# HYBRID LITERACY: A MODEL OF PRACTICE

Towards the development of current models of practice at Frontier College, in the tradition of Frontier College developed models such as *Reading Tents* or *SCIL*, that build on the concepts of *Hybrid Literacy* and *Three Levels of Practice Models* presented in this paper as food for thought for everyone working with Frontier College.

BY DAVID GREIG, 2003
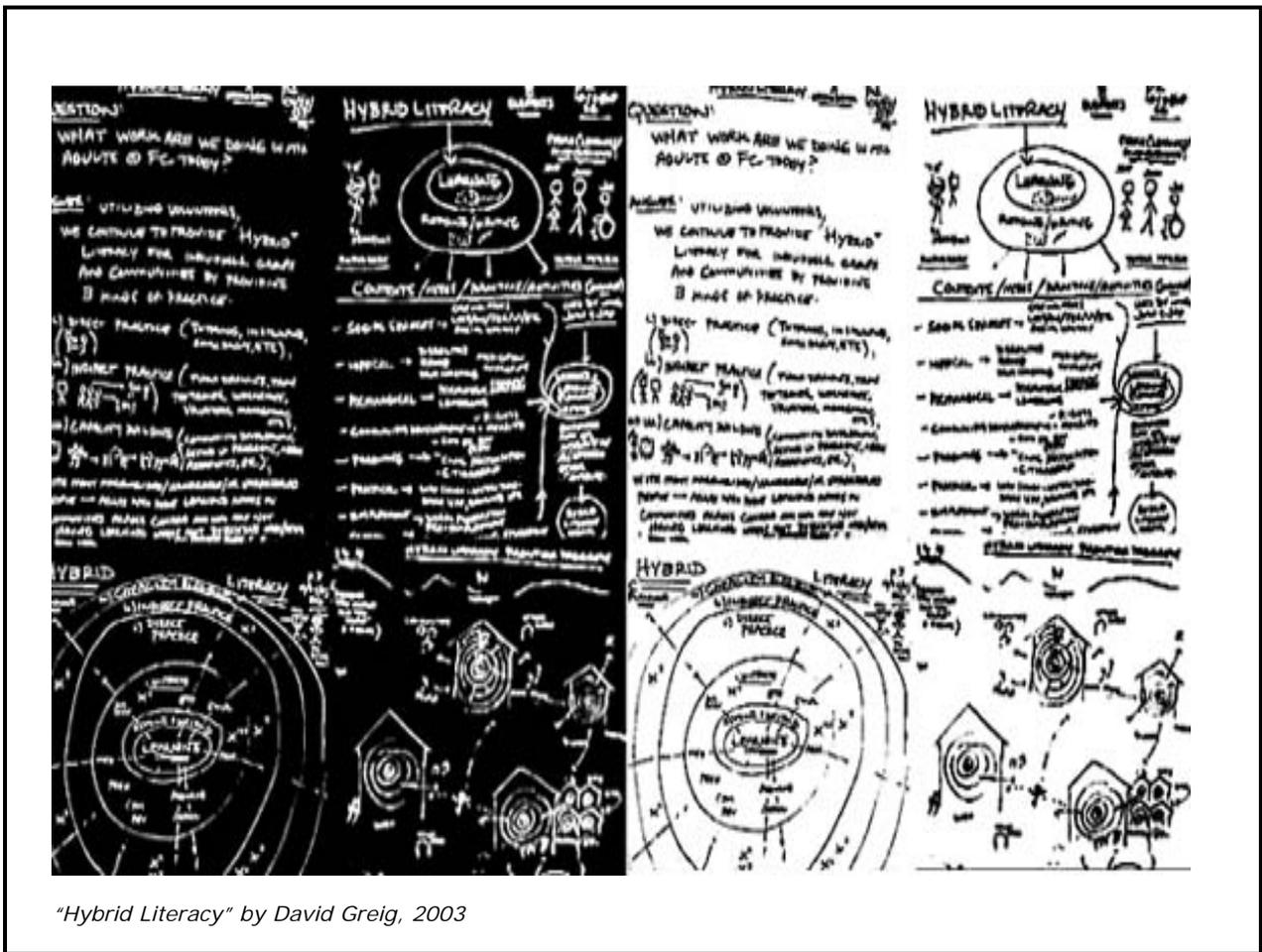
"Hybrid Literacy" by David Greig, 2003

Introduction

Reading the World and the Word, Paulo Freire

- In <u>Strategic Planning Document</u>, a report prepared for the Frontier College Board of Governor's meeting dated Jan 29, 2000, there are a series of recommendations. Under the heading, "Define Frontier College's niche in literacy", one of the draft revised strategic issues was:

"How can we effectively communicate the complexity of our programs and program delivery to a variety of stakeholders/audiences...?"

- This report on hybrid literacy presents a framework for beginning to answer this question. Frontier College has unique programs and unique program delivery.

- The work of **programs** is being presented here as "hybrid literacy". An essay and some notes from a workshop are presented below to help to define hybrid literacy. Digital

reproductions of diagrams from the workshop are also presented.

- Hybrid literacy is an approach to adult education programming that locates learning elements (including, but not exclusively, reading and writing) within the real life contexts of marginalized people's lives and communities.

- Note that this report is concerned with adult literacy programs and program delivery models at Frontier College; however, the model is equally applicable to work with children and adolescents. Hybrid literacy program delivery operates on multiple levels described below.

- The work of Frontier College **program delivery** is presented here as a model called "Three Levels of Practice". Basically, this model describes Frontier College's program delivery on three levels:

  1) **DIRECT PRACTICE**
  2) **INDIRECT PRACTICE**
  3) **CAPACITY BUILDING**

- These ideas are presented below based on notes from a workshop presented to the Frontier College Board of Governors on Jan 24, 2003 by David Greig and other Frontier College staff. It is intended as food for thought for Frontier College Board members and staff.

- The ideas presented here will also form the basis for a three-year NLS project at Frontier College which will develop best practices for literacy delivery to adults.

Hybrid Literacy: Critical Ideas about Literacy Practice Today by David Greig

Frontier College is undergoing a lot of growth and self-examination about the manner in which we practice "literacy". To assist with this evolution, here's a revised excerpt from a report I wrote in 1999 ("Critical Issues" in "Literacy and Homelessness, Phase 3 Report", St. Christopher House). This article is intended to provide critical reflection at Frontier College about the kind of work we do and can do.

Literacy work evolved in Canada (and elsewhere) during the 1970s into an unusual mix of many elements – some purely educational and many others adapted from a range of other disciplines. Community development work, health promotion, counselling of many kinds, anti-poverty work, Central and South American empowerment methods, action and participatory research methodologies, popular education, health promotion, community-based social work, liberation theology practice, inter- and transpersonal psychotherapies, developmental psychology, labour movement theories, social change work, feminist theory and practice, consciousness raising and civic action, along with a wide range of other elements once made up the content and informed the practice of "literacy work" in community-based literacy programs in many parts of Canada, the U.S., Western Europe, Australia and the UK during the 1970s up until the late 1980s.

"Literacy work" was an unusual and unique hybrid discipline that centred on education but incorporated and encouraged methodologies, approaches, theories and practices from any number of interrelated, overlapping and complementary fields. The result was a rich mix of innovation and activity, creativity and action. For many complex reasons, the definition of "literacy" became increasingly narrowed during the 1980s and early 1990s into a purely "educational" endeavour. As this systematization unfolded, the hybrid elements of literacy – that once made it an exciting and living field – were gradually eroded until only a relatively small number of primarily community-based (or similar) programs carried on with this kind of work.

The concept of "literacy work" as a hybrid of different disciplines has been discussed by many researchers. Stanislav Hubik of the Czech Republic described hybrid literacy in Alpha 94: "Literacy development has three equally important dimensions: the social, the educational, and the cultural. An integrated approach is needed. To the three dimensions of literacy (the social, the educational, the cultural) there

correspond three models of action: adult education, social work and cultural work. Literacy development strategy consequently includes all three."

Is hybrid "literacy" work actually "education" or is it perhaps "health"? Is it "community development work" or "cultural work"? Is it all of these things or is it something different? Whether hybrid literacy is a mix of "social work" and education or some other configuration of combined disciplines is not the issue. The issue is that a huge range of developmental and necessary learning elements have been expunged from the rigid reclassification of "literacy" solely as "education". The need now is not so much to define the components of individual hybrids in particular locations – the need is to identify the constituent learning elements that have been lost.

There are many elements that predicate, surround, comprise and support "learning", indeed make learning possible for many marginalized people. These "additional" but essential learning elements – elements that go beyond the cognitive factors that are currently the only "acceptable" (and fundable) learning elements in adult education – must be located, described, recorded, examined, documented and – most importantly – valued. There is a need to examine our practice, make clear what we are doing and why, and then share this proactive knowledge. There is much work that needs to be done to carry Frontier College and literacy work itself into the 21st century.

HYBRID LITERACY WORKSHOP BY DAVID GREIG
FRIDAY JANUARY 24, 2003, 6-8PM, OAKHAM HOUSE
FRONTIER COLLEGE BOARD MEETING

NOTES FOR F.C. STAFF FOR WORKSHOP

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1) AGENDA OF WORKSHOP
2) INSTUCTIONS FOR ACTIVITY/DISCUSSION
3) "HYBRID LITERACY" ARTICLE

1) AGENDA

Overview by David Greig of the concept of Hybrid Literacy as a frame for rethinking the work of Frontier College – there will be diagrams and an explanation of how our work fits into the concept of hybrid literacy by encompassing three elements of practice:

    a) direct practice (tutoring, instructing, etc.),
    b) indirect practice (tutor training, train the trainer, workshops, volunteer management, etc.), and
    c) capacity building practice (community development, setting up programs, needs assessments, etc.).

David will use these three levels of practice to present the idea of learning elements that are embedded as the core of practice at all three levels. This lecture will set the stage for the discussion using examples from Frontier College work. This section will take no more than 30 minutes. There will be a brief period for questions.

Discussion/Examples from Frontier College programs. Frontier College staff will use the template on the next page to brainstorm with their dinner table mates (Board members) ways in which the work they do is hybrid practice. Follow the instructions on the template. After the discussion at each table, we will reconvene for the final half hour to review each table's findings. We will then have an open discussion and David will elicit examples from Board members' own practice and will record them on a flip chart. Programs included are:

I.S. (Susan/David); BTS (Lurana/Robert); LT (Brent); ESL (Marlene); "OTHER" (Sarah on Northern project, Ellen on French and other SFL programs, John's CACL workshops, other staff on their own work, etc.)

INSTRUCTIONS FOR ACTIVITY/DISCUSSION

Frontier College Staff should come up with three (3) examples from their work that are not direct reading and writing instruction: What other kinds of learning take place in your program? What other kinds of activities do you do in your program that are not direct reading and writing instruction (eg. art projects, creating books, community development, self-esteem building, life skills, self-management, capacity building, starting programs, presenting workshops, etc.)

Name of Program: _____

3 examples of hybrid practice from your program:

HYBRID LITERACY — A ORGANIZATION

QUESTION:

WHAT WORK ARE WE DOING WITH ADULTS @ FC TODAY?

ANSWER:

UTILIZING VOLUNTEERS, WE CONTINUE TO PROVIDE "HYBRID" LITERACY FOR INDIVIDUALS, GROUPS AND COMMUNITIES BY PROVIDING 3 KINDS OF PRACTICE.
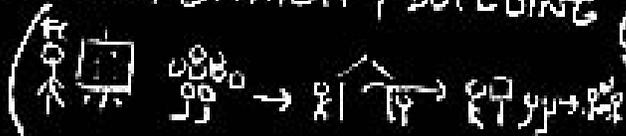
i.) DIRECT PRACTICE (TUTORING, INSTRUCTING, SMALL GROUPS, ETC.),

ii.) INDIRECT PRACTICE (TUTOR TRAINING, TRAIN THE TRAINER, WORKSHOPS, VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT, ETC.),
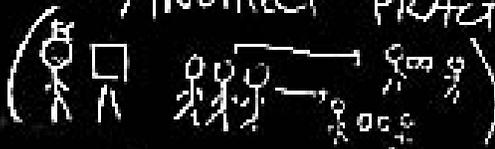
AND iii.) CAPACITY BUILDING (COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, SETTING UP PROGRAMS, NEEDS ASSESSMENTS, ETC.),

WITH MANY MARGINALIZED/VULNERABLE/OR UNDERSERVED PEOPLE → ADULTS WHO HAVE LEARNING NEEDS IN COMMUNITIES ACROSS CANADA AND WHO ARE NOT HAVING LEARNING NEEDS MET BY EXISTING ORGS/SYSTEMS

SAME MODEL

HYBRID LITERACY PROGRAM DELIVERY
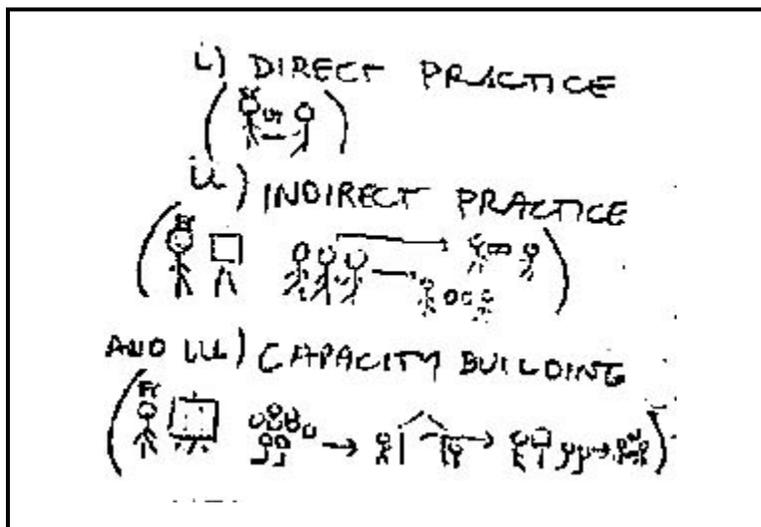
THREE LEVELS OF PRACTICE

Question:

What work are we doing with adults at Frontier College today?

Answer:

Utilizing volunteers, we continue to provide "hybrid" literacy for individuals, groups and communities by providing three kinds of practice (program delivery):

 i)   **DIRECT PRACTICE** (tutoring, instructing, small groups, etc.);

 ii) **INDIRECT PRACTICE** (tutor training, train the trainer, workshops, volunteer management, etc.);

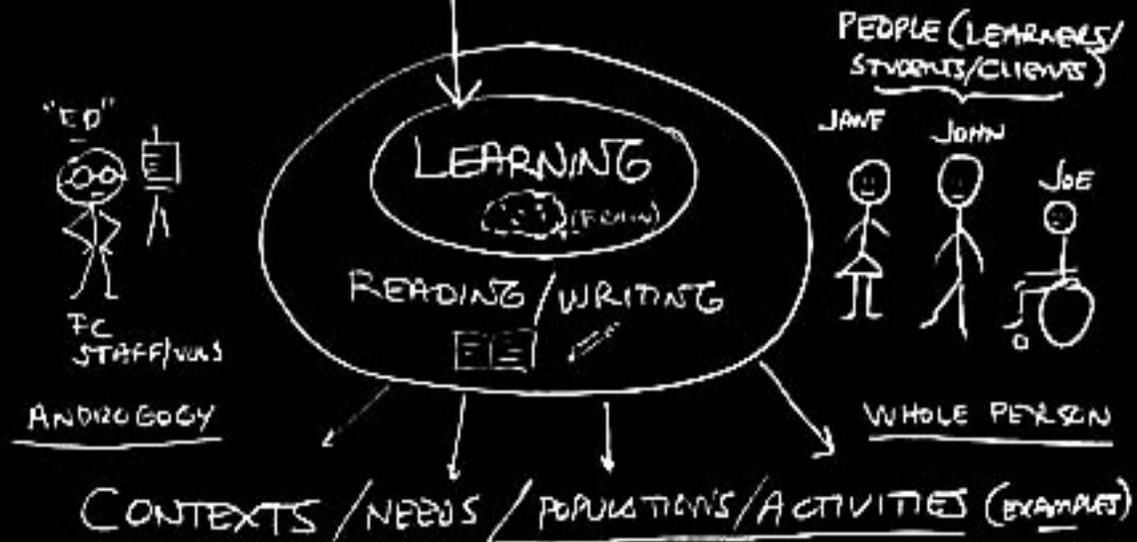 iii) and **CAPACITY BUILDING** (community development, setting up programs, needs assessments, etc.);

with many marginalized/vulnerable/or underserved people – adults who have learning needs in communities across Canada and who are not having learning needs met by existing organizations/systems.

HYBRID LITERACY

B ELEMENTS

P2
01/24/03
DG

PEOPLE (LEARNERS/STUDENTS/CLIENTS)

JANE   JOHN   JOE

"ED"

FC STAFF/VOLS

ANDRAGOGY

LEARNING (BRAIN)

READING/WRITING

WHOLE PERSON

CONTEXTS / NEEDS / POPULATIONS / ACTIVITIES (EXAMPLES)

USED BY JANE, JOHN & JOE

- SOCIAL SERVICES → CASE MANAGERS LOSP/OW/FBA/UI/ETC SOCIAL WORKERS

- MEDICAL → DISABILITIES REHAB DRUG ADDICTING   MEDICATION THERAPISTS

- PSYCHOLOGICAL → PSYCHIATRIC SURVIVORS SERVICES/ COUNSELLING

- COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT → RIGHTS HOUSING COM. EC. DEV (CED)

- PARENTING → CIVIC PARTICIPATION CITIZENSHIP

- PRACTICAL → LIFE SKILLS - NUTRITION - DAILY LIFE, BANKING ETC

- EMPLOYMENT → WORK PREPARATION PRE-EMPLOYMENT

- SCHOOL → SELF-MANAGEMENT, STUDYSKILLS LEARNING TO LEARN

- ETC...

READING & LEARNING ELEMENTS WRITING

EMBEDDED INTO OR INTEGRATE W/ ALL OF THESE OTHER CONTEXTS

HYBRID LITERACY WORK

10

HYBRID LITERACY ELEMENTS

1) At the core of all Frontier College activities is **learning** for the whole person.

2) Surrounding this essential learning are **reading and writing skills** grounded in androgogy, which is adult-focused educational practices.
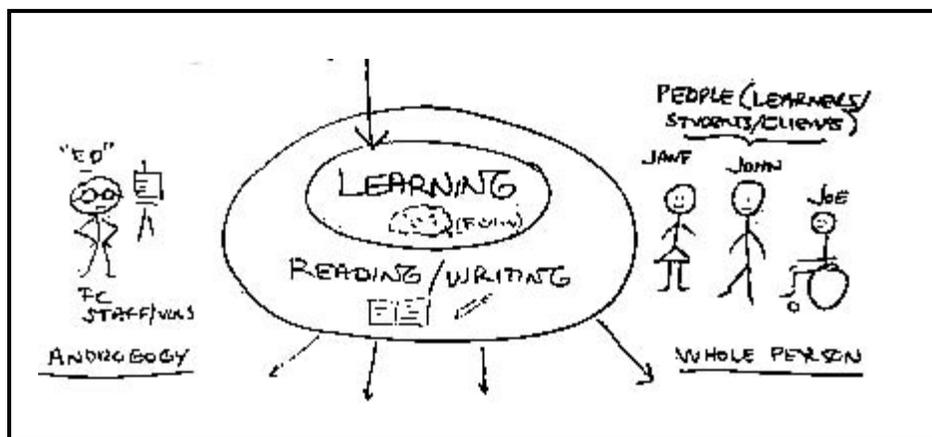
3) Surrounding these skills are the **contexts** in which students live and interact. These contexts are disparate and complex. Many students in our programs have needs that cover a range of contexts such as:

- social services *(case managers, ODSP/OW/FBA/UI, social workers, etc.)*

- medical *(disabilities, rehab, drug addictions, medications, therapists, etc.)*

- psychological *(psychiatric survivors/services, counselling, etc.)*

- community development *(rights, housing, CED or community economic development, etc.)*

- parenting *(life skills, nutrition, daily life, banking, etc.)*

- employment *(work preparation, pre-employment, etc.)*

- school *(self-management, study skills, learning to learn, etc.)*

At Frontier College, our work takes into account all of these contexts.

We devise educational interventions for people that locate the embedded learning components within these contexts.

We ask: What are the reading and writing skills needed to understand and deal with the medical or parenting contexts for students? What are the learning elements embedded in understanding social services or employment preparation?

We utilize real contexts in our "literacy" work to engage the whole person as an adult and integrate all of the elements into "hybrid" literacy practice.
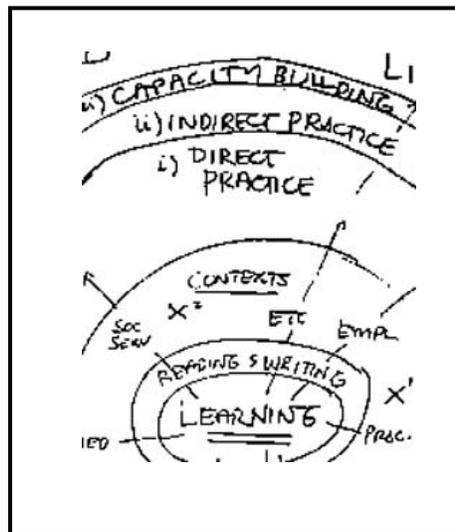
MAP OF
the HYBRID
LITERACY OUT-
COMES
& INTERVENTIONS

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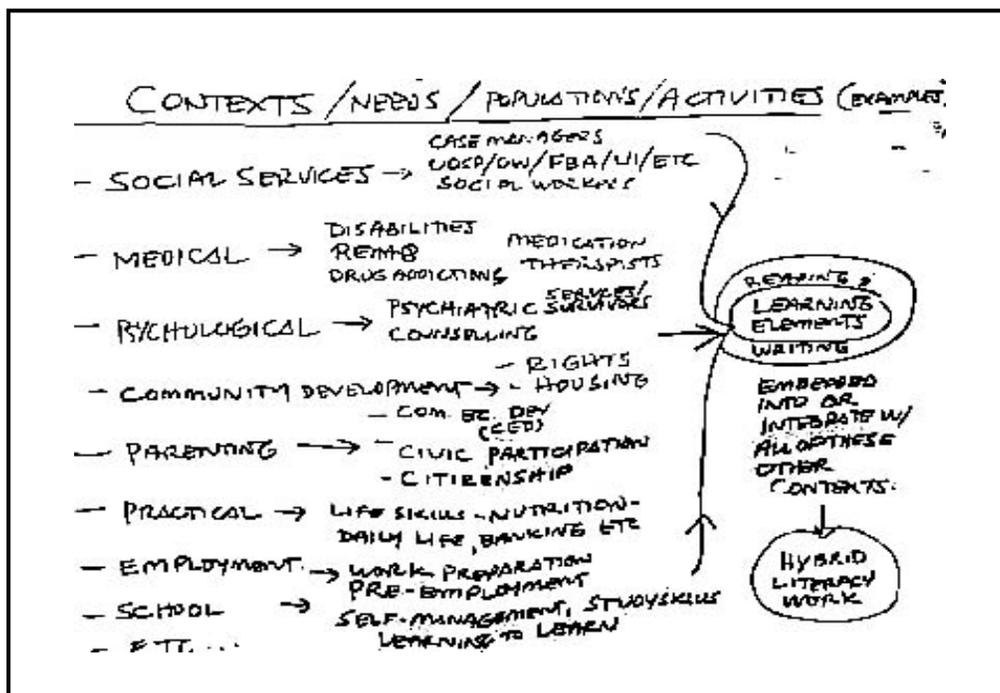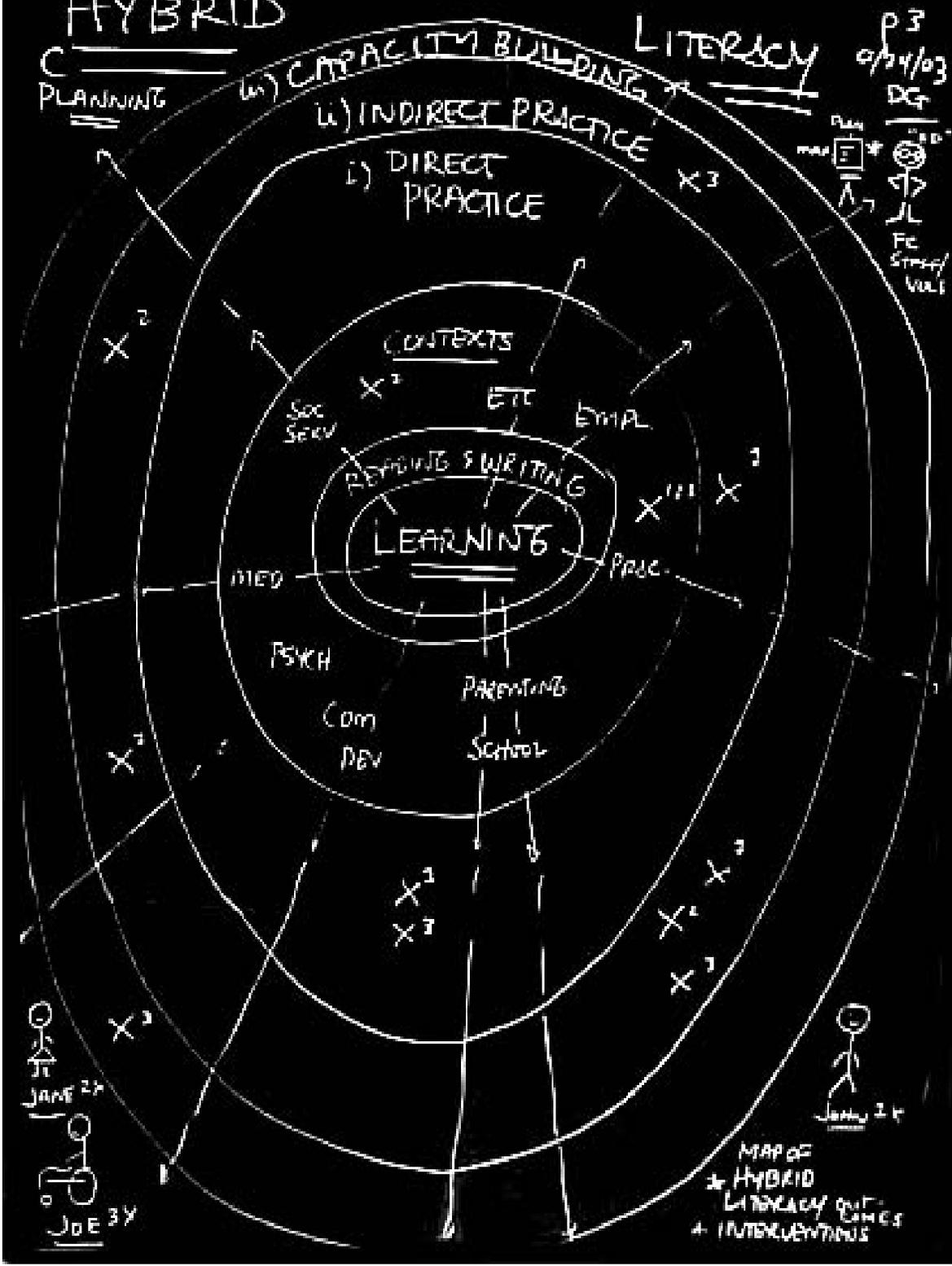
HYBRID LITERACY PLANNING

The Hybrid Literacy and Three Levels of Practice models allow for broad based program planning across locations and communities. This planning is represented as a diagram of a "web" constructed of six concentric circles.


- In the centre circle is "learning", the foundation of all Frontier College work.

- Surrounding this circle are "reading and writing", the essential skill areas that support learning. Frontier College has an historical (and continuing) expertise with and commitment to developing reading and writing capacities for all Canadians.

- Surrounding this circle are "contexts", the situations that impact the students. These contexts form learning content in our programs. *(For example, students may work on reading skills to help them understand their psychiatric diagnoses along with self-advocacy and communications skills to allow them to have a meaningful understanding of their medical situations – they are learning about an important issue in their lives by using reading, writing and other educational activities to facilitate this meta-learning.)*

- Surrounding the contexts, are three circles representing the three levels of practice: direct, indirect and capacity building.

All of these variables have been charted onto one meta-frame for integrative planning: planning that integrates as many of the variables in various groups of students' lives into holistic hybrid literacy learning environments. This is the work we do at Frontier College.
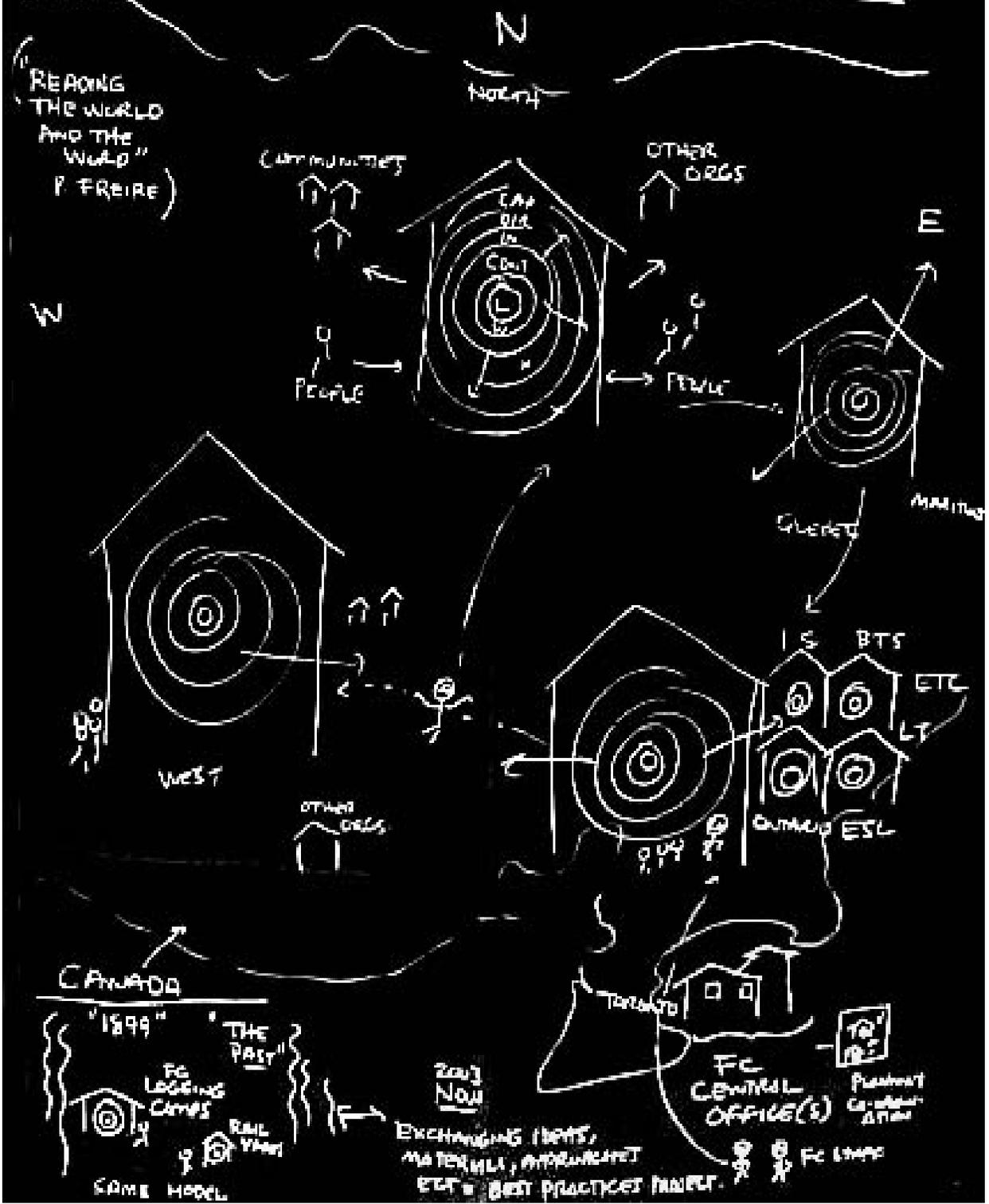
HYBRID LITERACY PLANNING MAP
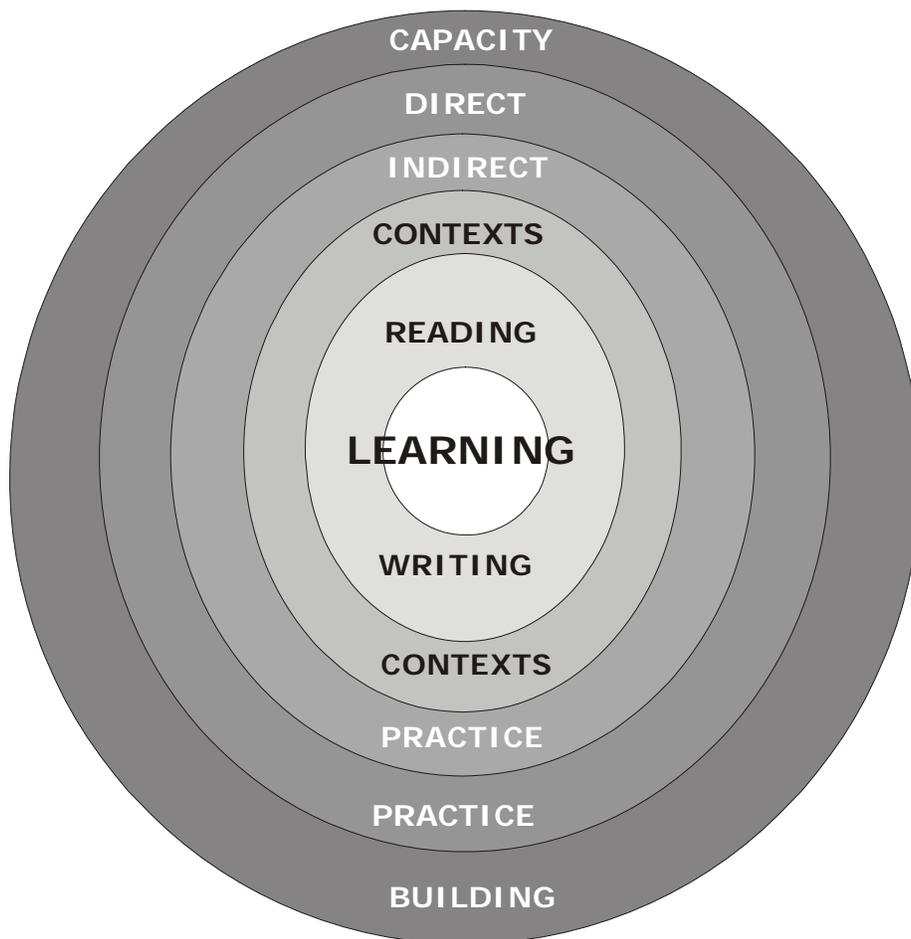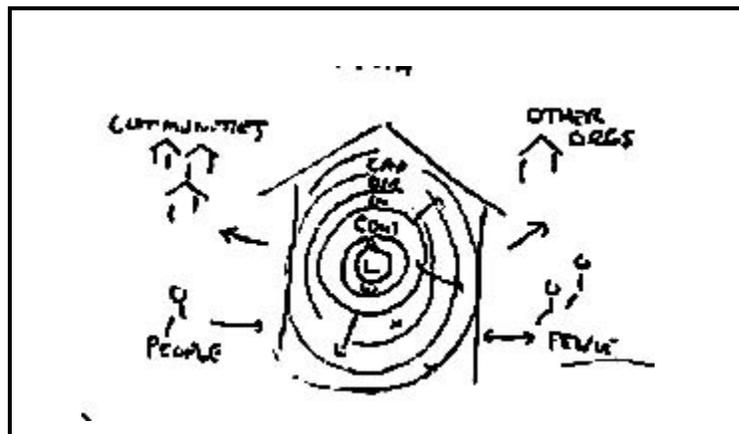

FRONTIER COLLEGE, 2003

HYBRID LITERACY FRONTIER PROGRAMS

HYBRID LITERACY IN FRONTIER COLLEGE PROGRAMS

Frontier College has been practicing hybrid literacy programming and using a three levels of practice model of program delivery for many years (although it was not named as such until now). Frontier College develops and maintains a series of individual and semi-autonomous programs that each offer a complex array of learning environments all across Canada. This is one of the greatest strengths of Frontier College: flexibility and expertise to meet localized educational needs, needs that are often not being met by any other organization or service provider.

As economic and governmental changes impact on the provision of non-traditional educational services, Frontier College is very well positioned to continue to work within the gaps left by cut backs. The models of Hybrid Literacy and Three Levels of Practice provide Frontier College with a pedagogical and philosophical groundwork out of which can grow theoretical innovations and practical interventions in the field of informal adult education. This pedagogical soundness allows Frontier College to continue to offer its long-standing holistic and unique brand of educational services – services which this report has shown are multidimensional, integrative, meaning-based and empowering to all the people we work with across the country. It is hoped that this report has answered the original question of how do we describe what we do to others.

EXAMPLES OF HYBRID PRACTICE AT FRONTIER COLLEGE

(from workshop notes)

- "teaching fishing and not giving fish"

- building networks with other practitioners

- working on speaking and communication outcomes

- cultural components of work

- values based work

- social elements as part of programs

- starting new programs

- providing resources

- teaching how to find resources

- treating people as adults – autonomous and respected

- starting by working with dreams in the context of real life

- work with health advocacy and support

- anti-racism work

- mediation work

- staff and volunteers as learners

- etc.