

## Chapter 4 Narrative Interviews

In this chapter, I share excerpts from the narrative interviews conducted with Tsimshian artist Roy Henry Vickers and surgeon Dr. Ralph Gilbert. Through analysis of these two interviews I seek to connect research on innovation, creativity and the imagination to factors that enable innovation and creativity to occur within systems, organizations and institutions. In this analysis, I draw upon the notions of wide-awakeness (Greene, 1978), metaphor (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) chaos theory and connectivism (Seimens, 2004), as well as concepts of what constitutes meaningful work and joy from *The Progress Principle* (Amabile & Kramer, 2011).

### **Interview 1: Through the Eyes of an Artist**

The first interview, entitled *Through the Eyes of an Artist*, was conducted with world-renowned Tsimshian artist, Roy Henry Vickers. In order to provide context as to why Mr Vickers was selected as a participant for my research, I will share some of the history of my personal and professional interactions with Mr. Vickers during the past 17 years, interactions that have greatly informed who I am as an educator today.

I had the opportunity to meet and work with Mr. Vickers (for the first time) when I was Principal of Sechelt Elementary, located on the Sunshine Coast in British Columbia. It was at that time I had invited Mr. Vickers to come for an entire week to our school and community in order to work with our students, staff and families of the Sechelt Nation. Together we would be embarking upon a journey of self-discovery,

visioning and goal setting. I had applied for and received a grant from the B.C. Ministry of Education to support the enhancement of First Nation education, cultural awareness and community and parent engagement within our school. Through his profound gift of storytelling, Mr. Vickers was able to engage all stakeholders (staff, students, parents, community) in deep, thoughtful conversations that enabled us to identify our individual and collective gifts and passions, while finding ways to bring these passions and gifts into our daily being and interactions with one another. His work during that week had significant and lasting effect on me as an educational leader, on our community, and our organization. It was these facilitated conversations that provided the rich foundation for the work that lay ahead of us, conversations that propelled us forward as a school community, enabling us to consolidate our key directions for the next three years.

Subsequent to this interaction, as an executive member of the Alberta Fine Arts Association, I had the opportunity to arrange for Mr. Vickers to come to our annual Arts conference as the keynote speaker. Mr. Vickers, once again, provided participants with a lasting and memorable experience. His inspirational words about the power of the arts to inspire and unlock individual potential, his reminder to us all about the significant role we as teachers have in supporting our students in discovering their individual gifts and passions, were messages warmly welcomed and enthusiastically embraced by all who attended.

My next interaction with Mr. Vickers came as a result of my work as a Course Director for the Faculty of Education at York University. I was serving on the co-ordinating and planning committee that had as one of their responsibilities,

coordination of nominations for individuals who might be considered for York's Honorary Doctorate. I brought forth Roy's name to the committee for consideration. I shared the story of Mr. Vickers' impact on my work as a school leader, his inspiration to students, staff, parents and community members of the Sechelt School community and his powerful connection with arts educators across Canada. Roy was nominated and awarded the Honorary Doctorate of Laws from York University in the spring of 2007. We had the opportunity to reconnect when he came to Toronto to receive this honour.

My most recent opportunity to connect with Mr. Vickers came as a result of the work I was doing as a Visual Arts Consultant with the York Region District School Board. I contacted Roy to begin a dialogue about the possibility of establishing a partnership that would involve working with arts educators and their students as artist in residence via a virtual medium. The first step in the process was establishing a Skype session between Mr. Vickers and five elementary Arts Teacher Leaders to discuss Mr. Vickers' book *The Elders Are Watching*. During this session the Arts Teacher Leaders had the opportunity to dialogue with Roy about his Creative Process and to inquire about the ways in which he accesses inspiration for his works. This provided the Teacher Leaders with important information they needed for the planning they were doing together, which involved creating a unit of study based on inspiration from Mr. Vickers' artworks and artistic process. Subsequent to this conversation, I arranged for Mr. Vickers to conduct a Skype session with a class of Grade 7 and 8 students so that the students might share their Creative Process and receive feedback from Mr. Vickers about their initial art pieces. The teachers and the students involved in this process were inspired by

the connection made with Mr. Vickers. An archive of the work created by the teachers and students during this unit of study, including a recording of the Skype session with the students, is further referenced in Appendix 2.

Reflecting upon all of my interactions with Mr Vickers, I realized that I needed to further understand the power of the Creative Process and hear about it from an artist's perspective. I was hoping my thinking regarding the types of mindsets necessary for seeing and creating new possibilities within organizations or educational communities might be further informed by understanding the Creative Process from this particular artist's perspective. I wondered if our conversation might shed light on the ways in which the arts and "artful-mindedness" (Steffensen, 2012) can "open up the process for seeing things anew, understand ourselves more fully, expand our ways of knowing and see the possibilities of alternate ways" (Zatzman, 2009). The following questions that I asked Mr Vickers, highlight the concept of seeing things anew as a result of the creative process, understanding ourselves more fully, and, as he articulates, "re-specting" (Vickers, 2011) by seeing differently with our eyes, our hearts and our mind.

K: In your work you begin, end, and continue with the creative process. Tell me how you define creativity within that process."

RV: Creation is a spiritual word, which includes the creator of all; the connection to our creator. When I look around at the world through enlightened eyes and the more enlightened I am, the more enlightened is my perception of the world, so, the more beauty I see because there is

nothing more beautiful than the world around us. To me, creativity is about accessing the wonder of yourself and creating something tangible that others can see what you see and each one of us is an incredibly special, unique individual in the world. So, if we become creative in our everyday lives, no matter what it is, it can be raising our children, teaching your class, learning a different way to walk in this world, it all can be enhanced by being creative and taking another look at what you do– which means respecting, “re-specting” what you do.

The notion of “re-specting” (Vickers, 2011) connects to the concept of wide-awakeness (Greene, 1978). It is because of the ability to be fully aware and to see things with “enlightened eyes” (Vickers, 2011) that one is able to be inspired and be in a place or state to create. Wondering about the potential barriers individuals might be facing with regards to their ability to create, I asked Mr. Vickers to articulate what he felt might be the reasons for a lack of desire or ability to create and he explained it in the following way.

RV: We live our lives being mentored in life by those older than us– our process of thought can limit us. The most powerful part of our body is our mind; we are only limited as to what we do in this world by what we think we can do. “As a man thinketh, so is he.” If I think I can, I will do it. The power of the mind- to imagine a goal and see yourself there, hear yourself there, talking to the people around you as if you are there– everyone and everything that is necessary to be there will come across your path. Keep

your eyes, ears and heart open to those people who are going to help you achieve that goal- the power of the mind, imagination, vision that god gave us.

Vickers reference to “As a man thinketh, so is he” (Allen, 1902), connects to the work of Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (1980), in that the metaphors we live by shape our realities and direct the ways in which we act, respond, think, and believe situations need to unfold. “All that a man achieves and all that he fails to achieve is the direct result of his own thoughts” (Allen, 1902). If as leaders we do not believe that it is our role or responsibility to create or be creative, then our organizations will not evolve with innovation or creativity. The mindset of an artist is necessary to change this condition. I asked Vickers about his thoughts on the connections between being an artist and leadership.

K: Is there a connection between being an artist and leading?

RV: Whole school systems do not see the importance of arts in schools. Because art accesses creativity, if we are going to effect the change we need, we need to bring our students to the knowledge that they are creative. We have to help them discover the incredible things they can do is only limited by their minds. We have to bring creativity to the top level of importance in educating people.

If those educators who get to the upper echelon of the system don't feel like they are artistic, then they will not be artistic; they will not be creative. But, they are creative, they are artistic; they just don't think they are. Maybe we need to get artists together who have the ability to articulate and somehow expose these people to the fact, the truth about creativity, that they are creative.

As I reflect on the themes that emerged during this interview, I find significant connections to key ideas contained *The Progress Principle* by Amabile and Kramer (2011), specifically a connection to leaders' abilities to structure places of joy—places where creativity and innovation are able to flourish as a result of the mindset of these leaders and the employees, “the confluence of emotions, perceptions, and motivation that people experience as they react to events at work ... the ability for individuals to make progress in meaningful work” (Amabile & Kramer, 2011). Vickers shared his perspectives on the intersection between the conditions within an organization and the actions of leaders and the various states of individuals.

RV: An organization is only as great as the sum of its parts. Whoever the leader is of that organization, he/she carries a great weight, carries a great responsibility. If that person is not a person who believes in the essence of truth, the whole organization will implode because you cannot carry the weight of power in your humanity. If you do not believe there is a spirit underneath everything, you have no place to go but to try and control

things, and we actually do not have control over anything or anybody in this world. If an organization is going to effect change it has to begin with the single individual, leader of that organization being the change. When we effect the change that is when the work begins. In our changing we need to have a concrete foundation; we have to be like those rocks underneath Niagara Falls. Yes, they will change with the water running swiftly over them. But, generations from now the rock that we are (that sees the vision) will make that vision a reality.

Chaos Theory, as explained in *Connectivism: A Learning Theory for the Digital Age* (Seimens, 2004), offers us connections to the phenomenon of change and resistance to change within organizations.

Chaos is a cryptic form of order, the breakdown of predictability, evidenced in complicated arrangements that initially defy order. Unlike constructivism, which states that learners attempt to foster understanding by meaning making tasks, chaos states that the meaning exists– the learner’s challenge is to recognize the patterns, which appear to be hidden. Meaning making and forming connections between specialized communities are important activities ... the capacity to form connections between sources of information, and thereby create useful information patterns, is required to learn in our knowledge economy (Seimens, 2004, p. 3).

Wondering about the notion of chaos theory and its possible connection to organizations, organizational change and transformation, I asked Vickers the following question.

K: At one point you were talking you talked about organizations and all these people coming together with all of this energy. It makes me think of my son who is studying physics; he used the word entropy describing how nature is naturally in chaos, and how we as humans want to constantly try to organize it. So, I wonder if all of the rules, structures, procedures, policies that we put in place in organizations ... What do you think is the fine line between entropy and being in a true balanced state within an organization?

RV: When I say the word chaos, I see all of those people around Niagara Falls today. Everybody is in his or her own little world and they are having fun— we all have smiles on our faces, but everyone is actually in different worlds. You walk by a person and they might look at you, but they don't smile at you. It appears they are enjoying the same thing you are enjoying. But, in reality we want different things; I want them to smile at me and I am smiling at them as they walk by like I wasn't there. To me that's chaos. We all have a commonality of an incredibly awesome beauty that is in front of our eyes, and yet we aren't even looking at each other (who are even more awesome, more beautiful than the Niagara Falls). We close ourselves out. Whole groups of people must find the commonality.

You can put together a whole set of rules of how we are going to effect this change, but if you don't all work with that common desire to change, and change yourselves in that way, it isn't going to happen, there will remain to be chaos.

Vickers articulation about the importance of finding the commonality between and amongst people has a strong link to the ideas found within an emerging theory of Connectivism. "Connectivism is the integration of principles explored by chaos, network, complexity and self-organization theories" (Seimens, 2004). Seimens presents the following principles of Connectivism.

Learning and knowledge rests in diversity of opinions; learning is a process of connecting specialized nodes or information sources; capacity to know more is more critical than what is currently known; nurturing and maintaining connections is needed to facilitate continual learning; ability to see connections between fields, ideas, and concepts is a core skill; decision making is itself a learning process; seeing through a lens of a shifting reality— while there is a right answer now, it may be wrong tomorrow" (Seimens, 2004, p. 4).

In this next interview excerpt, Vickers speaks to many aspects of Connectivism. These would include one's capacity to nurture and make connections, to see connections between and amongst others and other areas, to respect the diversity of opinions and to see shifting realities. These capacities link directly to the Four Directions of *being*:

Warrior/Leader, Teacher, Healer and Visionary. I have used these *ways of being* to frame a new model for leadership presented and elaborated upon in Chapter 5 Conclusions (pp. 120-125). The Four Directions are an essential aspect to centering, grounding, and informing our pathways and direction in the world, including how we emerge as leaders in this journey of self and with others. The Four Directions serves as a powerful metaphor that guides our engagement with others. When individuals within organizations embrace the Four Directions as a way of leading and when we understand how this metaphor can dynamically shape interactions within, the concept of the individual and the social is brought into view.

RV: When we try to change nature, it seems like what we are doing is creating something to give ourselves a false sense of the power to change. We should leave nature alone as much as we possibly can, because we are nature. It was Chief Seattle, who was one of my great teachers (and thankfully someone wrote down his words)– what he said that sticks with me was, “We are part of the great web of life. We did not create the web. What we do to each other, we do to that web of life.” If we are destroying our relationship with ourselves, our families, our communities, and our country, we are also doing to the world, so, to effect change in all of this chaos, the greatest change is effected by the choosing with our minds or wills to love. Love is an act of volition. We can will ourselves to love and we can will ourselves to stop loving. Choose love. Love will always effect a change for that which is beautiful and honoring and respectful and kind.

It is always positive. Love is like the constant pouring of water over a rock. It will erode granite– love is like the wind that blows– it will erode the hardest rock in the world and so if we want to change, then we must love to see ourselves growing and changing and being more loving people. The greatest teacher is the teacher who loves their students, even the most difficult student. The teachers who continue to rise above the rest in my memory are those who cared, who loved me enough to stop and take a few moments to share themselves and their thoughts, not the curriculum of the school, but their thoughts as to what can I do to help this student to want to learn. I think that is our great job we can do is to affect a desire in our students to continue learning long after we are done with them. If we can do that, then the knowledge that they have is the first step to healing, which is the first step to enlightening their vision, which is the next step to their leadership in this world.

In this final excerpt from the interview, Vickers’s words reinforce a belief and understanding that when leaders embrace a creative, artistic mindset, and “artful-mindedness” (Steffensen, 2012); they are able to access the emotions of the individuals and community, creating new spaces for interaction. In creating new spaces for interaction, a Third Space (Bhabha, 1994) emerges a space “where we may elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of ourselves”. In these new spaces, we find places of possibility. The importance and significance of artful-mindedness supports a

model of leadership connected and grounded by one's capacity to continually seek to know more, to not be satisfied with the status quo and to continuously operate from a place of wide-awakeness (Greene, 1978).

K: I wonder, what the connection is between the Creative Process and what education needs to look like for our children and our children's children?

RV: When my children see me excited, they are excited. When they see me willing to learn and this happens day, after day, after day while being with them, then they are excited. It is not the curriculum that the governing body of educators says must be taught that teaches children. It is our knowledge and excitement of gaining more knowledge as educators, that they (the children) see will give them the desire to continue to learn. Never be so arrogant as to say we know how they should learn and that we know what they should learn, because we do not. There is a great change that must come in educational systems. I believe it is a change to go back to the way teachers began in history. It is the way of passion and excitement of accessing knowledge. If that is present for the educators, then children will go on to continue to learn.

... the greatest change that we can effect in the world is the change for positivity that we can have in our lives. We make the difference in the world. My actions, my words make a difference. An ancient saying of the Basque people goes something like this: "You are the centre of your family. What you do affects the family. What you say affects every member of the family. Your family is the centre of your community. What your family does in the community affects a change in the world. Your community is the centre of the country and it affects the change in your country. Your country is the centre of the world and what it does and how it acts affects the whole world. So we must bring it back to me- I am the centre of the world and how I behave affects the world." So, if you want to build an organization, and find struggles, make the change in your life; let it make the change in your family and so on ...

K: So, what is the key with our leaders?

RV: We must emote. The system says the opposite. Or it says emote this way. We have come to believe that we can make someone feel a certain way. We do not have that kind of power over the other person. For me to think this is possible, to have this kind of power over someone else is total arrogance. And what is arrogance? It is ignorance and so in our

educational system what is it that changes ignorance– knowledge. Why is it that we do not bring the basic knowledge of how the human mind works to the core of our educational system? Why is that every single teacher who has ever gotten a degree, why is it that they weren't taught that we have seven basic emotions and they have gifts? The whole knowledge system for a child is from emotions. The whole natural system of gaining knowledge is by paying attention to what we are feeling and processing the feeling—figuring out why we are feeling it. And so, our system takes the knowledge, the natural way that human beings begin to gain knowledge and squashes it like a bug. It tells us we do not feel this way. It tells us, “That is not polite, that is not correct”.

K: So, do the arts honor emotions?

RV: They do. Through the arts you can emote, you can taste, see, and feel it.

As a result of conducting and reflecting upon this interview, I see the relationship and interconnectedness between individuals who embrace an artistry or artful-mindedness in their leadership capacity and the ability to successfully transform and sustain this change within systems, organizations and institutions. It is this artistry

mindset that I contend is the most significant factor necessary for enabling creativity and innovation to occur in the spaces and places we call school.

### **Interview 2: Through the Eyes of a Surgeon**

This interview, entitled *Through the Eyes of a Surgeon*, was conducted with Dr. Ralph Gilbert, the doctor responsible for the innovative, reconstructive cancer surgery performed on me in July 2008, shared in Chapter 2's personal narrative *Beyond the Diagnosis*. In this narrative I endeavoured to explain the significance that this life event has had on the evolution of my thinking regarding organizational transformation and my evolving understanding of the mindsets and actions necessary to change the *status quo*. I conducted the interview with Dr. Gilbert with the hopes that it might further extend and deepen my emerging understanding about redefining the possible, and what is truly involved when we "imagine forward differently" (Zatzman, 2009). The following excerpt provides insight into Dr. Gilbert's process of enacting change or creating a space for change and doing things differently within a field that was stuck within the *status quo*.

K: When you think about the journey that I went through and others have gone through as well, I guess I'd like to get a sense from you, and I know we talked about it after my surgery, how it was that you came about realizing this treatment path was the better way to go compared to the traditional methods that might have been chosen. So, if you could talk a

little bit about how you determined that this particular methodology was the way to go.

RG: It's a long complicated story, but the procedures for treating tumors in the maxilla have existed for more than 200 years, that is, the procedures to remove the structures that the tumor is in. Some famous people, including an American President, and Sigmund Freud were treated with, in terms of reconstruction, obturators or these dental appliances that would basically fill the hole. When I started my career, we didn't really even think about trying to reconstruct these defects because generally, it was viewed to be too difficult to do and there was no obvious way to do it. But, then as you develop your experience with patients, over the years you start to realize that patients wearing these obturators are generally, relatively unhappy with them. They (the obturators) have a dramatic affect on the quality of a patient's life because of the fact that there is this gaping hole in the roof of their mouth and whenever the patient takes the obturator out and it affects relationships, it affects eating, it affects social activity, it affects confidence, all those issues. I would see it (the issues) over and over again in the clinic. The classic case would be the 75-year-old woman who has had maxillectomy done ten years previously, insisting that all medical staff turn away as she takes out her prosthesis, because she is so embarrassed by it. And that is something you would see all the time. So, it

was relatively obvious to me that from a quality of life perspective that patients would do better if we could actually close the defects in their maxilla in a way that would provide a functional structure and we would provide an opportunity for them to get an implant retained, a partial denture or wear a standard denture, which is a lot less intrusive. You can take it out (the denture), you can still speak, you can still eat, and you don't have the same disability that somebody who has a large space in his or her upper jaw has. In terms of how we specifically got to that reconstruction, when I was at Sunnybrook I pioneered a technique using a skin flap for smaller defects of the palate. We developed ways of getting some of the blood vessel connections into the right places. There was a bunch of groups that came up with the same idea around the same time. The landmark publication in maxilla reconstruction was by a guy named James Brown, who is a maxillo-facial surgeon, actually a friend of mine, from Liverpool, England. He came up with a concept of moving bone and muscle using a different flap than the one I like using, he was using the iliac crest flap, and that was really a game changer, because it was the first attempt at the concept of just moving bone and muscle and then letting the body mould it into a structure. The problem I had with the iliac crest—that's the hip bone transfer—is that the donor site is really problematic, particularly for older patients, they have a lot of pain, they all get hernia's and it doesn't matter how you repair the site it just doesn't work very well.

And so we started looking for something different. I was looking at the literature, it was a publication from the mid eighties, by a plastic surgeon working in Indianapolis who described a flap called the *Latissimus dorsi* bone flap and as we looked at it, it became clear that this flap had a lot of opportunities for this kind of defect, because of the fact the anatomy was predictable, the blood vessels were long, and it looked like the donor site problems were not huge. It was in an era when we were using this structure of bones for reconstruction of the lower jaw and was a well-established technique. We just adapted it a little bit for the upper jaw and then developed a technique that is sort of the Toronto technique, or my technique. Increasingly, it's been widely adopted around the world now.

Gilbert spoke about the moment at which he saw, for the first time, things differently, which I see as being connected to Greene's concept of wide-awakeness (1978). His discovery of this new way of seeing *what is* is linked to serendipity, which is often an important element to innovation and creativity. Serendipity, as described by Foster and Ford (2003), has classical origin in literature and a "more modern manifestation where it is found in the descriptions of the problem solving and knowledge acquisition of humanities and science scholars". The emerging theory of Connectivism (Seimens, 2004) supports the concept of serendipity and can be connected to *Where Good Ideas Come From: The Natural History of Innovation*, Johnson (2010), which speaks to how ideas are generated. In this book, Johnson "grapples with the question of why certain environments

seem to be disproportionately skilled at generating and sharing good ideas ... in other words, it's a book about the space of creativity" (Johnson, 2010).

Critical to the generation and incubation of ideas are collaborative, sometimes chaotic, spaces in which ideas can meet, mingle, and become something new and different. History, Johnson argues, is littered with half ideas, which meet other half ideas (sometimes in the same person's head, often in others' heads), which together are greater than the sum of their parts. Ideas are a network- literally. They are a network of neurons firing in new ways, creating new pathways inside the brain of the person having the idea (Hatton et al, 2011, p. 9).

The space of creativity where innovation was able to unfold is captured in the following excerpt. Gilbert speaks about the *eureka*-moment experienced when his hunch was confirmed and there was materialization of a new possibility for a cancer treatment unfolding before his eyes.

K: I remember you talking about the overlay of shoulder blade itself, when you realized that you needed a bone with blood supply and how when you overlaid the impression/outline of the upper jaw, how it was a perfect match?

RG: It turns out that the tip of the scapula is exactly the same shape as your maxilla, with slight variations, but effectively exactly the same.

K: Wow, that's amazing.

RG: So, whoever designed us (laugh)— You know, sometimes you have epiphanies in surgery, where you are looking at something and looking at something and you suddenly go oh, that's going to work! It's exactly the right shape, the blood vessels are in the right place, the muscle cuff is properly oriented— everything here would work. It (inspiration) actually comes from a way of thinking about problems and surgery— that you are always looking for a better solution and thinking structurally and anatomically about it.

Gilbert explains the importance of an individuals' mindset and further elaborates on conditions that enable innovation to occur.

K: This brings me to my next question. I don't know if you recall my research is looking at innovation and creativity and spaces in which those happen and you talked a little bit about that moment of epiphany, of looking at something and seeing it in a different way, and I'm wondering how often do you think within your role do you get that opportunity to see things differently and if you do, what drives you to do something about seeing that difference and then acting on it?

RG: I think it is largely personality driven, that is you are never satisfied with the quality of the work that you achieve and so you are always looking to do something a little bit better and in patient care you can always improve, I don't think there is any question about that. There are, and its probably not fair to generalize, two types of surgeons, there are surgeons that just want to do a menu-driven, recipe-type of operation, doing the same thing over and over again because that is their comfort zone and there is other people that want to create, improve, always change what they do to try and refine it and refine and refine it, and I'm probably one of those people. There is a need to have a non-linear thinking ability, that is, to be able to view options, to think laterally, outside the box. I don't think along straight lines. Traditional thinking is you just go and keep doing the same thing you've always been doing. In surgery, lateral thinking is bringing in a completely different concept and approach to change the outcome for the patient and so I think I am quite a bit of a lateral thinker when it comes to coming up with new approaches. I developed a bunch of different operations in the reconstructive arena for reconstructing different parts of the head and neck anatomy.

I was interested in further exploring the notion of traditional thinking, which was referenced in Gilbert's previous response and wondered how this might connect to the

challenges facing today's educational systems, organizations and institutions. I was interested in finding out about Gilbert's perspective as a parent who has had children move through the system and wondered what was set of experiences they may have encountered in the educational system. I was interested in knowing what he considered to be the impact of these experiences and whether or not outcomes of teaching and learning might be different, and if so, what factors would contribute to this difference?

K: What you are describing for me is definitely that difference for where those spaces for innovation are able to exist and what is the difference they (the innovative spaces) can make. So, I guess I'm wondering- your children must be grown up now and not within the school system- if you think of their experience within school, I am wondering how do we apply that thinking that you have described, how do we apply it to really making a difference? How do we apply that within schools and what might that look like if it were to take hold and be different? ... Any thoughts on this?

RG: That's a big question. I think it's not everybody who can think laterally, so, it requires a creative personality and whether that requires some development early in your academic life to develop lateral thinking skills or skills for avoiding linear thinking. I am not an expert on education so I couldn't say that, but I think, probably people who have gotten or developed artistic skills in music or art or other things that challenge their

thinking everyday and create opportunities for creativity, probably are better at it than others. We know that gifted artists often make gifted and creative surgeons and gifted musicians sometimes make very gifted and creative surgeons. If you look at surgeons who develop new technologies, a lot of them tend to be people with other skill sets, or have had opportunities to develop other skill sets in their lives.

Gilbert made the connection between the arts and the ability to see things differently as a result of thinking in more creative ways. This connects to my thesis that the Creative Process is a vital element in changing the teaching and learning experiences within our schools, which can only be made possible when the educational structures themselves and system leadership is itself creative and “artful-minded” in how it conceptualizes teaching and learning. The research that has emerged on the successes of the Finnish school system (Sahlberg, 2012) points to this type of aesthetic, artistic structure for teaching and learning. “With Sahlberg as my guide, I visited bright, cheerful schools, where students engaged in music, dramatics, play, and academic studies ... what is to be learned is not prescriptive about the details of what to teach or how to teach it” (Ravitch, 2011). The arts are as equally supported as a way of knowing. The significance of the arts in the development of a learner links back to Gilbert’s comments that people who have opportunities to challenge their thinking through a Creative Process develop the artistic skills necessary to bring creativity to their work. What is different about the Finnish system of education is “schools are carefully designed to address the academic, social,

emotional, and physical needs of children, beginning at an early age” (Ravitch, 2012). The success of the Finnish approach to structuring learning offers an opportunity to reframe (into inspiration) the challenges facing schools as raised within Greene’s *The Creative Spirit: Keys, Doors and Possibilities* (1984):

... We do not offer the young enough options that they feel good enough to seize. The arts are not taken seriously enough as worlds that can be opened up to all sorts of individuals if only they are provided opportunities to move, media to work with, keys for the doors, if they are enabled to crack the codes. Most significantly, I think we too often forget that the primary purpose of education is to free persons to make sense of their actual lived situations– not cognitively, but perceptually, imaginatively, and affectively– to attend mindfully to their own lives, to take initiatives in interpreting them and finding out where the deficiencies are and trying to transform them ... (Greene, 2001, p. 206).

Creating schools as places of possibility (Greene) depends upon new mindsets guided by a foundation in the creative process. Finland stands out in the “Global Education Reform Movement” (Sahlberg, 2012) because of its central aim of developing “each child as a thinking, active, creative person, not the attainment of higher test scores. And the primary strategy of cooperation, not competition” (Ravitch, 2012).

I was interested in finding out about what might influence the development of a mindset that is willing and able to “imagine forward differently” (Zatzman, 2009) and to

understand the conditions necessary to “open up the process for seeing things anew, understand ourselves more fully, expand our ways of knowing and see the possibilities of alternate ways” (Zatzman, 2009), I asked this question:

K: Are there some key people in your life that have had an impact on your thinking and your ability to think outside the box and go in a different direction?

RG: Probably not in a formal education system, I don't think so ... (pause) my father was a very gifted artist and he was also a very gifted technician- he is one of those guys who could fix anything. If he needed to fix a dryer, he would learn how the dryer worked, he would read everything about it and take it apart and put it all back together again and it would work. He was one of those kinds of guys. He was also a very gifted woodworker, craftsman, boat builder.

K: So he had the ability to see something as being different the potential within it?

RG: And I think his artistic skills probably were the thing that helped him the most in that end and he helped create that for me. I had opportunities to do things with him all through my younger life. He had heart disease

and in those days you were told to not work, not stress yourself, so as a result, he spent a lot of time with me. And so I had the opportunity to create things– boats, constructions, whatever, we just did that all the time. It was part of my life.

Gilbert's articulation about his father's Creative Process and its connection to the development of his way of thinking directly links to the concept of the individual and the social. Exploring the connection between the individual and the social in the context of organizational creativity and innovation would help me determine the factors that enable or inhibit creativity and innovation as a result of this intersection of the individual and the social. I asked the following question in order to explore this connection.

K: In thinking about the organization as a whole and you within the organization, you have created a space and a place where you, individually, on behalf of your patients, are able to think differently, imagine possibilities. Would you describe, and I don't want to put you on the spot, the University Health Network as a place where they really honor and encourage that kind of thinking or do you feel that maybe you have had to push your way through certain structures to get at those spaces of innovation?

RG: I think hospitals have a responsibility on the operational side to be responsible and safe and that creates a certain structure that has some

restriction to it, but that's absolutely necessary to avoid having people making mistakes and hurting patients. But, this organization is remarkably adept and focused on creativity, particularly academic creativity— it's a really remarkable organization. They spend an incredible amount of money on research and a great deal of time to recruit the best people and they do whatever they can do to help you develop your career— it is why I moved here, because the academic opportunities here were enormous.

K: Has it always been a place that has been on the threshold, or has it emerged as people such as yourself and more people that think in this way come together?

RG: I think if you look at the history of medicine in Canada it has always been a leading institution academically and creatively, there is no question about that, so I don't think it is something that is recent. I'd say it's in that realm, as organizations go, is probably one of the most creative health care structures in Canada, without a doubt. If you look at the publication record and the amount of stuff that comes out of here from every domain, it's remarkable. I think UHN attracts a certain individual that wants to do creative things, wants to do new things, wants to be successful, wants to work really hard, so, it's a really interesting place.

My final question to Gilbert was asked as a way of determining whether or not there might be a particular metaphor that is embraced by an individual who has a strong desire to innovate and create within his or her work. By uncovering this, I wanted to determine if these personal and organizational metaphors provide the spaces in which creativity and innovation might flourish.

K: My last question for you Ralph is a bit of thinking in metaphors. Do you have something that you keep in your mind? You are a professor, as well you are a surgeon, is there something that reminds you of what you do every day and what is the metaphor that pulls it all together?

RG: I think it is going to be hard to capture it in a single metaphor— in the teaching and the training work that I do, it is very much like the metaphor you described. We are trying to develop residents and fellows to become better surgeons and to extend the breadth of their skills— it's a nurturing supportive environment, so it is exactly like trying to teach someone to fly.

In some ways academic surgery is more like throwing someone into a swimming pool without a life jacket and hoping they can swim. What happens in most academic institutions, this one included, is that high performing organizations generally just want the people that you can throw into the pool and they can swim and are not too interested in the folks who when thrown into the pool can maybe swim a little bit, but need

some help—it's the culture of highly driven academic organizations— it's not as kind as you would hope it would be, but that also creates a challenging environment for certain individuals. On the creativity side, I am not sure I have a metaphor for it. It basically is about not being satisfied with the status quo and the outcomes for individual patients and continuously trying to improve it, that's really what I do, and it drives my thinking. What I saw and what I enjoyed from my father was the creative process, and, I guess it (that Creative Process) makes my job really interesting- it makes my life and my career very interesting because if I had to do the same operation, the same way everyday, over and over again like making widgets, I don't think I would find it very interesting or challenging and I'd probably want to do something else.

Gilbert shared three diverse metaphors, which offer understanding regarding the factors that promote or inhibit innovation and creativity within an organization, system or institution. “Metaphors not only make our thoughts more vivid and interesting but that they actually structure our perceptions and understanding ... metaphors not only shape our view of life in the present but set up the expectations that determine what life will be for us in the future” (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). The first metaphor that Gilbert shares, frames his work as a teacher supporting the growth of knowledge amongst the Residents with whom he works. The metaphor of teaching someone to fly can be connected to the way of the Teacher and the Healer within the Four Directions of Leadership (Vickers &

Steffensen 2012) and serves as a model for leadership within an organization that nurtures knowledge creation. The significant understanding about the Four Directions of *being* is that the way of the Teacher is about listening, learning and growing. The way of the Teacher is about a continuous journey of learning and not a about a destination or a place of arrival. The way of the Healer is about nurturing, caring, guiding, supporting, and ultimately, moving out of a space of hurt, anguish and despair into a space of renewal. The success of the Residents' experience in learning new things can only happen within a supportive environment harkening back to the metaphor of learning to fly.

In the second metaphor (used to describe the role of an academic surgeon), Gilbert shares a different perspective of the way of the Teacher. In sharing the metaphor of being thrown into the deep end of the pool and being expected to swim, Gilbert suggests there is a need to be open to new possibilities and potential in one's role as an academic surgeon. With this view of the Teacher one can see that this way is about taking risks, learning from mistakes and failures and constructing new paths to explore. This second metaphor is also connected with the way of the Visionary. The way of the Visionary is about embodying the Creative Process, ignited by inspiration or challenge resulting in the emergence of something quite innovative or possibly new. The challenge one experiences as a result of being thrown into the unknown, results in the increased opportunity for Gilbert to innovate and create within his role of academic surgeon. As an organization, the University Health Network has an expectation that new methods will emerge as a result of the research academic surgeons embark upon in their work with

challenging cases that their patients present to them. In this way, the organization embraces the way of the Visionary, the Teacher, and the Healer.

In the final metaphor Gilbert speaks to the conditions that enable his own creative process. He reflects on the mindset that enables him to go beyond the *status quo*, which is inherent in his desire to constantly strive to improve outcomes for individual patients. This mindset is not unlike the way of the Warrior/Leader. The way of the Warrior/Leader is about speaking truths, not being afraid to take a stand, to take risks and to seek the changes necessary to move beyond a current reality. It is a place of potential and possibility joined by action. The way of the Warrior/Leader encompasses leadership that ignites the passion in self and in others, because it is clear, pure and true. It is about enacting and being the change. The way of the Warrior/Leader is about standing in the strength, truth, and beauty of who you are and leading in a good way. The interview with Dr. Gilbert has revealed that when an individual embraces all Four Directions within their thinking, then innovation and creativity can be realized. The significant factor or condition that supports an individual's work to be fully realized is engagement with the Creative Process. It requires a mindset to see things anew, particularly for the individuals, for whom the work is meant to make a difference, thereby showing the connection of the individual and the social.

Key themes that emerged from this interview are the significance of rigor, persistence, a creative mindset, the Creative Process and lateral thinking. The combinatorial aspect of these has the potential to move us beyond the *status quo*. Innovation— art works, design solutions, or scientific discoveries— comes about from the

re-shuffling and reconstruction of already existing components by a process Albert Einstein called ‘combinatorial play’ (Behrens, 2002). As with the first interview with Roy Henry Vickers, I see connections to the *Progress Principle* (Amabile & Kramer, 2011) and the ability for individuals to make progress in meaningful work. Dr. Gilbert’s passion for improving the outcomes for individual patients and his desire to be immersed in the Creative Process every day, patient by patient, can be likened to how photographer Andrew Zukerman defines inspiration: “when curiosity and rigor get together something happens” (Zukerman, 2011). That something happening is what I contend needs to be at the core of educational transformation.

Upon further reflection, I also see strong connections to constructivist learning (Vygotsky), in particular as described in Abbott and Ryan’s article *Constructing Knowledge, Reconstructing Schooling*.

The balance between emotion and logic, the role of intuition, and the relationship between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation are all part of the “complex adaptive system” that best describes the brain’s ability to deal with the messiness of ordinary everyday life situations. Constructivist learning, by drawing on the full range of a learner’s experience, strengthens the individual’s ability both to find novel connections, and to harness peripheral perception. Rather than a focus on intense, encyclopedic recall, constructivist learning leads to deep understanding, sense making, and the potential for creativity and enterprise (Abbott & Ryan, 1999, p. 2).

Dr. Gilbert's articulation of a connection to his father's Creative Process and how this Creative Process connects back to his work as a surgeon (someone who is driven by the need to do things in new, interesting and evolving ways) embodies the iterative nature of constructivist learning. This also harkens back to the theory of Connectivism, shared in the reflections on the interview with Roy Henry Vickers. Principles of connectivism such as "capacity to know more is more critical than what is currently known; ability to see connections between fields, ideas, and concepts is a core skill; decision making is itself a learning process; seeing through a lens of a shifting reality— while there is a right answer now, it may be wrong tomorrow" (Seimens, 2004).

The Creative Process that Dr. Gilbert embarked upon required all of these capacities and insights. It is my contention that by tapping into sources of inspiration such as those described by Dr. Gilbert, inspiration empowered by "artful-mindedness" (Steffensen, 2012) and an open learning stance, organizations, schools and educational systems will be truly generative, responsive, free of borders and limitations, thereby optimizing the identity of individuals and the entire organization. This artful-mindedness will ultimately enable us to move us from a state of entropy to renewal and innovation in praxis, transforming and eluding "the politics of polarity", where we might emerge "as the others of ourselves" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 39).