

## Discovering Educational Leadership in Connections: Dr. Elizabeth Murray of Tatamagouche<sup>1</sup>

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In recounting the educational leadership of Elizabeth Murray, with particular focus on her years as an adult educator at mid-century, I trace connections between her early years as a teacher and adult educator and her current community projects. These links are temporal, between past and present; social, between child and adult; and individual, between excellence as personal and shared experience. In writing about this woman's early life, I discuss first the limitations of traditional historical sources to divulge significant strands of leadership action, and second, the importance of Murray's former students and colleagues in providing essential evidence.

En faisant état du leadership d'Elizabeth Murray en éducation, surtout durant les années qu'elle a consacrées à l'éducation des adultes au milieu du siècle, l'auteure établit des liens entre les premières années d'enseignante d'Elizabeth Murray auprès des enfants et des adultes et ses projets communautaires actuels: liens temporels, entre le passé et le présent; liens sociaux, entre l'enfant et l'adulte; liens personnels, entre des gens qui partagent l'expérience de l'excellence. Tout en présentant les débuts de la vie professionnelle de cette femme, l'auteure discute d'abord des limites des sources historiques traditionnelles lorsqu'on cherche à dévoiler des axes significatifs de leadership en action, puis de l'importance des anciens élèves et collègues d'Elizabeth Murray, qui ont fourni des données essentielles.

[A] woman may write her own life in advance of living it, unconsciously, and without recognizing or naming the process. (Heilbrun, 1989, p. 11)

[Let us] find the right balance between the potential of socialization to liberate and to bind, so that the individual and society can grow in a manner that integrates the new with the positive aspects of the past. (Bowers, 1987, p. 32)

In several facets of educational literature, we are called to re-examine the significance of personally held meanings in the practice of schooling. "Meaning" for any individual person incorporates attitudes, beliefs, and values. In the literature of educational leadership, Hodgkinson (1982, pp. 107–109) has helped us to differentiate between attitudes and values and, further, to distinguish among types of values. Greenfield, since 1974, has forced the issue of value examination upon a field almost totally caught up in its preoccupation with observable and, supposedly, factual reality (see, for example, Greenfield, 1980/1993, pp. 92–96).

Housego (1992) and Sergiovanni (1992) have named, in very different approaches, specific values that may benefit administrative practice. Both call for a spirit of change, a renewed attention to “school and community,” and a balanced approach to individual excellence in the context of social responsibility.<sup>2</sup>

Oakes (1992) elaborates on this spirit of change in school practice and advocates a return to “core humanistic values.” She implies that schools (and their leaders) would do well to consider values that lead in new directions involving participation, communication, community, reflection, experimentation, risk-taking, and trust. Her call for increased “*caritas*”<sup>3</sup> carries an implied criticism of assumptions that have dominated school practice over the past several decades—assumptions, for example, about the overriding value of competition and consumerism. The earlier values correspond more closely with the aims of social and economic reproduction whereby schools are thought to reflect and to replicate the society in which they are embedded. The newer directions would involve close links between school and community as well but, in this case, in an environment of critical discourse and democratic dialogue.

The genesis of this new spirit of dialogue and community cooperation has several sources. First, the literature on women and leadership shows feminist ways of responding to organizational challenges that involve informal networking, discussion by participants, a breakdown of hierarchical arrangements, and a nurturing attitude on the part of the leader (Helgesen, 1990). Then too, other postmodern writings call for a re-examination of previously held assumptions such as those concerning progress, predictability, and the significance of the individual (Taylor, 1991) and a re-formulation of basic premises for action (Barth, 1990, pp. 9, 10; Housego, 1992, p. 230). Moreover, the emerging literature on holistic approaches to education discusses cooperation and dialogue in frameworks of both unity and diversity (e.g., Burge, 1993; Doll, 1993; Miller, 1988). In truth, the new spirit arises from a variety of sources, including the social and political pressures of an economic recession. For whatever reason, the ways of our *immediate* past have been found wanting in an age of global awareness. I italicize “immediate” with an assumption of my own—that an historical review of educational values and action may unearth “truths” that speak to our current age and problems.

Thus I began the study of a prominent Nova Scotian educator who embodies many values relevant today, particularly those of community cohesion and individual excellence. Although I held little hope of clearing the murky waters surrounding theoretical concepts of “leadership” per se (see, for example, Watkins, 1989), I wished to examine the values of this one leader and the manner in which she continues to influence others in a long chain of leadership. Two years into the study, I have changed the chain metaphor to one of “network” or “web” because my data indicate radiant rather than linear processes and images.<sup>4</sup> Underlying my approach to the study is Greenfield’s advice to us to examine the

“character” of leaders together with that of their followers and all participants in the social setting (1984, p. 143), as distinct from the “characteristics” of leadership so arduously pursued in traditional studies. I assume, therefore, the primacy of character and, further, that one’s character may be approached through that complex of beliefs, attitudes, and values, and the actions that flow from these (see Hodgkinson, 1983, pp. 201, 202; 1991, p. 60). A methodological assumption is, thus, that the words and actions of people involved as leader and followers offer the most fruitful venue for understanding the phenomenon of leadership.

In this paper I report one phase of a larger study investigating the educational times, and especially the leadership, of Elizabeth (Betty) Murray. I describe a specific period of Murray’s work in which she, with a few others, designed and developed the Division of Adult Education for the Province of Nova Scotia. I sketch briefly three other phases of Murray’s work that help to establish the general historical and social context of her educational life.

My first purpose is to point to emerging themes in the early days of Murray’s career and the manner in which these are played out today. My second purpose is to describe problems inherent in capturing the life history of a highly effective educator who, according to my opening quotation, has “written her own life in advance” in bold print but, in keeping with so many women, eschews the hierarchical arrangements of education in favour of enacting leadership in the context of classrooms and communities (Blackmore, 1989, pp. 102, 109; Casey, 1992, pp. 206, 207; Gilligan, 1982, pp. 48, 49; Helgesen, 1990, pp. 49–51). In discussing the absence in her career of traditional benchmarks of accomplishment—the principalship and the superintendency—I explain the research methods that had to evolve if I was to widen the allowable contexts for understanding the significance of this woman’s educational work. Neither documents of the period nor Murray’s own interpretation of events provided sufficient evidence to establish a clear image of leadership.<sup>5</sup> The methodological problem became one of re-claiming an educational life or, in a sense, of writing that life initially through the perspectives of former students and other adult educators of the era.

#### METHODS AND ETHICS

This descriptive and interpretive case study of the educational leadership of Betty Murray has both ethnographic and historical components. As an ethnographer, I live in Betty’s<sup>6</sup> home for a month each summer and join forces with the villagers to produce another Tatamagouche history play. For three summers now, I have collected information about Betty’s influence and current activities through interviews, informal conversations, observations, and news reports. I am, in this phase, very much the participant observer, immersed in the village culture. The multiple forms of data enable me to describe leadership in its immediacy, as played out in Murray’s community and home life.<sup>7</sup>

My second approach, conducted over the same period, involves more traditional forms of historical research. To reconstruct Murray's role as a young school teacher, community "animateur," and adult educator, I look to such sources as Department of Education documents, educational journals, college yearbooks, newspaper clippings, and texts foundational to the attitudes, beliefs, and actions of educators in post-war Nova Scotia. Most significantly, I rely on the words of Murray, her former students, and her colleagues.

Participants in the study reviewed the first draft of each phase of the report, corroborating and correcting my description and interpretation of events. In such a process, the researcher can hardly be considered the sole "instrument," as commonly claimed in qualitative studies (Borg, Gall, & Gall, 1993, p. 208; Eisner, 1991, pp. 33, 34; Ely et al., 1991, p. 25). More accurately, the researched and researcher alike play a role in the interpretation, as they do in the formulation of questions and all other aspects of the study. Checking one's work with others, advisable for the credibility of all qualitative work, takes on particular urgency when the identity of participants is given.

Although I do not see myself as the sole instrument, I recognize that I am part of the methodological problem. When I was eight years old, "Miss Murray" visited my rural school. With my teacher's blessing, Miss Murray taught us children artsongs, folksongs, and canons, and how to read music from blackboard notation. With 10 young friends, I joined Miss Murray's Rural Girls' Choir, and became both captivated by the beauty of choral singing and awe-struck by the power of musical leadership. Today, in the company of Betty Murray, I retain much of that childhood awe. Aware that Betty is most comfortable talking about ideas and the accomplishments of others, I tread carefully — too carefully — in probing for her story. Together with Betty, therefore, I am learning to talk more freely about women and leadership and the values we share and contest. In reporting these issues, I begin with Betty's current project, the history plays about her people.

#### FOUR ERAS OF LEADERSHIP

##### *The History Plays*

Every July 1 weekend the village of Tatamagouche,<sup>8</sup> Betty Murray's home and birthplace, draws visitors from all parts of Nova Scotia. They come to see the annual "play with music," written by Betty and enacted by the people of Tatamagouche, depicting a year in the history of their village. To date, there have been 12 such depictions, including such topics as the original settlements of Mi'kmaqs, Acadians, Huguenots, and, later, the Scots; the coming of the railway; tragedies at sea; and the enlistment of local lads in World War I. Last year, as the 65-year-old Creamery was closed, I took part in the story of its inception,

which was concurrent with the coming of electricity to Tatamagouche. Although the main participants in these plays are members of the 40-voice Tatamagouche and Area Choir, which meets under Betty's direction from September to July each year, the July play attracts a cast of approximately 140. These "actors" range in age from six months (there is always a baby to be presented to one and all during the July 1 village picnic) to 89 years, and the cast of animals includes hens, dogs, horses, and the occasional obdurate goat. In the performances, which seem to include the basic elements of theatrical success, Betty—described by one American visitor this year as a "Grandma Moses" of drama—and her people entertain from 2,000 to 3,000 enthusiastic viewers from across the province and beyond.

Yet Betty Murray, herself now 77, is no playwright. Indeed, she chuckles at this descriptor in the local newspaper. Her purpose is an educative one: to connect as many people as possible in text, song, and dance in an active engagement between past and present and in a manner artistically and historically authentic. How her leadership is played out in the fine details of this setting provides the grist for a far larger work, as do her current political activities in the community. I outline the event here to illustrate the connections between present and past experiences.

*Tarbet, Miss Murray's First School*

From Tatamagouche today, I take you across the Waugh River to the small one-room school of Barrachois—referred to here as Tarbet School—where Miss Murray began her teaching career in 1940. Miss Murray's academic training, culminating in a B.A. from Mount Allison University, and her professional year spent at the Provincial Normal College, Truro, gave her more preparation for teaching than most young teachers received at that time. Most important, she had listened with rapt attention to her Truro teachers; their Dewey-inspired lessons fell on fertile ground.

It seemed eminently sensible to the young Miss Murray to "learn by doing" and especially appropriate in a situation where she was teaching 40 students, from kindergarten level to Grade 9. Although she did not ignore the contents of the "big brown book" (i.e., the curriculum guide), she concentrated on activities that would serve students in their daily lives. The "big boys and girls," some of whom were already grades behind in academic prowess, began to experience success in other areas. For one thing, Betty recalls, "they all learned to drive, in the field behind the school, in my old car." Then

it just so happened that the school over there had never been really finished. It wasn't even painted. As it was just sitting, doing nothing for several years, we did the finishing touches. The big kids painted and people in the community joined in. We used to go there all summer, doing things.

From an old storeroom, “the kids fixed up a small kitchen,”<sup>9</sup> and they constructed cement steps and a walkway. Naturally, all such construction involved mathematical calculation and the skills of house-painting, carpentry, and masonry. What Murray did not know about such skills, she asked of neighbours and parents of the school. In retrospect, she considers this an idyllic teaching situation: “I had so much freedom and I could do anything. And everything I did was ‘perfect’.”

The most remarkable part of her work, however, was her teaching of music. I am not sure that “teaching” captures the flavour of this activity where, in one former student’s words, children

sat round the pot-bellied stove, drinking cocoa til late in the afternoon, sight-reading exercises, preparing for the spring music festival, an operetta, a church event or just singing for the joy of it. She successfully taught children who were thought to be tone-deaf to sing and enjoy music . . . we [challenged] one another to sing the most difficult intervals and passages.

Somehow “she covered the curriculum for all grades but it was her love and enthusiasm for music that captured her students.” Another former student recalls the spring musical plays where all children, “even the big farm boys,” took part in performances for the “town” (i.e., Tatamagouche). Yet another student tells of the treacherous drive over the (then unpaved) mountain roads to the Music Festivals in Truro, where the children from Tarbet received wide acclaim for their singing and their sight-reading.<sup>10</sup>

#### *Miss Murray as Community “Animateur”*

The unusual activities taking place at Tarbet and the excellence demonstrated in at least one area of learning, brought Murray to the attention of School Inspector MacLeod (*Annual Report*, 1944, pp. 75, 76) and, through him, to Professor Mortimer Marshall of Acadia University. Marshall believed all teachers should have intimate experience of the communities in which they teach. In his opinion, teachers can only respond to the needs of students if they know the community setting—the prevalent forms of work or employment, the leisure-time activities, and the interests and attitudes of the parent body (Marshall, 1948, 1949). At the time, he needed the help of a co-operating educator, both to initiate community projects and study groups in the University catchment and to involve his graduate students in such activities. Betty Murray was asked to be that educator. This she agreed to do, resolving to spend her newly inflated salary on additional lessons in the University’s School of Music.

In her community work over a period of three years, Miss Murray won the confidence of local people and built programs that radiated from the University town of Wolfville. Her style was informal. Various people from the area

remember her as “just like one of the family.” She formed close and abiding friendships throughout the Valley and, as she remembers, “always had a place to stay for the night.” One woman recalls that “Betty would drive in the yard in her old Chevy,” stride in “with her overnight bag in hand,” and ask if her hostess could “throw another potato in the pot.” According to these informants, no task was too menial for Betty. She would “chop wood, pitch in with the dishes, and entertain us all with stories.”

Miss Murray moved among the largely rural people of the Annapolis Valley to assess their perceptions of need, to encourage study groups that spoke to these needs, and to involve graduate students from Acadia University as observers, researchers, and, where needed initially, group leaders. It was the people who identified their interests in forming specific study groups, radio Farm Forums, Women’s Institutes, explorations of local history, book clubs, and music and drama activities (see *Annual Report*, 1947, pp. 175–178). Miss Murray acted as facilitator to make the necessary links and, in the case of music and certain discussion groups, as leader.

Now Miss Murray was creating another set of links—between adult learning (i.e., her official area of activity) and the involvement of children in musical ventures. This developed as she, in an effort to identify community leaders, visited teachers in their rural schools. As singing occurred everywhere Miss Murray went, she had an opportunity to note those children who appeared especially keen to sing. These came from all sectors of the community; they included a few children like me who had enjoyed the advantage of private lessons and those, far more numerous, who had very little musical opportunity. We came from some 20 Valley schools and were invited to form a large “Rural Girls’ Choir” that met regularly in a church basement.

Some of the children were asked, in due course, to make guest visits to larger, adult, community choirs. The children’s role was twofold: to demonstrate excellent singing and, by their sheer presence, to elevate the choir to its “community” function—that is, to connect people of all ages in a common purpose. One prominent Nova Scotia entertainer recalls that, as a young man in love with singing, he “accompanied Betty Murray to a different choir every night of the week.”

#### *Miss Murray as Adult Educator*

Contemporary with Murray’s work in the Annapolis Valley was the development of a master plan for a projected Division of the Nova Scotia Department of Education to serve the learning needs of adults (Henson, 1946). The planners of the Division of Adult Education took their inspiration from several sources. First, there was the influence of the extension workers of St. Francis Xavier University who, since the late 1920s, had been working with fishermen and farmers of eastern Nova Scotia to form credit unions and cooperatives. This experiment in

rural development, known as the Antigonish Movement, was led by the Roman Catholic clergy and by Father “Jimmy” Thompson and the Reverend Dr. Moses Coady in particular. Just as active were the men of the extension service of the provincial Department of Agriculture and Marketing, who saw economic and social organization as equally necessary to the advancement of the rural communities (Henson, 1954, p. 5). Yet another influence was the rapidly developing Home and School movement, whose leaders perceived a need for “adult education about education” and considered the community an important “educational influence ranking with the home, the school, and the church” (Henson, 1954, p. 5).<sup>11</sup> A common perception among these various groups was that the social and economic inequalities, tolerated in the days of the Great Depression, were quite unacceptable in the relative prosperity of immediate post-war Nova Scotia.

Based on experiments in adult education in other settings and on a wide survey within the province, Guy Henson—soon to become director of the new Division—outlined a philosophic approach to adult education and three main directives for action. The importance of local initiative and decentralized organizational control was emphasized. The Division’s role would be (1) to help communities develop educational programs suited to their interests and needs, (2) to serve the especially urgent needs of racial minorities (i.e., the Black population of Nova Scotia), unemployed youth, war veterans, and women, and (3) to co-operate with existing educational institutions and voluntary groups with educational purposes (*Annual Report*, 1946).

The Division of Adult Education was established in 1946 with a highly skilled group of founding educators directed by Guy Henson and with Charles Topshee as assistant director. Both leaders had extensive experience in adult educational projects through St. Francis Xavier University. The other three educators were John Hugh MacKenzie, a former school principal and worker with war veterans, Don Wetmore, a drama specialist,<sup>12</sup> and Elizabeth Murray, the “successful teacher and community leader” (*Annual Report*, 1946, p. 94). Miss Murray’s assignment was to continue her work in the Annapolis Valley and, as a “field representative,” to test the ideas of various Divisional members, for, as Henson (1954) recalled eight years later, she

was able to rub shoulders with the people with whom she was working, to enter their homes, to attend gatherings more or less regularly, and to see the day-by-day, week-by-week progress. . . . All the things we were doing or offering thus came under her firsthand scrutiny as a professional worker and she could report on their immediate and long-range values from the point of view of the people concerned as well as from her own. (pp. 20, 21)

During the next four years in the Valley (1946–1950), Miss Murray and her education students became engaged directly in the activities of 19 communities with approximately 1,000 people. By extending more peripheral service, she was



“in contact with another 20 communities.” In Henson’s estimation, “these activities constitute a significant advance in adult education in rural Canada” (*Annual Report*, 1950). He continues the prodigious list of accomplishments:

This year [Miss Murray gave] a total of two months of time to help staff four folk schools; assist with classes of 50 teachers in the adult education course [at Dalhousie University] and 14 teachers in a new course in community music at the Nova Scotia Summer School [also at Dalhousie]; instruct at the 10-day Summer School of Community Music and give several short courses in other counties for adult music leaders; conduct several short courses for farm and Home and School workers in other counties; and maintain contact with folk school students and their communities in Hants and other counties in which the Division has no regional representative. (p. 161)

Related outcomes of Miss Murray’s project included a new education program for patients at the Nova Scotia Sanatorium<sup>13</sup> and frequent assistance at provincial and county conventions of the Nova Scotia Farmers’ Association, Nova Scotia Federation of Home and School Associations, and Women’s Institutes.

Using this experimental period of Miss Murray’s service with the Division of Adult Education, and her later work as field representative in Colchester County and as music supervisor to the Division—a period extending to 1960—I shall pursue here three Divisional innovations in which Murray was particularly influential: (1) the residential folkschools, mentioned by Henson above, (2) the School of Community Arts, and (3) the Nova Scotia Festival of the Arts. Although the innovations arose through the combined vision and effort of all workers in the Division, there is evidence as I shall show that Betty Murray’s role was crucial to each venture’s success.

An inspirational impetus to the development of regional and residential folkschools came from the work of Danish philosopher, educator, and “man of the cloth” N. F. S. Grundtvig. Bishop Grundtvig, who lived from 1783 until 1872, conceived of education as a lifelong process in which each person could, and should, be engaged from birth to death. He believed that the most effective means of engagement was obtainable through man’s dialogue with his neighbour. One finds in Grundtvig’s writing, as in the Danish folkschools of today, the “interesting mix of stubborn individual spirit and strong social collectivism . . . that Danes regard as everyman’s responsibility toward freedom of choice” (Warren, 1987).

The Nova Scotian folkschools had, similarly, the goal of developing individual competencies in the light of social or community contexts. This, according to Donald F. Maclean,<sup>14</sup> was consistent with the ideal of “educating people, not merely training them.” In this process, we can trace an attempt to “get at the whole person.” This was approached in two ways during the 10 days or so of residential life. First, there was a strong emphasis on developing an appreciation of local history and the rural setting. In Maclean’s words,

this [would lend] a sense of identity, or worth, and of motivation. . . . If I am to become effective, then I must become someone who reads things, not just manuals on how to do this or that, but to gain some appreciation of history and to develop some perspective that prevents me from feeling defeated and discouraged because something doesn't work. Others have worked hard in the past and failed, but they learned something from their failure; or they have succeeded and gone on to something further.

Tom Jones, another early field representative and, later, director of the Adult Education Division, confirms that the "thrust was to help people understand their rural communities better. And to take part more effectively in the life of the community, [through sharing] ideas and experiences."

Related to this sense of unity with one's past and community was the development of the cultural aspects of the individual. For this reason, all participants in Nova Scotia folkschools studied music, drama, and folkdance. These activities were seen, according to Herman Timmons, another former director of the Division, as "part of a well-balanced life" and as a "means for getting at the whole person." Once more, the emphasis was on personal development in a community context.

The folkschool day was "spent in study groups about community issues, whereas the evening program was initiated and directed entirely by the students." Murray's role was to temper long days of study with music and often physical recreation, and to participate in discussion groups as the need arose. In Jones' estimation, "She was great at [this]; she looked after the music but she very ably took part in all the other sessions."

The vision behind these folkschools was both transformative and long-term. The immediate goal was to assist able community members to realize their own leadership abilities and, as a result, to assume leadership roles back in their own villages and towns. The long-term outcome demanded patience and perseverance. As Maclean explains, "if you really transform individuals, this is something that is permanent and the effects will be socially pervasive for a long time to come." The "transformation" arises, in this case, from self-discovery — the discovery of leadership capacity.

The follow-up work in local Nova Scotian communities showed Betty Murray playing a large role. Timmons, recalling Murray's effectiveness, says she was

always an innovative person, a creative person. There were no bounds to her interest, as far as people were concerned. She was a generalist, even though she had a high degree of expertise in the music field. And she was a terrific field worker, managing people and organizing people and programs. She had energy, creative ability, and perseverance. She wasn't easily discouraged.

Timmons emphasizes that many people might have similar talents but were far less successful, lacking "Betty's dedication, hard work, and the determination to stick with it."

Dedication, hard work, tenacity, and vision were needed for the conception and realization of the School of Community Arts and, later, the Nova Scotia Festival of the Arts. The School was initiated jointly, in the late 1940s, by the Divisional drama supervisor, Don Wetmore, and the “musical” field representative, Betty Murray. Its purpose, like that of the folkschools, was to develop leaders who could carry on projects in their own communities; this time, of course, leadership was in the arts of drama, music, painting, and dance.

Naturally, the 10-day School could not produce professional “artists”; the objective of Murray and others was to identify those with training and talent in their communities and bring them to the School to benefit from the stimulation of the finest teachers of the arts in Canada (and, occasionally, England) and by association with other students. Although the School began in Halifax County, it was moved early to Tatamagouche, which became its permanent home.

Tatamagouche was, from the very beginning, the venue of the Nova Scotia Festival of the Arts. It was no coincidence that this particular village was selected for the provincial event; as Donald Maclean recalls, it was chosen “because Betty had been so successful in identifying people and having things happen in that community. [As folk schools had been held in Tatamagouche], there was a very receptive body of people.” Timmons remembers the original planning committee meetings and agrees that

the major contribution, the birth of the Festival, was from Betty Murray. Her ability to envision what might take place and then to plan how it might be launched and then to execute it. You could go so far in dreaming things, but Betty was also great in the execution.

And the execution bore the unmistakable marks of art and history, played out in a context of community.

At the Festival, local artists displayed their art and crafts on the grounds. Internationally known Canadian musicians, such as Maureen Forrester, Lois Marshall, and Teresa Stratas, gave guest appearances on the stage of the Rural High School. Nova Scotian theatre companies performed major plays. In one tent, children could “have lessons” with Orff and Kodaly music educators and in another they could “draw and paint.” This was truly a community happening.

My interviewees, without exception, were affected deeply by these Festivals. Timmons, for example, recalls one of the most pleasant experiences of his life as he sat in the school auditorium and watched

[Wilder’s] *Our Town*. In [viewing the vagaries of a small town], I felt that everything seemed to cohere, that everything was hanging together in the Festival program. Outside the auditorium were the booths and displays of community culture—folkdancing, choral groups, crafts—and, in the building, was a splendid performance of *Our Town*. In this play about the intrigues of a small New England community, one of the characters looks down from Heaven and observes, “My gosh, all of this. Is this what it was about?”

Possibly the history plays in Tatamagouche *today* offer us “the character in Heaven” with his transcendent insights. Through the history plays, the people of Tatamagouche recreate their own story. They revisit their ancestors and, by viewing amusing and tragic happenings and political manipulations, they become aware of their history in an entirely different way.

The Festival moved to Halifax in the early 1960s where, after a few years without Murray’s guiding force and dissociated from the community spirit of Tatamagouche, it fell apart. In 1960, after 14 years in Adult Education, Betty Murray resumed her career as a schoolteacher. She had, all along, befriended many children in need, including a few who showed exceptional interest and ability in music. Her decision to provide a permanent home for the eminently gifted 11-year-old Stuart Campbell led to a second decision to abandon the “road show of adult ed.” For the next 16 years, Murray taught for the City of Halifax, most of the time as a Grade 5 teacher in the inner-city and racially mixed Richmond School. An account of this period, as remarkable as the three touched on above, must await another publication.

#### DISCUSSION

Three threads weave this story together. The first links past and present in action and in re-presentation. This historical awareness, well developed in the young Murray and finely tuned during her years as an adult educator, appears with full force in the current Tatamagouche plays. As Maclean explains, the historical awareness, of which the entire town becomes a part, provides “not only a sense of identity but a sense of *depth* to that identity.” The second thread, intertwined inextricably with the first, is “community” in the fullest sense of the word. Community, for Murray, has come to mean, perhaps has always meant, the interaction of people of all ages and abilities.

This leads to the third thread, the significance of the individual person within the collective. Maclean articulates an observation that I heard over and over again, that “Betty Murray was able to infuse with the development of the individual an awareness of social interaction.” This was accomplished, he recalls, through her “infectious enthusiasm. Some people are enthusiastic but a week later it is all over and done with. Betty wasn’t like that. I can think of all sorts of individuals who were touched by her enthusiasm. And it started something that they really took hold of, very often with her continuing encouragement.”

Time and again I was to hear of Murray’s energy and enthusiasm; also, people spoke of her strength of purpose and the direct manner in which she expressed it. Jones’ comment is typical: “She did say *exactly* what she thought. She never pulled any punches that I can remember. But we always found her to be a very kind person, a good teacher, and a very, very hard worker.” Maclean recalled, however, that no one would view her

in any sense of the word as *obtrusive*. She was very much in the centre of things but you never felt she was dominating the scene in a way you'd rather not have happen. You might feel that she was a central figure in something, but it was never unwelcome or unproductive.

Maclean speaks of others in that era who, confident of their "right" path, were unable to convince others to follow.

From such conversations I form an image of Murray's leadership that not only supports feminist claims of nurturing, caring, and networking, but also shows a leader of immense strength—one who, in many cases, bends people to her will (Greenfield, 1984, p. 150). It is through a continuing study of both Murray's character (i.e., the values to which she adheres) and the characteristics of her leadership (such as humour, determination, vision, directness of speech) that I may enlarge my understanding as the research progresses.

By observing Murray's leadership-in-action and listening to her words, I am developing two images of leadership. First, leadership appears as situational action; although there appears to be a predilection to leadership in certain people, the leader in one context may be the follower in another. There is, thus, the potential for leadership in all people. Second, leadership may involve and foster creativity where both become affirmative expressions of the human condition. In this case, for example, Murray encourages, models, instructs, cajoles, and insists that others perform and add their own personal touch to their performance. The people in her context are inspired to go beyond the written script, both in drama and in their daily lives. I use the word "creative" meaning that the end product—if such ever exists<sup>15</sup>—cannot be anticipated fully in advance of its realization. This going beyond any individual "vision" applies to the history plays of Tatamagouche as it did for the early organizers of the Division of Adult Education. As Maclean recalls, it was not that they had a specific vision of what a particular place should be as a community but, rather, that the people themselves should develop an informed sense of vision." What will result "nobody knows until it has been realized. If you have been sound and honest along the way, and have learned something, then much more likely than not the outcome will be positive. Not perfect, but positive."

#### METHODOLOGICAL PROBLEMS AND CONCLUSION

Two problems in particular impede the writing of this educator's life history by the traditional means of historical research, that is, by an examination of documents. First, an examination of the recorded facts do not establish a claim to leadership during the Adult Education years.<sup>16</sup> Analyses of documents enabled me to build an image of strong-minded and prolonged activity surrounding Betty Murray but hardly a detailed profile of leadership as we know such profiles from the "conventional" literature. I found an essay concerning rural schools written

by Murray from her one-room schoolhouse in Barrasois (Murray, 1943) and, later, another describing the musical life of the community of “Upper Utopia” (Murray, 1950). These documents demonstrate an initiative that was unusual for a young woman in the early 1940s. Also, from Henson’s year-end reports, we read accounts of Murray’s field activities in the Annapolis Valley and other parts of the province (annual reports 1947–1950), and the director makes numerous references to Murray’s community involvement and to her activities in the Fine Arts. Missing from the documentation, however, are the perspectives of her fellow workers and her students. It is from these informants alone that we can begin to appreciate the strength of character and the sheer “presence” that constituted this woman leader at mid-century.

Another impediment to building the profile of leadership emanates from Murray’s humility. Although she makes decisions that in many ways affect others, and occasionally in the face of considerable opposition, she does not view herself as a “leader” but as a “facilitator.”<sup>17</sup> In an attempt to understand *from the participant’s point of view*—that is, following a Weberian concept of *verstehende* sociology (see Brubaker, 1984, p. 5)—I was thus unable at first to identify evident leadership.

Through sharing with other interviewees Murray’s perceptions about leadership, I was able to correct the story. Timmons, for example, felt that the very attitude of humility explains Murray’s ability to “get results from others—the fact that she thinks that, that she tells you her role was to encourage others,” represents her true leadership ability. Indeed, Grob (cited in Smyth, 1989) contends that, “leadership . . . must demand of its practitioners a willingness to open themselves to critique [and] . . . insofar as [it] is the work of humans who are moral agents, it must root itself in . . . humility” (p. 183). Although many consider humility a virtue (e.g., Holmes, 1992; MacIntyre, 1981), we would do well to examine another interpretation. Humility, particularly common in women, may reflect their reaction to a world not written according to the script of their own experience and “ways of knowing” (Belenky et al., 1986). Quoting Patricia Spacks, Heilbrun (1989) points out that although a woman has “significant, sometimes dazzling accomplishments to her credit, the theme of accomplishment rarely dominates the narrative. . . . Indeed to a striking degree [women] fail directly to emphasize their own importance” (p. 23). We must be careful, in the case of exceptional women, to distinguish humility—the virtue seen so clearly through the masculine lens—from the tendency among women to “disallow” recognition of their own strength.

My understanding of Murray’s particular leadership style, incorporating as it does both the voice of empowerment and that of authority, and my appreciation of her underlying concern for history, community, and the individual, have grown from a period of observation and from reading, reflecting on, and, most of all, listening to the words of others. Through such qualitative methods, I have

been able to correct my own preconceptions of Murray's leadership. Whereas, for example, I had assumed the primacy of an exciting and innovative event—the growth of a renowned experiment in adult education—on the development of Murray's attitudes, beliefs, and values, I have discovered that these values were well in place prior to 1946. It was Jones, who first met Miss Murray while studying Education at Acadia, who clarified my understanding:

I don't think that Betty *learned* the approach from the Adult Education Division. I think she *brought* it. In other words, I think part of the approach that gradually formed in the Adult Education Division over the last five years of the '40s was largely due to Betty Murray's input. Although everybody changes [with new experience], I think she *came* with a lot of the basic philosophy. She may have modified it as she went along, sharpened it, honed it a little bit, but she certainly had the basics when she came.

Murray, in this sense, was instrumental in shaping the history of Adult Education in Nova Scotia. Bringing her values of "caritas" and community to the Division of Adult Education she, and others of like mind, constructed an educational reality that drew from the past and that lives on today.

#### NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> This research was supported financially by the University of Calgary and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. I gratefully acknowledge the thoughtful assistance of Donald F. Maclean, Elizabeth Burge, and Elizabeth Tucker.
- <sup>2</sup> See Rizvi (1986), as well, for a particularly cogent argument supporting a "democratic and communitarian" model of school leadership.
- <sup>3</sup> I define "caritas" with most of the descriptors offered by Oakes and with an encompassing emphasis on human compassion.
- <sup>4</sup> As Keller (1986) maintains, the "relations between things [in this case, leaders and their followers] are as delicate as spider's silk, known only instinctively, with profound indirection — yet strong enough to hang a bridge on" (p. 218).
- <sup>5</sup> Concerning the inadequacy of documentation, my findings parallel those of Nelson (1992).
- <sup>6</sup> To capture more closely the spirit of each setting, I address my major participant variously as "Murray," "Betty," "Betty Murray," or "Miss Murray."
- <sup>7</sup> A paper entitled *Innovative Leadership in a Community Context: Elizabeth Murray and the History Plays of Tatamagouche* may be obtained from me upon request.
- <sup>8</sup> The village takes its name from a Mi'kmaq word signifying "the meeting of the waters," for at Tatamagouche the Rivers Waugh and French converge and flow into the Northumberland Strait.
- <sup>9</sup> As many children had to walk several miles in all seasons, a noon meal was a necessity.
- <sup>10</sup> Inspector Nelson MacLeod (*Annual Report*, 1943) notes that "special honours went to Tarbet school, with its capable teacher, Miss Elizabeth Murray" (p. 72).
- <sup>11</sup> Far more radical in intention and ideology than the Antigonish Movement was a small but active group of Anglican clergy in the 1940s known as the Anglican Fellowship for Social Action (AFSA). These young men took their lead from the Gospel, pledging to "hold the natural resources of the earth as a common trust for all mankind" (interview with the Rev. Canon Russell Elliott,

August 1993). The "Briefcase Boys," as the socially minded clergy were called by friends, did not receive always the blessing of established churchmen.

- <sup>12</sup> It is of some significance that members of the Adult Education Division considered drama, art, music, and libraries to be crucial to community living. I was told by Donald F. Maclean (who, in 1954, became secretary to the Division) that these cultural components were "part of a well-balanced life" contributing to both the development of individual skills and one's "relation with other people in a community sense." Drama activities, for example, provided a motive for exploring one's historical roots and present-day problems, and presenting these in a creative form of communication.
- <sup>13</sup> Betty Murray herself spent one year in the Sanatorium when she contracted tuberculosis in her early twenties. Betty's father, Dr. Dan Murray, regularly saw tubercular patients in his home; as a consequence, two of his own children were infected.
- <sup>14</sup> In lengthy interviews I held with them during the summer of 1992, adult educators Donald F. Maclean, Herman Timmons, and Tom Jones shared their perceptions of Divisional events. References to these persons in the text of the article are to this series of interviews.
- <sup>15</sup> During the party to celebrate last year's closing night, I overheard someone ask Betty how long it took her to write *Milk and Honey*. "Oh," she replied, "it's not finished yet. If I had another two weeks, it would be quite different."
- <sup>16</sup> Since retirement, however, Murray has received wide recognition, including an honorary doctorate from Acadia University and honorary life memberships from the Nova Scotia Choral Federation and the Canadian Music Educators. The Tatamagouche plays, moreover, are well covered in the local papers and are accompanied by feature stories about their author.
- <sup>17</sup> Possibly Murray's self-perception is changing as a result of the current research as we reflect together on the comments of others. Certainly my own views are evolving, not only regarding Murray's leadership but about "leadership" in general. That this "reconstruction of the researcher's own understanding of the problem" may occur during the process of conducting qualitative research has been demonstrated clearly by others (see Casey, 1992, p. 206).

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