

FDEV Zine (Issue 3, April 2021)

A new publication by the Office of [Faculty Development](#)

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Teaching & Storytelling

This month's topic, teaching and storytelling, invites us to embrace a more vulnerable side of our profession, and to enter our classes (virtually or not) willing to put ourselves out there. Storytelling in the classroom, at least the one that centers on the narrator, often requires a level of openness and honesty that moves learning out of the realm of "simple" knowledge and pushes it into experience.

I never considered myself to be a great storyteller. Maybe because I've always considered my experience a fairly normal and easy one, nothing that could be turned into some fascinating story or a meaningful learning example. Then one day, in my SETs, I received a comment about how "she always talks about Italy!"

It took me a minute to understand whether this was negative criticism or a positive comment. I certainly speak a lot about Italy in the World Cinema class I used to teach: I grew up watching those movies, they are in my native language, and often reflect an experience that is my own. So why not bring that experience into the classroom when teaching about Italian cinema?

I have now lived in the US for 20 years. This seems an important milestone to think about my story, and my experience. Moving away from one's country is not easy. It is like all of a sudden you have two lives. The pre and post life. The Italian and American life. The personal/familial and the professional life. And I often feel I'm a different person depending on where I am. In these 20 years, the two worlds have collided a few times, mostly when people from one world come to visit me in the other world. My family in Italy has come to appreciate my American life and often friends and family are curious about and fascinated by what I do here. The one person who could not see me in this dual dimension is my maternal grandmother, Mirella. She died way too young, at 61 years old, of breast cancer. And there is not a single day that passes in which I don't wish she could see me here and now. I wish I could tell her my full story, as she is such an essential part of who I am and who I have become.

Two colleagues that have contributed personal stories to this issue, Browning Neddeau and Lindsay Briggs, both spoke about their ancestors. I don't believe it's a coincidence. After all, our stories only exist thanks to and because of them.

So, I dedicate this April issue, my grandmother's month birth, to her and everything that I am because of her.

Zines and personal narratives: [A collection from Berea College's Hutchins Library.](#)

TEACHING AS A FORM OF STORYTELLING (Browning Michael Neddeau)

Mamogosnan/Creator,

Nokmes nkedwenen nwi-swenanen/Share my words with Grandmother.

Bozho>Hello Grandma Neddeau,

Ni je na?/How are you? I might usually write that everything is going well. I would share with you the adventures of the season; the events of the day, week, month, and year. However, 2020 and 2021 are two years that continue to test all of humanity. I never imagined that I would spend so much time staring at a méznatésék/computer screen as a teacher. It sometimes feels like staring into an abyss where you hope your message reaches someone in a meaningful way. You literally are sometimes staring at small black squares on the screen because not all students have the same access to the very technology we require they use in higher education. I know, Grandma, I am grateful for what I have and for everything you have done for me to be here today. The work I do honors my ancestors that have come before and the ones who will walk after me.

I carry your teachings in good ways. My parents ensured that your teachings and cultural ways of knowing and doing continue. To my friends and colleagues outside of our family, I explain this as cultural survivance. Your teachings, Grandma, are not about what we used to be and how we lived. Your teachings are about how we live, why we do things a certain way, and how to live in good ways. The concepts of victimry and nihilism are absent in our cultural ways, but very much central to the beating of colonized hearts.

I enclosed your photo, Grandma, with my letter. You served as a federal government nurse for so many years. It is not lost on me the service you provided to our citizens. We are currently in a pandemic where public health and wellness are deeply scrutinized and -- oddly -- politicized. I reflect on how you served as a nurse in a tuberculosis hospital in our tribal community, attending to people that were fighting an infectious disease that was foreign to our people. It is 2021 now. I am a teacher. I look around in my community and realize that your teachings are ever-present. I teach as a form of storytelling. Teaching provides my students and I space and place to ensure that our fire burns and stories and lived experiences are valid.

As we keep the fire burning, Grandma, I think of the Seven Grandfathers, specifically the gifts of love, truth, and humility. In a world filled with opportunities to spread love, speak truth, and practice humility, I see you. I hear you. Do you see and hear me? It's me, Browning.

Iw/End,

Browning

P.S. Your chicken recipe continues to be a favorite at our dinner table. I miss you.

Browning and his grandmother, Marjorie Lucy Neddeau, are enrolled citizens of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation.

WHO TELLS THE STORY OF US, HERE, NOW? (William Cuthbertson)

We know stories. Because we are human, we know them – we tell them. We know stories can be etched to stone, to plant, to screen, to memory, to another person in such a way that we live beyond our own boundaries, and that by sharing stories we become the link between past understanding and future promise. The stories need not be physical or permanent – sometimes their impermanence suits them best – but as an academic community, the value of storytelling is visible in all our work. We rely on narrative to create logic and pathways that those we teach can follow to discovery.

As those in positions of academic power, we understand that who tells a story is at least as important as the story told. Earlier this year, Kendall Leon (FYE/English), Stefani Baldivia (Meriam Library), and I were among six collaborators across three universities who published our stories of how we sought to elevate student voices in the core of an academic institution's identity: its university archives.

In particular, **we sought to help universities tell stories different from the ones they are used to telling.** Where archives are known for storing the records of academic governance, letters from prominent figures, imagery of popular groups and gatherings, we understand that those stories can (and typically do) favor certain voices over others. They favor higher classes, whiteness, people already comfortable in academic spaces. But for those of us who work with first-generation students, we know archives don't often -- if ever -- tell the stories of students whose very presence determines our success.

The Primary Source Interview assignment that Archivists Jay Trask, Jane Monson, and I started at the University of Northern Colorado, and that Stefani Baldivia and I continued at Chico State's First-Gen Trailblazer Symposium, sought to bring student voices and stories to the permanent stories a University tells about itself. As a classroom assignment, students are asked to answer a few set questions on their experiences at university and then encouraged to riff, sharing whatever and however they felt comfortable capturing their stories. They work in small groups, record on library cameras and personal phones, and are graded on objectives of sound quality and demonstration of effort to keep the conversations unbound. Because the rights to the interviews are retained by the students, they control when, and for how long, their videos available to the public, or whether they are public at all.

The result is a story of a university that looks and sounds like the students of the university.

It recounts startling family stories, **stories of wanting to belong**, stories of challenges that came from the university itself in how it addresses issues of race and class and visibility.

But as John Edgar Wideman wrote, all stories are true.

The truth of empowering students to tell their own stories, in their own voice, and to interweave those stories into the history of the university itself, is to pay tribute to all the ways in which we understand how voice, and presence, and story, and the storytellers themselves come together to remind us who we are.

We encourage you to read more about the [first-generation student voices projects](#) and to download the [Primary Source: Interview assignment](#).

You can also explore six years of [student voices from the University of Northern Colorado](#). This assignment will be taught at Chico State as part of *LIBR 130: Introduction to Undergraduate Research* in Fall, 2021.

The photographs in this and the previous page were selected from the [Northeast California Historical Photographs Archive](#).

UPDATES FROM THE FLCs

Theory and Practice of Teaching First-Year Students

Celina Phillips

As a "seasoned" instructor in Agriculture, I have started to really pay attention to what I call the "generation gap". How can I better understand our incoming students' experiences and cultural lenses to reach and work to engage them in our curriculum, our college, and in my classes? Combine this with the fact that we are critically evaluating our curriculum, I entered this FLC with the hopes to enhance my understanding and think about what we can do to engage our students quicker in our program, with the hopes of improving retention, graduation rates, and the "Chico Experience" for our students. Two aspects of this FLC have resonated with me. First is the connection and comradery of being able to engage with colleagues. Second, is the idea of connecting our diverse students to the purpose of not just courses, but the entire curriculum, will work to ensure student success!

Closing the Equity Gaps

Erik Wasinger

Data, data, DATA! In the Closing Equity Gaps FLC, we are focusing on using all the data we can gather to address equity gaps in our classrooms. Did you know Chico State has it's own Equity Gap dashboard? We do – and the link is on the FDEV website. Although still evolving, the dashboard has information on each of your classes over the past several years, including equity gaps by class or by year, and will even identify gaps within first generation and non-first generation students. As an FLC, we are using these data to identify potential changes we can make to a course, helping to promote a successful educational experience for all our students. Digging into the dashboard has lead to some powerful conversations, conversations that will continue with guest speakers at our next FLC meeting.

THE DAY BEFORE THEY CAME (Don Hankins)

The painting reflects upon the question: "what was happening in Indigenous villages the day before colonizers arrived?" Here the Mollukenu? (Condor spirit) is dancing a sacred dance upon the land which has been freshly burned to care for it as a commitment to our ancestral obligations and unborn generations. Linked to those obligations are the radiating symbols for land (lines) and water (dots) as prayers cast to the directions. The horizon is filled with smoke

that serves a purpose of cleansing the lands and its inhabitants while sheltering the surface waters and creating particulate to bring rain. The disconnect to these traditions began with the arrival of colonizers, and we currently grapple with reasserting our knowledge in fulfillment of our traditional obligations, our languages, and other elements of culture including the production of traditional paints.

The Day Before They Came (Don Hankins, 2015)

Ochre and charcoal pigments with duck fat binder. These materials were collected within the Miwko? waali? (Plains Miwok world).

REFLECTIONS ON MIXED RACE IDENTITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION (Lindsay Briggs)

As someone who appears solely white, I have long struggled with how to live authentically as a white-presenting, but deeply connected to my Native roots person. In academia, this is even more difficult as I constantly worry about taking up “too much space” from my Native colleagues who both LOOK Native and often work in Indigenous Studies and related disciplines. I have not experienced the same marginalization of those with darker skin or those who grew up on reservations, but I still carry the historical traumas of my people passed on both genetically as well as through the stories of my elders. I am additionally challenged by the settler-colonialist concept of blood quantum; my mom is a member of our tribe, but I am not because too many white family members have watered down my DNA. I don’t want to be seen as an Elizabeth Warren profiteer even if my experience tells me I am absolutely not the same. Society and media are the reasons I struggle with my identity, not who I feel I am in my soul. I bring all of these complicated bits and pieces of me into the classroom. On the first day of class I identify myself as both white and Native American. I talk about John Bidwell (not nicely) and the Mechoopda people whose land we sit upon and learn. I talk about how colonialism and white supremacy affects everything we do in the classroom whether overtly through things such as health disparities or covertly such as systemic racism in the education system that leads us to have less than 0.51% Native American students on a campus built on Indigenous lands.

I tell my students I don’t have all of the answers to so many complicated questions that will come up in our course, but I will help them hold the complexity and sit with them in the uncertainty while we work together to look through all the complicated pieces for solutions to contemporary issues. I bring my whole self to the classroom and I invite them to do the same.

Lindsay’s Great Great Grandfather around 1929. His name was John Long (Anglicized), but he was born Gosh Puh Gah Bow in 1856 in Minnesota. Lindsay’s family hails from the Leech Lake Band of the Ojibwe part of the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe.

LEAVE THIS BLANK ON PURPOSE

Ah! Just kidding! Check out the events below!

[Teaching Racial & Social Justice Series](#)

April 13: Data Displays and Interpretation: Linking the Practices of Our Fields to Social Justice Issues

April 27: Supporting Students' Community Wealth with Culturally Sustaining Assessment.

[Friday Forums](#)

April 16: How to Approach Service Strategically (10:30-12:00)

April 30: The ChicoFlex Model (11:00-12:00)

[FDEV Podcast: Rise, Teach, Learn](#)

April 8: Universal Design for Learning

April 22: Sustainability & Ecological Justice (Practices and Pedagogy)

[QLT Workshops](#)

April 6: Workshop 3-Organization of Course Materials and Resources

April 14: Workshop 4-Student Engagement

April 23: Workshop 5-Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility

FACULTY DEVELOPMENT RESOURCES

[FDEV Media Channel](#)

[Mode Course Design](#)

[Teaching Guides](#)

[Grades & Equity Gaps Dashboard](#)

[Tuesday Tips](#)

[CAL\\$](#)

[FDEV Podcast](#)

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