the detrimental issues surrounding the closure of the French school in her area, which caused a
fiasco in regard to the Anglo-dominant and Francophone-dominant students and the divide that exists between them. When the school closed there was an issue of placement. She related that instead of delegating students to one school, they should “open up the border both ways and let kids … who were not passing the test [the French proficiency test] to be in the Franco-dominant group. They would be better served by attending [the other French school in the area]” (personal communication, May 4, 2013) and also would not be divided and labeled according to their French speaking ability. In the French schools, class sizes are much smaller than in the rival boards that are competing for students. Germaine, Anne, and Natali discussed the discrepancy between the French-Catholic and public board in terms of class size:

Germaine: You know some years you get 6 or 7 enrolments, but now the two JK, SK’s … they are not big classes.
Natali: The public schools are probably thinking, what? They ran a class with 6 or 7 kids?
Anne: They would never do that.
Natali: Ya that’s the beauty of the French schools!
Germaine: Ste-Croix … the last time I was teaching there, the grade 7 and 8 class, there were 12 students in the class.
Anne: That’s dreaming! (Chuckle)
Natali: That’s Article 23 of the constitution. They have to offer it!
Germaine: That was an assigned French school.
(personal communication May 4, 2013)

In a small rural area, where equal opportunities are not available for all students to receive the same educational choices, such as language acquisition and class size, a divide is created between rural residents. This fosters a negative attitude, which is detrimental to feelings of community, and place.

The Ontario Federation of Agriculture (2004) comments below on the negative issues of rural school closures, some of which are beyond the scope of the participants’ conversations and

this dissertation. This comment illustrates how closing a rural school reaches far beyond the scope of education:

Schools are an integral part of both the social and economic fabric of rural communities. Not only are schools where our children spend a large portion of their days being educated; they are also our children’s playgrounds, day care centres, adult learning centres, community centres, recreational facilities, and meeting halls. Without access to local schools, which provide space for these many other reasons, residents may face additional taxes to build community centers, etc. This could result in a significant financial impact on the residents and to the community. Without such facilities available, it becomes difficult to maintain a viable population and economic base in rural areas. In past years, some high schools [and elementary schools] have been consolidated and relocated to other communities. Removing older students from rural areas for their education means that they are not in the communities to get part-time employment. Long bus rides might prohibit them from being hired for after-school employment, as they will be unable to get to work on time … it can also have a significant impact on the local economy.

Rural schools therefore play a very important role in the welfare of the area and are a significant determinant of student success. Schmidt, Murray and Nguyen (2007) contend that “a growing body of research on small schools, both in Canada and the U.S. finds that small schools do a better job at promoting educational attainment through a cohesive sense of community” (p. 60). Related to that success are students’ and residents’ beliefs and feelings of security in regard to their communities, which all participants believed to be strongly tied to their sense of place.

The importance of rural principalship. As the principal often makes the decisions in regard to enrollment and other recommendations, all participants felt that the rural principalship is a strong force that pivotally affects the success of the rural school, not only in advocating for it to remain open, but for keeping parents on board to support and promote the success of the students. Principals in rural areas also must be cognizant of their role in the community and the importance of knowing their community situation. Novak, Green and Gottschall (2009) (as cited in Lock, Budgen, & Lunay, 2012) maintain that rural school principals require many skills. They
Leadership in rural and remote settings is multifaceted, diverse, and place-conscious. The needs and priorities of rural and remote students, their parents and communities in general require skilled and knowledgeable leaders who are aware of their own situatedness, their positionality and, are receptive to the distinctive demands of their own school community, while aware of their role in mediating relationships with outside and beyond – the 'global'. (p. 334)

Germaine discussed a situation in which the principal was not attuned to the essence of the school and community. The principal alienated the parents and students to a point where the Francophone students moved from the small rural school to the neighbouring town French public school. This may have affected the feasibility of the school to remain open. She said, “The principal … she sort of emptied the classes.” Natali continued, “Alienated the parents … so the parents have the choices [to move their children] … this sounds familiar, doesn’t it? … The principal makes the difference.” Germaine answered, “That principal made a big difference when she got there… we lost a lot of those French speaking families because she was very hard headed and … now there are only 60 kids in that school.” For the school to remain viable, rural principals must therefore realize that the success of the school is related to the satisfaction of parents and students and must also be aware of the general feeling of the supporting local community. That is why according to the participants, if the rural principal is not living in the same locale as the school and a resident of the community, he/she must at least be aware of the needs of the student, parent, and general population. Lenore contended that a “rural principal must know their population and satisfy the unique needs of their community” (personal communication, May 4, 2013).

From a music education perspective, Natali, Germaine, and Lenore mentioned the importance of the rural principal in keeping music alive in the small centres. Referring to Anne, Natali remarked:
You were wonderful because you were administration! And I often watched your choirs and thought, wow! I wish I could do the directing and play at the same time as she does! I was always impressed by you. You don’t often have an administrator supportive of a rural music program and you were the one in your school who also made it happen! (personal communication, May 4, 2013)

I also remarked on Anne’s dedication to the music program through her principal role, that she was “interested in spending the extra time to do it.” Natali also reported that during her years of teaching music in her rural school, there was only one principal who “was musical, loved [it] and took over one of the choirs.” She added, “and left me with the others but she wanted to be involved and thought it was important. They also concurred that in my own years as music teacher in my rural school of 27 years, one principal had “made a difference through his strong and unbending support of the music program and the marching band” (personal communication, May 4, 2013).

Relating Education to General Rural Issues

Why are we losing our rural children? The conversation at this point changed from the issues of school closures to the reasons behind these and why the rural demographics are changing. Where there is growth in some areas that are encouraging young families to move into the newly built subdivisions, other areas in the rural locale are transforming. Anne initiated the dialogue on this topic:

Anne: I’m going to relate this to general rural now ... Population. I can see the education going for mega schools, but if you look at rural Simcoe County, you don’t have a lot of just … single-family … farms anymore. One family could own … buy up thousands of acres …

Lenore: I know a family. [Lenore pointed to me, for our family owns a large farm].

Anne: But that is what they are doing; farmers are buying other people’s farms so that there isn’t a population in the rural setting like there used to be ... So they [the farms] are getting massive.

Germaine: Yes.

Anne: So families are buying up those farms, and there aren’t a lot of [farm] families.

Germaine: The farmhouses are still being rented. My husband’s farms [Germaine’s spouse is a manager of a few mega-farms owned by foreign investors] – all the houses are rented but there are not houses where there are children …
**Anne:** But the whole idea of having or raising your family on the family farm is gone, it’s more; be big!

**Janet:** As my spouse said … the other day … when he was a child, there were many small farms on our highway, [they] were … working farms and some had beef, dairy, mixed … varied farms and now there is basically us left and the land is owned by us or the [neighbours on the next concession]

**Germaine:** They bought [a mega farm to the east of us] … [our neighbours]

**Germaine:** It was Koreans before and they didn’t do anything with the land except rent it out.

**Anne:** Isn’t it amazing that the farming community is reflecting the education – you go big – the small family farms go big.

**Janet:** Yes.

**Anne:** Dollars and cents.

**Natali:** And not coming from a farming background, this is actually news to me. We always joke about agribusiness, but I guess agribusiness in this case … its actually local. It’s actually family farms becoming big …

**Janet:** Some! There are some foreign interests though …

**Anne:** That’s happening in the south[ern] part of the county as well. Holland Marsh – it used to be individual, it [was] all bought by corporations, but now the [foreign investors] are buying all those areas up. So big corporations … and who knows when these family farms sell … that you might not sell to somebody with big money, like big corporations. That would be another step.

(personal communication, May 4, 2013)

This dialogue introduced an important point in regard to how agribusiness is influencing many different characteristics of rural areas, such as demographics, education and in turn the sociological aspects of community – knowing your neighbours, having ties to the land, having a sense of community and sense of rural place. The farming industry is therefore transforming the rural landscape. Mega-farms are replacing the small family farms as farmers are expanding their operations to increase crop yields to feed rural and urban areas. Wales (2013) discusses the importance of rural agribusiness, and why rural Ontario matters – the significant contribution it makes toward feeding its people. He remarks:

I argue the fortunes of rural Ontario are sometimes qualified by more than economic value. Farmers, for example, may only represent less than 2 per cent of Ontario’s population. But farmers also own approximately 80 per cent of all privately held land in Ontario. We are multi-generational stewards of that land – intimately connected to its health and its capacity to produce safe, healthy food for our own families and the families of our urban neighbours.

This comment reflects the strong significance of the farming population in general to sustain a
successful rural community. All residents, whether living in rural, urban, or suburban areas must be cognizant of the part that this sector plays. As the demand for food increases, the farming operations must expand to keep up with demand.

All participants discussed the expansion of the rural towns and the impact this growth is having on the schools. People are moving into town and builders are constructing housing developments to keep up with the demand for affordable housing. Families are also moving from urban areas to find cheaper housing. Natali brought attention to the demographics in the towns and directed the discussion:

**Natali:** Well even small towns though. It’s only young families that want to live there. Retired people don’t want to live in small towns. They need places that have access to a big hospital. There are not that many … I mean it’s the declining population … the younger people.

**Anne:** But we want the younger people to populate our schools.

**Natali:** Ya. I’m thinking of Moonstone – a little school – really nice little place, with reasonably priced homes … but there are not that many young people anymore. …

**Janet:** But why would a young family want to build a house in Moonstone now … if in the future there is not going to be a school?

**Natali:** That’s true … but they will be bused … if it’s still reasonably priced real estate … But you’re right, why would they? And the answer is that they probably won’t. I don’t see it growing at all … which is very unfortunate!

**Lenore:** I think that idea is right – that the change in farming is connected with the change in education. And I think maybe there are other connections too that we haven’t thought about.

(personal communication, May 4, 2013)

Lenore addressed a very important issue. The gradual change in the agricultural sector impacts many different aspects of rural life, economics, and social interactions. The following participants’ concerns highlight a few of these.

**Youth migration away from rural areas.** Another unsettling aspect the participants highlighted is the decline in rural population. Youth, after completing their secondary education, move away permanently and settle elsewhere. We discussed this issue in the following dialogue:

**Natali:** But then they don’t go back, they don’t go back to the community!

**Janet:** That’s the other issue. There has to be something in that community that draws them back.

**Natali:** Well it’s very difficult for rural kids because they do have to leave their area to pursue
any higher education because there are no opportunities. And they go away to school, and then they come back – maybe. But oftentimes they stay away because there is no employment for them. (personal communication, May 4, 2013)

Learning to leave and wanting to leave rural areas are issues that are well documented in academic literature (Corbett 2007, 2009) and discussed in Chapter Eight. Budge (2007) refers to the outmigration of rural youth as ‘the brain drain’ (p. 7). The Rural Institute (2013) views the situation from an Ontario perspective, discussing the conundrum that rural areas face with youth leaving their homes. They also propose a possible solution for making post secondary education more accessible for rural youth. They remark:

From the rural perspective, we are losing population. The 18 to 59 year olds are vacating rural places and we get back the seniors. Seventy-seven percent of kids who go away to school never return to rural communities. Can we not do something to make post secondary education affordable and deliverable in rural towns and keep these smarter young people here at home where they will prosper and enrich our rural society? We have a glut of empty schools sitting all over rural Ontario that could be put back to use as post secondary education sites. We could make use of virtual technology to bring education to the rural students instead of taking the rural student to the education. Greater use of mobile classrooms and labs would be the answer to any practical training required. (n. p.)

The participants mentioned however, that due to technological instability in rural areas, where cell phone, GPS, and Internet service still is for the most part inferior, students do not all have equal access to technology at home. At school, the service is more reliable but in remote areas of the county some students may not be able to complete work at home. They also commented on the fact that many people who live in urban areas are unaware of the technological issues that rural residents deal with on a daily basis.

The discussion then turned to the fact that some families move to a rural area because they were born and raised in a small locale and wish to return to a rural community to raise their children; they wish to have access to a small community school, and to live in the country and
feel safe. Germaine related a conversation she recently had with a newcomer to her community:

Sometimes other families come back to the area. I was talking on the [school] board that I was on last week … there was a young woman there, and I was asking where she came from because she was unknown to me. I thought I knew everybody in Lafontaine. (Chuck). She said that they were from out of town … they came to this area because they got a job at the super jail and the hospital and I asked why they picked Lafontaine. They said that they were raised in a small community. And they wanted to come back to a small community. And I thought that is something that we need to work on, and try to get other families to come, to make it attractive for other families to come back … they said they wanted their children to get educated in a small community school. (personal communication, May 4, 2013)

**Negative stigma of rural areas.** Lenore maintained that we have all commented in the interview conversations that if students stay in a rural area, they are not always considered a success. Natali and Germaine agreed. This brings a negative connotation to the term rural, as mentioned by Theobald (2005) who states, “rural equals backward” (p. 122). I was also caught off balance when an acquaintance of mine pointed out the fact that there is a billboard sign on the highway outside of our community, advertising new lots for sale. The caption on the sign reads - ‘Move to the Woods, not the Sticks!’ This is a blatant example of the attitude that often prevails in regard to rural area and residents. We talked further on this issue:

**Janet:** And I get that with my son David … Sometimes … people say oh what is he doing? Oh he’s on the farm? Oh, as if … oh that’s too bad!

**Germaine:** Yes!

**Anne:** My grade one teacher who I really respect and she was my music teacher too… She shocked me, she said to me, when I came back and taught at Minesing, she said you know, these other people, around my age … I figured that they’d be back … but I never thought you would ever come back, you know? So that kind of attitude I think has been around for a long time.

**Lenore:** Yes.

Natali: I remember growing up, and I couldn’t wait to get away from my small town, and then as an adult, I spent the better part of a decade trying to find my way back to that because people change. And I am really glad we made it to this area. It isn’t where I grew up but it’s similar… everybody knows everybody and in a good way. There are bad things about that as well. But I am really glad that my children have experienced that.

**Germaine:** Yes.

**Natali:** Everyone knows everyone. I’m really glad my children had an opportunity to grow up in a smaller place, you know all their friends … they have to be driven everywhere … when you
live out in the country. So when we came from Mississauga, which was like a thousand people in 20 square feet, I am happy that we did it. But I had to grow into that again. Having grown up and thinking … oh I can’t wait to get away from this place! … This is too small. There is nothing here for me! But you have to … people change their opinions then go back into that! (Lenore, Anne and Germaine all nod in agreement) (personal communication, May 4, 2013)

**Difficulties of suburbanized rural areas: Rurbanization.** Some families, who grew up in rural areas left for a period of time then made the decision to move back. Anne mentioned the issue of them returning to areas that have been suburbanized. With the large number of subdivisions creeping into agricultural farm settings, many families do not belong to a school community. In her last school where she was principal, Anne described the area as farmland, with only a school. The subdivisions where the students live at the nearby ski hill are far away from the school. She asked, “Where is the community of the school? … We are an entity unto ourselves.” Without a community feeling, as Anne discussed in Chapter Seven, it may be difficult for many students and parents, who are so displaced from the school locale to have a strong tie to the community. They may feel a sense of placelessness, rather than a sense of place. Anne felt therefore that children attending schools located outside of their actual residential setting might not necessarily identify with their school community. Anne believed that suburban subdivisions springing up in ‘the woods’ are problematic in terms of sense of place.

**Rural Place in Transition: Where Does this Place Music Education?**

Anne initiated the discussion on rural places in transition and the impact on music education. Four points were raised: the lost generation of music education students, lack of interest in reviving music education, the importance of the music teacher providing a relevant program, and a lack of encouragement for special subjects in remote areas. Anne stated:

**Anne:** Ok. With music, we have lost a generation in music because for the last, say 20 years in the public board, the emphasis has not been on music, we have gotten rid of …

**Natali:** Music consultants, educators … Moonstone ended up with the catalogue, pretty well all of it – the sheet music from the library. When you start getting rid of things like that … your basic utensils …
Anne: There is no interest in reviving it … from the public sector at all and reviving and putting more music into the curriculum. So I believe we have lost a generation and how do we regain that? Because those parents … they are starting to be parents now. If they have not grown up with a value for music, how are we going to reinstate it? (personal communication, May 4, 2013)

The participants therefore believe that it is difficult to restore interest and value for music education when it has been missed for a generation. If administrators do not see the value of music in their rural school, especially if the school has not recently provided a music program to students, they may consider implementation of a music program as a frill. Parents may be of the same opinion, unless a music program has been a tradition and has been operating successfully. Lenore also brought up an interesting point in regard to American Idol and the fact that contestants do not mention their success in music as a product of their school music program. She stated:

I watch American Idol … the people who are competing in there, the people are being encouraged into music by their parents. I never have heard one of them say that ‘I was encouraged by a teacher, or my teachers, or the school or anything’. It’s the parents [who receive the credit] … they lay the foundation for the music coming out of these people who are competing on American Idol and other competitions I suppose … But I haven’t heard one of them say, “I was encouraged by somebody in some school!” (personal communication, May 4, 2013)

Natali was discouraged by this comment, for it infers that students are either not receiving a music education in their school, or the school music program does not provide students with the motivation to study music, based on the ‘school music’ they learn. In a study conducted by Green (2002) the author found that students are not stimulated by their music studies in school and instead learn music more successfully in informal music circles. However Natali, Germaine, Lenore, and I feel that one music educator can make that difference. They relate to their past experiences as students and teachers in their rural schools with regard to encouraging the students to continue in music studies. They remarked:

Natali: That’s unfortunate. …I had students and I know students that say that they were encouraged.
Germaine: I agree.
Lenore: I agree … I know many …
(Germaine: nodding in agreement)
Lenore: I know many… I know 6 professional musicians that started off in the same Barrie Collegiate Band that I started off in … and they went into music and that was their life and still is for some of them.
Natali: I think that they need that one person maybe to make that difference. (personal communication, May 4, 2013)

Natali, Lenore, and I also discussed the impact that one good music teacher makes by providing a consistent music program, and agreed that the program is most effective when offered throughout the grades and provided by a designated music teacher. The discussion continued:

Janet: I think you’re right. I think…it’s the parents coaxing … I also think it is the music teacher as well but it’s difficult when the schools are not providing the music to start out with. Like Germaine, you would have quite a few music … students that would be really keen because your music program is very consistent throughout the grades. And like mine was…when I was teaching, it was consistent throughout, because I was the music teacher. But you would have students that would be interested in continuing in music … but I think that with such a watered down music program or a nonexistent one in a school …
Natali: And not the dedicated people! The classroom teacher that knows nothing about music has never been musical or has studied music has to teach the curriculum. So what they have done, they have got rid of people like you who were THE music teachers in the building and they became classroom teachers. That was in the early 1990s when that happened. (personal communication, May 4, 2013)

Lenore related back to the comment by Anne on the missed generation of music teachers. She added:

No it was before that … The music teachers that went around to the rural schools – the itinerant music teachers who went to the rural schools and taught music … My teaching partner … had been just moved into a classroom and she’d been the itinerant music teacher for that whole area. So that was in the early 70s when I started, when I met her at the school. So they started eliminating music … years ago, [over 40 years ago]! (personal communication, May 4, 2013)

The music educator. Anne brought the conversation back to present-day issues for rural music teachers and discussed the importance of that one key person in a school to provide music instruction. She commented and provided an example, which encouraged others to tell their
anecdotes as well:

**Anne:** You have to have someone key in your building that really wants to be in music and depending on what they do, they can spur people on to do what you said, (looking at Lenore), like go to American Idol. Here is an example. With the Coldwater Music Festival, I had a little girl in grade 3. Wanted to sing a solo – practised with her. But she was special. … she would go away and come back and have everything I told her, done. I went to see her, she’s in grade 9 now … She went from that experience at Coldwater, just preparing … to playing the piano and now she has her own grand piano and she is playing beautifully but that was that first experience.

**Natali:** Yes … sometimes they don’t do well. But the fact is someone cared enough and worked with them and encourages them [is key].

**Anne:** You know, I had a student write to me at Christmas time and he lives out in Halifax. … He’s in Grade 9 as well and he was Asperger’s and teachers could not handle him … But he sang, he sang! He was just fabulous at Coldwater … But you know he is singing … and that’s his forte in choirs and doing things; it stayed with it. Having one person that made an impact on children …

**Germaine:** I had so many parents coming up to me and say, “I had no idea. I had no idea he could sing. I am glad he came to this school, because I would never have known!”

**Lenore:** That’s very true.

**Natali:** My first experience teaching, when I was in Sudbury … teaching the mentally [disabled] … But I remember taking a group of kids to a music festival in North Bay. Totally uncommunicative … but they could sing! It is almost like … what’s the term – autistic – and the one boy in particular … [with many physical challenges] but music made him a different person and I … can still hear his voice, sort of a mellow tenor, and just wonderful, and so sometimes just the learning skills are not enough. Sometimes you need to fill your soul.

**Germaine:** Yes.

**Janet:** I think what you were saying Germaine, a while ago about when you left Ste-Croix, that you weren’t sure what was going on with the music, you had such a vibrant music program there and when you left … even though music is a protected subject in your board, it might not happen.

**Germaine:** Yes.

**Janet:** There it is again; it’s back to the individual music teacher. And it doesn’t matter what kind of legislation we have …

**Germaine:** When I did the supply teaching in the Grade 7 and 8 this year, I asked one of the girls, I knew she was talented, I had taught her JK, SK, I said, “So what are you doing in music this year? … “Oh I don’t know. I wasn’t there that day.” I just wanted to cry! (personal communication, May 4, 2013)

Anne therefore called for future dialogue on the need to hire qualified music teachers in our rural areas. All participants agreed, believing that the system for hiring specialized music teachers is not a priority in the board. Natali, Germaine, and I noted that at one point they had suggested that music educators have the opportunity to come into the schools on a paid basis if music were not a designated subject in the public board. The women also criticized the fact that
the boards (public and French Catholic) allow other venues to come in to generate revenue for the boards, such as ‘lunch ladies’ (Germaine’s board) and pop machines. Others hired professional traveling musicians, which all believed to be an asset, yet were often used as a substitute for music instruction. Anne believed these performances were opportunities “just to listen to music.” Anne also described a situation that she encountered when she was an administrator. Her school had three extra pianos, so she “hired a piano teacher ... and offered half hour piano lessons to the students [through an outside source, funded by the parents]. I had my hands ROYALLY slapped and had to stop because there was no place in our board saying that I could hire a music teacher.” Germaine also remarked that she at one time went into the French schools in her rural area and offered piano lessons, but that was practice was also stopped. She commented, “No one inside the school is allowed to make money,” unless it is through contracts, such as vending machines etc. In terms of music education, I mentioned the issue of the use of board facilities for school and community music concerts, and of having to pay a fee. I remarked, “It just seems like it’s gotten totally away from the main reason of why they [boards] are there, and that’s for education” (personal communication, May 4, 2013). All participants believed that a review of these issues (which may also be specific to urban as well as rural areas) is needed. They were of the opinion that rural schools, in areas where they are in danger of being closed, or even those that continue to remain open, will continue to suffer from the lack of concern for their unique qualities and needs. In addition, if the schools and the programs they offer deteriorate, their communities – their rural places will be adversely affected as well.

Moving forward in a rural place: Next steps. I began the discussion on ‘moving forward in rural’, asking participants if they believe that rural schools can be saved by a place-based approach. I defined this as a “multifaceted idea ... that would be something to highlight
your local area… whether it … be agricultural, … historical … or through a certain program that
may be running." All participants were pessimistic; for they believe that fiscal constraints and
Ministry and board agendas do not consider rural areas. Natali remarked, “They just won’t care
… even if it’s 100 percent to someone’s benefit, if it isn’t cost effective, it won’t matter.”
Germaine asked what the main argument would be to implement a place-based program. I
suggested:

I would say that it would be a very difficult argument to even get it started. But if
you were able to get anyone interested in it, you would say, we have a rural school
here that has a very viable community and a very supportive community and we
have a special program such as an organic garden or a music program that drives
the community or that keeps the community together. So we would like to
highlight that in a place-based curricular manner. And of course the curriculum has
to support the place-based [idea]. I mean you can’t do anything unless the
curriculum … you have a directive. (personal communication, May 4, 2013)

Anne made an interesting comment, “Didn’t you and I do that with the music? You had the
Elmvale band, I had the Minesing band and it was the thing … but … without the personnel it
won’t continue!” Germaine continued by asking an important question. “Is there research that
has been published to back the fact that children who graduate from place-based schooling do
better or have a better self identity or feeling of openness to the world, have better thinking
outside the box?” All participants believed this to be an important concern, and one to consider.
This thought led to a discussion on the importance of celebrating rural areas through a place-
based approach and how they all believe they have done so, throughout their teaching praxes on
a historical, musical and sociological basis. However, more needs to be accomplished through
practice and advocacy. The following were their suggestions and comments.

Redesigning rural schools to thwart closure. Anne suggested that instead of closing
rural schools, perhaps rural school boards might consider redesigning the boundaries. She also
proposed changing the design of the high school, (by extending the high school to include
students in Grades 7 and 8). However Natali, Germaine, and Lenore felt that this move might place rural schools at further risk. Students may have even longer bus routes and be forced to attend school outside of their rural community. In another rural community serviced by the Upper Canada District School Board, the suggestion to move intermediate students in Grades 7 and 8 to the high school caused a great amount of fiery debate and was severely criticized by the Elementary Teachers Federation of Ontario.43

**Sharing rural highlights: Cross board music participation.** One of the first suggestions made in regard to sharing rural expertise and highlights in music education is to encourage cross board music participation, to bridge the geographical isolation of our rural county. Natali commented that “the collegiality” between schools and boards is very important in a rural area, particularly one that spans a large geographical area. Germaine recalled that, in the past, the teachers of her French-Catholic board were allowed to share resources with the public board. Music groups regularly performed for each other, highlighting music talent in their schools. Then the directive of sharing only with schools in the French Catholic board stopped her from inviting the French public school music ensembles. She was able to invite her board’s school groups but the closest high school was 56 kilometers away. Not often would a group be able to travel that distance. She also remarked on the fact that her school board head office was not aware of rural issues, for it is located in Mississauga, running from, “Sarnia, Lake Ontario, Mississauga to south of Parry Sound; a huge board.”44 Cross board sharing would also be very


44 A map of Southern Ontario that encompasses this region may be retrieved from: [http://www.mto.gov.on.ca/english/traveller/map/southindexpdf.shtml](http://www.mto.gov.on.ca/english/traveller/map/southindexpdf.shtml)
beneficial for teachers who teach subjects other than music to view the place-highlighted music program offered by Germaine and Natali in the northern part of the county. At present, exchanges between the music programs are not allowed.

Teachers and administrators should also take note of the fact that the Arts are taught through preparation time in the French Catholic board, unlike the public board. Anne commented that in her board, music through preparation time is offered if there is an interested and/or qualified music educator, “You trade off. If you want somebody to cover your music, you can still do it” (personal communication, May 4, 2013) providing that there is a music person on staff. It is very beneficial to share these ideas and organizational issues between boards for new ideas and innovative ways to improve program delivery.

Celebration of Rural Areas: Place-Based Approach

The conversation continued with the participants discussing what each has accomplished in the past through a place-based approach. They also commented on the importance of highlighting any initiatives that have been successful, and which would be likely to work well in the future. Anne remarked that Germaine’s community is a very vibrant one with its French Canadian culture. Germaine’s approach may therefore serve as a model for other communities as she highlights place from a historical and cultural way through her music program. Natali agreed, adding that Germaine’s community has an abundance of musical and artistic talent that should be celebrated throughout the county, not solely in Germaine’s community. Natali added, “they are very artistic – and we have various artists in the area” to share their talents and place-based music with the school community. Germaine commented on the importance of the school reaching out to community members, inviting artists in to share their talents:

The school, because it is a small school, a rural school, we almost need to expand, have it used as a community centre as well, where [at present] there is one
particular man who has [funds] to start a studio … and wants to … try to get him to use the school. Have the school become more a place where, different age groups come in … You have the old age centre right beside the school, residential apartments for seniors; have them come into the school. And share … [histories, stories, their talents]. (personal communication, May 4, 2013)

I mentioned that in Germaine’s community, local musicians and artists gather to celebrate the Festival du Loup, which demonstrates their strong commitment to culture. In other areas of the county however, residents do not have a distinct homogeneously contained historical culture that is celebrated. I added, “But we can celebrate the history [of our area of Huronia], and observe our local fairs and community festivals. And if we can do that, perhaps that will bring the rural back into … focus.” Anne added, “If you do that, then we can bring in … I’m thinking especially York, Simcoe County, focus on place, to bring back the music, like in Lafontaine.” Anne also explained how one particular First Nations community in our county considers their school as “being the hub of the community.” She was excited about the idea and wanted to adopt that philosophy in her school. Anne remarked, “that really spurred me on when I became principal” (personal communication, May 4, 2013) to consider utilizing the space in the school for many different services; for social recreation, counseling, law enforcement, etc. She remarked:

And I was talking to a student from [the First Nations Community] last week at the history fair and he loves it … everything is there … its all right there under one roof … they are not paying rent to build a police station, it’s all right there under one roof, all of the offices, so financially I think it makes a lot more sense and overall with the community having instant access for the students that need these. Makes a sense [of place]! (personal communication, May 4, 2013)

The participants believed it to be an excellent proposal, yet they all agreed with Germaine who stated, “the Ministry wants everybody to be the same” (personal communication, May 4, 2013).

**One size does not fit rural: From standardization to special schools.** Germaine commented, “I think we [rural schools] are losing that uniqueness. That’s why they have standardized testing.” Natali added, “Yes standardized curriculum as well … they think
everything is mobile, that you move and that everything is the same.” All remarked that moving from one area to another is certainly not at all the same. Germaine added that standardized testing “doesn’t help them to feel better about their ‘self’, so you have to take each child for the strength that they have. Kids don’t have a chance to get a sense of identity, of self and place, they are [just] being drilled.” Natali replied, “I always thought that they paid lip service to the intelligences.” Anne stated, “which is too bad, because … you are absolutely right, they are ignoring the values of music and a well balanced life.” Germaine commented on the importance of a school that includes the arts and environmental issues – place-based for rural areas. “I would give anything to have a school like that” (personal communication, May 4, 2013). Yet all participants agreed that fiscal constraints and lack of knowledge of the special issues facing rural areas would stand in the way of such a venture.

**Importance of the rural voice: Creating a centre for rural education studies.** One theme that was prevalent throughout the collaborative session is the importance of the rural voice. All participants felt that the rural voice may be heard at a small rural community level, yet is not heeded in an all-encompassing way outside of the locale. Despite the many attempts by the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, the Department of Rural Studies, the University of Guelph that advocates for the viability of the agricultural and environmental sector, Statistics Canada that provides a quantitative view of rural areas and sociological aspects of rurality in Canada, and the many academic journals and U.S. government rural statistics such as Why Rural Matters: 2011 – 2012, from an Ontario educational perspective, the situation is rather bleak. Lenore agreed with my suggestion for the creation of a Centre for Rural Studies to accompany the Centre for Urban Studies at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. Lenore remarked that it would be a very important department, seeing that “most of Canada is rural!”
However Anne brought the conversation back to the local level and asked the participants, “Where does the change start? … Does it start in the individual school with the principal, the director, or the Ministry? I think that the way things are right now, you have to start with the Ministry.” Natali answered, “Yes, it is top down.” Anne and the others continued to dialogue:

**Anne:** Because I know … that we had a new director, that started in Simcoe County, a few years back and I was ecstatic because he had a music background; he was a principal of an Arts school down in [another] region, he’ll have empathy with the music. I am going to go with him and say “How about doing this … this and this?” His response … “I appreciate your passion” and he said, Try and do it with your own school.”

**Germaine:** (Clarifying) … Try to do it with your own school?

**Anne:** Yep. Just do the music in your own school. That was his response.

**Germaine:** What were you proposing?

**Anne:** Try to get music out to the whole county … And he was a good music person and he said … “Just do it in your own school!” … But I was so disappointed because there we had somebody in the director’s [position] who should have been very empathetic and been able to do something and we didn’t … so that’s why I am thinking, so we need to start at the Ministry. And start making presentations.

**Natali:** Or start at the level where they handle the money. Maybe the trustees.

**Anne:** That’s right. Well it’s all-provincial education.

**Natali:** Yes that is true and trustees [cannot] really do anything.

**Anne:** So I think the Ministry would be the way to go. So what do you need us to do?

**Germaine:** We need to make our perspective known and appreciated by more people … it takes a while to change culture, an educational culture. And it takes a while and we have to start somewhere. (personal communication, May 4, 2013)

Germaine believes that change occurs in “baby steps… the first thing that comes to mind is baby steps. You have to do something, try to keep it [music] alive.” Since Germaine has been involved in this research study, she has become a member of her local school committee to advocate for the school and plan new initiatives to keep the school vibrant and alive in her area. Anne has also been actively involved, advocating for rural education and rural schools as a chairperson of the educational committee for the Ontario Plowmen’s Association, hosted by Simcoe County in 2014. She described her plans:

I am planning to put a book out about plowing, about everything in the education area. I am having First Nations, followed by a historical walk through rural Simcoe
County with the First Nations: Métis … Simcoe County Museum, into present day with the animals and crops we have now … I am looking for contacts. (personal communication, May 4, 2013)

The focus group session ended with all participants sharing an interest in Anne’s current work with the upcoming plowing match, demonstrating their keen interest in rural education and specifically music education in the county. Germaine and Natali summed up the importance of continued conversation and advocacy on the topic. Germaine stated, “And I think that great minds (pointing to all participants) can make a difference. There has to be a way to convince … and I think being retired music teachers, French teachers, we have a different perspective on the education system and I think it is important for us to rally.” Natali added, “We have a sense of history and new people do not. We can see how things have transitioned” (personal communication, May 4, 2013).

The next steps and initiatives suggested by all participants will be beneficial in three ways. They will highlight and preserve the rural schools and culture of the surrounding areas. They will give rural students a feeling of pride and interest in their rural community that may encourage them to stay and/or return after they have completed post secondary studies. And finally, they will instill in students, parents, teachers, and residents of a rural community, a sense of belonging, of place, and attachment to their place. All of the above may be accomplished, and more from a general as well as a music education perspective.
Chapter Nine: Conclusion

Theoretical Discourses: Underlying Themes to Ponder for Future Consideration

**Rurbanization, agribusiness, fiscal constraints, politics of teaching.** After reading through the participant chapters, reflecting on their personal and professional stories, and reviewing the data of the collaborative session, I believe a discussion of rural matters, specifically those related to rural music education, cannot begin without critiquing the underlying issues that affect communities and education in general. I turn initially to the work of Apple (2010) who reminds educational researchers and teachers that, “we must see education as a political act” (p. 152). The author also warns that we must think relationally – why we are teaching what we teach, who makes the decisions, and what values are important and represented. He asks, “What can we do as critical educators, researchers and activists to change existing educational and social inequalities” (p. 152)? To answer this question requires an examination of the underlying issues affecting and influencing the direction of education in rural areas.

In regard to Apple’s notion of *relationality*, I believe my rural music education participants truly critiqued their perspectives from a relational point of view, touching on many aspects of their rural lives, on education and schooling, and on the outside influences that affect them daily. Many issues are political in nature and related to the politics of schooling, to aspects of neo-liberalism, and capitalism. The rural perspective is complex and transformative.

From the participants’ perspectives, competing forces are seen as creating diverse issues. Firstly, *rurbanization* - the expansion of urban-style subdivisions – is creeping into rural areas and transforming the rural landscape. Agribusiness in rural areas; the agricultural sector is expanding from small family farms to mega farms to keep up with consumer demand for top
quality cheap food, thus demanding higher crop yields. Farmers must specialize and go big to compete in the world markets. Agribusiness is indirectly affecting the positionality of rural education. Fiscal constraints in cash strapped rural boards of education are changing the dynamics of teaching; school boards are pinched to find the monies to operate (Irwin, 2012, p. 287). The terms ‘rural’ and ‘rurality’ are easy to intuitively understand but hard to define. The politics of teaching and testing is transforming what is taught and how it is taught (Apple & King, 1977). All of the above discourses are underlying issues that affect the ‘top-down’ ladder effect of education in general, and particularly rural education, which often gets left out of the conversation. The participants in this dissertation refer to these issues as they relate to their music teaching praxes and rural education in general.

**Community and communitarianism.** ‘Community’ is a word that is often used in conjunction with rural areas. The term itself is cause for much dispute amongst theorists and can have different meanings depending on the context in which it is used. It is therefore informative and insightful to hear rural residents’ points of view on their meanings of community and to listen to the stories of experience of the rural music education participants. I defined the term through the voices of the participants. Anne related, “Community is made up of people in a specific geographical area. Community can also be made up of like-minded people … community is reaching out” (personal communication, June 12, 2012). Germaine described community as “a feeling, where there are neighbours – a group of people – they can be in a village, a church, or in a certain area, like the French rural community” (personal communication, August 10, 2013). Lenore commented that community means, “a group of people who are tied together … in a helpful way… a demographic place” (personal communication, March 31, 2012). Natali defined community as a sentiment, tied to people and
place. She stated, “the sense of place of where you are and the traditions that are around where you are … I mean the day to day people place and tradition, that would be the community” (personal communication, May 12, 2012).

The participants therefore tend to value the ‘community’, the people and the places that surround them in their teaching praxes. Corbett and Mulcahy (2006) refer to the value that rural residents place on their communities and how they take ownership of them and the institutions that serve and represent them. “Residents of rural communities have often worked very long and hard to establish community-based institutions and organizations like schools and small hospitals that are actually very well attuned not only to local circumstances but also to larger global forces as well” (p. 20). Many rural communities also celebrate dedication to the locale as in my own rural place, where every fall one local resident is awarded a communitarian award, the Citizen of the Year; it is awarded to a person “who has committed to the betterment of the community”⁴⁵. I therefore refer to the notion of *communitarianism*, which celebrates community betterment. It is also defined as “a theory or system of social organization based on small self-governing communities” (Oxford Dictionary, 2014). This is a complex theory and discourses are many and varied, and for the most part are beyond the scope of this dissertation. Yet I will borrow some thoughts from Tam (1998) who offers three principles in which communitarian beliefs can apply to an inclusive community such as those discussed and critiqued by the participants. He sees the following ideals as important. a) “a co-operative inquiry” (p. 7) from a group or local perspective. My participants believe that rural issues are a community discussion and cannot be left to the individual or to the politicians who are unaware of the rural perspective. b) “common
values validated by communities … should form the basis of mutual responsibilities … [and] undertaken by all members of those communities” (p. 7). The participants call for continued dialogue on what each rural community needs, due to the fact that each rural community is so different in many ways. And, c) “power relations … must be reformed so that all those affected by them can participate as equal citizens in determining how the power … is to be exercised” (p. 7). He also remarks that communitarians support “attitudes and conditions … to build inclusive communities” (p. 7). The participants concluded that “power relations” (personal communication, May 4, 2013) and the ways they affect rural schools should be governed by the needs of individual communities, instead of through a blanket policy where one community perspective fits all. I believe that the four participants in my study work toward this shared vision of community and emulate a communitarian perspective through their rural music education praxes as discussed by Tam (1998).

**Rural and rurality.** Budge (2006), in a frequently cited article, introduces the notion of rural and rurality as terms that are difficult to define, due to the diversity of rural communities. She states, “the difficulty of defining rurality is, in itself, one of several common features frequently documented in the literature” (p. 5). She lists other features of rurality in addition to the lack of a uniform definition; “school and community interdependence, oppression as lived experience, a history of conflict regarding purposes of schooling, an outmigration of young, intellectually able citizens, and a salient attachment to place” (p. 6). My participants however, tend to see rural and rurality as represented through two frames of reference from a demographic/social perspective, and a relational/tension perspective.

The notion of rural conjures up feelings and essences, some negative, and others positive. Characterizations include isolation, fishbowl environment, close ties with others, safeness,
uniqueness, strong bonds, and a closeness with nature, history and culture. These sentiments ground the participants in their sense of place and attachment to their area. On the other hand, rural also relates to tensions – to change, an unwillingness to break from traditions, the lack of rural voice, the lack of resources and contacts, and instability and uncertainty. Yet Rios (1988), as cited in Budge (2006, p. 6) states, “people know when they are rural” (p. 1) even though it is difficult to explain. My participants therefore presented a few words and phrases to represent their rural notion. Rural means: farmland, a sense of community, knowing your neighbours, ‘a lack of’, transportation issues, and living on the ‘concessions’.

The participants discussed problems at length in the focus group session that relate to the politics of schooling. They critiqued school reforms that push for rural school closures and curriculum expectations that do not leave room for music education programs to continue. They all believe that rural communities can collectively advocate for their unique school situations. Arvind (2009) (as cited in Irwin (2012) raises issues that are occurring in rural communities in India, where rural people are attempting to strengthen the capabilities of their rural schools from the local perspective and are advocating for positive change. (Similar matters, such as rural school closures that are happening in rural India are occurring in Ontario). Arvind (2009) supports the notion of the importance of community members and “participatory deliberative governance” so that “ordinary people … can experience empowerment at the local level” (p. 2) and from a communitarian perspective. He states, “For democracy to be fully empowering, it should be fully alive at the grassroots level” (p. 2). The author dialogues further to label the school as a starting point (used previously but bears repeating). “School as civic space then provides the context in which shared visions, textured solidarity, and ongoing struggles can be realized to construct a more participatory form of democracy” (Arvind, 2009, p. 3). This
perspective also relates to the issues brought forward by the participants in terms of advocating for their communities, from the topic of rural school closures, to highlighting their community through place-based curricular ideals.

With these theoretical underpinnings in mind, I will review the four research questions and the resulting perspectives of the participants in the following discourse. As a total of 16 interviews were completed and each person read all conversations then commented on them, a large amount of data was gathered. After sifting through countless conversations and later participant comments, homogeneous themes emerged across the spectrum of participant data.

**Question One: Experiencing the Personal, Sociological and Professional**

The first sub-question addressed issues that personify a rural music educator. How do four experienced rural music teachers make meaning of the personal, sociological, and professional circumstances of their praxis – or presented in a more colloquial form – What is it like to be a rural music educator? The following themes emerged: the multifaceted roles a music teacher fulfills in the school and the intersecting role the music educator experiences with the local community.

**Rural music teacher roles.** In-depth discussions with the four participants paint a very diverse and intense picture of the role the teachers assumed in their rural schools. These diverse roles are as follows: Lenore: kindergarten and primary teacher, preparation time teacher (music), assembly and concert accompanist, band assistant director; Natali: French teacher, teacher librarian, preparation time teacher (music, social studies, mathematics, literacy), choir director, concert and assembly director; Anne: regular classroom teacher, planning time teacher (music), band director, choir director, musical director, glee club director, piano accompanist for assemblies, concerts, choral festival, vice principal, principal, Germaine: Kindergarten (French
acquisition), preparation time (music), choral director, organ and piano accompanist for school church Masses. The list of the many duties the four participants have assumed throughout their teaching careers therefore demonstrates the multifariousness of their teaching responsibilities. It is unfortunate however, that Germaine is the only educator who taught music on a full-time basis, for in Germaine’s board, Arts instruction is provided through preparation time and is designated as such.

Bates (2011) describes music educators’ roles in rural areas as multifaceted, often requiring them to teach additional subjects. He also comments on the complications of teaching music as well as other subjects. “It can be frustrating to have the skills to help students succeed, yet not have enough time in the day to do everything – a problem not necessarily unique to rural schools, but certainly amplified by the expertise required in teaching multiple levels and subjects” (p. 92). Isbell (2005) also discusses the issue of the expectations of the rural music teacher. He states, “Rural music teachers may also have other responsibilities that are unrelated to music. After teaching a variety of music classes each day, they can often be seen driving school buses, coaching sports teams, or advising student clubs” (p. 30). In the case of my participants, extreme roles such as actually driving a bus did not occur, yet Germaine was responsible on many occasions to organize and ride the buses that picked up her choir. Students in her combined choir were representative of three different rural schools where she taught music. The bus started at one school, loading up the students and Germaine, and then proceeded to the next two schools to pick the remainder of the students up. This occurred for joint rehearsals and then to the music festival competition! Situations like the above may occur in urban areas as well, yet they cause more limitations in rural areas, where the schools are long distances away from each other and the rural roads are often hard to negotiate in winter weather.
Despite the fact that all four participants expressed their love of teaching music in their school and expressed many joys of doing so, they also expressed their frustrations in having to branch away from music to fulfill their other job requirements. They felt a disconnect with their music students when they were expected to teach other subjects, especially when students requested extra practice times and one-on-one sessions for extra help. These usually preceded choral festival and concert times.

Bates (2011) points out that many music teachers, as in all four participants’ cases, fulfill other responsibilities to their school and community after hours through their involvement in community events and committees. When Natali and Germaine assumed the additional role of ‘principal relief,’ (a duty they assumed when the principal was out of the school building) they were in charge of any disciplinary issues that occurred during the school day. This secondary role also took them away from their music duties. However Germaine and Natali believe this extra duty to be well suited for the music educator, for in their capacities as music teachers they were familiar with all of the students in the school. Germaine discussed this role and the relationship she has forged with students through music:

I have always been [an] assistant to the principal too, so I have a close connection to all the kids, especially the behavioural kids, because those are the ones that I have to see at lunchtime. Everybody would say, “I wouldn’t want that job for any money in the world!” But I liked it because I could sit down with those kids and have a conversation with them. And I wouldn’t have a problem with them in my classroom! It’s in somebody else’s classroom – the problem! ... They were familiar with your expectation and your fairness. (personal communication, August 10, 2012)

I also asked Germaine if she feels she has a closer relationship in this role as administrative-disciplinarian because she is the music educator. She answered, “Yes because I have become a constant in their life. Classroom teachers come and go, change every year but they rely on me to be always there” (personal communication, August 10, 2012).
As vice principal and principal, Anne also experienced a similar sentiment in regard to being close to students through her dual role as administrator and music educator. Yet sometimes she found that asking teachers to excuse students from their regular classroom instruction was difficult. And as principal, Anne ran all of the extracurricular music programs in the school. She remarked:

As vice principal and principal it was different than as a teacher. As a teacher I could take my class and just practise. I could take the other classes and practise at recesses and lunches and do things immediately. As principal and vice principal, I didn’t have that luxury because they had their regular instruction going on. I had to have them during recesses if I were available, or lunch hours, and being principal it is hard because the teachers want to see you and the staff wants to see you, parents want to see you. There might be a little discipline going on at recess. So it was tough as principal to do that. (personal communication, June 12, 2012)

Yet all participants congratulated Anne for her dedication to music education through her administrative role, for small rural principals face added challenges as compared to their urban counterparts (Starr & White, 2008). As Anne was attempting to fill a gap in music education by building a community of music on top of fulfilling the requirements of her administrative role, she was going above and beyond the expectations of her position.

**Community: Music teacher as communitarian.** It is well documented in academic literature that music plays an important role in establishing a sense of place, and develops and advertises a particular geographical place’s identity (Brook, 2011; Derrett, 2003a; Gibson, 2002; Hudson, 2006; Whiteley, Bennett, & Hawkins, 2004). In terms of local culture, music not only provides a sense of identity in the community, but also grounds the local residents and students in their place. Robertson (2001) comments on the importance of music in a place. He states, “Music operates symbolically like place. Music does not simply reflect a place, sense of space, or local identity, but also creates (and is used to create) these” (p. 214). And in a specific rural
place, the music educator performs an important role as a place and community builder, creating music with her students and advocating for community through her music praxis. To me, the music educator plays the role of a communitarian, a notion that gives emphasis to the importance of an individual to shape a community ideology.

This very important aspect of a music educator is exemplified in Germaine’s teaching praxis as she incorporated the local French Canadian legends and folk music in her classroom music teaching and in her choral repertoire for the local music festival. In Lenore’s Kindergarten classroom, she taught songs that exemplified the seasons, relating them to the agricultural practices of the area and the local festivals, which according to Derrett (2003a) builds an emotional attachment to place. Particularly noteworthy was Lenore’s dedication to the school band, which performed at the local and regional community festivals, for it was the mandate of the band program to foster relationships between rural communities.\textsuperscript{46} Natali, Anne, and Germaine, in their choirs’ participation in the local music festival and in the cultural festivals in their areas, also built a sense of community, as they highlighted their local school musicians. Derrett (2003a) discusses the importance of building community, which she believes is “almost invisible yet [a] critical part of a healthy community”. She also remarks, “A sense of community comes from a shared vision, where a clear sense of purpose values individual’s ideas and contribution and involves working together on community issues, celebrations, and problem solving” (p. 51). The participants therefore not only recognize their music education efforts,

\textsuperscript{46} The first principal of the school started the school band in 1968. His vision was to form a music group that would represent the rural community in performance and liaise between the local rural communities and represent the school, community, township and county. The band continues today, yet in a different form.
(which mostly are completed after school hours) as important music education tools, but as identity, sense of community, and sense of place ‘builders.’

Music plays an important role in place identity and in local community culture, such as in Germaine’s locale, where local musicians and residents highlight the French component and the popular culture of their French Canadian hamlet of Lafontaine. Natali emphasized this role in her music praxis as well. Anne and Germaine both developed place identity through their churches. These various music activities also ground residents in their community and give them a distinctive ownership of their place. Bennett (2004) remarks on the significance of music in community culture stating, “As well as providing the socio-cultural backdrop for distinctive musical practices and innovations, urban and rural spaces also provide the rich experiential setting in which music is consumed” (p. 2). In a rural area, school music plays a very large Arts role in the community, linking school children with the local residents. Students perform in school and community functions, and also provide the community members with Arts opportunities that they may otherwise be without. Isbell (2005) believes that in a rural area, performances in the community are important in “establishing the music program as an integral part of the school and community” (p. 33). Oftentimes residents do not have the opportunity or availability to travel long distances to performance venues, so the music entertainment and visiting Arts performers who come to the schools, are often the only music experiences that are available to a small sector of the rural population. Teachers and students, as in the case of the four participants, support local music culture. “As local musical cultures are understood, embraced and brought into the life and identity of the teacher [and students], a space [is] created for these same practices in the classroom” (Bates, 2011, p. 93) and in extra-curricular music programs. In Germaine’s classroom music lessons, she highlighted local culture – legends and
historical events – as she carefully chose repertoire to reflect these community values. Natali also felt it very important to highlight the adjacent community’s French heritage by including a French choir in her school and providing the neighbouring school students and her own school community, a space in the French choir. As she championed the French culture of her area in the rural music festival, she further demonstrated her commitment to community culture. In the collaborative session, Natali remarked about the significance of the musical culture in Lafontaine, “they are very, very artistic. I always think of [singers, and songwriters in your community].” Germaine replied, “And they are very artistic. A lot of artists come out of Lafontaine” (personal communication, May 4, 2013).

Bennett (2004) discusses the importance of a local musical culture, such as that found in Lafontaine. “Both as a creative practice and as a form of consumption, music plays an important role in the narrativization of place, that is, in the way in which people define their relation to local, everyday surroundings” (p. 2). Music chosen by Germaine and Natali highlights this local music culture and “interacts with the local structure of feeling” (Bennett, 1997, as cited in Bennett, 2004, p. 3). Anne did similarly in her rural area through her school and church music program, providing a bridge between the community institutions. Lenore celebrated community through music, linking the local agricultural practices and community festivals and celebrations to her involvement in the extracurricular band program and classroom music practices. All participants therefore demonstrated a commitment to local cultural, social, and economic practices. They utilized their music praxes to liaison in a communitarian sense - supporting “attitudes and conditions … to build inclusive communities” (Tam, 1998, p. 7) between the school and the locale.

**Forging community connections.** The four participants demonstrated their commitment
to building community relationships through their extensive involvement with their communities through school music activities; band, choral, and musical performances at the school, concerts in community venues such as churches, nursing homes, retirement homes, special events, and meetings. The students involved in these many and varied performances and musical interactions also strengthened their bonds with community residents and organizations. Brook (2011) remarks on the positive aspects of musical opportunities for students. She remarks, “Traveling outside of the community increased relationships among students, and deepened their understanding of traditions both within their local community as well as their place in a provincial community” (p. 164). From participants’ perspectives, this interaction was felt on many levels: school, community, township, county, and province. However the participants were also involved in other community interactions on a personal scale, which indirectly was connected to their position as music educator. These interactions ultimately had great potential to strengthen their relationship between themselves and their community. As the music educator in the community, the formation of these significant, outside bonds positively influenced their teaching praxes in a circulatory (sequential) way.

**School and church.** Germaine is deeply involved with her church, both on a personal level and through her school. To Germaine, her faith is a very important aspect of her music education praxis, for she has a strong commitment to her beliefs and a personal passion to provide a religious education through her music repertoire. As a longstanding member of the church in her community, she played a triple role, as the church organist, the choral director of her community choir, and as the choral director and accompanist for the school Masses. She also prepared the students to sing the repertoire and on many occasions, gave students a turn to choose the repertoire for the monthly school Mass.
By comparison, Anne is also the organist at her church, and was the choir director for a period of time, yet other than performing during church services with her students, there was no connection between the church and curriculum due to her position as teacher/administrator in a public board. Anne however, believed this dual role further strengthened the bond she forged with the community members as well as students and parents. She also believes that a strong community bond enhances her sense of belonging and sense of place. Academic literature on rural teachers supports Anne’s position that living and teaching in a rural area grounds residents in their place and forges strong bonds between community members (Arvind, 2009; Bates, 2011; Harper, 2004). If an educator teaches in the local village, assumes the duties of organist in the church, and lives in the vicinity as well as Anne and Germaine have, it stands to reason that they would develop a very strong sense of community and attachment to place. The narratives of Anne and Germaine support that assumption.

**Music educator and beyond.** Germaine and Anne both demonstrate a commitment to their local community that goes above and beyond their educators’ roles, yet are tied in some respects to schooling in their community and to their dedication to the viability and stability of education. It is interesting to note that both Germaine and Anne are connected with their church and are members of political and social organizations outside of their regular teaching roles. Germaine has assumed a position in her local school to advocate for its continuation in providing a French language program. Seeing that the school is suffering from low student enrolment, she has recently joined a committee to assist in future planning. She is also advocating for a place-based curriculum that highlights the positives of their Francophone community as well as their Francophone heritage. She commented that the incentive to get involved at the school community level is due to her participation in this research study. Even though she does not have
family members attending the local school, she still feels a strong commitment to Francophone education and in preserving her rural Francophone community, heritage, and culture.

Anne is still involved in education in her county on a part-time basis, when she is called back to assume administrator positions on an occasional basis. In addition, Anne has volunteered to sit as chairperson on an upcoming rural event, hence her commitment to rural education. She has a dedicated affiliation with the agricultural community, due to her strong, ongoing agricultural rural roots. As Anne outlined in her personal story, her family background is deeply rooted in agriculture. Today one of her family members still is working in the farming industry. Her sister and family own a large farm north of Barrie. Anne is involved in the farming operation during the summer harvest season. She explained her educational role in the upcoming International Plowing Match, to be held in her county in 2014:

I am the education chair of the International Plowing Match, talking about rural. And that’s 2014 but I want in our education area, to have things in French and English. I want to include the French schools. And I am also preparing a book, because so often children go to the Plowing Match and they never see what plowing is, and they still don’t know what it’s about. So I am making a primary book. I have a great artist … she is going to draw for me, but I would like to have it all … translated into … French. (personal communication, May 4, 2013)

Anne believes that children in rural areas should retain connection to their place, be mindful of their roots, and understand the transitions occurring in rural areas. She also feels that new students who are moving into the area should appreciate the ties that rural students have to the land, particularly those who come from a farming background. Agricultural communities have a history that is deeply connected to the land as a physical structure. This connection historically has embodied the essence of rural sense of place. Woods, Heley, Richards, and Watkins (2012) conclude:

Whereas land is simply the foundation for the construction of towns, and cities, whose urban culture and economy thrive on human ingenuity and industry that may have little direct attachment to the physical ground over which it occurs,
Question Two: Music Teacher Perceptions of Sense of Place

The second question guiding this study was, ‘What are music teachers’ perceptions of a sense of place in the contexts of their professional praxes?’ A wealth of data pertaining to this question appeared under the headings of Juxtaposition of Purpose and Space. In this section, participants defined their music education praxis through their involvement in music from a political perspective. They discussed the tensions existing between the purpose of schooling and the actual allotted space to carry out curriculum expectations. These produce conflict and seem to be detrimental to their sense of security in their teaching praxis, in their rural community, and beyond. As their sense of safeness and the security they have historically known in their rural place slowly erodes, their perception of sense of place follows suit. Consequently the participants all believe that their sense of place is intricately connected to the music experiences they were involved in, as well as the issues and tensions that were occurring in their locales at the classroom, school, board, and Ministry level. These tensions have an effect on their personal feelings of sense of place because issues are transforming their rural areas and consequently their emotional attachment and feelings of place. The themes that emerged fall under the heading of Breaking Bonds: Sense of Place in Transition. They are: lack of understanding of rural uniqueness – changing landscape of rural areas, curriculum homogeneity\(^{47}\), teaching to leave, and the eminent closure of rural schools. As these problems are very real, they were debated at

\(^{47}\) Homogeneity is defined as “the quality or state of being homogeneous [alike or the same]” (Oxford Dictionary, 2014). Retrieved at http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/homogeneity?q=homogeneity I use this term in relation to curriculum, meaning that curriculum instruction is the same across the province of Ontario, regardless of the ‘place’ it is implemented.
Breaking bonds: Sense of place in transition. The following issues were raised throughout the participants’ interviews and collaborative sessions. They were discussed as creating tensions and breaking the close community affiliations and bonds that rural areas have historically enjoyed and celebrated. As rural areas are slowly transforming, participants believe the following as being detrimental to residents’ attachment to their areas and to the future of rural communities.

The uniqueness of rural areas. In the collaborative discussion, the four participants discussed the uniqueness of their own rural areas and compared each. Germaine discussed the domination of the Francophone culture and the ways in which her rural community is steeped in its historical traditions. Natali discussed her perspective from the notion of ‘smallness’ noting that her rural school was situated in an area that had no resemblance to Germaine’s. However Natali remarked that her area was also rich with historical significance, due to the presence of many Huron archaeological sites close to her community.\footnote{Further information on historic archaeological sites in Simcoe County can be retrieved from: \url{http://www.oashuronichapter.com/p/archaeologists-in-huronia.html}}

Anne and Natali critiqued the similarities between their schools, for each school is the heart and life-blood of the community. The school stands alone in the locale, where there are no other public buildings; Anne’s last school was isolated and stood alone in a field. On the other hand, Lenore’s school is located in a small hamlet, which bears no resemblance to the others. All participants’ rural communities, and schools and the social and political circumstances that surround them are therefore different and unique.

The four participants considered the political viewpoint on education in general and the
apparent failure of education policymakers to take the uniqueness of each community into account, specifically related to rural areas. In terms of curriculum and testing student knowledge, the geographical context means nothing. In fact if a student lives in a rural or urban area, he/she is tested as if learning is situated in a sterile environment, where all things are equal. Yet students learn in a particular context, in a specific geographical area and come to school with different family, social and political perspectives. EQAO tests, written in an urban area, are often irrelevant to rural students, as a test would be to urban students, written from a rural perspective.

As a result, special features of rural and urban areas are not considered in school political policy; in terms of funding, the curriculum, testing and general school procedure. A ‘one size fits all’ philosophy marginalizes all areas, rural or urban. The four participants expressed their concerns in the following dialogue:

**Lenore**: What you have in your area … is totally different from what would be happening in [others’] areas … They are all so unique, so unique.

**Germaine**: I think we are losing that uniqueness. The Ministry wants everybody to be the same. That’s why they have standardized testing.

**Natali**: Yes … standardized curriculum as well.

**Germaine**: Everything is standardized …

**Natali**: They think everything is mobile, that you move and that everything is the same.

**Anne**: It is not the same (agreeing).

(personal communication, May 4, 2013)

In other words, education in Ontario and beyond has no geographical context.

The lack of noting ‘difference,’ uniqueness, and special characteristics in a community diminishes the relationships that students build between themselves and their rural locale. In addition this philosophy does not teach newcomers to rural areas about the importance of the land from an agricultural and environmental perspective. Moreover, this blanket policy does not encourage longstanding rural youth to remain in their communities and embrace the positive aspects of rural or build community. The participants therefore assert that current policies in
education that treat all areas as homogeneous, do not reflect the importance of place, nor do they model a perspective to build a sense of community, or sense of place. This position is well supported in academic literature (Corbett, 2009, 2010; Theobald, 2005), and provides an example of lack of support for rural education, rural schools, and teachers from all levels; administration, school board, and Ministry of Education.

**Changing landscape of rural: Agribusiness and rurbanization.** During the collaborative session, the participants discussed the changing rural landscape and its ties with the agricultural economy. As the small family farms of the past are now mega farms, the demographics of the area are changing. There are less farm children attending rural schools, which consequently creates a disconnect between the farming community and the schools. Knowledge of farming practices that was implicit is no longer there. Natali explained:

> When I came to [our area], I came from a mining town, I had 4-year-olds telling me, teaching me about things about farming and things about agriculture … but I will bet you now, unless it’s coming from their home, the kids don’t know a whole lot about what is going on and why their community is important or what the whole agricultural movement has done for the community. I bet you it’s not there anymore. (personal communication, May 4, 2013)

Anne, Lenore, and Germaine agreed. Germaine added, “I think the … rural schools should get back to their roots … to be distinct, I mean more agricultural … based. But we are trying … to compete and be like the big schools and it is not working. There should be more … [emphasis] on the environment, farming and agriculture.” Germaine referred to the ‘big schools’ – mostly urban – in her French board; the board office is also located in an urban area. She feels that there is a great disconnect and extreme difference between the rural and urban schools, yet they are treated in a similar manner. This issue of losing children was discussed extensively in the previous chapter under *Relating education to general rural issues: Why are we losing our children?*
Another pertinent subject raised in the collaborative session is the change in demographics in rural areas due to urbanization. As rural communities are transforming from small farms to mega farms, some of the farmland close to the rural hamlets are being developed. As my son often remarks, “Farmers close to town can’t compete with the ‘growing of houses’.” Since developers are buying up large areas to build houses, keeping up with the demand of urbanites moving to rural areas, landowners are selling for profit. Selling to developers is much more lucrative than cropping the land. This is an unfortunate reality that is occurring in rural areas. The matter of rurbanization is discussed in a previous chapter and is one that rural communities must confront. Anne asked, “Isn’t it [concerning] that the farming community is reflecting the education” in our rural areas? And again it’s dollars that are driving that” (personal communication, May 4, 2013).

The curriculum: Homogeneity and lack of following the document. According to the participants, one of the most glaring examples of homogeneity is in curriculum, where students are taught as if they all learn in the same geographical locations, in the same contexts and with the same resources. Apple (2004) discusses the curriculum and ideology surrounding it. He comments on the hegemony that exists in education; the control over what should be taught and how and by whom. He describes the control that exists through the “school as an institution, the knowledge forms, and the educator” and how they are “situated within a larger nexus of relations” (p. 3). The participants conferred that in their viewpoints, the relations of control are through the Ministry, the board, and the administrator. The teacher must carry out the wishes at each level. Yet the homogeneity of the curriculum does not allow for a relationship to a particular space and place. There is very little mention of the uniqueness of communities and therefore little opportunity to highlight place.
From a music perspective, the participants discussed how music is not taught in most rural schools. Not only do schools suffer from lack of resources, such as music rooms, teaching materials and music supplies, there are very few music educators at the elementary level. Germaine is the only participant who taught music full time as a protected subject. The Ministry of Education provides an Arts curriculum document for all public schools; consequently there is a disconnect of what should be taught and what is actually taught. They referred to the role of the regular classroom teacher at the elementary level who is expected to teach the Arts – the music portion of the curriculum if the school does not have a music specialist teacher. Yet the classroom teachers do not usually have the musical expertise to teach the challenging music curriculum and its expectations. Anne referred to the fact that music educators are suffering from a “lost generation” of music education in the schools. Anne and Natali’s comments corroborate the viewpoints of Bolden (2012) who reports on the negative affects of teaching music without specialists, consultants and resources.

Anne also mentioned that it is the duty of the administrator to make sure that the Arts subjects are taught. She remarked that the principal “can make it work” either through advocating for the hiring of music specialists and/or allowing teachers to trade off subjects so that music is covered in some capacity. She relates this to her board of education where the Arts are not a protected subject. Germaine and Natali also referred to the principal as being the key person to support music in the school, for according to the Ministry document, it is an expectation for him/her to do so. The Ministry of Education (2009) document, The Ontario Curriculum Grades 1–8: The Arts (2009) states:

To support student learning, principals ensure that the Ontario curriculum is being properly implemented in all classrooms through the use of a variety of instructional approaches, and that appropriate time, facilities, and resources are made available for teachers to allow all students to participate in all four strands of
the Arts program. To enhance teaching and student learning in all subjects, including the Arts, principals promote learning teams and work with teachers to facilitate teacher participation in professional development activities. (p. 11)

Anne made a comment about principals who do not value music and are not cognizant of communities who hold the Arts – particularly music in high regard. “Those types of principals … they are missing a big portion of their job … the community and what the community values” (personal communication, June 12, 2012). All participants were in agreement and commented that principals and teachers can connect students to their locale through the proper implementation of the Arts curriculum and the ways in which students can positively relate to community and place. Lenore, Natali, and Germaine all congratulated Anne for attempting to hire qualified music educators during her tenure as a member and chairperson of the board hiring committee, a role that is filled by principals. They also praised Anne’s dedication as an administrator to music, and how she used music to provide her students with a sense of community and sense of place.

**Teaching to leave.** Another issue that three of the four participants discussed in the personal interviews as being detrimental to rural areas, is the subliminal suggestion of the curriculum; teaching students to leave. During the collaborative session, all participants expressed a concern that this ‘hidden message’ in the curriculum was also detrimental to students’ feelings of pride toward their rural area, hence giving them a negative ‘sense of place’. Corbett (2007) discusses this negative perspective at length. He believes the curriculum has historically taught rural students to leave for better opportunities. Corbett contends, “The history of rural education can be read as one part of a larger history of urbanization, the movement of populations from the country to the city” (p. 8). He adds, “Rather than support place-based ways of knowing and established social, economic, and cultural networks in rural and coastal communities, the school has typically stood in opposition to local lifeworlds” (p. 10). As
teachers must teach to the curriculum and teach to ‘the EQAO tests’, all convictions of teaching through a place-based perspective are thrown asunder. Corbett (2004) confers stating, “The nature of professionalism among teachers has tended to privilege placeless, generic and technocratic ideas about what counts as education” (p. 10). The argument about students wanting to leave their rural areas was then directed toward to the notion of place-based curricular ideals – highlighting the positive aspect of rural living so that young people would return to their rural roots. Germaine also remarked that as teachers we must celebrate the local in our general education and specifically in our music programs to attract young families and encourage youth to stay. The participants therefore believe that curricular ideals should be changed to be more specific to community so that students and teachers can see the value of their rural areas. Being a proud rural communitarian will reflect a positive sense of belonging, hence a positive sense of place.

**Rural school closures.** Throughout the participant interviews and the collaborative session, one of the most contested issues was the fact that school boards are considering many rural school closures. This issue is widely challenged and has been discussed extensively in rural academic literature (Corbett, 2004; Irwin, 2012). In fact Corbett (2004) discusses this from a Canadian perspective, stating, “Canada’s ‘rural problem’ has been featured in education discourse for at least a century, and it is slowly being ‘solved’ by urbanization, out-migration and the consolidation of schools” (p. 33). Furthermore, this serious matter is not specific to Canada, but is a worldwide rural problem (Arvind, 2009; Lauzon & Leahy, 2000b; Hyry-Beihammer & Autti, 2013; Woods, 2006). In Irwin (2012), (a dissertation on the closure of rural schools from an Ontario perspective), the author states, “The research reveals a deep and divisive institutional-community dichotomy where the social purposes of the local school as defined by the
community, are in constant tension with the school board’s economic and fiscal policy purposes” (p. iv). He also points out that local school boards have a lack of empowerment to recognize and act on local needs, conditions, and special circumstances, for they are “on a defined tether” (p. 287). Even though they are expected to act for the betterment of rural communities, as outlined in the educational guidelines, they must follow the restrictive funding formulas. Irwin therefore refers to the tensions caused by the two directives (p. 287). All participants are cognizant of the restrictions that are placed on local boards in regard to school closures, yet feel that the affected communities should advocate for the schools to remain open. I state, “the concern of the rural [should be] addressed at the Ministry level.” Anne asked, “Where does the change start? I think that the way things are right now; you have to start with the Ministry.” Natali agreed. “Yes it is top down” (personal communication, May 4, 2013). The participants proposed that all issues, including school closures, advocating for rural community, and for the reinstatement of music education programs need to be addressed at the Ministry level.

Question Three: Rural Lived Experiences that Contribute to Sense of Place

During individual interviews the participants were asked: What features of rural lived experiences contribute to a sense of place? To answer this question, each participant provided a metaphor to represent their relationship with their rural area that symbolized their feeling of sense of rural place. The participants also chose a musical selection they had taught to their students, which they believed represented the essence of their rural music education praxis – working with rural children and interacting with community.

Metaphor as representation. The four participants were very keen and eager to represent their teaching praxis in a metaphorical way. They utilized the concept of metaphor to describe their relationship to their rural area, and/or to their social and professional interaction
with their communities. The metaphors were different, ranging from objects to an art form. As discussed in Anne’s chapter, she chose the notion of a pyramid, for she believes that her interaction with her students in a musical sense, builds community. Like a pyramid, Anne provides the basis of music education so that her students can be ambassadors of their community either as an individual or in a group. Anne’s sense of place is therefore tied to her commitment to her rural community.

Natali chose a Jan Brett picture book that represents a person fulfilling many different roles in a day. Natali relates to the outdoor, geographic settings of Jan Brett’s picture books in her teaching praxis, where her school is situated in an isolated area with nature surrounding her – farmers’ fields, woods, and hills. She believes that in an isolated rural area, music teachers are often teaching more than one subject and must be very enterprising and assiduous to fulfill their obligations to rural students, parents, and community. Natali feels that the music teacher gives to the community, and the community gives back. Unfortunately Natali’s school is slated to close in future, and teachers, parents, students, and community members must work together in many roles to avert the closure. Natali’s rural sense of place is therefore tied to demographics, teacher roles, and commitment to community.

Lenore chose an art form – music – as metaphor for a rural community. Lenore believes that in her community, her rural sense of place is tied to music. Through this art form, Lenore interacted with students, parents, and community members through her music teaching, her accompanist roles, and through her involvement in the extra-curricular school band and community choir. Music also plays a familiar role to Lenore, as her family was very involved in music education – her father as a rural principal and advocate for the Arts and her mother as a primary teacher in a rural school, with a focus on music in her classroom. Lenore believes that
music is the essence of her interactions in her rural community, and her sense of place.

Germaine’s metaphor of the wolf relates to her rural Francophone community, strongly steeped in Francophone culture, heritage and tradition. As discussed in her chapter, the wolf is metaphor for the community of Lafontaine, Ontario, which annually hosts the Festival du Loup. Germaine believes that her sense of place is tied to her relationship with her community, her religion, her faith, and her Francophone heritage. In the legend of the wolf, the wolf is the protector of the community and to this day, the wolf still remains a symbol for the community’s sense of belonging and sense of place. The wolf as metaphor for Germaine’s music education praxis and her involvement in her rural culture brings these images to life. Just as indigenous story telling uses metaphors to tell a life story and reflect a culture (Archibald, 2008, p. 381), the wolf in Germaine’s opinion symbolizes her sense of place and sense of belonging in her Francophone community.

Music metaphors. Higgs (2008) remarks that “dance, music, poetry and other arts all provide metaphors for lived experience, allowing us to see ways to live and grow and new ways to know” (p. 553). Metaphors have the ability to not only produce images, but to create a picture of interaction and experience. McCarthy (2007) draws on metaphors as a way of understanding musical knowledge in an interpretive sense and gaining insight into the self. She utilizes “the metaphor of ‘spinning and weaving’ as analogous with the acts of making stories and creating narratives which document and interpret them” (p. 4). In relation to music education and the understanding of music from a relational sense, metaphors can represent “the act of recalling music and its meaning” (p. 6). Consequently it is from this perspective that I review the musical compositions that my participants chose to represent their rural music education praxis.

Anne chose an instrumental composition – At the Hop – that her children loved to
perform, and Lenore chose *Morning has Broken* – a song that represents the start of a new day in the Kindergarten music class. Germaine and Natali both chose choral compositions that were symbolic of their commitment to community culture. Their choirs performed these at special community events. Germaine chose *Prayer of the Children*, and Natali chose *Une Colombe*. All participants remarked that the compositions chosen represented the emotional attachment they have to their music praxis, their music students, and the rural school and surrounding community they serve. It is interesting to note that this metaphorical exercise encouraged them to write a narrative story to explain the context of the metaphor and the lived experience that surrounded it.

**Stories of experience.** I asked each participant about their lived experiences as rural music educators and the short biographical stories they either told me, or wrote down as a journal entry, provided very rich data that greatly informed my study. I turn to the work of Denzin (2008) who describes a biographical experience as “interpretive research”. To be an interpretive biographical excerpt, it must be a “meaningful event or moment in a subject’s life” (p. 117). Even though the participant stories I collected are not a chronology of their lives, they paint pictures of lived experiences, impressions, and images of their music education praxes in their rural communities. I therefore borrow Denzin’s notion of stories of experience to frame my presentation of the interpretive data.

A review of the participants’ stories reveals themes categorized under *Musical Emotional Experiences*. The stories were mostly unscripted and emerged from the rich interview data. It is interesting to note that each story evoked either an emotion of joy or sorrow, and at times the participants demonstrated this emotion as they talked about a particularly moving or upsetting event. The stories produced rich narratives linked to their interactions in their rural community, to their students, parents, and some to certain students who made an impact on their professional
lives. Particularly noteworthy are the stories about negotiating diversity, where each participant believes that in a small rural area, students at the elementary level are inclusive and treat all of their school peers with respect. The participants did remark however that this tended to be a relational aspect of young children, for this might change as they grow into adolescence. Yet they remarked that in a music capacity, their students tended to value their peers as co-musicians by their musical strengths and interests, rather than by their ethnicity, race, gender preference, or socioeconomic status.

The stories therefore produced a large amount of rich data that portrayed the four participants as very dedicated, positive educators who are aware of the rural issues that continue to be a detriment to rural education. Yet the participants are determined to stand up for and advocate for positive change in rural areas, for a rural voice, for better programming, for the importance of recognizing rural for its strong qualities and highlighting these, and most significantly, they continue to provide the best music education experiences they can offer to their rural students.

**Question Four: Embodying Place-Based Practices**

Participants were asked my fourth research sub-question: How do educators situate their practice to embody place-based teaching practices? This was answered in the collaborative session, which highlighted the importance of moving forward with a place-based perspective. Yet participants expressed pessimism with regards to implementing this perspective due to fiscal constraints, the lack of rural voice, and policies that tend to favour urban areas.

It is well documented in the teachers’ stories of their professional lived experiences that they believe in the importance of highlighting the positive aspects of rural life, rural living, and rural schooling. Particularly important to them is the land and environment, that is such a
significant aspect of the rural context. Their call for a place-based educational approach in rural
education is therefore loud and clear.

In the interviews, the participants all commented on the importance of context to their
teaching praxis. Germaine and Natali discussed the historical significance of their area and the
need to situate their music practice from a place-based perspective. They both demonstrated that
philosophy through the classroom and choral repertoire they chose and their daily emphasis on
highlighting the positive aspects of their rural area. Anne and Lenore did likewise, with the
strong bonds they forged and constructed through their community engagement and classroom
practices. Anne also is committed to her rural culture; the history, agriculture, music, and general
rural practices. Yet Anne asked, “where do we go from here?”

**Moving forward: “Rurally relevant” teaching.** All teachers see a disconnect between
educational policy and the means for moving their ideals of place-based education forward. In
other words, they see many stumbling blocks. The issues associated with implementing a place-
based approach across the curriculum were discussed at length in the collaborative session.
Firstly, the participants acknowledge the importance of the rural voice in advocating for a
curriculum that is **rurally relevant**, so that teachers, students, parents, and community members
have a voice in what is best for their rural locale. Ladson-Billings (2009) advocates for culturally
relevant pedagogy to be adopted across the curricular subjects to engage students in their urban
schools, communities, and beyond, and to celebrate learning in the context in which her
participants were teaching. My participants believe similarly in terms of learning, engaging, and
interacting in a rural learning environment. Germaine, Lenore, Anne, and Natali strongly believe
that teachers in rural areas should celebrate their rural areas, and engage critically in learning
through a **rurally relevant pedagogical approach**. This approach is therefore a very important
finding that has emerged from the study.

However, the participants believe that to implement a rurally relevant pedagogical approach in rural areas, further action is needed through the rural voice and through research. Yet Popkevitz (1998) cautions that “To approach the assumptions about urban and rural schools, research cannot regard them as geographical concepts; they are discursive concepts that historically circulate in schooling to construct the qualities and capabilities of the urban and rural child” (p. 9). The participants therefore advocate for the importance of being cognizant of the rural teaching contexts from a geographical, cultural, historical, religious, economic, and sociocultural perspective. To accomplish this gargantuan task at the Ministry level is an impossibility, because all communities, whether they are rural or urban are unique. The curriculum must therefore give leverage for local communities to have a voice in the education of rural children so that place-based perspectives that relate specifically to the area are both enabled and encouraged. In other words, the community must have some ownership of the school and the educational practices, the content and how it is taught. An initiative at the Ministry level that incorporates these ideals will support a rurally relevant pedagogical approach.

Germaine, Natali, Lenore, Anne, and I believe that this type of empowerment is important in rural areas in order to affect positive change through social community participation. The community could then effectively advocate for rural schools in many capacities to: teach rurally relevant curriculum, highlight the positives of rural areas to encourage youth to return to their rural roots, work together to deal with changes in the demographics of the area, keep rural schools open and viable, and be the voice and watchdogs for their locale. Arvind (2009) contends that a place-based perspective should emulate the
following, “The school is envisioned as an organic extension of the community; the classroom is seen as an evolving learning space; curricular experiences are linked to children’s immediate social context; and teaching-learning processes are largely mediated through reflective practices” (p. 4). The author however believes that two actions must be followed to move toward “sustaining and scaling-up these micro-level practices” (p. 11). He remarks:

First, further consolidation and expansion of the participatory base can help create a wider ‘ownership’ of the local school, build the capacity of the local rural community in terms of knowledge of their rights, roles and responsibilities in the changing scenario, strengthen the practice of collective decision-making, and facilitate the emergence of a more inclusive and representative leadership at the grass-root level to support a culture of accountability and transparency. Secondly, the state-level administrative bureaucracy should be encouraged to engage with local rural communities, and the state must adopt more flexible structures that have a built-in space for community participation, joint planning, and accountability in managing schools. (p. 11)

To recapitulate the viewpoints of the participants in regard to the viability of rural places, rural education and rural music education, I turn to Corbett (2006) who states

Communitarian philosopher Theobald and ecopedagogue Bowers (2001, 2003) argue variously that unless rural spaces are protected with people living in them, they become open for exploitation and eventual ecological catastrophe. In this model, rural people are constructed as essential stewards of the land rather than as redundant labor in a postindustrial economy. In this vision, intimate connections to place-based history, culture, and tradition and the need to protect that land as a productive, life-sustaining infrastructure is precisely what education ought to enhance rather than erode. (p. 291)

Implications for Research

Place-based education: The next route along the journey.

Implications for me as researcher and scholar. When I first began my doctoral project, the initial step to my thesis work, I, by no means envisioned the journey from that point to this final chapter to be such a rewarding, interesting, but challenging route. From my doctoral thesis proposal to recruiting participants, completing the data collection and analysis process, and then
the chapter writing, I have acquired a wealth of knowledge on the importance of place in a rural community and celebrating place in curricular studies. Through interactions with my four participants, I have rekindled friendships and professional relationships as well as made new ones. I have learned not only from the academic reading, writing, and learning, but also most importantly from my connection with my participants, Anne, Lenore, Natali, and Germaine. They have taught me so much about the importance of rural community, of rural life and rural interaction. I consider us a team of co-researchers, for they too have taken such an active interest in this rural study. Germaine remarked, “I have learned a lot…. [it] has been a different perspective on community, school, the value you bring to it… all of your writings, your interest” (personal communication, May 4, 2013). We have therefore learned and grown together, personally, professionally, and scholarly.

**Implications for narrative researchers.** This inquiry has provided me with an opportunity to investigate the issues that my participants and I have witnessed in our music education praxes, in our rural communities, and in other rural areas in our county. We have experienced many longstanding years of teaching in our rural schools and communities, and have seen the gradual transformation of place, from a physical and demographic perspective, and on an intellectual and sociocultural level. As seasoned music educators, we have also critiqued our topic from a longitudinal perspective, a perspective we believe would not be possible for newer, less experienced teachers. These have all impacted and advanced our viewpoints and belief systems about the importance of music education in rural areas. Furthermore, our perspective goes beyond the music classroom, to other disciplines and specific subjects, and reaching out into our rural communities and beyond. Narrative methodology has offered us this opportunity to investigate our lived experiences from an in-depth personal perspective, where other
methodologies could not. We have further advanced our knowledge and viewpoints through Schön’s (1987) notion of “knowing-in-action, reflecting-in-action, reflecting-in-practice, and framing and reframing” (p. 25) from a longitudinal perspective.

This inquiry has also expanded on the use of collaborative narrative in a unique manner, for I ventured from very detailed, individual stories, and moved to the collaborative narrative – providing a new narrative weave. As my participants and I worked in collaborative partnership every step of the way, we are “carried out beyond ourselves to find ourselves” (Dewey, 1934, p. 134, cited in Beattie, 2009, p. 40), listening, reading, re-reading, and critiquing each other’s interview transcripts, correspondences, and journals, culminating in a collaborative focus group session. This final step gave us new levels of knowing. We also collaborated in an arts-based way to go beyond the concrete facts and opinions. Beattie (2009) states, “We live in a world where things are logical, rational, and technological … we need poetry, myth, metaphor, story, music, art, and nature to nurture all aspects of ourselves” (p. 36). As the participants told their stories of lived experiences through literary and music metaphors, they told stories that were full of details and emotion, relating viewpoints and sentiments that further expressed their commitment to rural life, education, and community.

My participants and I therefore call for other researchers to adopt and expand on our use of collaborative narrative to investigate many of the pertinent issues related to all aspects of education. It is unfortunate that research to date has not effectively investigated the lived experiences of educators from a Canadian lens, and specifically an Ontario lens, to understand individuals’ perspectives of teaching, learning and interacting with community. It is therefore imperative that this particular research on rural music teacher perspectives be continued; yet expanded to encompass teacher viewpoints of other subjects. By doing so, collaborative narrative
researchers will not only provide new, rich, data for educational policymakers to heed, but will push the boundaries of narrative further to explore its parameters, to provide brilliant, vivid, enlightening, and educational research material for future.

**Implications for participants.** Natali made a very important point about the importance of collaboration and deconstructing educational issues, not only from a professional perspective but also from a personal one. She reflected on the ways that this research study has given credibility to all of the extra work she accomplished in her school over the years related specifically to music education. She said with emotion:

> I have to say I feel humbled … to think that you have done so much in particular. One of the things that I have to thank you for is to lend credence to what I did in the last part of my career because some of the staff members I worked with could care less. And you made it important! So thank you! (emotional) I always thought it [music] was important and some of the principals thought it important … The people I actually worked with didn’t in fact. (personal communication, May 4, 2013)

Germaine answered, “They almost take you for granted.” Natali added, “and working with three quarters of the school and yet it was underappreciated.” (personal communication, May 4, 2013). Lenore also remarked on the importance of this research study for it gave her the opportunity to reflect on her past – on the ways that her interaction with her rural place and community positively enhanced her music praxes and how her music “brought the community together through the school music events.” (personal communication, May 4, 2013). She also stated, “Janet, this study has been wonderful for me to rethink my music teaching and how I used music to teach all of my kindergarten subjects. It has brought a sense of credibility to what I did ... and can show others what can be done with music for children.” Lenore also related this sentiment to place, “and as I was teaching this way, I never realized how important place is in music
education … This can serve as a model for those who could do the same with their music talents” (personal communication, June 24, 2013).

Germaine, Lenore, Natali, and Anne therefore believe that an ongoing collaborative discussion should take place. They wish to take the research further. Natali stated, “We need a follow-up.” Anne remarked, “Well let me know if there is anything else I can do to help music in rural education … what do you need us to do” (personal communication, May 4, 2013)? This query provides me as researcher with a momentum to move forward in my academic and scholarly journey to continue research on the importance of rural place, music education in rural places, and how further research may positively influence music education praxes in rural areas in the future.

As we move forward: Framing our future. This study has provided the opportunity for my participants to frame and reframe their musical experiences as they relate to their lives, the rural places in which they live, and the relationships they have and will forge in future in their rural communities and their music education praxes. In the case of Lenore, Germaine, and Anne, they have left full time contract teaching. Anne and Germaine are still supply teaching on a regular basis – they may visit and revisit their past experiences as they move forward in their communities to advocate for rural community, rural place, and for music education practices of the future. For Lenore, this study has provided her with an opportunity to reflect on her past as a music educator and make sense of her attachment to place and how her narratives of experience can guide future rural music educators as they interact in their rural music education environments. All participants have demonstrated that music educators CAN provide their rural students with a dynamic and scholarly music education program, despite the fact that they often fulfill multiple roles and teach other subjects as part of their contractual agreements. Anne
discussed that, even though music is not a protected subject in the public board, if there is a qualified music teacher on staff or a teacher who is interested in teaching music through planning time, a music program in some shape or form can be provided. She remarked, “Well don’t worry about planning time! Because back when I was a first year teacher, there was no planning time … [All teachers nodded in agreement] … you still make it work. You trade off! All you need is a tradeoff. So planning time aside, you can make it work. If you want somebody to cover your music, you can still do it” (personal communication, May 4, 2013). However all participants remarked that this outcome is directly dependent on the views of the principal. Nevertheless music teachers find a way to instill music knowledge to their students.

Together we have discussed the future of rural education and of rural music education specifically. As a group we have a vested interest in rekindling music education in our rural schools and studying and critiquing the ways in which we can make that happen. We also have a mandate to work for the betterment of our rural communities. So what do we need to do? What avenues should we pursue in order to continue an investigation of critical issues? What are implications for future research in rural education and music education?

In the following discourse, I will outline the next steps in rural music education that my participants and I believe may effect positive change not only for our rural communities, but for all of the future rural music students that will pass through the doors of our rural schools. We envision a transformative future for rural communities, schools, education, and music education. We therefore feel that a discussion on the future of rural music education programs must begin with the investigation of rural matters in general and particularly from a Canadian and place based perspective. Yet with a void of rural music education research from an Ontario perspective we must suggest topics of research that will provide the much needed scholarly data to move
As music educators must often fulfill multiple teaching roles in a school and teach subjects outside of the music realm, they must be able to think beyond their subject area (Bates, 2011; Conway, 1999; Isbell, 2005) so this suggested inquiry may provide them with the background needed to negotiate rural places and rural schools. Research on the concept of ‘rural’ in Ontario is very limited, as is research in the field of education from a teacher’s perspective. As educational policy falls under provincial jurisdiction, any research must therefore begin with an in-depth investigation of rurality from a provincial standpoint. Next, an inquiry that includes the voices of rural residents and rural music teachers that teach the programs should be conducted, linking all individuals and groups through the concept of place and place-based discussions. Many questions will lead the inquiry. Howley, Theobald and Howley (2005) state,

Rural education research simply must ask what sort of schooling rural kids are getting, why they are getting it, who benefits and who gets injured in the process, and by what mechanisms. What to do about such matters may emerge in the related conversations, and not just among an elite composed of scientists, bureaucrats, and politicians – but among rural citizens most prominently. (p. 3)

And as far as music education is concerned, current music teachers and prospective rural music educators need further research to understand and mark their pathways for the future.

**A work in progress: Big steps to be taken.** The participants believe that the following issues must be taken into consideration to affect positive change for rural communities and education.

**Implications for educational research from a rural perspective.** The participants noted that rural communities and education are directly influenced by rural industry; farming, fishing,
logging practices, etc., for the economics of rural areas impact the educational policies that control our schools. As the demographics of an area change, the school population shifts, causing issues in enrolment, hence affecting rural school viability. It is therefore important for rural academics to investigate economic practices of the past and present and to study the ways in which these transformations affect rural school settings. Riley and Harvey (2007) discuss the significance of studying change in farming practices through the medium of oral history. They “consider the potential of oral history approach to explore the geographies of farming cultures and the process of agricultural and landscape change” (p. 391). Oral histories “offer a more nuanced appreciation of this change ‘from the ground’” (p. 391). And as many rural residents have strong ties to the land and an emotional attachment to their place enhanced by agricultural practices, oral histories can provide a wealth of data in regard to people’s attachment to the countryside. Students may gain further knowledge and understanding of the historical development of their place and the evolution of local people’s sense of place and sense of belonging (Spring, 2013).

Suburbanization to urbanization: The importance of researching rural change.
Throughout the participant interviews and conversations, it is apparent that Lenore, Natali, Anne, and Germaine highlighted the importance of researching rural areas in regard to the transformations that are occurring subliminally (feelings, sense of belonging, sense of place) as well as explicitly (demographic changes; migration). They felt that narrative stories and listening to each other’s stories of experience provide a wealth of significant data to understand these transformations. They discussed the concrete examples of suburbanization of their rural communities, where urbanites are moving into their areas to find a better way of life for many reasons; cheaper housing, open spaces, safer environment, living closer to nature, etc. –
all of the attributes that have been historically enjoyed and celebrated by rural residents. Yes, 
people are moving to ‘the sticks’ for many reasons! Yet rural communities and schools are not able to keep up with dramatic transformations in rural town populations, whether the cause may be due to migration (Howley et al., 2005) or based on economics and industry (Barrett, McHenry Sorber, Provinciano, 2013). Theobald and Wood (2010) also contend that the capabilities of rural areas are changing and becoming places where the ‘local’ becomes the new wave of importance. The authors state, “Human economic activity will of necessity, cease to be global and will become once again, local” (p. 32). No matter what the reason may be for people to rurbanize, participants stress the importance of academic literature that studies these trends. Research must therefore be completed to frame the importance of rural communities and the impact this demographic shift will have on rural schools, on the programs that are offered, and on the educators who are providing these programs.

*Rurbanization in terms of agricultural practices.* When small farms are consolidated, they become mega-farms; the agricultural industry is then able to produce crops to satisfy the needs of the domestic as well as the global market. Land close to the rural towns is also sold to developers who ‘grow houses’ instead of foodstuffs. This expansion in terms of the agricultural industry – urban-style expansion – impacts local rural schools and their programs. A new ‘style’ of student enrolls in the school that perhaps has urban roots. In addition, parents may have different expectations of their rural school and may place further curricular and extra-curricular demands on those teachers who provide the programs. Howley et al. (2005) discuss the factors that influence school philosophies, programs, and feelings of attachment to place, hence sense of place. They contend, “The [rural] district faces the challenges of crafting schooling practices that fit with suburban residents’ views of effective education. At the same time it owes allegiance to
its rural past and to those community residents who still pursue rural ways of life” (p. 11). The authors also argue that in the event the rural schools are not meeting the demands of the added population as well as the expectations of the new residents, the “consolidation of the district’s [board’s] schools [strain] and perhaps even rupture the bonds among members of the teaching staff” which, in turn, transforms the community’s “identity” (p. 11). Howley et al. (2005) define this as a school and community’s “identity crisis” (p. 4). Moreover, when the rural schools must close due to insufficient facilities that cannot satisfy the larger school population, school boards move toward a mega-school model and close the inadequate rural facilities. Corbett (2009) believes this is a step back in attitude. This quote is important and bears repeating. Corbett, cited in Theobald (1997) remarks, “Rather than taking the consolidated, urban factory-school as the model of educational progress and modernity, we might actually reintroduce the small, intimate, community-focused rural school as an appropriate model for the 21st century” (p. 8). In relation to this aspect of change, my participants’ community groups may be less likely to want to provide extra monies to fund programs such as music. The authors therefore call for further research in the area to provide a more “detailed picture of what is happening in [communities] where the tensions associated with demographic shifts seems to be affecting the performance of the schools” (p. 2). My participants concur with this notion, and particularly the ways in which these shifts affect music education practices in their rural areas. They also commented that research must be completed that deals with the rural Ontario perspective, for studies such as the above are absent from academic literature that pertain to the Ontario situation.

**Implications for educational research from a rural teacher, principal, student, school board trustee perspective.** In the United States, rural education and rural teacher education has been widely studied from the American perspective. Founded in 1907, the National Rural
Education Association is a non-profit organization that “is the voice of all rural schools and rural communities across the United States” (NREA website, home page). 49 This organization supports rural teachers, principals, school board representatives, and rural higher education instructors and administrators. The annual NREA convention and research symposium address “the issues that affect today’s rural educators” through research presentations and roundtable discussion sessions, and provides a venue for rural educators to share research and resources”. For the past two years I have attended the research symposium and have presented papers on rural Ontario educational issues. The NREA also sponsors the journal, *The Rural Educator*, which highlights current research literature. In addition, the *Journal of Research in Rural Education* is a scholarly journal, published by Penn State University, providing further academic literature on rural education. These journals are excellent resources for Canadian academics and educators. Some issues find resonance in Canadian contexts, yet many issues that are specific to the Canadian landscape are not addressed. It is unfortunate that rural education is NOT a focus in Canada, as it is to the south. Rural education must be included in the conversation, particularly from an Ontario perspective, for over five million rural residents are not represented in the literature. Research studies must therefore be completed that deal with rural education perspectives from the teacher, principal, student, and school board trustee standpoint. Educational researchers must find out more about these perspectives that are absent from the data. Because rural areas have unique characteristics in Ontario as in other parts of the world, the local context of teacher perspectives and programs under study must be included in the discussion as well.

49 www.nrea.net
Implications for educational research from a rural music education perspective.

Countryman (2008) describes the situation of music education in Ontario. She states, “Music education is now, and always has been, a marginalized subject” (p. 1). She also comments on the relationship that exists between research and practice. “The increasingly complex sociocultural milieu within which education exists compounds the issue of music’s perennial shaky status as a school subject. The separation between music education research and practice is especially troubling” (p. 1). On the other hand, Bowman (2012) relates that “Manitoba music education is, as CMEC’s report concluded, remarkably healthy” (p. 63), particularly in the elementary schools, because in large centres such as Winnipeg students are given regular, frequent music lessons (p. 50). No mention however is made regarding the situation in rural areas specifically. Yet he adds that music education in his province is beginning to rely more heavily on “advocacy campaigns”, evidence that music may be “at risk”, (p. 63) at least in some areas. Other authors have reported on the state of affairs in the remaining provinces, which can be found in Veblen and Beynon (2007). Bolden (2012) comments on the issues facing secondary programs across the country; student enrolment in music is declining, due to a diminishing population (p. 25). My participants however contend that with the lack of music in many of the elementary schools in Ontario, students are less likely to enroll in music in their secondary years. Perhaps this is the case in other provinces as well, yet my viewpoint and my participants’ cannot be generalizable across the provinces. Bolden (2012) also brings attention to the fact that music programs cannot be successful without qualified music educators and support. He states, “Music programs cannot run without teachers, but they are also doomed without political and

50 Coalition of Music Education in Canada: www.musicmakesus.ca/
My participants and I also posit that in rural areas, music education in Ontario suffers even further, due to the lack of understanding of the importance of place, rural community, and the importance of music education in sustaining a positive relationship between these entities. Accordingly, when my participants considered the next steps that need to occur for rural places and rural music education programs they commented that “being retired music teachers, [from the public and French schools], we have a different perspective on the education system” (Germaine, personal communication, May 4, 2013). Natali remarked, “We have a sense of history and new people do not. We can see how things have transitioned.” Germaine stated, “The first thing that comes to mind is baby steps.” Anne added, “Where does the change start? Does it start in the individual school with the principal, the director or the Ministry? I think that the way things are going right now, you have to start with the Ministry [of Education]” (personal communication, May 4, 2013). All participants inferred that it is important for the Ministry of Education to listen to the voices of experience – to the voices of rural residents and most importantly – to the teachers who teach in rural schools. Ministry policy makers must also initiate research and be cognizant of and embrace research results. From a music education perspective, the lived experiences of music education practitioners will provide researchers with the necessary tools to delve into the issues. Yet as issues in rural education are so individual, it is important to also study rural education from different perspectives and from diverse community frames of reference, using the perspectives of rural residents, teachers, principals, students, and locally appointed education trustees. Opening research up to these different groups on place, sense of belonging, and sense of place, education and music, and the role that music plays in community and individual identity, will provide the necessary tools to move forward. From a
music education perspective, Gould (2006) contends that music researchers must “lead the discussion” (p. 36) and listen to the voices of experiences and to those who understand the contexts of inquiry. She remarks:

Revolution in music education discourse involves a broad political philosophy of music education that engages in sustained critique of our legitimated practices, playful experimentation with a wide variety of possibilities, and intensive exploration of previously silenced voices. The most salient voices are those of our students, schools, and communities. Speaking with and through them, we articulate the discourses of our programmes, of music, education, and students. (p. 36)

It is therefore imperative to listen to the voices of individuals, heard within the context of their sense of place. Collectively their perspectives may provide invaluable knowledge and induce change.

**Rural music education: What perspectives are out there in the rural landscape?** A review of the current literature on music teacher perspectives in Ontario is very limited. Studies that pertain to Canadian rural music education completed to date tend to deal with music curriculum, social justice issues, music teacher identity, and Canadian content, yet these are investigated through an urban lens. One study however does add to the literature on rural music education and sense of place, yet is relevant to issues occurring in rural Manitoba (Brook, 2011, 2013). Further research is therefore needed that investigates rural Ontario music education programs through the voice of the educators themselves and how place influences and guides their pedagogical practices. Corbett (2006) comments on this need:

If rural education is to be meaningful though, I suggest that it must be contextual and connected to the particularity of place. It is my sense that place-based education is becoming much more difficult in the present climate. How this tension is resolved in Canadian classrooms and in rural schools is something about which we need to know more. (p. 298)

The participants have demonstrated that tensions have existed and still do exist in rural teaching
praxes. These tensions that disrupt local music education praxes must also be studied so that in
future they may be resolved for the betterment of rural school children.

Towards a Place-based Approach: Music Education in Rural Communities: A Rurally
Relevant Approach

This research study has demonstrated the importance of place in education through the
study of lived experiences, narrative stories, oral histories, through dialogue and collaborative
sessions, and through the metaphors of teaching and music. No matter where children and adults
attend school, whether the context is in a rural or urban setting, place plays a significant
educational and spiritual role. Stauffer (2009) describes three features of place related to teaching
and curriculum. Firstly, she stresses, “The experience of 'place' is not only fluid but also
simultaneously individual and collective”. Secondly “'place' may be socially constructed, but it is
individually understood" and is dependent on the context that is "unique to the individual, and is
complex, multiple, and layered". Finally, 'Place is also a "narrative synthesis of experience” (p.
177) from the individual’s perspective as demonstrated by the participants’ stories of experience.
In their distinctive rural contexts, Natali, Germaine, Anne, and Lenore made sense of their place
and provided materials that intertwine curriculum expectations with the narratives of their rural
environment, human interactions, history, agriculture, and music. They understand their places
from their unique perspectives and teach from a place-based lens that highlights their
individuality in teaching and interacting with each student. Teaching from a place-based
perspective not only gives prominence to the environment from a sociocultural, economic and
demographic viewpoint (Sobel, 2004) but also instills some essence of belonging, sense of
community and sense of place to all. Lenore, Anne, Germaine, and Natali believe that through
music education, teachers and students bond to their communities and to their place. They
collectively feel that further research is needed to highlight the importance of place for future educators. In addition, they believe that they do highlight place in their music education programs. Anne asked, “Didn’t we all do that [teach from a place-based perspective]? Germaine – you accomplished this through your French Canadian legends and songs, Natali as well. Janet – you did this through your school band and musicals, I did through my band and choirs, Lenore through your songs.” Germaine asked, “Is there research that has been published to back the fact that children who graduate from place based schooling do better or have a better self identity or feeling of openness to the world, have better thinking outside the box” (personal communication, May 4, 2013)? All participants remarked on the importance of researchers to follow this avenue of research as well. They also stipulated that further research must be conducted to highlight individual programs. The participants qualified that they felt further studies would assist new and seasoned teachers about the different repertoire choices that are out there that focus on place. They all established that teachers would benefit by knowing what others teachers are doing to draw attention to place. Consequently the participants and I ask: What place-based music education programs are out there in Ontario? What repertoire choices do rural music educators choose to highlight their place? How can we, as music educators, bridge the gap that exists between education, rural places, rural educational policies, learning, and experiencing? They therefore call for a new approach. Put ‘rural’ into educational discussion, planning, and curriculum. They call strongly for a rurally relevant approach!

A Reflection

Today I took my granddaughter to school. It was her second day in Junior Kindergarten and she was excited that I take her so that she could show me where she now spends her fun-filled days. The school she attends is in the rural ‘town’ and is the school where I taught music and regular classroom assignments for most of my teaching career – for 27 years. I was a little apprehensive to take her to the school because I had not been back there since I had left it seven years ago. As
I drove to the school, I began to reflect on the changes that have occurred over the past 35 years – changes to the school, the neighbourhood in which the school is located, and the actual ‘town’ itself. Reflecting on these changes makes me aware of how my own sense of place has transformed. I realize how the community that I live in has changed from a rural town to a suburbanized rural locale, where the concept of rurbanization has taken hold and has altered not only the physical aspects of the area, but people’s interaction and contact with the land, the environment, the day to day activities occurring in the school space and the resulting bonds that the rural residents and students feel toward their school and community.

As I drove into the school parking lot, I remember how for many years the parking lot had not been paved like all of the nearest city school lots and how the local rural school board trustee had fought to get it paved – to equal its city counterparts. It had been there in a gravel state for over 20 years. I also glanced at the two additions that had recently been added to both ends of the school to house the all day kindergarten program and an expanded staff room. To me it almost looks like one of the newer city schools in this new stretched out form. And the large schoolyard? When I first started teaching at the school, the school yard was not fenced in on all sides- just the highway side. Why would you have to put a fence around a schoolyard when there were farmer’s fields bordering the playground area? Oftentimes in the fall when I left in the late afternoon to head home, a farmer was out harvesting his corn crop or plowing up his field. Today a nursing home stands across from the school, and the farmer’s field is now an expansive subdivision, housing many new residents who have migrated to the ‘town’, buying a new house in the now bedroom community.

Looking back, I can remember when a path bordered the farmer’s field, which led further to the east and then wound to the south, to the banks of the Wye River. Students in the two Grade 4 classes hiked there to explore, study, and enjoy the surrounding nature. In the fall the students walked to the edge of the field that was bordered by a thick bush. Here they completed a fencerow study, watching for small rodents, birds, and insects. The classes also made the short trek to the river and sat by the banks quietly, waiting for the turtles to pop their heads out of their hiding places. Just sitting there absolutely still, they might see all kinds of wildlife! And in the winter, the class put on their cross-country skis and skied over to the river to note the changes to the riverbank that the winter weather brings. But now, what is there in that place? There are houses, paved roads, busy traffic, groomed lawns, and dust. The classes don’t go there now to interact with nature.

I can also remember how my band students practised their marching up and down the quiet road that bordered the school in the fall and spring, and on some of the mild winter days. Very few cars would come by – we had the whole road and field to ourselves to practice the colour guard and marching routines. Now there are crosswalks, a stop sign, and a busy road that leads into the expansive subdivision. In addition there are many new stores on the highway side, west of the school – a
Tim Horton’s, McDonald’s, and two small strip malls. Things have changed.

Another very noticeable change while walking into the school is the fact that, in the past most rural residents knew each other, or they were familiar with who you were at sight. However I was pretty confident that no one would recognize me, for most teachers in the school do not live and teach in the same area anymore. I was pleasantly surprised however, to see that the manager of the YMCA after hours program was a former music student of mine. She greeted my granddaughter and I when we walked into the kindergarten room.

One particularly upsetting change for me is the issue of the music facility that was erected in 2000. The chairperson of the band parent committee and I raised $80,000 to build the facility that used to house the marching band program and the building where I taught music for four years. Before that, I had another music room but lost it, due to board cutbacks. So the local rural community donated a large portion of the money to fund the building. Now the music facility is used for other subjects, for daily fitness activities, and for other classes. It is also decaying, for the board has not kept up with their part of the agreement to make any needed repairs and annually maintain the building. I will never go into that building again. It is too upsetting.

Time has passed, and the rural school I once knew is no longer. Now I am a stranger in that school where I spent most of my professional career and where I dedicated hundreds of extra hours to the band, musical, and choral program. And the present music program? There isn’t a formal one. There isn’t even a piano in the kindergarten class. I ask my granddaughter when she comes to visit. “What songs did you sing today”? She often replies, “The Canada song”.
References


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## Appendix A

Lefebvre's Conceptual Triad and Related Frameworks Represented as Categories of Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Field</th>
<th>More Concrete</th>
<th>More Abstract</th>
<th>Human Being</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical</td>
<td>Aspects of Triad (Physical space/Experience)</td>
<td>Examples</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Perceived space</td>
<td>Routes, destinations, way-finding, Modes of transport</td>
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<td>…………………………………………</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Smelling, seeing, hearing, tasting, touching, moving, attending, disassociating</td>
<td>My body/ Your body</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental</td>
<td>Representations of space</td>
<td>Plans, discourses, concepts, methods, models, theories, academic disciplines</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conceived Space</td>
<td>…………………………………………</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Thinking, reflecting, systematizing, ideating, imagining, interpreting, measuring, categorizing</td>
<td>My mind/ Your mind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>Representational space</td>
<td>Home, graveyard, festival, family farm, office, public monument, nature bed</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>…………………………………………</td>
<td>…………………………………………</td>
<td>My direct experience/ your direct experience</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lived Space</td>
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</table>

## Appendix B

### The Conceptual Triad Modified by the Researcher

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Field</th>
<th>Aspects of Triad</th>
<th>Examples</th>
<th>Quotations: Evidence</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Physical</strong></td>
<td>Spatial Practice</td>
<td>Physical Space: Demographics of area, location, Demographics of town, school, church if applicable</td>
<td>How these have stayed the same, changed, effects of physical space on aspects of ‘place’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where?</td>
<td>Physical Space:</td>
<td>• Simcoe County</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Town</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• School</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mental</strong></td>
<td>Representations of Spaces</td>
<td>Definitions:</td>
<td>Quotations related to participant definitions that are categorized, explained, qualified and quantified:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What?</td>
<td>Definitions of Concepts:</td>
<td>• Rural, rurality, community, curriculum, board and school policies</td>
<td>• Rural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Rural school aspects</td>
<td>• Curriculum: expectations-what is done, how, when?</td>
<td>• Rurality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Measuring success: quantifying, qualifying, board and school policies and how they impact rural schools, community</td>
<td>• Community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Curriculum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social</strong></td>
<td>Social Space Explaining social space:</td>
<td>Describe the experiences: What are your interpretations?</td>
<td>Quotations Relating to Lived Experiences: Personal and Professional Teaching, school, community, church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who?</td>
<td>• School, church, and community interactions on personal and professional levels</td>
<td>• School, church, community.</td>
<td>• Interactions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Qualification of social interactions</td>
<td>• Emotions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Metaphors</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The conceptual triad modified by the researcher is an adapted version of The Conceptual Triad; Carp (2008, p. 133) as presented in Appendix A.
I referenced and cross-referenced each field for all participant data that was placed in the modified conceptual triad chart (Appendix B). I compiled a data chart for each participant. The following topics and themes emerged. Note that the physical and mental fields merged to produce the topic of *Teacher Roles*. The mental and social fields merged to produce the topic of *Aspects of Community*. The physical, mental and social fields as they were merged together produced the tensions and conflicts: *Juxtapositions of Cultures, Intersecting Roles: School, Church and Community* and the personal lived experiences: *Narratives from the Heart, Narratives of the Future, Metaphors: Literary and Musical* and the *Cadence*. From this final chart, I was able to organize each participant chapter under the above headings.