Chapter 4: Dialogue

(Excerpted from doctoral dissertation: SEED Graduate Institute: An Original Model of

Transdisciplinary Education Informed by Indigenous Ways of Knowing and Dialogue)

Dialogue is at the center of SEED's educational practice and philosophy. It is because of this that the meaning of "dialogue" and the particular history of how dialogue came to be practiced at SEED bear considerable explanation. I begin by introducing the particular context and meaning in which David Bohm used dialogue and briefly explain some of the central components of Bohmian dialogue. Next, I articulate some of the philosophy and practice of Plains Indian talking circle and the circumstances that brought together Bohm and Little Bear; discuss how that led to the SEED dialogues; and explain the unique hybrid of Bohmian dialogue/Native talking circle that is practiced at SEED today (as well as how the SEED hybrid is distinguished from Bohmian dialogue). I conclude the chapter with the relevance of dialogue for SEED and for the emerging consciousness in the larger society.

The word *dialogue* is used today to describe a great variety of forms and practices that have something to do with furthering understanding between groups or individuals. In common language, *dialogue* simply refers to a conversation between two or more persons. However, the etymology of the word, as Bohm (1996) was quick to point out, suggests a deeper meaning. The word *dialogue* comes from the Greek *dialogos: Dia* doesn't mean "two"–it means "through"; and *logos* means "the word" (Bohm, 1996, p. 6). Thus, implied in the etymology of the word is the stream of meaning that can flow through a group engaged in the process of dialogue.

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Bohm was aware of the potential of dialogue to facilitate shared meaning within a group and hold the group together in a relatively coherent whole. He was also keenly aware of the limits of thought and the "tacit infrastructure" of conditioned consciousness that can obstruct coherence, but I address those concerns in a moment. The cohesive potential of dialogue, in which meaning can flow through a group, is in distinct contrast to "discussion," which is etymologically related to the words *percussion* and *concussion,* which refer to breaking things up (into dysfunctional fragments), or as we might say today, "breaks things down" for purpose of analysis of the separate parts (Bohm, 1996).

Einstein and Bohr

Fairly early in his career, Bohm became aware of the blocks in communication that arose *between scientists* who clung to their particular way of seeing, which he felt was largely predicated upon their unconscious assumptions. The situation with Einstein and Bohr is perhaps the most obvious instance in which this happened, with Einstein remaining steadfast to relativity theory, and Bohr embracing quantum theory. Although they were initially close friends, they gradually became so alienated from each other that they completely separated. Then, one well-intentioned person arranged a party in which Einstein, Bohr, and their students were all invited. To the dismay of the organizer, Einstein and Bohr remained on separate sides of the room, communicating only with their own students. Bohm believed that what should have happened between Einstein and Bohr was a dialogue in which each listened deeply to what the other was saying for the purpose of understanding, not to persuade the other of the correctness of a particular belief. If either Bohr or Einstein had been able to suspend their judgments and listen

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without jumping to defend his own position, then a breakthrough in understanding for both might

have occurred (Bohm, 1996).

The Emerging Paradigm and its Relationship to Bohmian Dialogue

Bohm was on the forefront of an emerging paradigm in twentieth century physics that

recognized the undivided wholeness and interconnectedness of reality, as opposed to the

prevailing Newtonian paradigm of unidirectional causality, which tended to abstract and focus

on the actions of phenomena apart from other phenomena. Bohm believed that the prevailing

paradigm, although instrumental in the rise of utilitarian invention, was also instrumental in

leading to a fragmented view of reality and a concomitant fragmented consciousness within the

society. Bohm had no illusions that the emerging paradigm had already impacted the society at

large. He realized that scientific knowledge of the past several centuries had become absorbed

into the tacit knowledge of the culture as the unquestioned truths of the age. Bohm felt that for a

genuine transformation of humankind to take place, the tacit knowledge of the society would

need to change. Bohm frequently spoke of "tacit knowledge" as the knowledge that governs

much of what we unconsciously do (1980). Riding a bicycle or driving a car is a form of tacit

knowledge, but Bohm used the phrase "tacit knowledge" to mean something deeper than this. He

was referring to all the unexamined assumptions governing our lives that create the particular

lens through which we individually and collectively see the world–what he called our "tacit

infrastructure"–but might also be called our paradigm. The Newtonian paradigm had objectified

the world and pervaded science and culture in such a way as to create a collective incoherence at

the base of society–and as this incoherence was tacit, it was largely invisible. Scientific

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knowledge had in effect been elevated to "scientism"–another form of religion simply accepted on faith as the correct knowledge. Bohm said that science has come to "play the role that religion used to play of giving us truth" (1996, p. xi). Bohm was greatly concerned about this for several reasons, all of which directly affected the way he practiced dialogue and his overall vision of dialogue.

Perhaps the greatest forces that motivated Bohm to introduce his concept of dialogue were the looming ecological, religious, and political crises of a world where polarized ideologies are the norm. Bohm understood that a fragmented view of nature simply doesn't work when addressing complex, interconnected problems such as Earth's ecology. In order to address these complex, interconnected issues, we have to start over in a certain sense and rebuild a coherent tacit structure to society. For instance, there are literally hundreds if not thousands of groups now attempting to address the ecological crises of our time. If all of these groups were to have some basis of common understanding, then they could address the issues in a coherent manner, rather than as they do now, which is to address the issues with different underlying assumptions and agendas, and poor communication/cooperation, if there is any communication at all. We cannot address deeply interconnected issues, such as ecology, with an incoherent, disjointed effort; at least, we cannot continue to do that and somehow expect different results. As Einstein (purportedly) said, this is the very definition of insanity.

Features of Bohmian Dialogue

Bohm considered his attempts to implement dialogue as a form of laboratory experiment for which he did not yet know the results (Nichol, dialogue transcript, 1994). The following

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features of Bohmian dialogue were not set out in concrete at the start, but over time, they formed

the basis for the praxis. These central features of Bohmian dialogue are:

1. no preestablished purpose–no agenda;

2. shared meaning;

3. suspending assumptions/judgments, not trying to persuade or influence;

4. flow of meaning;

5. group size of 20-40 people to constitute a "micro-cultural context";

6. exposing of tacit infrastructures;

7. no content excluded;

8. no moderation–facilitation is used only to initiate the process and is dropped thereafter;

9. impersonal fellowship;

10. proprioception: Self-awareness of thought, feelings, emotions, body as one undivided

whole; and

11. regular weekly or monthly meetings.

There is no preestablished purpose in Bohmian dialogue, so that moment-to-moment

awareness and flow of dialogue are welcomed. Once you have a set agenda or purpose, the

tendency of a group is to attempt to stick to the agenda and not allow in a change in direction.

Shared meaning comes from a process of *suspending assumptions/judgments* and

listening to understand, rather than to persuade or influence the outcome. Bringing multiple

perspectives out without judgment provides a base of shared meaning. However, this does not

imply that the base of meaning is static or a simple aggregate of what everyone has said. It is

more fluid than that, so that even if a listener misinterprets the meaning of the speaker, "the very

mis-perception of one's spoken intent can lead to new meaning that is created on the spot (Nichol cited in Bohm, 1996, p. xii). *The flow of meaning* is what is created.

Bohm advocated a group size of between 20-40 people to create a "*micro-cultural context*"–a mixed representation of many subcultures as a microcosm of the larger society. Over the course of the dialogue the process will tend to expose the predispositions, viewpoints, backgrounds, and assumptions that constitute the tacit infrastructure(s) of an individual mind-set, group, or subgroup.

No content is excluded from the dialogue. The intent is to provide a safe space where everyone feels free to participate and contribute. Eventually, a feeling of *impersonal fellowship* can develop amongst the group. This is enhanced by regular weekly or monthly meetings. Bohm recommended continuing the meetings for a significant length of time, such as over the course of 1 or 2 years. In the beginning, a *moderator* or facilitator is necessary to explain the process, but the facilitator's objective would be to "work himself out of a job" (1996, p. 15)

Finally, the most challenging aspect of Bohmian dialogue to understand (and even more challenging to do) is the concept of developing *proprioception*–a technical term Bohm used for *self-awareness of thought, feelings, emotion, and body as one undivided whole.* By this, he meant, "in the process of thought there should be awareness of that *movement*, of the *intention* to think, and of the *result* which that thinking produces" (Bohm, 1996, p. 91). The concept of proprioception is related to the concept of moment-to-moment judgment and assumption. Lee Nichol, Bohm's longtime editor and collaborator, explained:

> One direction is to try to change the assumption. The other direction, having suspended, is to allow the assumption to "flower" within your entire organism. Instead of trying to alter it, let yourself feel its "meaning"–how it charges the organism emotionally, psychologically, neurophysiologically. Sense the living

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movement of it. This is the beginning of proprioception. We begin to explore
whether or not we can proceed without the observer–the "me"–trying to control
everything. Softening the opinion is still in the domain of the observer controlling
its world. (Nichol, 1994, dialogue transcript from unpublished private collection)

Bohm's approach to issues of thought, feelings, and emotions was in part developed
during the course of his near quarter-century collaboration with J. Krishnamurti, a relationship
that profoundly changed Bohm's examination of the limits of thought, as well as his entire
intellectual and spiritual outlook on life, according to Nichol (2007, private communication).
Bohm became a trustee of Brockwood Park (one the schools founded by Krishnamurti) and the
Krishnamurti Foundation; the latter eventually published several volumes of discussions between
Bohm and Krishnamurti, including *The Ending of Time* (1985) and *The Limits of Thought*
(1999). Bohm also openly acknowledged Barfield (1965) and Polanyi (1966) as influences
regarding thought and tacit knowledge.

I do not attempt to summarize Krishnamurti's overall views, which would be a
dissertation in itself. Nonetheless, I point out here a few core perceptions of Krishnamurti that
arose in dialogue with Bohm and appear to have profoundly influenced Bohm's approach to
dialogue.

1. "To be is to be related" (Krishnamurti, in Krishnamurti & Bohm, 1996, p. 40).

2. All thought is limited. (Krishnamurti & Bohm, 1985, 1999).

3. "All thoughts, all fragments, are related to each other" (Krishnamurti, in Krishnamurti
& Bohm, 1999, p. 51).

4. "Thought is everlastingly moving" (Krishnamurti, in Krishnamurti & Bohm, 1999).

5. "Perception is not a movement of thought" (Krishnamurti, in Krishnamurti & Bohm,
1999, p. 50).

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7. In direct perception, there is no observer and observed. There is only perception (Krishnamurti, in Krishnamurti & Bohm, 1999).

8. The urgency of "cleansing the mind of the accumulation of time." (Krishnamurti & Bohm, 1985, p. 30)

Later in this chapter, I juxtapose some of these perceptions of Krishnamurti with Native thinking, which may shed some light on the differences and similarities between Bohmian dialogue and Native talking circle. At this point, since the essence of thought is important to Bohmian dialogue and talking circle alike, I discuss the concept and workings of thought now in some detail.

Thought Is the Problem

One of the pivotal insights of twentieth century physics was that, in the quantum world, the observer affects the observed. But what about thought? If I say, "I am angry," and "I" identify this as a problem, and "I" seek to change my state, what I have difficulty seeing is that the observer (my ego) is not really much different from the observed (Bohm, 1996). In other words, a person identifies a problem; the person thinks this requires change, and then thinks of a way to change the problem, but can't change the problem and doesn't understand why, because, as Bohm said, "thought itself is the problem" (p. 12). The problem of thought is particularly evident when trying to address psychological problems, but according to Bohm, thought is also the source of the general collective incoherence of society. In fact, Bohm felt that most of the thought in society "originates in the whole culture and pervades us" (p. 59).

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Bohm believed all of thought to be an abstraction because it separates something in our attention from the whole of creation. That abstraction is a division that is not inherent in nature (which to Bohm is an undivided whole), but once we think of nature as something separate from ourselves–as "out there"–then this is what becomes real to us. It becomes so unquestionably real that it is not typically recognized as a belief, but exists in the tacit knowledge of the culture as a base of shared cultural meaning. With the important exception of intact Indigenous cultures (for reasons I elaborate on later), this artificial sense of separation from the natural world is endemic in modernity. It is our thought that creates and sustains this perspective. Bohm said, "Thought is very active, but the process of thought thinks that it is doing nothing–that it is just telling you the way things are" (1996, pp. 10-11). But all along it is thought that creates what is manifested. Many things we may believe in, such as our "nation," are simply constructs of the mind. "Thought produces results," but "thought says it didn't do it" (p. 11).

Thought and Fragmentation

The benefit of abstract thought is that it allows for the breaking down of large problems into manageable units in which utilitarian action can be carried out upon the smaller units to produce a desirable result. This has been the basis for scientific advances over the past 500 or more years. Thought is applied to a particular problem or set of problems in a direct application. Following Barfield (1965), Bohm, called this "literal thought" (1996, p. 97).

Literal thought is still a *representation* of reality; it is not reality itself. It can be likened to a map that is drawn up to include what is relevant to a particular problem to be solved, and that excludes what is deemed irrelevant or unnecessary. It also tacitly claims that all things are

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discrete and exactly as they appear: no more, no less, no different. "A cat is a cat, and that is

that" (Nichol, 2007, private communication). Literal thought can be useful for problem solving

as a means to a particular end. However, to accomplish its ends, literal thought must objectify the

world and treat everything in it, including people, as objects. Eventually, the thinker begins to

believe that their objectification of the world is the reality, and forgets that they are seeing a map,

not the territory. In other words, literal thought fragments reality, and then the thinker believes

that reality is in fact fragmented! This process is tantamount to a form of idol worship (Barfield,

1965) where, over time, the idol itself is confused for the divine.

Participatory Thought

Bohm contrasted literal thought with "participatory thought," which is a form of thinking

that tends to bring things together. Bohm pointed out that participation has two meanings, the

earliest one suggesting a "partaking of," as in eating from a common bowl or breaking bread, and

the latter meaning "to partake in," or to make your individual contribution (1996, p. 98). Bohm

combined both of those meanings together to operationally define *participatory thought* as

thought that "sees that everything partakes of everything" (p. 99) This is reminiscent of Bohm's

(1980) concept of the implicate order, where he said, "everything is enfolded in everything."

Bohm recognized the undivided whole of nature as a dynamic process–and used the term

"holomovement" to characterize the carrying of the implicate order process (1980). The

movement of participatory thought is emergent from a deep structure of thought from the origin,

from the timeless ever-present implicate order. This flow of meaning/knowledge bringing

together individual and collective consciousness is integral to Bohm's vision of dialogue.

Finally, and very important for our purposes, Bohm recognized that participatory thought, while largely repressed in modern, Euro-American consciousness, might still be present in Indigenous societies. This awareness was a foreshadowing of what was to come when Little Bear chose to approach Bohm and initiate science dialogues between Native elders and Western scientists, an action that eventually culminated in the creation of the SEED dialogues.

Plains Indian Talking Circle

The roots of Indigenous talking circle go back as far as humankind does, to the sharing of stories around a campfire. It is probable that some form of talking circle still exists in all Indigenous communities, even if it is often an informal process. In Little Bear's youth, he had many opportunities to partake of an informal talking circle atmosphere that was basically "good story telling sessions" (2007, personal communication).

Plains Indian culture, like many other Indigenous cultures, values the coming together of community to exchange stories. The somewhat formal process known as Plains Indian talking circle emerged from the informal process of a person having a concern and wishing to gather a community to address the concern (Little Bear, 2007, private communication). That person might then "hire" another as their spokesperson to address the issue of concern. The hired person in effect becomes the moderator that convenes and holds the energy in the group. The person with the concern then listens to the input from the group. The council members address the concern from their perspective but do not tell the person with the concern what to do. In a more formal talking circle process, people will gather in a circle with an opening to the east, and speak in turn in a sunwise (clockwise) direction. Each speaker will be free to speak as long as they

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wish without interruption. A talking stick (typically a feather or carved walking cane) is passed to each person who speaks. The talking stick gives the person the floor and carries a connection to the spirit world of thought and energy. The most important thing about talking circle is listening. In a way, "listening" is a part of speaking as well. The speaker (and listeners) must clear their minds as much as possible to open themselves up to the thought waves that come from nature through themselves. The whole group may engage in a ceremony (such as a sweat lodge or smudging) prior to engaging in dialogue. It is understood that it is necessary to come to the dialogue with a purified mind and heart. This state of readiness enables the participants to act as a conduit for the flow of Spirit (Little Bear, 2007, private communication).

In talking circle, the person with the concern listens intently all the way through the process and does not respond. The sharing of all points of view builds a shared meaning throughout the group. This could be spoken of as consensus, but not in the way the word is commonly used in the West, for it is not about coming to a unanimous agreement to decide on an action plan to do this or that. Instead, the process allows a shared meaning to unfold in a subtle manner and need not be explicitly recognized. Bohm would refer to this as a "tacit" or unconscious understanding. In talking circle, the key is to begin with a clear mind and build to a shared tacit understanding.[1] The person with the concern then has a basis to decide what action(s) to take, and the other participants also can similarly take with them what they learned to be used in the future if circumstances warrant. However, it is not as simple as extracting a particular *static* meaning from the dialogue and applying it to another particular *static* situation that fits the meaning. It is understood that the meaning of what is received in the talking circle is

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4. In Bohmian dialogue, the participants begin as is, and through suspension of assumptions/judgments and proprioception, tacit infrastructures are believed to lessen over time. Both methods have the potential to end with shared tacit meaning, which is more coherent.

a living meaning [this same understanding exists in Bohmian dialogue]; it may take some time to unfold and is always a moving energy, never a time-bound static knowledge.

There is, in my mind at least, a parallel between Krishnamurti's understanding of perception and the idea of perception in Native thought. In both instances, direct perception is conceived as experience that is *outside of linear time*. Perceptions are not a form of thinking that is abstracted from the flux; they *are* the flux! There is no I or ego in a language such as Blackfoot (Little Bear, personal communication). When consciousness is "surfing the flux" (as Rupert Ross, 1992, puts it), there is an awareness of the interconnectedness of all.

In general, the style of communication in Native societies is more deliberate than in Western cultures. A recognized elder tends to speak more slowly and carefully, with the understanding that the spoken word carries an effect in living energy upon all our relations (Little Bear, 2007, personal communication). Silence is not something to be afraid of. This is culturally quite different from the ping-pong style of communication that has become the norm in the West. The difference between ordinary conversation and talking circle among Indigenous cultures is much less of a gulf than when dialogue is attempted in Western culture. A lot of the measures that Bohm took to attempt to unravel the subject-object division of egoic consciousness were simply not as necessary in traditional talking circle. A shared consciousness is already implicit in tribal consciousness. In the nineteenth century, Tonnies coined the term *"Gemeinschaft"* culture for a social organization of interpersonal reality based on blood, *region*, race, *custom,* and *language* (italics added), as opposed to a *"Gellesschaft"* culture (a social organization based on "objective reality") (Stewart & Bennett, 1991). It makes sense to me that the *place*, *customs* (including rituals of renewal), and *language* would bring about the shared

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tribal consciousness–the factors of blood or race would be secondary. Indigenous languages

embody a worldview of dynamic, moving interconnection and reciprocal relationship between

themselves and the natural world (Alford, 1981; Whorf, 1956). There isn't the required

separation of subject/object that is inherent in Indo-European languages. All of the above allows

for a natural unfolding of what Bohm (1996) called "participatory thinking."

Participatory Thinking from a Native Perspective

According to Little Bear, participatory thought in Indigenous societies can realize the

potential of what Bohm was aiming for. Little Bear distinguished between "thought" and

"thinking, something Bohm also did, but in a slightly different manner. Little Bear equates

"thinking" to what Rupert Ross (1992) called "surfing the flux." (personal communication, 1999-

2008). It is being in the flow of the dynamic enfoldment and unfoldment of nature with no

separation between the observer and the observed–what Bohm (1980) would call the

"holomovement." When you simply move with the flux, that is thinking; but when you zero in

on a particular place as a reference point, that marker in time is what becomes "thought." Little

Bear explained: "David Bohm [despite the notion of the holomovement and quantum theory in

his worldview], still carries a hint of separation between the thinker and everything else out

there.[2]

The Native view is that all of creation thinks–that "the animals, the rocks–every aspect of

creation have thought processes" (Little Bear, 2007, private communication). I the person am a

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5. This could be partially attributable to the English language that Bohm is using, since Bohm
agreed there is ultimately no separation. The root of this issue may be the animate/inanimate dichotomy
inherent in English (see Footnote #6).

conduit for the manifestation of thought, but not the generator of thought. Humans have a limited

range of perception, like a radio dial. Other beings are aware of other frequencies. "In talking

circle, when a person is speaking, it's really nature speaking" (Little Bear, 2007, personal

communication). The participants in talking circle are tuning into the thought waves of nature.

"The Native view is not on the fence of the quantum wave/particle paradox. It's all wave" (Little

Bear, SEED dialogue transcript, 1999).[3] The person becomes a *conduit* to the thought processes

of nature, and those thought processes that flow through the human range of perception then

reciprocally influence the thought processes of nature. All is interconnected in dynamic flux. So

we can learn from the rocks and the rocks can learn from us, and so forth (Little Bear, 2007,

private communication).

The uniqueness of Native languages is a critical lens for understanding these processes.

Native languages are profoundly different from Indo-European languages, the latter of which are

replete with nouns. In speaking a language abundant in nouns, understanding comes about from a

(collective representational) stopping of the world. Native languages are completely different

(Alford, 1981; Whorf, 1956). Sakej Henderson said that in his language (part of the Algonquin

family), "people can go all day long without uttering a single noun" (Alford, 2001, ¶15). As

Little Bear and Heavy Head (2004) noted, in the Blackfoot language, there are not nouns or

verbs at all as we normally describe them in relation to each other. Instead, linguistic meaning is

something similar to events emerging out of a fluid, constantly moving interconnected flux,

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[3]. Little Bear might also have said, "All things have life force" (Cajete, 2000, p. 71). All is
animate. This is an area where it becomes easier to understand what Little Bear meant in saying that
Bohm has a "hint" of separation between the thinker and everything else out there. For instance, Bohm
said, "Mind is implicit in inanimate matter. Given the proper conditions it unfolds and forms living beings
who might even be conscious" (1985, p. 20). In this statement, Bohm maintains a distinction between
animate and inanimate beings, conscious and unconscious, that would tend not to be present in Native
thinking. In Native thinking, all is alive. All is conscious. (Little Bear, 2007, personal communication).

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rather than discrete interactions between subject and object. The Blackfoot worldview of synergistic, interconnected relationship is beyond the imagination of a Newtonian worldview, but much closer to a worldview of quantum entanglement or nonlocality. I revisit the question of Native languages more thoroughly later in the dissertation, but the point to be made here is that it is possible in Native languages to "surf the flux" in ways that may be hard to imagine for non-Native speakers of SAE (Standard Average European) (Whorf, 1956).

The investigation of language, and how Native languages afford a unique lens into the quantum world of energy, became one of the driving forces for the eventual emergence of the SEED dialogues. But before I outline the differences and commonalities between the hybrid of talking circle/Bohmian dialogue practiced at SEED, it is necessary to acknowledge our roots that brought us to this point in time, for the SEED dialogues are very much a continuation of a previous tradition.

History of the SEED Dialogues

In 1992, Dan Moonhawk Alford, my mentor into Native America, was privileged to be invited by his mentor, Sakej Youngblood Henderson, to participate in the historic first Bohmian science dialogue between Native elders, quantum physicists, and linguists, held that year in Kalamazoo, Michigan, sponsored by the Fetzer Institute. This first dialogue emerged out of a web of events that can most easily be traced from 1989, when Leroy Little Bear and others put on a small Native science conference held in the Nakoda Lodge on the Indian reservation of "Stony," located west of Calgary. David Peat was one of the participants of that conference, and Leroy knew that Peat knew David Bohm, because they had written books together by that time.

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Later on, Leroy found out through Peat that Bohm, who lived in London, was coming to a little place in New York State called "The Farm." Leroy tells the story. "Someone had bought the farm, and converted it into a retreat center, and when I found out David Bohm was coming, I made arrangements to meet him. Peat was living in Ottawa at the time, and we drove down together and went out to the farm. We had 2 good days of visitation with Bohm, and as a result of that meeting, David Peat and I approached the Fetzer Institute to sponsor a dialogue, which then took place in 1992" (Parry, 2004, p. 6).

Little Bear was moved to approach David Bohm for three reasons in addition to the obvious respect he held for Bohm's work:

1. He understood quantum theory to be in consonance of spirit with Native views of the cosmos in dynamic flux.

2. He knew that Bohm would be more likely than most other Western scientists to listen to a Native viewpoint, as Bohm had an appreciation for dialogue that was very similar in feeling to a Native American talking circle.

3. Leroy knew that Bohm had been experimenting with a language based entirely on verbs, which he called the "rheomode," from the Greek *rheo,* which means "to flow." Little Bear knew that Blackfoot was a language that operated in a very similar way to the language Bohm was trying to create (Parry, 2004).

Thus, the stage was set for an auspicious first dialogue in 1992 . Little Bear moderated the historic dialogue, and he was joined by 20 or so other Native and non-Native elders, physicists, linguists, and others. The complete list of participants is below:

Leroy Little Bear, Blood Indian Tribe, Blackfoot Confederacy
Amethyst First Rider, Blood Indian Tribe, Blackfoot Confederacy

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David Bohm, physicist

Saral Bohm, wife of David Bohm

David Peat, physicist

Dan Moonhawk Alford, Osage and Cherokee linguist

Sakej Youngblood Henderson, Chickasaw and Cheyenne

Henry Bush, Potowatomi

Lou Ann Bush, Potowatomi

Joe Couture, Cree psychologist

Ruth Couture, Cree

Carol Hegedus, Fetzer Institute

Alan Ford, linguist studying Cree

Sam Kounosu, Japanese physicist

Danny Musqua, Seauteau elder

Buff Parry, linguist

Lee Nichol, writer; editor of Bohm's work

Paul Grof, psychiatrist

Dick Katz, psychologist

Tobasonakwut Peter Kinew, Ojibway elder

Anab Whitehouse, Sufi philosopher

Joel Elkes, medical anthropologist

Therese Schroeder-Sheker, thanatologist/harpist (aka "The Angel")

Many of these people from the original 1992 dialogue have gone on to deepen their work around the ideas that were brought up in the dialogues. David Peat wrote *Blackfoot Physics* (1996) and founded a learning center in Italy. Lee Nichol went on to edit several volumes of Bohm's work, including *On Dialogue* (1996), a compilation of Bohm's thoughts on dialogue and the nature of collective thought. Sakej Henderson became the head of the Native Law Centre in Saskatoon and continued to work closely with Leroy on Indigenous rights issues, most recently on biodiversity.

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Leroy went on to promote the concept of Native science and to lead many other Bohmian

dialogues. He also became the dean of Native Studies at Harvard before "retiring" to Lethbridge,

Alberta, where he continues to teach about Native science, moderate dialogues, and act as the

academic dean of SEED pending the launch of SEED Graduate Institute's inaugural class.

Moonhawk, who was already resurrecting the reputation of Benjamin Whorf (the linguist who

had done so much to point out the unique characteristics of Native languages), continued to

develop and expand his work around Indigenous ways of knowing and bridging Indigenous and

Western science through what he came to call "quantum linguistics." Moonhawk was the one

who approached me a few years after SEED began to simply wonder, "What if we brought the

dialogue to Albuquerque?" Together, we teamed up to organize the first SEED dialogue in 1999,

but before then, there were at least three dialogues sponsored by the Fetzer Institute that took

place in Banff, and others were sponsored by MIT and the National Science Foundation. All of

these dialogues had been moderated by Little Bear, who incorporated certain elements of

Bohmian dialogue together with traditional talking circle to create the unique hybrid practiced at

SEED today by Little Bear and his protégés.

The Little Bear SEED Hybrid of Bohmian Dialogue and Talking Circle

It is important to document that when Little Bear and Bohm first got together, Bohm

came into the dialogues with the *spirit* of dialogue as he understood it, but did not impose his

way of doing dialogue upon the meetings. Instead, he allowed the Native side, who had initiated

the meetings, to proceed (Nichol, 2007, private communication). What transpired, at least

initially, was that the Native participants built a bridge of understanding toward the Western

point of view (Alford, 1993; Nichol, 1999; & Little Bear, 1999; private communications). Thus,

the hybrid of talking circle/Bohmian dialogue that came about was not simply an appropriation

of Bohmian dialogue for other purposes, but a true mixing of traditions. The actual process Little

Bear uses parts ways with many of the core threads of Bohmian dialogue (Nichol, private

communication), but in other respects, it accomplishes much of the spirit and vision of Bohmian

dialogue even when sometimes using other means, at least in the opinion of this author.

Comparison between Bohmian Dialogue and Little Bear SEED Hybrid of Dialogue/Talking

Circle

I use as a point of departure Table 1, a chart that juxtaposes Bohmian dialogue with the

Little Bear SEED hybrid of Bohmian dialogue/talking circle (hereafter abbreviated as hybrid

dialogue, or HD). Then, I explain these concepts more fully, although any explanation will be

somewhat lacking, because both Bohmian dialogue and HD are living, breathing practices, not

some models with operating instructions that are followed to the letter. Both are influenced by

Spirit on a moment-to-moment basis, or at least they can be.

The biggest differences between Bohmian dialogue and HD are in the moderation, the

kickstart question and follow-up questions from the moderator, the somewhat different

approaches to flow of meaning, the length of acceptable time to speak, the (outer circle)

audience, the different emphasis on the limits of thought or thinking as a conduit to Spirit, and

the question of exposing tacit infrastructures to dissolve them, or starting from a clean slate and

building to a tacit understanding of shared meaning. Let's first look at the role of the moderator,

as the role of the moderator in HD is manifold and integral to the process.

Table 1

Bohmian Dialogue/Hybrid Dialogue Comparison

Bohmian Dialogue	HD
No preestablished purpose/no agenda.	No agenda, but there is a purpose to bring together Native and non-Natives in dialogue.
No moderation.	SEED has the concern. Hires moderator.
No kickstart question.	Moderator poses questions, including kickstart question.
Shared flow of meaning.	Similar emphasis.
Participants are mindful of not speaking too long.	Can speak as long as Spirit moves.
Suspending judgment and assumptions. Not trying to persuade or influence.	Same/Safe container sustained by moderator.
No content excluded.	Same.
Limitations of thought/dissolutions of thought emphasized.	Thinking/Spirit conduit emphasized.
Expose tacit infrastructures; let them surface.	Begin with open mind/heart. Build to one mind. Kick-start *koan* question serves to suspend tacit infrastructures quickly.
Proprioception.	Not emphasized.
Group Size of 20-40 people; No audience.	Group size of 24 maximum, inner circle plus audience.
Ongoing meetings (weekly, monthly).	Annual or semiannual with core group and new participants.

(Table created by author)

1. The moderator sets the tone for dialogue by thoroughly explaining the process and being a model of a good listener.

2. Once the process is understood, the moderator keeps the group immersed in the content by monitoring and safeguarding the process.

3. The moderator asks the kickstart question (this is a critical element I explain more fully shortly) and subsequent questions to thicken the soup of dialogue.

4. The moderator recognizes speakers in particular order he/she determines.

5. The moderator facilitates a safe container in the room.

All of these aspects of moderation could be discussed in some detail, as none of them except the first are part of Bohmian dialogue, and skillful moderation is an essential part of HD. However, other than a few brief comments here, there are good reasons why I do not discuss the other aspects of moderation in this chapter. For one, much of skillful moderation is done at the subtle level, and involves monitoring the flow of participatory consciousness in the room. To attempt to describe such an endeavor would involve a rather tortured (and almost certainly inaccurate) rational analysis of events that are prerational and spontaneous. The skill of moderation is a tacit skill that cannot be communicated through a book or dissertation. There are other aspects of moderation that are explainable but not significantly different from the moderation of any group. Those aspects need not be taken up here either. For purposes of this section of the chapter, I only discuss the kickstart question, for the kickstart question is perhaps the most fascinating and unique aspect of HD that is initiated by the moderator. It has the potential to accomplish something considered very important, although immensely difficult, in Bohmian dialogue–the suspension of tacit infrastructures.

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In the opinion of this author, the kickstart question does (to a significant degree) successfully bring about the suspension of tacit infrastructures, and in an expeditious manner that is completely different from a Bohmian approach. In Bohmian dialogue, patience, regular meetings, and proprioception are the means to suspending tacit infrastructures. In HD, the kickstart question jump-starts the process. Little Bear never tells his kickstart question in advance to anyone, so because it is a surprise question, participants cannot come to the dialogue with prepared remarks that further a personal agenda. But that's only the half of it. The kickstart question is also a riddle or koan that is challenging to Native and non-Native participants alike. A good kickstart question will (at least temporarily) lock up the mind–and in that suspension, there is the opportunity to access a deeper knowledge that is outside of ourselves and our normal ways of seeing. For example, in the first year SEED ever presented a dialogue (1999) Little Bear's first question was, "Is it possible to come up with an original thought?" He coupled that question with a corollary question: "What would be the reality that we would experience if you did not think in a language?" The first question brings into play the word *original,* which in English is an inherent paradox, because the word maintains a double meaning of returning to the origin, or source, and at the same time it also refers to something brand new. The second question is also a double bind, because it asks the participants to think about *not thinking.* As a person who has received training in hypnosis, I understand something of why this works. In hypnosis, there is something called the confusion technique, which causes trance by locking up the patient's conscious ways of seeing, and thus builds receptivity to new ideas. Paradox thinking is very similar. It brings forth creative thinking (Begay, Maryboy, & Nichol, 2006). Dare we say it can bring forth "original thinking?"

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In 2006 (SEED Language of Spirit Conference, 2006), Little Bear began with the kickstart question, "Do you really and truly believe in a separation of church and state?" One of the inner circle participants, Nora Bateson responded: "When you said 'Do you really and truly believe in a separation . . . '–right then, I said, no, I do not believe in separation–whatever it is– but then you said 'of church and state'–and, oh, God." All these questions are more difficult to answer than they may first appear. The kickstart question initiates a generative flow of dialogue, and then, from there, dialogue takes on a life of its own.

I have made the case that a good kickstart question suspends tacit infrastructures. However, I do not mean to imply that the tacit infrastructures simply go away. Thus, even if we assume that the koan is successful in initially suspending tacit infrastructures, how long can those structures remain in abeyance before they rise up again? This is why a good kickstart question for SEED dialogues, which bring together Indigenous and Western ways of knowing, is one that in some way addresses the root of tacit knowing in both groups. Questions such as "Is it possible to think an original thought" or "Do you really and truly believe in the separation of church and state" do just that. They bring up charged issues for both Native and non-Native participants. When participants go about answering a kickstart question, they are forced to articulate an answer that in some ways will likely reinject at least some of their preexisting tacit infrastructures into the answer. But because their tacit infrastructures were at least temporarily suspended, they are more likely to be open to the flow of meaning from Spirit that is outside of themselves, and the same will be true for everyone who is *listening* in the inner and outer circles.

The same principle and the same possibility are allowed for in Bohmian dialogue, but there are subtle differences. For one, without the kickstart question, it will generally take much

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longer to get to this level of openness. Secondly, a key difference between Bohmian dialogue and talking circle is that Bohm emphasized the limitations of thought, and HD emphasize the *power of thought/Spirit.* Everyone is free to speak as long as Spirit moves, whereas in Bohmian dialogue, an exceedingly long speaker would tend to be thought of as inconsiderate.[4]

In HD, there is even more of an emphasis than there is in Bohmian dialogue on acting as a conduit to a source outside of themselves, outside of the room, even outside of time.[5] In HD, according to Little Bear, what is spoken may seem a bit like a jigsaw puzzle at first; but if one waits patiently the pieces come together to get a more complete picture (2007, personal communication). HD can be likened to climbing a mountain. As each person speaks, you build a mountain of ideas. There are many ways to climb the mountain, but in the end we all share a common view (Little Bear, 1999 dialogues, private communication). This is a way to build a coherent tacit infrastructure.

A New Form of Participatory Knowing

In HD, everyone, including the outer circle, is *participating* in the flow of meaning that is being created in the room. That sense of participation is perhaps to some degree what Barfield (1965) called "original participation" of "early man" (p. 42), to the extent that there is an emergent *awareness* of a collective participatory consciousness as opposed to an awareness of

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[4]. The latter complaint can arise in HD as well if someone is not familiar with the process, or if the speaker simply continues too long even when it is apparent that Spirit is no longer moving through them.

[5]. I do not mean to imply that these collective participatory aspects are not strongly valued in Bohmian dialogue when they very much are. I think that one of the reasons Little Bear said that these aspects are emphasized more in HD is simply because these practices are more commonly practiced in Indigenous societies, and since the SEED dialogues feature at least half Native participants in the inner circle, these participatory aspects naturally tend to come out more.

the self that is doing the thinking. But it may also be that something else is happening; it may be the beginnings of a new kind of participatory consciousness being created through a sustained encounter of contemporary Indigenous consciousness with modern (or postmodern) Western consciousness.

The SEED dialogues may be a microcosm of a larger shift in the structures of consciousness. The development of rational consciousness over the past 500 years never actually eradicated the underlying structures of consciousness that Gebser (1985) called the archaic, magical, and mythical consciousness. It only suppressed them, and now we are seeing their reemergence in a new (original) way–which has at least the potential to merge and reposition rational consciousness in an inclusive, fuller, integral consciousness. As Western consciousness reached past the zenith point of rational consciousness, the Baconian strategy of marshalling nature to do the bidding of humankind has produced diminishing returns and/or frightening consequences for the species and for all our relations. The postmodern "I" of separative consciousness seems to be fragmenting and dissolving, and with it, there has been a resurgence of interest in Eastern wisdom, and more recently in Indigenous thought. In part, this has come from the recognition of the timelessness of the Indigenous wisdom throughout the world. In part, this may be a romantic desire of the Western world to go backward in time to a simpler era. In part, it may be because of the emerging Western tradition of wholistic thought, spurred on by the advances of twentieth century physics, mathematical cosmology, and systems theory, and their parallels with Native thought.

In Native America, the question now being asked is, What will be the form of Indigenous thought that survives into the future? (Secatero, 2005, private communication) How do we

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understand the "original instructions" that Native elders talk about in light of the conditions we face today? (Secatero, 2008, private communication). I don't believe that Native consciousness can ever return to the way it was in precolonial days. But what can happen, and in some small measure is happening at the SEED dialogues, is a hybrid consciousness that brings forward Indigenous wisdom with an emergent wholistic consciousness in the West to form a new kind of participatory, wholistic consciousness. The deeper question is now, what new form will this participatory wholistic consciousness take that all the "five-fingered ones" can embrace, if we are survive the next 500 years and beyond? (Nichol, 2007, private communication; Secatero, 1999-2008 private communication). In bringing Indigenous and Western science together for nearly a decade in a hybrid of Bohmian dialogue and talking circle, SEED has been a midwife in the pending birth of this new consciousness. And just as Bohmian dialogue was an unfinished experiment, so are the SEED dialogues. To create a full graduate curriculum based on Indigenous ways of knowing as an opening to all ways of knowing, it is necessary that dialogue be in the center of our process.