

Reflecting on my Journey - Who Am I? Who am I as a leader? Who am I as a researcher? Why do I research? Who do I research for? Am I a transformative leader or silent enabler?

July 15th - 20th

When looking back on how I came to the place I am at and thinking of all the people who have guided, pushed, challenged, and dared me to pursue action that changes systems of oppression, I am left with a deep feeling of gratitude. As change is constant, I knew a shift was coming, something moving me away from being a principal to a scholar-practitioner - where a space is created to invite theory and practice to dance lovingly, freely, and ugly, all the while cultivating change.

For years within my circle of influence, others have wondered if I would venture into the post graduate work. It was something I had considered but did not believe would happen to me - that infamous imposter voice surfacing and trying to steal away a light that was needing stoking. Being brave, I decided to apply to the newly created Doctor of Education Program at the University of British Columbia Okanagan (UBCO). Discussions of possibility flooded conversations with my husband, son, extended family, friends and colleagues. Doubt, excitement, and disbelief flooded my mind, and I was afraid to go through all the steps applying - purposefully disconnecting from my calling, from what "Ainsley" says the tapping at your shoulder.

This tapping has been a long history of witnessing, and hegemonically participating in, oppressive systems where toxic social generative fields leave compassion to the side to prioritize those who fit into the dominant narrative - namely, the Western Heterosexual White Colonial system. Microaggressions are pervasive within our formal and informal circles, and this was something I have always wanted to see change - how can people say and do things that hurt and oppress others based on identity markers (i.e., sex, sexual orientation, race, religion, disability etc.)? In the world of education, why are conversations of blame and shame pervasive? Are they pervasive? How does one stop microaggressions, or mitigate the oppressive stories that reinforce the toxic? How can leaders keep wellness at the heart of their leadership so that toxic practices, such as microaggressions do not grow and damage their moral integrity. How can leaders consider the intersectionality that is within themselves. How can leaders consider the intersectionality of the people in front of them? What about during informal and formal conversations? What about during difficult conversations? During simple or during complex decisions? How can we recognize the layers of current and historical oppressive experiences of hegemonic colonial practices - how do we do this if the history is not obvious, not able to be seen, or not relatable? Can leaders be more compassionate within their values to meet people with an open heart in a non-judgemental while recognizing that their own positionality may be part of a system of oppression? As a white male, I recognize my privilege within a Patriarchal Western Colonial System - I have been afforded realities based on my positionality. But, as a member of the 2SLGBTQAI+ community, oppression has been part of my everyday life, whether it's through the heteronormative mores pervasive in the dominant world, whether it's through hegemonic systems, or even within the Queer community.

Returning to how I am where I am. Although I was plagued with ideas of failure, discouraged to go down the Post Grad route by my inner demons, I decided to submit to

UBCO. Gathering amazing minds to recommend my entry into the program, and feeling like intersectionality was needed to be raised to the surface for leaders to increase the well-being for themselves and others, I hit submit and impatiently waited.

The EDLL 602 class at UBCO called for attendance on the Syilx peoples lands in Kelowna. I only recall Kelowna as a hockey place, where, as a child, I reluctantly attended a few hockey tournaments. The drive to Kelowna was spectacular, the land, the lakes, the sun, and the heat, kept pointing me to the university. My husband, Jaime, and my son, Sebastian travelled with me, supporting my decision to make a change in my life, and hopefully, begin to open spaces to have others reflect on their own change to eradicate systems of oppression with intersectionality as the catalyst. As I moved closer to an institution, with roots in colonial thought and systems of oppression, I reflected on the people who would also be moving into the Doctor of Education program - the first UBCO Ed D cohort. There are 37 of us - from all walks of life. All of us created beautiful biographies introducing ourselves, sharing our passions and accomplishments. There are consultants, superintendents, authors, AI experts, international speakers, professors, and there is me - principal. Again, the imposter whispered its doubt into my ear, but I swatted it away and kept thinking, I have something to contribute, I have something to learn.

There are several activities and events that occurred at the week of July 15th - July 19th that made my mind bend:

1. Who am I activity with Dr. Cohen
2. The keeping children safe activity - webs - going back to the land
3. The 4 Food Chiefs story
4. Interrogating my Problem of Practice
5. Daily reflecting and writing with Natalie
6. Conversations with colleagues
7. Doctorate Group - Lisa, Jon, Colleen and Sabre
8. Using the Four Food Chiefs to determine how we will be online
9. Listening to the Panel of past Doctorate Students - Very helpful