

“THEIR CAPACITY TO DELIGHT”:
KNOWING PERSONS WITH DEMENTIA THROUGH HAIKU

by

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ABSTRACT

This research explores the use of haiku poetry to connect with persons with dementia. The happenings during two one-hour sessions provide the main focus for this study. These sessions were part of an ongoing spiritual care program on the secure dementia unit of a long-term care facility. The sessions were co-facilitated by the chaplain who leads the ongoing program, and by myself as both guest poet and researcher. Haiku were used as prompts to reminiscence. Words and phrases from the stories that were spoken during the session became the building blocks for creating collaborative haiku within the group setting.

“Inferences all over” was spoken by a person with severe dementia and became a part of one of the collaborative haiku. This comment is remarkable for its association to poetry where the words on the page often only hint indirectly at a deeper meaning, and for its association to spirituality where the stories we tell often only hint at our deeper truth. The ambiguity around what is evident and what is implied paradoxically invites connection. The first chapter of this thesis, *Beginning*, describes the format of a haiku session where building connection is the primary intention. It also explores issues around the creative arts.

“Inferences all over” also speaks to the hermeneutic phenomenological approach of this thesis, where the stories speak for themselves. These stories appear in the second chapter entitled *During*, along with insights gleaned from interviews.

“Inferences all over” well describes the third chapter, *After*, where I reflect on my experiences as a participant in this research, and where I detail some of the ripples of this study into the dementia care, haiku, and educational communities.

“Their capacity to delight” in the thesis title was spoken by the chaplain who developed the spiritual care program. Her belief in the possibility of connection with persons with dementia forms the bedrock of the program—where hospitality invites connection and validation affirms their responses. This capacity has implications for all teaching—formal as well as informal—as it invites learning as an experience to enjoy rather than endure.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the persons with dementia who participated so generously in the haiku sessions, both before and during my graduate studies. My heart was touched by their honesty and joy.

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I am grateful beyond measure to my friend and collaborator, Maggie Woodbridge, for her generous support during every step of my graduate journey. Her pioneering work in spiritual care for persons with dementia paved the way for this research. She invited me to play, and to open my eyes to possibility.

Rebecca Luce-Kapler, thesis supervisor *extraordinaire*, listened deeply and guided gently. She invited me to honour my personal voice as my academic voice, and her witness as poet, writer, educator, and friend has been a blessing. As a member of my thesis committee, Katharine Smithrim invited me to be bold enough to incorporate the spiritual aspects of the research into my thesis. I thank her for this and for her enthusiasm.

My cheerleaders during these graduate studies were many: my family who gave me long-distance support, and my friends who provided perennial encouragement (especially Marco, Terry Ann, Susan, Ruth, Christa, and Barry). Several wise women in my circle helped me keep my feet firmly planted on the ground during this wildly transformative adventure of graduate school. The encouragement of so many heartened me along the way.

I would like to express my thanks to David A., Roy Holloway, and Gina Santi for their assistance during the research process. The hospitality provided by the administration and staff of the long-term care facility was greatly appreciated. I also want to acknowledge the poets who gave permission for their work to be included in this thesis.

Lastly, I am appreciative of the financial support I received through Queen's Graduate Awards, and through a Teaching Assistantship and several Research Assistantships through the Faculty of Education.

COPYRIGHT OF THE POEMS

For the poems of all the poets, including myself, copyright remains with the authors.

Haiku were written collaboratively with participants during five haiku sessions from 2004 to 2007 as part of the Soul Sessions spiritual care program. Three of these sessions preceded the graduate research represented in this thesis, and the material from the two sessions in 2007 formed the major part of the data for this thesis. Poems from all five sessions have appeared in a book entitled *signs of spring: haiku poems by persons with dementia* (2007), and the copyright remains with the Soul Session Poets.

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CHAPTER 1: BEGINNING

only by its shadow
seeing the white hair
on the blank page

Philomene Kocher

An Invitation

My adventure began several years ago. I had moved into a new neighbourhood and began to carpool to work with a friend of mine, Maggie Woodbridge, who lived nearby. Maggie liked to take the long way to work which meant that we traveled by the waterfront. And it also meant that we had time to talk each morning. She works as a chaplain in a long-term care facility, and I became fascinated by the stories she shared with me about her work. She created a new spiritual care program called Soul Session for those with severe dementia living on the secure dementia floor. In this program she used all kinds of prompts to engage with the residents—stories, scripture, music, and poetry. She told me what kind of themes and activities she tried, and I was intrigued by the range of material and the way she used it. In truth, I was also fascinated to hear about persons with dementia¹. I knew many of them were older, and I wondered what it would have been like for my parents if they were still alive. Would dementia have touched them, and me? I was vaguely aware of what dementia was like: being forgetful, wandering and getting lost, and not being able to care for oneself. And yet the stories that Maggie told me were filled with humour and poignancy. She told me they laughed together and cried together in Soul Sessions.

And then, one day she asked me if I would like to join the group and bring haiku poetry along as the focus for the Soul Session. I was hesitant. More than hesitant—I was resistant to the idea. I had shared some of my work in readings and workshops, but I

¹ I have chosen to use the words “persons with dementia” rather than “people with dementia” to emphasize and honour their personhood. This understanding evolved during the research, so the original letters of information and consent forms used the words “people with dementia” (see Appendices). I did not change the wording from “people with dementia” when I quoted directly from the work of others.

knew engaging with this special audience would be entirely different. So I said no. She asked me to think about it.

There were several reasons why Maggie had invited me as a guest poet. She had noticed that the persons with dementia in her group responded to poetry, both classic and contemporary. She had told me the story about several women reciting the long familiar poem *The Highwayman* (by Alfred Noyes) along with her when she had read it in the group. She had been surprised. So had the daughter of one of those women who had joined the group that day—to see her mother with the capacity to recite a poem, a capacity that she had maintained despite the dementia. Maggie had also noticed that the participants responded to sensory cues. She had often brought items that fit with the theme of the session (for example, a suitcase if the theme was traveling) as well as music that they would recognize (for example, *My Funny Valentine* by Nat King Cole or *Love Me Tender* by Elvis Presley). It was hard to say whether it was individual memory or group memory as participants shared stories and built on each other's stories. Or, rather, to be more specific, participants shared fragments of stories—often it was only words or phrases that were shared. Because she knew that haiku were short poems that held sensory images, she wondered if both their brevity and their clear images might also arouse recall. And, finally, we had known each other as friends for several years, and this would make collaboration easier. So she invited me, and then repeated the invitation.

I was still hesitant to take haiku into the spirituality sessions. Not because I believed they didn't belong there, but because I was unsure of my capacity to move into a new environment. The individuals would attend because it was their program, and not because they were specifically interested in haiku. I knew there was a good chance that

they had never even heard of haiku before. Finally, one day Maggie said to me, “if we fail, we will probably be the only ones to remember it.” And so I said “yes.” This journey into a new way of experiencing haiku informs this thesis.

The Journey from “Yes” Onward

The first haiku sessions were held in the fall of 2004, and included spiritual care sessions on the secure dementia floor (the Soul Sessions program) as well as the three other units in the long-term care facility (the Count Your Blessings program). These programs that Maggie created and facilitated were influenced by the suggestions in the book *Full Circle: Spiritual Therapy for the Elderly* by Kevin Kirkland and Howard McIlveen (1999), as well by as her experience as a facilitator in the SNOEZELEN® environment. SNOEZELEN® is a non-directive therapy that was developed in the Netherlands in the 1970s. “Children and adults with disabilities or other limiting conditions enjoy gentle stimulation of the primary senses. There is no need for intellectual reasoning” (FlagHouse.com, 2007). The SNOEZELEN® room is designed so that the experience for the participant is both multisensory and emotional in nature, i.e., lighting, atmosphere, sounds, and textures are used either singly or in combination, and the facilitator or *enabler* assists the individual to gain maximum pleasure from the activity in an atmosphere of safety and security. “Participants experience self-control, autonomous discovery, and exploration-achievements that overcome inhibitions, enhance self-esteem, and reduce tension” (FlagHouse.com, 2007). Most significantly, participation can improve communication and build trust in the relationship between the individual and the enabler.

From her experiences with SNOEZELEN® and with the emerging program format of Soul Sessions, Maggie realized that there were two key components: the experiences needed to be multisensory, and the atmosphere needed to be welcoming.

Persons with dementia often feel tremendous pressure to remember the *facts* of their lives, so an environment that is creative and non-judgmental (*no-fail*) can be very freeing for them: “Creative expression is especially important for people with dementia, for whom traditional modes of communication are breaking down” (Basting, 2002, p. 6).

Programs that engage persons with dementia in the arts are increasing in number and scope because it appears that such programs can enhance well-being for these individuals. Research by Anne Basting and John Killick (2003, as cited in Bortnick, 2005) found that “in looking at those with dementia, for many seniors it is music and the other arts that continue to hold out the chance for continued cognitive involvement and emotional stimulation when other modalities become problematic” (p. 210). There is no denying the effects of the neurological impairment of dementia, as the syndrome consists of a number of symptoms that include loss of memory, judgment and reasoning, and changes in mood and behaviour. However, Tom Kitwood, an advocate of a holistic *person-centred* approach to dementia care, noted the use of poetic imagination by persons with dementia, and stated that “the stories people tell about events in their past are often rich in metaphor related to their present situation” (Kitwood, 1997, p. 73). In a way, the arts provide a “bridge of communication” as noted by researchers exploring the value of music and art for seniors residing in a long-term care facility.

Our personal development is based on what happens to us in the two worlds in which we live. One is the external world of things and events; the other is the inner world of senses, feelings, and meanings. Art activities are important because they form a bridge of communication and interaction between these worlds. (Rosling & Kitchen, 1992, as cited in Bortnick, 2005, p. 209)

This kind of exploration might benefit any adult who wished to find meaning in their lives, perhaps most particularly persons with dementia for whom many of the usual cues

for self-identity are no longer available (e.g., living in a long-term care facility rather than their own home), or no longer accessible due to limited cognitive ability. However, personal identity survives in some manner. As neurologist Oliver Sacks (2007) describes:

It is as if identity has such a robust, widespread neural basis, as if personal style is so deeply ingrained in the nervous system, that it is never wholly lost, at least while there is still any mental life present at all. (This, indeed, is what one might expect if perceptions and actions, feelings and thoughts, have molded the structure of one's brain from the start.) (p. 336)

A hallmark of creative expression programs with persons with dementia is the regard for their capacities that are still intact: “the centrality of relationship, the uniqueness of persons, the fact of our embodiment” (Kitwood, 1997, p. 7). These capacities for social interaction, emotional connection, and sensory awareness are integral components of what researchers in the study of human consciousness call *enactive or embodied cognition*. Philosopher Evan Thompson (2001) proposes that “the affective mind isn't in the head, but in the whole body” (p. 4), and notes that this embodied awareness occurs in relationship to others and to the environment.

Embodied knowledge contains knowledge within conscious awareness and knowledge at an unconscious level; for example, a person might be aware if their heart rate begins to race, but generally heart rate is not consciously noted. This has implications for understanding the consciousness of persons with dementia—that is, trying to understand how they can know something without being able to explain how they know. It is possible that despite the limitations of neurological impairment, persons with dementia can access (at least to some extent) their *embodied knowledge* given a supportive environment and multiple cues (sensory, emotional) that might stimulate access to their knowing. Engagement with the expressive arts may be valuable in

providing such an environment and cues. Educator Elliot Eisner (2002) describes work in the arts as a way to develop a sense of self, and also a way to invite the development of “a disposition to tolerate ambiguity, to explore what is uncertain, [and] to exercise judgment free from prescriptive rules and procedures” (p. 10). Perhaps it is through this judgment-free encounter with ambiguity and uncertainty that the arts paradoxically invite connection.

Indeed, the primary focus of the Soul Sessions program is to foster connection within the group. For the participants, this process invites connections to their own memories, to others in the group including the facilitator and sometimes family members, and, because the focus of the program is spiritual, to their understanding of the Divine. Is it possible that the hospitable space provided by Soul Sessions is one of the factors that invites individuals with dementia to participate to their fullest capacity? Also, is it possible that this kind of participation—where all comments and stories are welcomed—gives these individuals a place to discuss both their fears and joys? Because severe dementia is most common among the elderly, is there a reticence among persons with dementia to share their fragmented stories and their fears of both dementia and death? These fears belong to many, not just to persons with dementia.

In a recent news article during Alzheimer’s Awareness Week®, the headline read *Dementia—The Nation’s Biggest Fear, UK* (Medical News Today, July 5, 2007). While the article advocated simple lifestyle changes that may reduce the risk of developing dementia, the article indicated that Britons fear developing dementia “more than any other health condition in old age,” and that “it is a fear that not many people talk about” (Medical News Today, 2007). Are such fears warranted? The article notes that one in

three older people will end their lives with a form of dementia; that 700,000 people in the UK are affected by dementia; and that by 2051 this will soar to 1.7 million people. In the United States, one estimate is that there are currently 4-5 million people who have some degree of dementia, and that dementia affects about 1% of people aged 60-64 years and as many as 30-50% of people older than 85 years (eMedicineHealth.com, 2007). In Canada, an estimated 450,000 Canadians over 65 have some form of dementia, and by 2031 there may be 750,000 Canadians with dementia (Alzheimer Society of Canada, 2007). As well, based on a public opinion poll in 2006, an estimated 32% of Canadians know someone with Alzheimer's disease (the most common type of dementia). These statistics seem dire, and the fear of developing some form of dementia seems warranted, particularly as the population of Baby Boomers ages over the next several decades.

A misleading image of dementia is "the death that leaves the body behind" (Kitwood, 1997), and it would seem that the fear of dementia is somehow tied to the fear of death. John O'Donohue (2004), a poet and philosopher, describes the cultural view this way.

We prefer to avoid talk of death. It is amazing that aside from minimal and superficial reference, the theme of death is absent from most of our conversation. Our culture avoids it too. Where time is money no-one really wants to focus on that edge where time runs out on you. Our education system never really considers it; we have no pedagogy of death. Consequently, death is something we are left to deal with in the isolation of our own life and family. When death visits, there is no cultural webbing to lighten the blow. (p. 201)

In my own experience, this is a true accounting of "when death visits." My mother died when I was 30 years old. Although I was a young adult, nothing in my experience had prepared me for the psychic devastation that followed her death. I had a job. I had friends. I had family. I belonged to a church. And yet, despite all of these supports, I felt

devastated and isolated to a depth I had not experienced before. I wonder now if a “cultural webbing to lighten the blow” might have helped. Somehow our culture has lost its way in *educating* individuals (that is, to bring to an understanding or an acceptance) in such an important aspect of life skills. Avoidance of death leads to fear of anything that hints at death. And dementia does hint at this ultimate vulnerability.

So the fear of developing dementia, particularly in one’s elder years, seems warranted: it is a likely possibility. But what might lessen some of the anguish around such a diagnosis would be a culture that honours the personhood of those with dementia, and that honours their capacities that are preserved. Rather than focusing only on the limitations of persons with dementia (and these limitations are real for both the individual and their caregivers), could a balancing perspective of nurturing their capacities bring hope? As previously mentioned, the capacities for social interaction, emotional connection, and embodied awareness appear to be available despite the limitations resulting from neurological impairment. Several studies (chosen to illustrate rather than to present a comprehensive overview) have explored these capacities and bring a different perspective to the field of dementia care.

Cuddy and Duffin (2005) described a case study of a woman with dementia who showed sparing (i.e., the skill was preserved) of musical recognition and memory despite severe dementia. The researchers adapted three standard psychological tests of musical recognition and appreciation so that instead of requiring verbal or written communication, assessment could be accomplished by behavioural observation. Their conclusions for why music may be preserved in dementia included: music, by enhancing a general level of activation, may prompt motor activity or memory recall; the words that

come along with a tune may have a comforting effect on the emotional state which would assist in recall; and, brain activation patterns during complex musical tasks appear to be widely distributed, and may support or reinforce musical memory through co-activation processes. They suggest, therefore, that “music sparing may be the most available and accessible form of the sparing of a complex skill in dementia” (p. 234). Because of this, “music may be a welcome tool for improving the quality of life in institutions and private homes” (p. 230).

Because research findings have shown that the participation of older adults in physical activity programs is linked to increased physical and psychological well-being, Heyn (2003) explored strategies to enhance participation in exercise programs for individuals with Alzheimer’s disease. The study evaluated “the outcomes of a multisensory exercise program on cognitive function (engagement), behavior (mood), and physiological indices (blood pressure, resting heart rate, and weight)” (p. 247). The program combined a variety of sensory stimulation, integrated storytelling, and imaging strategies; and results showed improvement in engagement, mood, and resting heart rate. Of particular note is that storytelling can evoke the stimulation and use of the senses, and that through the act of telling a story or listening to a story, participants increased their attention and participation in the activity. As well, imagery can evoke the senses and create an experience by using past memories and images. Although the study was preliminary with only a small number of participants, the multisensory approach appears to warrant more investigation.

A recent study by Dijkstra, Bourgeois, Youmans and Hancock (2006) demonstrated that older adults who had moderate to severe symptoms of dementia can

assume advice-giving and teaching roles despite their cognitive impairments. One explanation for these preserved discourse and role-associated abilities may be that in a naturalistic setting (such as when they are having a conversation or teaching someone how to do something), persons with dementia can compensate for memory impairments. Another explanation may be that persons with dementia can tap into long-term episodic memory stores of experiences that are more accessible than short-term memory, possibly due to the repetition of the episodic details of the original experience over time. “Successfully assuming specific roles also may contribute to a better quality of life and more rewarding social interactions with peers and caregivers” (p. 365).

Developed by Anne Basting (2002), the TimeSlips storytelling method “opens an avenue for creative expression for both people with dementia and those who care for them by allowing them to play in the realm of the imagination where there are no wrong answers” (p. 6). Participants in a group setting are invited to respond to an image by prompting them with open-ended questions. All responses are validated and accepted and are woven into a story that is read back to them by the facilitators. Basting relates that “[t]he stories captured an array of personal memories, popular culture references, life experiences, and fragmented answers born of the illness” (p. 7). These stories are often not linear as persons with dementia have difficulty perceiving linear time, but humour and poignancy are their hallmarks.

Many of the themes from the preceding studies and programs are similar to those that appeared during the development of the Soul Sessions program: that music and other multisensory strategies can benefit persons with dementia, that validating the preserved abilities of persons with dementia enhances their well-being, and that creative expression

in a non-judgmental environment can be freeing and satisfying for persons with dementia.

What is remarkable is the realization that many of these characteristics are also key to successful learning environments in general, whether designed for children or adults. For example, a critical influence on adult learning is the group environment, whether in a classroom setting or an online setting. Teaching methods that provide “a relaxed, trusting, mutually respectful, informal, warm, collaborative, and supportive learning environment” (Sipe, 2001, as cited in Kerka, 2002) are more conducive to learning at all ages. In adult education, this kind of environment encourages the learners themselves to draw upon and share from their own experiences, skills, and values. Furthermore, “[a] basic premise in group dynamics is that a group is more than a mere collection of individuals, that is, groups have their own dynamic quite independent of the individuals comprising them” (Tennant, 2006, p. 107). This group dynamic can either enhance or inhibit learner engagement.

Although a supportive environment is important for all learning, it is particularly critical for learning through the arts where “the so-called subjective side of ourselves has an opportunity to be utilized” (Eisner, 2002, p. 10). There is an added vulnerability because I am not only sharing some *thing*, I am sharing a part of *myself*. This may become easier as learners develop familiarity and skill with different materials and forms of expression, but “[f]or the beginner, creative expression can be like a delicate flower—tender, vulnerable, and easily destroyed” (McNiff, 2004, p. 216). Educator Parker Palmer (1998) well describes the vulnerability of inviting our private self into the public, and the hospitality this requires.

If we want to support each other's inner lives, we must remember a simple truth: the human soul does not want to be fixed, it wants simply to be seen and heard. If we want to see and hear a person's soul, there is another truth we must remember: the soul is like a wild animal—tough, resilient, and yet shy. When we go crashing through the woods shouting for it to come out so we can help it, the soul will stay in hiding. But if we are willing to sit quietly and wait for a while, the soul may show itself. (p. 151)

When I first attended Soul Sessions, the closest past experience I could rely upon were poetry workshops I had planned and facilitated. Being with the persons with dementia was very different. I noted some of these feelings in my journal in late 2004, almost two months after completing four sessions—one on the secure dementia floor, and three on the other units in the facility.

I had to let go of “Phil the expert” and be a participant with the others. After the first session, I knew that there was no way that I could have led the group by myself, and so felt like I had failed somehow. I had to reframe the experience—given that it was a joint effort with Maggie. (journal entry)

Maggie brought her skills as a chaplain to the sessions, and I brought my knowledge of haiku. But it was more than a sum of these skills. There was a synergy created in our collaboration as well as in the interactions among all of us in the group: co-facilitators and participants. Maggie and I were responsible for structuring the group (asking prompting questions, deciding when to move from reading haiku to collaboratively writing them), but the flow was led by the persons with dementia (when their interest began to wane in a topic or they became restless, we moved on). There was a very real reciprocity in the group, something that was different from the more formal format I had used in previous workshops. “According to Kitwood, this capacity to be present with another person with ‘free attention’—independent of action or outcome, direction, or agenda—permits the moral space of true meeting to emerge” (McIntyre, 2003, p. 479). My journal reflected this.

I would say that what has changed for me is that I have loosened my perceptions around poetry workshops—to include “relationship” as an important part of what we were accomplishing together. (journal entry)

During my graduate studies, exploring transformative learning theory as an aspect of adult learning provided some perspective for me. This type of learning invites an individual to make meaning from previous experiences or to question long-held assumptions (Cranton, 2006). Transformative learning theory grew out of the work by Jack Mezirow in the late 1970s in which he outlined a process of personal perspective transformation which he described as “a structural reorganization in the way that a person looks at himself and his relationships” (Mezirow, 1978, as cited in Cranton, 2006, p. 21). This shift in perspective is often precipitated by a person experiencing a *disorienting dilemma*—which can be either a dramatic event or a gradual cumulative process. A way through such a dilemma is to examine unquestioned *habits of mind*, which may be considered ways of seeing the world based on one’s background, experience, culture, and personality. Such an examination is a way of reconsidering experience, and of challenging one’s assumptions and beliefs. Integral to this process is self-reflection as well as discourse, dialogue, and support from others (Cranton, 2006).

In many ways, my learning to participate in the new setting of Soul Session also prompted a profound inner shift in my way of being. I had been bound up in my role as *facilitator*, and then shifted into becoming *participant*. Maura McIntyre in her article *Dignity in dementia: Person-centered care in community* (2003) describes this *unbinding* in this way.

In illness, however, particularly in the context of dementia, we often forget that relationships are still a two-way street. We easily become role bound and set-up false self-defeating dichotomies: patient, victim, person requiring care—and on the other side: helper, caregiver, rescuer. We can forget mutuality and reciprocity

—we sometimes only notice what needs to be done, the symptoms and physical manifestations of the illness—and fail to notice or be with the person. (p. 479)

This is what happened as I participated in the Soul Sessions a second and a third time. I became more aware that we were sharing stories—however brief or fragmented—with each other in mutual enjoyment. I became less role-bound and more centred in what was happening in the moment. For individuals with dementia, being fully present in the moment may be one of their capacities, whether that moment is occurring right now or is one of memory. I am reminded of a story that a friend told me many years ago when she was working with persons with dementia, and which I recorded as a haiku.

on the Alzheimer's ward
“there is no later here”—
her wide smile

Being in the present moment is one of the signature characteristics of haiku, a short poem usually written in three lines. Haiku poetry usually presents two images in contrast or association, and these images capture what is experienced through the senses. The brevity of the poem leaves space for the reader or listener to react to the poem as it resonates with their own lived experience. Both of these attributes seem to have particular relevance for persons with dementia. First, the images are sensory in nature and it appears that sensory awareness is still accessible in persons with dementia. John Killick and Kate Allan (2001) describe this potential as follows.

One area of development in dementia care which may have considerable potential in enhancing well-being and communication is that of providing stimuli to the senses, either through specialized environments or less structured approaches using familiar objects, scents and so on. (p. 58)

Secondly, the juxtaposition of images in haiku invites a response from the reader or listener. John Bayley (1999) spoke of this capacity still retained by his wife Iris Murdoch

when she had dementia: “Only a joke survives, the last thing that finds its way into consciousness when the brain is atrophied” (p. 54). Indeed, there is a similarity between haiku and jokes: both are characterized by an incongruity that invites interaction. The structure of humour as described by Lucille Nahemow (1986) could as easily describe the structure of haiku (and, in particular, humorous haiku): “The discrepancy between the expected and that which transpires accounts for the humorous experience. However, incongruity alone appears insufficient. There must also be resolution for the joke to make sense” (p. 6). The resolution is the meaning or connection the reader makes when encountering the juxtaposition in haiku. Nahemow also notes that “[t]he recognition that something is funny contains both emotional and cognitive elements” (p. 8), and this kind of wholehearted response is true for haiku as well.

An additional consideration for using haiku in the setting of spiritual care is its ability to hint at eternal truths through its focus on the particular. Haiku poet Bruce Ross (2007) describes this as an *absolute metaphor* where an existential quality can be evident in the concrete, sensory images of a haiku.

Something mysterious is happening...that can't really be expressed in words but can be felt through words....If that mysterious thing is the appearance of the universal, that appearance can manifest itself only in the particular.

Or, as the poet-philosopher Noah benShea (1990) describes it: “an eternity is any moment opened with patience” (p. 25). By focusing on ordinary objects and activities, haiku can invite connection not only to *this particular moment*, but to the larger vista of nature, including human nature. Not every haiku will lead to a spiritual epiphany, but many haiku do lead to a heightened awareness and appreciation of life. I am reminded of what

Diane Ackerman noted in her book *Deep Play*: “It’s ironic that poets use words to convey what lies beyond words” (1999, p. 127).

Using words to point at “what lies beyond words” is also at the heart of the methodology of *hermeneutic phenomenology*.

Hermeneutic phenomenology tries to be attentive to both terms of its methodology: It is a *descriptive* (phenomenological) methodology because it wants to be attentive to how things appear, it wants to let things speak for themselves; it is an *interpretive* (hermeneutic) methodology because it claims that there is no such thing as uninterpreted phenomena. (van Manen, 1997, p. 180)

This style of inquiry employs narrative to explore the meaning of a situation. In this thesis, the situation is the haiku session. I chose this methodology to avoid focusing on an individual’s limitations (i.e., for a person with severe dementia to answer questions in an interview situation with someone they didn’t know). Rather, having witnessed their abilities as they participated in Soul Sessions prior to my research, I wanted to focus on their capacities. Like poetry, phenomenological text “lets us see that which shines through, that which tends to hide itself” (p. 130). By focusing on the stories that were shared within the haiku session, the participants may “speak for themselves,” and readers may “see that which shines through.” These stories appear in Chapter 2. The following is a description of the nuts and bolts of the haiku sessions.

As we prepared for the first Soul Session, Maggie suggested that we share the theme-related haiku for the first part of the session, and consider writing haiku collaboratively during the second part of the session. She knew from experience that the participants in the group often shared pithy and poignant comments, and she knew from her familiarity with haiku that pithiness and poignancy were what make haiku sing. I felt open to this challenge, although hesitant since this type of collaborative writing was also

new territory for me. This is how the preliminary format was born. It was based on Maggie's experience as a facilitator in the Soul Sessions program and my experience as a facilitator in haiku workshops. This format would remain constant throughout all the sessions, although as we moved from session to session we did modify other components (for example, the length of time for each part of the session) as we learned what worked best. Always, our guiding principle in deciding what *worked* was whether the strategies were effective in meeting our primary goal of building connection.

Before the session, Maggie and I met to select a theme and discuss the logistics. I then searched through books to find haiku that I felt might illustrate the theme (for example, summer) and that might include images that would resonate for the participants (for example, gardens and children's summer games). In doing this, I relied on my intuition of what kinds of poems my mother might have enjoyed. She would have been about the same age as many of the participants (early 80's), and as well most of the participants were women. I held this connection with my mother when I participated in the actual sessions. It helped me feel more at ease in ways that are difficult to describe. A poem from several years ago comes close.

using the mirror
my mother gave me
the other side magnified

Once I had selected the haiku (as many as 20-30 poems), Maggie and I reviewed them together and selected ones that might prove most stimulating for discussion. I prepared a set of index cards (3 inches x 5 inches) with the haiku in large font in the centre of the card. I used the Times New Roman font since the visual stimulation of serifs makes it easier to read. After the first round of sessions, we noticed that participants had

difficulty reading the haiku because the poems do not usually contain capital letters (they often read the middle word in the centre of the card, in the middle of the poem). After that, we decided to capitalize the first letter of each of the three lines to help the participants in reading the haiku.

Also in preparation for the session, we selected objects so that visual and other sensory cues were harmonized with the poetry selected. For the summer session, we brought in strawberries, tomatoes, and fresh corn in the husk, along with a bright tablecloth, fresh lavender and basil, and some children's toys for playing in the sand. These could be seen and touched, and some could also be smelled and tasted. Also in preparation, Maggie selected music that would match the theme of the session. She purchased and downloaded the music from the internet so that the singers would be the same ones the participants would be familiar with (for example, Elvis Presley or Louis Armstrong). The music then became an additional cue to the theme and to memory.

The haiku sessions were held in the same room as the sessions for the ongoing Soul Sessions program. The room opens from the main lounge on the secure dementia floor. The window portion of the door is covered by a blind, and there are curtains on the windows that face the lounge. Across the room, beige curtains frame a window that looks out over a parking lot, and in the distance to the waterfront. The room is home to many kinds of activities, so there is a refrigerator, stove, and sink along with cupboards above and below the counter. A soft-coloured geometric wallpaper is interrupted with a bulletin board announcing the month's programs and activities with bright colours and theme-related pictures. Also on the wall are several pictures, a clock, and a Dustbuster®. There is a large conference table in the middle of the room that is covered with the same bright

tablecloth for each of the sessions—a soft cotton with yellow checks and a red floral border. On the table is a candle in a hurricane glass that is lit at the beginning of each session and extinguished at the end. The table also holds many of the sensory cues that are brought to the session. The participants gather around the table either sitting in their wheelchairs or on the office-style chairs covered in green vinyl.

Music played while the participants gathered for the session. This could take five to 10 minutes, and I stayed in the room with the participants while Maggie and other staff guided residents to the room. Several individuals were in wheelchairs, and so we negotiated seating until they found a place at the table that was comfortable for them. As well, a few of the individuals were quite soft-spoken and responded only to individual conversation, so they sat near the front of the room where one of the co-facilitators could engage with them. The front of the room was where the flipchart was. One of the co-facilitators would stand at the front with a marker to record words and phrases, although during the meeting both facilitators took turns moving around the room to be close to each participant.

The residents on the secure dementia floor have severe dementia and are considered at-risk for wandering. Coming in and going out of the unit requires a code on the keypad to unlock the double doors. On the inside, there are pictures taped to the door indicating residents most at risk of leaving and becoming lost. From the central lounge just inside the doors, there is access to the nursing station, the dining room, two corridors of residents' rooms, and the community room as mentioned above. Activities are sometimes held in the central lounge, and they include the worship service on alternate Sundays and other events such as sing-a-longs. Down a short hallway, there is access to

an outdoor garden. On one side is the brick wall of the building, and around the rest of the perimeter is a high wooden fence that encloses the walkways, seating areas, and raised-bed flower gardens.

The Soul Sessions program developed from an invitation to Maggie as the chaplain to provide a spiritual care program for the residents with dementia. This program did not take the place of the worship services that visiting clergy led in the chapel or the biweekly non-denominational worship service that Maggie led on the dementia unit, but rather complemented them. Soul Sessions has a different focus. It is to be a welcoming no-fail environment that invites informal sharing among the group. A general theme is provided for each session (for example, feet or traveling), but the underlying intention is to create an atmosphere spacious enough to hold and honour whatever the participants wanted to talk about. They might speak of their fears and joys, an aspect of their daily lives, memories, or their relationships, including their relationship to the Divine. The Soul Session is structured (through the theme), and yet responds to the flow of the discussion (sometimes participants move to an entirely new topic). Paradoxically, both of these elements—structure and spontaneity—are required, and depend largely upon the focused attention of the facilitator. Music therapist Gretta Sculthorp (as quoted in Sacks, 2007) describes this kind of attention that she developed in her years of working in nursing homes and hospitals.

At first I thought I was providing entertainment, but now I know that what I do is act as a can-opener for people's memories. I can't predict what will be the trigger for each person, but there is usually something for everyone, and I have a part of my brain that "watches" in stunned amazement what is happening... (p. 345)

The Soul Sessions program began in 2003, and about 10-12 individuals (of the 44 residents living on the dementia unit) participate in the program every two weeks. In

preparing for an individual session, Maggie decides who might be most able to participate and who might most benefit from participating. This is based on her knowledge of the resident's capabilities, and on information from staff and family. Over the past several years that the program has been in place, the membership in the group has changed when residents move to other floors (when they are no longer ambulatory and therefore cannot wander) and when residents die. Although some individuals have remained in the group since the beginning, the majority of them have not.

I was surprised at how quickly and how fondly I came to know the residents. When I would return for the next haiku session, I would feel more comfortable with the individuals I recognized. I was more familiar with their capabilities, for the sharing we did together focused on our strengths rather than our limitations. I did not know them as staff would know them in looking after their personal care. I did not know them as Maggie knew them from her experience as spiritual guide. But I knew their voices and some of their stories. What they had—their life experiences and their personalities—they shared with an openness and a generosity that touched me. I learned how to be with them through their example, through observing Maggie, and through participating in a 2-day training program that focused on the key principles of resident-centred care (this training was being provided to all staff in the facility).

When all participants had gathered in the meeting room, Maggie led them in an opening ritual that began each session: lighting a candle, having the participants hold hands, and her saying a prayer. This opening ritual is significant. Even if individuals were perplexed about what they were preparing for, the familiarity of the ritual seemed to anchor them somehow—and the feeling of community in the group would build week by

week. Maggie noticed that it takes about 8-10 weeks for the group to form, that is, to get to know one another and develop as a group (personal communication). The prayer was informal and non-denominational in nature, asking for blessings upon everyone present and their loved ones. Each component of this ritual holds importance: the place is set apart, the candle is lighted, everyone holds hands, and someone speaks while the others listen. The primary focus of Soul Sessions is spiritual care for those with dementia, and there is a similarity between this ritual and that of a worship service in a church where, too, the place is set apart, there are candles or other symbolic objects, there are gestures (for example, kneeling), and someone speaks while others listen. The anthropologist Victor Turner described ritual as “a stereotyped sequence of activities involving gestures, words, and objects, performed in a sequestered place, and designed to influence preternatural entities or forces on behalf of the actors’ goals and interests” (Turner, 1977 as cited in Deflem, 1991, p. 5). The symbolic nature of the ritual can store a tremendous amount of meaning.

Not only do symbols reveal crucial social and religious values; they are also (precisely because of their reference to the supernatural) transformative for human attitudes and behavior. The handling of symbols in ritual exposes their powers to act upon and change the persons involved in ritual performance. (Deflem, 1991, p. 5)

This similarity to a worship service is important, as many of the participants are elderly and would have grown up in an era when attending church was part of their weekly routine. The opening ritual clearly identifies the session as different from other activities provided in the long-term care facility. It may, therefore, tap into not only the recent memory of past Soul Sessions, but into a more long-term memory of participation in

worship. Through the symbol of lighting a candle, it might also tap into the collective cultural memory of establishing (in whatever form or path) a relationship with the Divine.

After the opening ritual, Maggie engaged the participants in conversation by asking them how they were doing. She then introduced me as the guest poet and told the group what we would be doing during the session. The first part of the session was devoted to reading the haiku out loud and sharing any stories or associations that arose from the images in the haiku. When possible, the participants were invited to read the poems by themselves, or else they were read by one of the co-facilitators along with the participant. If family members or staff were attending, they were invited to participate by reading as well. The poem was read at least twice, and more often if participants indicated that they didn't hear it. After the poem was read, Maggie and I asked open-ended questions to prompt discussion (for example, "what do you think is going on?" and "does this remind you of anything?"). These questions might be directed to the group in general or directly to an individual. Sometimes the response from a participant was "I don't get it." When this happened, we elaborated on what we thought the poet was trying to say in the poem.

In this way, haiku were used in the novel fashion of being a catalyst for stories and memories. Maggie used the analogy that "haiku are the bait, not the fish." This reflected our intention to focus our attention primarily on the participants, rather than on the haiku. However, because this represented new territory for me, I was concerned about using the poems only as jumping off places. Was the integrity of the poems being maintained? Upon reflection, I was able to answer "yes." I realized that haiku are jumping off places for everyone. Maggie and I would ask the intermediate question "does

this remind you of anything?” to help build a bridge for connection. For someone without dementia, this underlying question is unspoken but forms a part of the almost instantaneous response that an individual might have of connecting the poem to their own lived experience. We were slowing the process down, and in a way amplifying it. When haiku speak, the reader or listener leaps across the gap from the bare images in the haiku to something in their own lived experience. This allows a kind of epiphany to reverberate through an experience of recognition or resonance. I believe that both the spare language in haiku as well as the tension in the poem (usually attributable to a juxtaposition between the two images) help to create this gap—the part of the poem that creates ambiguity. Only a fraction of an experience is recorded by a haiku poet, that is, only a part of what she or he experienced through their senses or through an insight. This distillation of the experience allows a reader or listener to recreate the bigger picture by filling in the details from their own lived experience. In *Soul Sessions*, Maggie and I facilitated the process of filling in the details with the participants, but this process is already a part of what happens with haiku.

When participants shared stories, the response was often repeated by Maggie—sometimes in a louder voice so that everyone could hear, but mostly to acknowledge the response. When we felt that a response (a word or a phrase) held resonance for the group, one of us wrote it on the flipchart. The strongest cue for significance was whether feelings were evoked. Sometimes the group would laugh uproariously together, and at other times a participant might place her hand on someone else’s hand to bring comfort if the story was sad. Maggie and I tried to maintain the *no-fail* attitude by our encouragement (smiling and acknowledging what was said) so that participants could feel

free to say whatever they wanted. Sometimes participants shared what appeared to be non sequiturs, however these were often recorded as well because of their originality. At first, we had recorded their responses during the second half of the session (before we wrote haiku together), but found that recall was more difficult for both participants and facilitators. It seemed more effective to record them as they occurred. This had the additional impact of validating a participant's words visibly—they could see that their words were valued because they were written down. In rare instances, the participant told their story in such a way that their words immediately resembled a haiku poem, and was written down in that form. Here is one such example.

In a Soul Session focusing on the theme of summer, one woman told a story with obvious delight as she tilted her head back, closed her eyes, and smiled throughout the telling. She regaled us with how she had raided her grandparents' garden when she was a child. When her grandmother noticed her doing this and called to her from the doorway of the house, she ran out of the garden squishing strawberries under her bare feet.

raiding my grandparents' garden
squishing the strawberries
as I run away

(Soul Session Poet)

What was remarkable was that this woman had been distressed for the two months since she had entered the long-term care facility, and yet during this group she was able to recollect her experience with vividness and share it with joy. This particular memory has an intensity about it—there is something exciting about both the bodily experience and the experience of being caught. Other participants then joined in and remembered times when they had raided the cookie jar, raided an apple tree, and raided a neighbour's

garden. Many of the stories were recalled from early childhood, and often included some kind of sensory experience and emotional connection.

Along with the prompting questions, we also used the objects sitting on the table as additional cues, as well as songs that reflected the theme. Often this sensory cue (the feel of a tomato, the taste of a strawberry, the smell of corn on the cob, a song or a singer they could recognize) would prompt stories from the participants. In the summer session, we passed a huge tomato around from person to person after we had read a haiku about tomatoes. One woman said “felt sure of myself,” then “I knew it was a tomato,” and “it’s all mine” (regarding the feel of it). These comments were recorded on the flipchart, and led to the following poem composed from this woman’s responses as well as others’.

I know it is a tomato
by the feeling of it
it’s so firm and smooth (Soul Session Poets)

It is difficult to distinguish the significance of the haiku from that of the tomato in arousing memory, that is, to distinguish between the cue of the verbal images in the haiku (and in the ensuing prompting questions) and the cue of body awareness. Does such a distinction matter? In one way, it doesn’t. The varied ways of inviting responses all lead to the primary focus of connection. In another way, it does. It would be useful for anyone who wants to try this activity of sharing haiku to know that sensory stimulation is a powerful cue for persons with dementia.

The words and phrases offered by the persons with dementia and written down on the flipchart became the *building blocks* for the haiku we created as a group. To start, we read the list of words and phrases out loud. In doing so, poems sometimes emerged spontaneously by connecting several phrases on a certain topic. In other instances,

Maggie or I selected a phrase for the first half of the poem and invited the participants to suggest what might complete the poem—either from something written on the flipchart or from something they wanted to add. Maggie and I initiated the poem and also decided when it was complete. However, the process included as much input as possible from the participants. We usually collaborated on five or six poems during a session, and Maggie and I took turns reading these new poems out loud just before the closing ritual. Maggie made a particular effort to acknowledge whoever had contributed the word or phrase—once again validating the person and their story.

The closing ritual mirrored the opening ritual. We once again held hands as Maggie said a prayer asking for blessings upon everyone present and upon those who were remembered. The candle was extinguished. Music played again and participants sang along and some even danced as they left the room.

After one particularly joyful haiku session, Maggie commented to me about how it seemed “deceptively easy.” As previously mentioned, there is actually quite a formal structure in place that seems to accommodate spontaneity. This includes a great deal of planning beforehand, and Maggie is quite intentional about holding her role as spiritual facilitator during the session. She provides loving attention to create a welcoming space, and as well maintains awareness of the clock time and the structure for the session (opening, conversation, presentation, discussion, closing). This particular session seemed so effortless and flowed so easily. In my journal I noted my feelings about what had happened.

I lost a sense of time – I was “in” time, not watching it....Quite magically for me, I felt myself present mind and heart and body. Kairos time, as I lost track of time as we moved along. It was a lighthearted session, joyful. All I remember is trying to meet the residents with eye contact and lots of smiling....It’s 2 days later and I

feel I've been walking around without skin on, not in a hurting way, but in a sort of intense, vivid, alive kind of way. (journal entry)

Kronos time has a quantitative nature—it refers to linear clock time. *Kairos* time has a qualitative nature.

Kairos, even though the Greek meanings are complex and culturally dependent, refers to the right time, opportune time or seasonable time. It cannot be measured. It is the perfect time, the qualitative time, the perfect moment, the “now.” Kairos brings transcending value to *kronos* time. (Freier, 2007)

What I had experienced was a full engagement in the present moment. I believe that *kairos* is the same as *flow* which Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1990) outlines as “the way people describe their state of mind when consciousness is harmoniously ordered, and they want to pursue whatever they are doing for its own sake” (p. 6). I have since wondered what conditions allow a person to enter *kairos* time—the internal conditions as well as the external. And I have also wondered how persons with dementia experience their present moment.

Other poets have shared poetry with the elderly, and their experiences may provide perspective for the current study. Poet Kenneth Koch detailed the sessions he shared with the elderly in his book *I Never Told Anybody: Teaching Poetry Writing in a Nursing Home* (1977). As most of the individuals were not able to write either because of muscular challenges or blindness, he was assisted by poet Kate Farrell and usually also by a social worker. They became the scribes for the poems, and “[t]he method of teaching worked itself out as we went along” (p. 6). He believed that his students had the capabilities to move from storytelling to making poetry. “He can use the natural strengths for poetry he has: the music of ordinary speech and the memories and feelings life has given him” (p. 8). And he believed in the pleasure of poetry.

Still, it is such a pleasure to say things, and such a special kind of pleasure to say them as poetry. I didn't, when I began, think much about the problems. I started, instead, with my feeling for the pleasure people could find in writing poetry, and assumed I could deal with any problems as they came up. My students, in fact, once given the chance to begin, were, in spite of all the difficulties, happy to be writing poems. (p. 6)

He began with writing prompts and collaborative poem-making, and in later sessions moved to individual poem-making and added sensory cues such as music and physical objects like seashells and sand.

Some things about the poetry ideas remained the same. They were always about feelings, impressions, and associations. They always asked for personal responses. They invited thinking of and remembering small things, particular details, especially those connected with feelings and sensation. They approached strong emotions in indirect ways, asking, for example, not for poems about childhood longings or about feelings for nature, but for a poem of talking to the moon or the stars. (p. 24)

During each session, Koch would read the poems out loud to the group and praised the poetic qualities in their work such as “sensuous detail, humor, talking about strong feelings, some energetic personal way of saying something” (p. 16), to give the authors confidence and encourage them to keep writing. The participants were excited to have their work admired by the facilitators and other participants. Koch noted that the participants in the workshops wrote easily about present as well as past experiences.

In poetry, one writes about present feelings, and about the past, without needing to adhere to chronology. (p. 47)

My students expressed youthful feelings easily, and feelings from childhood. In feeling and imagination, there seems to be a way in which a person is all ages he has been. (p. 141)

Another poet, John Killick, who has shared poetry and written poetry with persons with dementia for over a decade, says that such individuals “gravitate towards the more emotional kind of language, the more sensual kind of language, which was

probably there in their childhood” (BBC Radio, 2005). In speaking of the words and phrases that are shared with him and which he makes into poems, Killick notes: “I think that people with dementia can often find a real solace and satisfaction and a creativity in speaking in this way and having it recognized as being of value because they’re so used to being put down” (BBC Radio, 2005). Killick edits the words—transcribing, selecting and shaping—but adds nothing to the text.

In the Introduction to the first book of dementia poems, *You Are Words* (1997), John Killick describes how his conversation with persons with dementia “blossoms with metaphor, allusion, [and] the currents of feelings are reflected in rhythm and cadence. I have no doubt that the natural language of those with dementia is poetry” (p. 7). The following shows one conversation that was included as part of a collaborative poem.

“I want to thank you for listening. You see, you are words. Words can make or break you. Sometimes people don’t listen, they give you words back, and they’re all broken, patched up. But will you permit me to say that you have the stillness of silence, that listens, and lasts.” (Killick & Allan, 2001, p. 80).

YOU ARE WORDS

Life is a bit of a strain,
in view of what is to come.

Sometimes I feel embarrassed
talking to anybody, even you.
You don’t really like to burden
other people with your problems.

I have been a strict person.
What people and children do now
is completely different. Any beauty
or grace has been desecrated.
The circle of life is shot away.

I want to thank you for listening.
You see, you are words.
Words can make or break you.
Sometimes people don't listen,
they give you words back,
and they're all broken, patched up.

But will you permit me to say
that you have the stillness of silence,
that listens, and lasts.

(Killick, 1997, p. 10, used with permission)

He also names the issue of exact authorship of the poems: "The poems inevitably reflect my personality and approach because they would not have come into existence without that participatory element. But equally, not a line would exist without the experience of the people I worked with" (Killick, 1997, p. 7). This is collaborative art-making. Barbara Jagger (as cited in Killick & Allan, 1999) speaks to this role of *scribe*, and its benefit for everyone involved.

I believe there is a separate need for scribes who, because they are not caught up in the family relationships of the storyteller, and because they are not paid to provide them with practical care, can help people who are suffering from rapidly failing memories to make late, felt statements about their lives. And such witness, containing often a luminosity of language, is pure gift. We are richer. (p.36)

In a second book, *Openings*, the dementia poems gathered by John Killick are married with photographs of persons with dementia by Carl Cordonnier (Killick & Cordonnier, 2000). In the Forward to this book, Faith Gibson describes how their work allows us to catch glimpses and find clues about what it might be like to have dementia. She acknowledges that the work is selective and interpretive, but nonetheless has the capacity to challenge us and to enhance our understanding of personhood in persons with dementia.

These poems by John Killick and photographs by Carl Cordonnier capture particular truths about individuals, yet collectively they show common aspects of dementia: despair, desolation, fear, frustration, loss, loneliness, pain, restlessness, seeking and searching. Here too we find happiness, past and present, acute observation, perceptive comment, resistance, and sardonic humour as people struggle to express a sense of who they are and what they want; for in dementia, although much is lost, much remains. (Forward in Killick & Cordonnier, 2000)

What remains for persons with dementia is their personhood, including capacities that are only beginning to be understood.

Dementia care researcher Heather Wilkinson (2002) observes that “we need to develop an understanding of the experience of living with dementia and this understanding cannot really be developed from proxy reports” (p. 10). This kind of qualitative research involves a direct engagement with persons with dementia to enable their voices to be safely and effectively heard. As research becomes increasingly directed towards understanding the subjective experiences of persons with dementia, new ethical and methodological issues are raised.

Two key issues have emerged from attempts to engage in more inclusive research: the impact of individual cognitive ability on participation; and the negotiated social relations necessary for the safe participation of people with dementia. (p. 16)

Despite these challenges, that research is moving in this direction is encouraging as “[u]ntil very recently the perception that people with dementia were unable to express feelings, opinions and views was widely held” (p. 15). The question becomes not whether to include persons with dementia in research, but how to overcome the practical challenges in doing so.

From exploring the literature, I would like to move into outlining the method for this research. After the first three sessions that I attended as guest poet, I was accepted to graduate school as I wanted to explore more fully what I had experienced. I had been

worried that *education* was only school-related, until my friend Ann Patteson, a recent doctoral graduate from the Faculty of Education, described education as the art of learning to live well.

The plan for my research included co-facilitating several more haiku sessions with Maggie as a collaborator, and these sessions would be a part of the ongoing Soul Sessions spiritual program. Ethics clearance for these research sessions was sought and received from the Queen's University General Research Ethics Board, and from both the Ethics Committee and the Medical Advisory Committee of the long-term care facility.

Because persons with dementia are vulnerable individuals and may not fully understand written letters, consent for participation and for the use of quotes from the sessions was sought from the person with legal authority for the person with dementia (see Appendix A for a sample letter of information and consent form). To maintain confidentiality of this contact information, the letters of information and consent forms were distributed from and returned to Maggie through her capacity as Coordinator of Spiritual Care for the long-term care facility. Consent for videotaping was based on not showing the videotapes publicly, but only using quotes from the transcripts. As well, options included the choice to use a pseudonym for a participant or to use a quote without naming the participant. One family chose the first option and one family chose the second. The other families allowed the participant's given name to be used.

Once consents were received, dates were set for the haiku sessions in which I would participate now as both guest poet and researcher. Maggie assisted me in arranging volunteers to help with videotaping the sessions. Two individuals were willing to assist: Roy was a volunteer from the community, and Gina was a staff member. These two

individuals participated in both of the research sessions. Because the participants were seated around a conference table, one person videotaped the participants along one side of the table, and the other person videotaped the other participants.

Consent to participate and to allow material to be quoted was given by Maggie and both volunteers. After each session, I interviewed both Maggie and Gina for their immediate comments on what we had just experienced. Several weeks later, I interviewed Maggie and Gina together for further comments about their experiences of the research sessions and also their insights about dementia care in general. I interviewed Roy after the second session. I also interviewed Dave, the husband of one of the participants with dementia, several weeks after the second session. He had attended both research sessions, and gave his consent to be interviewed. (See Appendix B for a sample letter of information and consent forms. These documents are different from those in Appendix A as these individuals were able to make their own decisions regarding participation.)

The first session happened in late January with a theme of *winter*. The second session followed in early February with a theme of *love* in honour of Valentine's Day. After the second session I felt there was sufficient material to paint a picture of what happened in the group, so I decided against a third research session.

The next chapter reveals the stories from the two research sessions, followed by a summary of the insights gathered from the interviews. Many of the key components of Soul Sessions will be illustrated, including:

- the intention of the co-facilitators to be open to and welcome the possibility of connection within the group
- multisensory cues (for example, the music and the tablecloth)

- group dynamics
- the opening and closing rituals
- the haiku
- the invitation to participate through prompting questions (both general questions directed to the group and specific questions directed to an individual)
- the repetition and validation of responses, and
- the flow between structure and spontaneity.

These elements were considered individually prior to the session. However, during the session they are inextricably woven together to create the sacred space for communion.

CHAPTER 2: DURING

signs of spring
the earth smells like lemonade
inferences all over

Soul Session Poets²

² This is the title poem from the book *signs of spring: haiku poems by persons with dementia* (2007).

Session 1: Winter

It is late January and overcast; however, the snow lends its own light and makes the day a little brighter. I have arrived at the long-term care facility early to coordinate the last-minute details with Maggie. This Soul Session will represent the first of my research sessions. I anticipate that I will need two or three sessions to gain enough material for my thesis research, but am leaving that decision open for the time-being.

Maggie and I met previously to prepare for this session. Once we had decided on the theme of *winter*, I selected 20-30 haiku around that theme. I discussed with Maggie which haiku might resonate most for the participants; that is, what images of winter would be most meaningful to them. And I made up index cards featuring the poems in a large font that I brought with me this morning.

Maggie has chosen the music and created a CD by purchasing and downloading the songs from the internet (from either the Napster or iTunes™ web sites). She has eight songs including *Winter Wonderland* sung by Burl Ives and *Frosty the Snowman* sung by Gene Autry. This is a regular part of her preparation for Soul Sessions. She has found that the participants respond most strongly when they can recognize the lyrics or the singer. We load the CD player and the CD onto the cart that will move all our materials to the meeting room.

We discussed what other prompts might be helpful, and have shared the task of collecting them. We have a green bowl and a white ladle with a bag of barley, as one of the haiku we'll share is about carrots bobbing in a pot of barley soup. There is a large stone vase with bare lilac branches, and a small decorative bird perched in one of the

branches. There are dry grasses in a small stone vase. From the craft shop in the long-term care facility, we have borrowed knitted items: mittens, hats, and slippers. We also have some pinecones and a white teapot. All of these items are also loaded onto the cart, along with the flipchart and markers and the regular items that are part of the sessions: the bright yellow tablecloth with the border of red flowers, and the candle in its hurricane lantern cover.

We leave Maggie's office on the lower level to go to the first floor which is the secure dementia floor. As we leave her office, I feel very nervous about the session. This is mostly because it represents my first research session and I am present now as a researcher as well as a guest poet. I feel this responsibility acutely and will later write in my journal about being "inwardly terrified." The previous three sessions with this group have spanned a period of two years, and the last session was almost a year ago. Maggie has told me that the group has changed over the year. I feel sad about those who have died and will miss those who have moved to a different floor in the home, but I look forward to seeing at least some familiar faces.

When we come to the dementia unit, Maggie presses the buttons with the code for us to enter, and we maneuver the cart through the double doors that close and lock behind us. There is a very short hallway which opens into the main lounge. Residents are sitting in the chairs and couches in the lounge, and some sit in wheelchairs. We push the cart along the left side of the lounge, past the nursing office, and into the Country Kitchen where the meeting will be held.

We set up by pulling the table into the middle of the room and making space around it for the chairs and wheelchairs. We've put the music on as we set the table and

assist the volunteers in setting up the video cameras. Gina is a staff member and has agreed to videotape the session using the camera that belongs to the facility. She places her camera at the front of the room and will film the participants who are sitting in front of the window. Roy is a volunteer from the community who brought his own camera and has set it up in the back corner of the room. He will film participants along the side of the table closest to the door. I also test and set up the digital recorder as a backup for the videotapes of the session.

While we are setting up, a woman comes in and walks over to the table. Swaying to the music, she picks up a pinecone and touches the teapot with it. She stays for several minutes and then leaves.

The song *A Winter Romance* is playing as participants start to gather. I stay in the room and welcome them as Maggie goes to the lounge to ask them to come in for the group, and assist them if they wish. The residents who will participate in this first research session were selected several weeks ago to allow time for consent forms to be mailed to and returned by the person with legal authority for them. Three of these participants choose not to attend when they are asked to join in, and so there are eight residents in the group this morning. The other five participants include Gina, Roy, Maggie and me as well as Dave whose wife Miriam is a participant. Several of the participants have attended previous haiku sessions.

The music moves to *Let It Snow! Let It Snow! Let It Snow!* sung by Carly Simon and many in the group start singing along. Maggie assists Arthur³ in finding a place at the table for his wheelchair, situating it so that he can be included in the video. He sits to Maggie's left at the front of the table. He is a soft-spoken man, and it will be easier for

³ All names are the given names of the participants, except as noted.

Maggie to talk with him and hear his responses if she is next to him. He is a tall man with white hair and a beard, and his hands rest on the plastic shelf attached to his wheelchair. Beside Arthur is Frances, a petite woman with wispy white hair. Next is Flo⁴, sitting beside Bert. Flo and Bert are good friends. They will sit throughout the session holding hands. At the end of the table are two women. The woman⁵ sitting near Bert is younger than most of the other participants in the group, and her voice is higher pitched and sounds young too. Jackie sits next to her in a wheelchair and appears frail. She makes slight involuntary movements when she is at rest, and is very soft-spoken. On the side of the table by the door, there is Harold, Dave and Miriam. Harold sits with his chair pulled out from the table. Halfway through the session, he'll excuse himself and leave. Dave sits beside his wife Miriam. I stand at the front of the table, but will move around to speak with each of the participants when they are invited to read a haiku out loud. Maggie is also at the front, but stays there for most of the session and is the one to write down many of the words and phrases from the discussion.

To begin, Maggie introduces me and reminds them that I've been there before, and that I bring poems with me. She asks if they notice anything different, and Flo says "something different is the camera." Maggie acknowledges her response, asks if anyone minds having their picture taken (many reply "no"), and then tells them "we're filming this group because we just find you so interesting." Everyone in the group is focused on Maggie and what she is saying. From time to time, Jackie moves her coffee mug around and strokes her hand over the tablecloth. Maggie then introduces Gina and Roy and tells the group they'll be doing the filming. When Gina is introduced, Flo says "she's very

⁴ This is a pseudonym.

⁵ Permission has been given for this woman's words to be used, but not her name nor a pseudonym.

pretty.” Maggie then introduces Roy who sometimes tapes the dances and other events at the home. Roy says “he’s not pretty,” and everyone laughs. But Flo speaks again and says “he’s handsome,” and Maggie says, “he’s handsome, thank you Flo, that’s very good.”

Maggie introduces the topic of winter and mentions that, although it hasn’t been a very snowy winter, that the last week has been very cold. She invites the group to hold hands and everyone looks to their neighbour and reaches out their hand. She suggests to Frances that since she might not be able to hold Arthur’s hand, she can just place her hand on his arm. Maggie lights the candle and asks us to bow our heads for the opening prayer. Everyone does except for Miriam who continues to look out the window across from her, but turns her head to look at Maggie as she prays.

Gracious and Loving God, we ask Your Presence here with us today as we remember our experiences and we share them together, as we laugh and think fond thoughts, as we use our brains creatively. We ask You to bless each one of us and all the experiences that we have had in our lifetime, and bless us as we share those together today. Amen.

Many in the group echo the “amen.” Maggie asks everyone “so, without further ado—well, what do you notice on the table?” Flo notices the bird in the branches, Jackie notices the branches by pointing to them, and someone else notices the pinecones. Maggie tells them they are lilac branches and asks them if they like lilacs. Most participants raise a hand to signify they do. Maggie tells the group that she is going to write and I am going to read. I explain that we are going to share some poems, and that after it’s read out loud that we’re going to ask the group if there is anything they would like to tell us about the poem or what it describes. I’ve asked for a volunteer, but then decide to ask someone to start. Since I know from the previous sessions that Arthur is not able to read the poem out loud, I ask Frances if she would like to begin. She agrees. So I

walk around the table to where she is sitting and tell her that I can read it with her if she'd like. She turns the card over in her hands to see if there is anything on the other side, and then turns it back. We read the poem together several times.

first snow
the cat followed everywhere
by its footprints (Grant Savage, used with permission)

I say "it's actually a very little poem. Do you get a picture from that?" Maggie asks us to read it again, more loudly. She asks "can you hear, Harold?" He replies "pardon?" Maggie repeats "did you hear that?" and he replies, "I can hear it, but I don't understand it." She repeats the poem and then Frances says "well, I don't understand it either."

Maggie asks "did you ever have a cat?" to which Frances replies "I suppose, yes." She asks the group if anyone had a cat, and both Flo and Bert put up their hands. Maggie asks Flo if she understands the poem and she says "the cat goes through the snow, and his footprints are all through the snow, and he turned around and followed them." "That's right," Maggie replies, and then asks them "what do cats do when they're in the snow?" Flo puts her hand up in the air and makes a kind of pawing action. When asked what cats do when it's really cold, Frances says "they go underneath the snow," and Flo says "they shiver." When Jackie puts her hand up and shakes it, I say to the group "they shake it off." Maggie responds "yes, Jackie's got it, they shake their paws."

Flo tells us that she had a housecat named Fluffy that was female. Maggie asks Bert to tell the group about the cat he had. He says "my cat? Well, he died." Bert only answers the question and then pauses, seemingly for effect, and then laughs. Others smile too. At this point Flo says in exasperation "oh" and playfully punches Bert in the arm. Bert continues "that's all that happened to him. He was an old cat." Maggie laughingly

asks him another question “but before he died, Bert, was there anything exciting about him?” He tells us that it was a housecat and didn’t go out in the snow. I ask him to tell us his name. “Judy,” he says, and everyone laughs. “Yeah, that was my daughter’s name and she loved the cat.” He tells us it was a female cat and that it was house-broken.

While Bert has been telling his story, Arthur has grimaced. His hands are still folded on the plastic shelf. Maggie leans closer to him and asks “Arthur, did you ever have a cat?” and then more softly, “did you ever have a cat, Arthur?” He replies “yes.” He speaks several other words which are difficult to understand, but Maggie repeats them for him—“the kind of cat everyone had.” When asked what kind of cat he had, he puts his right hand up and holds his thumb and forefinger a little apart to indicate something small. He is alert and holds his hand in the air even as Maggie goes to the flipchart to record “the kind of cat everyone had.”

I ask if anyone else had a cat and Dave volunteers that he had a cat that was sort of a tortoiseshell. Maggie goes back to Arthur and asks him if that’s what he meant, and he says “I don’t know what it was called.” Dave continues “we just called her Puss,” and everyone laughs. When Maggie asks if she was let out of the house, Dave replies “oh, all the time—she was always having kittens.” To which Bert remarks “she was having fun.” Although Miriam does not contribute to the group’s conversation, when her husband Dave is speaking, she turns to look at him.

We move to the next poem, and because I am planning to go around the table, I ask Flo to read it.

in and out
of the bare lilac branches –
a blue jay

(Philomene Kocher)

I remind them that the lilac branches are like the ones we have in the stone vase on the table, and I invite them to “imagine the colour even if...even though it’s winter and we haven’t got any colour on the lilacs.” Dave mentions that the blue jay is all alone. Maggie says “what do you think the blue jays do in the winter? Harold, what do you think they do?” He shrugs his shoulders and then replies “I guess they go south, I don’t know... don’t see them around.” I reply “haven’t seen too many, have we?” Then Harold comments “well, I guess it depends on where you’re living.” When Maggie asks them what blue jays like to eat, Bert replies “they eat a lot of chicken feed, I know that...the small stuff, put a little bowl outside and they would clean that up in two or three days.” He uses his hands to show “small stuff” and the “bowl” as he’s talking.

Her head is down, and it appears as if Frances is sleeping while the conversation goes on around her. We talk some more about what we feed the birds. Maggie shows them the dried grasses in the stone vase and wonders aloud if the birds could find seeds on bushes and flower heads. She asks the participants if they used to feed the birds. And then asks “did you used to feed the birds, Arthur?” He answers softly “chickadees.” She leans in to hear and prompts “the chickadees? You put out the seed for them? And did you like to watch them?” Maggie repeats his answer “yes. Did you get lots of birds? ...yes...what kind? Did you get little chickadees...cardinals...and blue jays?” Flo adds “crows,” and everyone laughs. I mention that we have a poem about crows and we decide to move along.

Miriam has picked up the set of haiku cards to look at, and when I go to her I say “Miriam, I think there is one in here about crows and we’re going to read that one.” I take the cards and start to look through them. Across the table, Frances is slouching in her

chair fast asleep. I walk back around the end of the table and ask Bert if he will help me read it. In the middle of the poem, he turns to me and says “it would be hard for a guy to see that...a crow caw...we didn’t see it.” I agree and we laugh as he goes back to the poem. Maggie asks us to read it a little louder, and when I say I’ll read it again with him, he says “no, you read it.”

through the window
I see the crow caw
in the bare tree

(Philomene Kocher)

I ask “so, if you’re inside and you can’t quite hear the crow, can you still see it when it’s...,” and Bert says “oh yes.” I put my hand up and make an opening and closing motion as if my hand was a beak. Maggie asks him “you know what it’s saying, Bert?” He replies “it wants some feed, I think...they used to come right up to my back step.” Maggie tells a funny story about crows picking up little pieces of donut that had been thrown out in the parking lot for the birds. She does an imitation loudly with “caw, caw,” and everyone laughs at her doing that. Frances wakes up at this time. Maggie finishes with “they were raucous...they were making so much noise, and I walked right past them and they didn’t even pay any attention to me. They’re quite cheeky, aren’t they?” She asks the group if they like crows. Bert replies “they must do some good...they wouldn’t be here if they didn’t.” I repeat his answer a little louder so everyone can hear. Maggie asks a question directly “Frances, what do you think of crows?” She responds “yes, I think they’re all right if they’re tame and they can sit at the table comfortably with you and they don’t make a mess.” Maggie writes “crows are good if they’re tame” on the flipchart, and then asks Frances “have you ever seen that?” To which Frances replies “yes, I’ve seen them...flying around the house...up in the air.” Flo says something to

Bert about crows, and Bert replies “not in the house.” Maggie reads Frances’s statement out loud again, and asks Frances “do they have their own chair? Or would they have a perch?” Frances says “have a what?” Maggie says “a perch,” and Frances comments “a perch, oh, I thought you said a purse.” Everyone laughs and I say “that would be a good picture,” and Maggie adds “a crow with a purse.” Bert shakes his head and shrugs his shoulders at this. Maggie says “I think that’s almost a little poem all by itself.”

I pick another poem from the stack of cards and tell them “now we’re going to go inside. We’ve been outside looking at the birds through the windows, and we’re going to go inside, right into the kitchen.” I ask the woman beside Bert if she will help me read the poem to the group, and she agrees.

carrot slices bob
in the barley soup –
winter thaw

(L. DeVar Dahl, used with permission)

I ask Bert if he’s ever had barley soup and he says he has. There is a small bag of barley and I take it from the table to show to the group. Maggie asks “do you like barley soup?” and Flo replies “I’ve never had it.” Maggie says “Bert’ll have to make you some.” Bert and Flo have been holding hands all through the session, and he now turns to her and says softly “I’ll make you some.” I pass the bag of barley around the table, and ask Harold if he remembers barley soup. He replies “no.” Maggie leans in and asks questions and repeats the softly spoken replies: “did you ever have barley soup, Arthur? Yes. Do you like it? Sure. Was that a good Scottish thing to have? Good Scottish barley soup. Would there be a bit of beef in it? Yes. Who used to make that for you... your wife... your mom?” Several conversations happen at the same time: Maggie still talks with Arthur, Bert talks to the woman sitting to his left, and then Bert turns to Flo and says “you make

barley soup with barley.” Meanwhile, I’m talking with Harold about the different things you put into a soup. We move back to a full group discussion by asking what we might put into the soup, and the participants offer ingredients such as celery, carrots, and onions. Maggie asks Harold if he ever made soup, and then asks him if his wife ever made it for him. He says “oh, I imagine she has, but I’ve never made it.” He laughs and the group joins in. Maggie says that soup requires two people, one to make it and one to eat it. Bert straightens up in his chair and leaning towards Flo asks her “what are you going to make?” She turns to him and makes a quiet comment and laughs. Maggie asks Frances if she used to make soup, and she replies “yes, well, I usually bought it already made and heated it.”

I tell them that we’re going to stay inside for the next poem and ask Jackie to help me read it. She is very soft-spoken, so I ask her if she’d like me to read it along with her.

one by one
they come down to see
applesauce on the stove (Dorothy Howard, used with permission)

Bert says “it don’t make sense.” I try to prompt with “well, what about if you were upstairs and somebody was cooking downstairs...would you want to come down and see what was going on? No?” I lean in to hear what Jackie has said and repeat her reply about “the smell.” Maggie asks “what calls you downstairs?” and Flo says “the smell.” Then Maggie asks “now what would be in the applesauce that you would smell? What’s part of the smell?” Several participants reply at the same time “cinnamon.” And Frances adds “onion.” I reply “that wouldn’t work too much, but the cinnamon.” Maggie says “I bet that would be good with pork, though.” And she asks Frances if that’s what she used to make it for. Frances says “yes.” Jackie says “rice,” and I repeat it to the group “put rice in

soup as well.” Maggie repeats it again “rice and barley. How do you make applesauce? Do you leave the skins on?” Frances says “you take the skins off and you beat them all up,” accompanying this answer by using her hand to make small circular motions to imitate beating things in a bowl. Maggie admits that she leaves the skins on when she makes applesauce, and some laugh at this. I say that some people peel the apples before they make the applesauce and some don’t. Flo volunteers “you have to take the seeds all out,” and someone adds “the core.” I am standing beside Jackie and repeat her soft-spoken response to the group “sugar and cinnamon...Jackie is saying sugar and cinnamon...sugar, that would be good.” Maggie asks the group if they would eat it warm or cold, and many respond “warm.” She then asks if they would add anything else, and Frances says “probably a bit more sugar.” Maggie says that her father used to have hot applesauce and ice cream together. Bert seems to shrug his shoulders at this, and I ask him “you want it hot, do you?” And when he replies “I want everything hot,” the group breaks out in laughter at the double entendre. Maggie teases him “Bert, Bert, Bert.” Bert turns to Flo and says “I didn’t say anything wrong.” Maggie asks them what else they might eat with applesauce, and they volunteer foods such as cheese, toast, fish, and roast pork. Maggie says “is anybody getting hungry?” and Flo replies “you’re not helping.” Arthur leans forward in his wheelchair and Maggie asks him if he’d like some applesauce right now, and he smiles and replies “sure.” She asks him if his wife made him applesauce, and he says “yes.”

I mention that we are going to do the poem about the cows, and Maggie says “oh. So how many people came from a farm?” Two participants put up their hands, Frances and the woman beside Bert. She asks “Bert, did you not come from a farm?” He says “no,

all I done is do the butchering on the farm.” Maggie asks Harold and he says he wasn’t born on a farm. So she says “you’re a city boy,” and he replies “well, a town anyway” and then smiles. Maggie says “a town boy” and Flo adds “a tomboy.” Everyone laughs. Then Bert comments “a luxury farmer.” I repeat his comment and then repeat Jackie’s response “oh, you were on a farm in Saskatchewan, Jackie.” Maggie says that Harold came from Saskatchewan too. I ask Harold if he would like to read the poem with me, and he says “pardon me?” I ask him again, and he reads it as: “early twilight, snow-covered the barn, on the back of cows.” I re-read it with him.

early twilight
snow enters the barn
on the backs of cows

(Christopher Herold, used with permission)

Flo responds immediately “ah, poor cows.” I say “it’s true, if they’ve been out all day, right? Right? And it’s on their backs? Did you ever see that? Who came from the country? Did you ever see that? Cows going in the barn with snow on their backs...in the winter time? I’ve seen that happen, and then it melts off when they are inside the barn where it’s warm.” Maggie asks “why do you think they’re going in the barn?” Bert replies that the cows are to be milked. Maggie repeats his answer “they’re being milked.” Arthur has raised one of his hands from the wheelchair, so Maggie asks him “Arthur, did you ever grow up with cows?” While Maggie is writing something on the flipchart, the woman next to Bert turns to him and says “my grandfather used to have cows.” I ask “what kind of cows, do you remember?” Maggie asks her “what colour?” I am standing near her and ask “did somebody do it...do the milking?” and she replies “yes.” Maggie asks her if she ever helped with the milking and she shakes her head “no.” Maggie asks again what colour the cows were, but Bert is already talking to her and places his hand on

her shoulder. They keep talking together, while the group conversation continues. I repeat to the group that “Jackie had Jersey cows.” Harold stands and tells me he has to use the bathroom. I go to the side of the room to pull his walker near for him, and Gina moves from behind the camera to hold the door for him. He says “don’t worry, I know where I’m going.” She puts her hand on his back and exchanges some words with him as he leaves the room. Dave leans towards Miriam and they exchange conversation. The woman next to Bert has mentioned that they showed the animals, and Maggie asks her “oh, so they were prize cows?” But she replies that they had horses at her grandparents’ farm, and her grandfather had the cows. She said she used to go over to the farm with her dad.

Maggie asks Jackie again about the Jersey⁶ cows: how many they had and whether they used to separate the cream. As she asks the question, she makes a turning motion with her hand. Bert also makes a turning motion and says something about “the separator” to Flo. Maggie tells us that she used to help her grandmother run the separator⁷ to separate the milk from the cream, and Bert says “I was just going to say that...I helped my grandmother.” When I ask about making butter, Jackie says “yes.” When I ask her if she remembers if they sold the butter, she replies that she was “too small.”

Maggie asks Bert “if you had the same thing that my grandmother used to make. She used to have so much cream left over all the time that she used to make this thing called creamed potatoes...she would slice potatoes in a pan with some onions and then

⁶ Jersey cows give milk that has a high butterfat content, and therefore more cream.

⁷ A cream separator was a machine used to separate the cream and skim milk: “these machines were heavily geared and operated through centrifugal force” (Densmore, 1987). Whole milk was poured into the container at the top, and other containers were placed under the two spouts. The original separators would be operated by someone turning a crank, and later they were motorized and run by electricity.

she'd cover it with cream, and leave it on the stove all morning." When Bert replies "I haven't had that in years," everyone laughs. Flo says "that brings back memories. My mom used to do that...she was a good cook." Maggie asked her if the tasting or the smelling was the best part, and Flo replies "to eat it." She asks Bert and he says he "loved to eat it." She asks Dave if he's heard of it, and then she says it's "a real Canadian thing, a cast iron frying pan and it just kind of sits there, just on low the whole morning." She writes "loved to eat it" on the flipchart.

Miriam, meanwhile, has looked at the bag of barley and placed it in the middle of the table. She straightens the tissue box in front of it. A little later, she picks up the tissue box and shakes it, and puts it back on the table. She picks up a pine cone to look at it and places the pine cone on top of the tissue box.

I suggest that we do one more poem. Dave agrees to read, and reads the haiku out loud twice. As he reads, his wife Miriam watches his face.

at my age
slowly
a snow angel

(Alice Frampton, used with permission)

Flo smiles as Dave is reading the poem. Maggie asks them if they know what a snow angel is, and Flo replies "lay down in the snow with your arms out and you just make the angel." As she talks, she waves her right arm in the air over Frances's head while she still holds Bert's hand in her other hand. Maggie repeats the first line of the poem "at my age," and asks them who they think is speaking. Bert and Flo say "children." Maggie says "oh, a kid?" When asked, Jackie, Flo and the woman beside Bert remember making snow angels. I tell them we have some things that you might put on before you go out to make a snow angel. Flo says "snowsuits," and I say "right on. We couldn't find any snowsuits,

but we brought some other stuff.” Bert says “a pair of skates.” I say to him “you’d put skates on to...oh, you’re going right out to the pond, aren’t you?” He replies “yeah...I thought that was where we were going,” and we laugh. I say that we’re going to make snow angels on the way to the pond to skate, and Flo playfully punches him in the arm.

I put some mitts on the table in front of people, and ask “what would you be wearing before you went out to do the snow angels?” Jackie picks up the mitts and puts one on. Miriam picks up a pair of mitts and looks at them and then looks at Dave. She puts the mitts in front of him. Maggie places a mitt in front of Frances and says “there, Frances.” Frances appears to have been sleeping and wakes up when her name is spoken. Maggie touches Arthur’s hand with the other mitt and asks him “Arthur, what’s that...aren’t they beautiful?” The replies from the group about what they might wear include snowsuits, mitts, boots, jackets, toques, and a scarf. Then Frances answers “shorts.” Maggie clarifies by asking “in the snow, Frances?” Frances answers “yes.” Maggie repeats “shorts in the snow,” and then adds “you were tough. The British never gave in.” Flo says “well, I’m British, but I wouldn’t dress that way,” and we laugh. Maggie says that these particular mittens have extra wool inside and they’re really warm. She passes the one from Arthur down the table, and first Flo and then Bert tries it on. I ask the group if anyone ever knit, and Flo says that she did.

When Maggie asks “what does snow taste like from your mitten...did you ever taste snow when it gets all caked in your wooly mitten?” Frances said that she sometimes did that. Flo shakes her head and says “no.” Maggie teases her that she was “too good a girl,” and everyone laughs. Then Frances speaks up and says “sometimes you do things unconsciously, though...if you’re tired.” Bert sits up in his chair and puts his right arm

along the back of Flo's chair and pats her shoulder. Both he and Flo look somewhat surprised, or perhaps exasperated, as Maggie talks with Frances about eating snow.

Maggie then goes back to the poem and says "I'm wondering if the person who wrote that poem is older, saying 'at my age' ... 'slowly a snow angel' ...so it might hurt her shoulders." Frances leans forward and says, "oh yes, perhaps." Then Maggie asks her if she would make a snow angel now, and Frances replies "yes." Maggie and I reply "you would?" Then Maggie asks how many others in the group would make a snow angel today. I put up my hand. Frances leans forward and says "I'd make sure no one was there." Maggie comments that it's snowing outside and some participants turn to look. Gina, who is running the video camera that focuses on Frances, asks her to repeat her answer. Frances replies, "pardon," and then says "I'm glad we made that." Gina repeats to Maggie "make sure nobody was there." And Maggie asks Frances, "why?" Frances replies "because then they would object." Maggie writes things on the flipchart and then says to Frances, "do you think they might object to an older person...." Frances continues "either that, or fly away with them." Maggie clarifies "and all the snow angels would fly away?" and Frances replies "perhaps." Maggie responds "that's lovely." And Frances says "well, you asked." Maggie says "I love that."

We point out again that it's snowing outside. Flo, who is sitting in front of the window, turns around to look and then says "it is." Jackie puts her hand up and then holds it about 12 inches from the table. Maggie says to the group, "it will be thick." I say "oh, the snow has to be thick before you make a snow angel." Maggie writes this on the flipchart and says "has to be thick, that's right...sorry, my notes are getting less organized...so it has to be thick...and there's a trick to making sure your snow angel is

perfect, isn't there? It's not the making of it, what is it? It's..." Flo replies "the getting up." I say "right on...that's the tricky part...maybe that's why this person has a little trouble getting down to make the snow angel, and getting back up." Frances says, "oh, I never thought of that." Maggie asks "how would you get up so you wouldn't disturb your snow angel? Arthur, how would you get up after making a snow angel?" Arthur responds to Maggie talking to him and leaning in to hear his words, but it is Flo who replies "sit up...and then stand." Maggie says "sit up and then stand, boy that would take... you might have to have a friend there to hold your hand...right...and pull you up." Maggie reaches out with her arm to mimic someone helping another person get up. Bert leans over to Flo and says softly "I was there," and Flo turns to him and laughs in delight. I repeat "Bert's going to help." Then he says to Flo "I'll hold you." Maggie says "yeah, I'll bet you would." Both Flo and Bert laugh, and Bert adds "trust me."

I've been standing beside Miriam and she starts to talk—for the first time contributing to the group discussion. I lean over to try and hear what she says as she points to the haiku cards sitting on the table. I repeat "the main is right beside me?" Maggie says "yes, the main is right beside me...wonderful," as Miriam once again points to the cards.

We've gone around the whole table asking everyone to read a haiku except for Arthur and Miriam. We have read and talked about seven different haiku, and this has taken approximately 40 minutes. This is really the fourth haiku session that Maggie and I have co-facilitated, and this session features the most poems that we've ever shared.

Maggie asks the group "now do you think we could make some poems out of that?" I suggest that we do one first about a cat. Maggie reads the list of phrases from the

flipchart, identifying who contributed each one. Then she asks “what would we like to do?” Flo answers “cuddle them,” and Maggie says “okay, cuddling the cat...okay, let’s start with that.” Frances contributes “feeding it.” Maggie repeats “feeding the cat,” and then goes on “cuddling the cat and feeding it...and what about that?” I go over to the flipchart and point to a line, and Maggie reads out loud “the kind of cat everyone had.”

cuddling the cat
and feeding it
the kind of cat everyone had (Soul Session Poets)

Jackie holds one arm in front of her, and with the other hand makes a stroking motion. Maggie notices and says “Jackie’s cuddling her cat...can you feel her purring...that’s nice.”

Then Maggie says “blue jays.” Dave says to Miriam “you always wanted a cat,” and Miriam replies “I didn’t want it all of three moments.” I ask her if she wanted to be able to cuddle it longer. Maggie asks “then you might have wanted something else, eh Miriam? Did you want a cat and then you wanted something else?” Miriam says “well, not really.” Maggie asks her “do you like cats?” Miriam replies “I’m resting,” and laughs. Maggie repeats “oh, you’re resting,” and Miriam says “that’s enough.” As we move along to the next poem, Miriam talks quietly to Dave and shows him the tissue box and the pine cone that she’s put on it.

Maggie reads the phrases and words on the flipchart that are about birds. From the phrases that she’s read, I say “what about ‘a blue jay all alone...might go south...depends on where you live’?” Maggie and I clarify the wording for the second line, and then Maggie writes the new poem.

a blue jay all alone
it might go south
depends on where you live (Soul Session Poets)

Bert speaks up with a story. Maggie and I prompt after each sentence either by repeating something he said or asking a question. “I remember one year, my wife and I were going down south. We were all packed. The cat comes...he jumped in the car. Yeah, he wanted to go. We had an awful time getting him out.” The group laughs. Bert continues “we all laughed with that cat. Couldn’t go near him...he’d hiss...I’m going.” I asked Bert if that cat was Judy and he said “yes.” When I said “that cat had a mind of her own then,” Bert replied “yeah, well, Judy did too,” referring to his daughter. Everyone laughed loudly at that part of the story. I repeat “Judy did too,” and Bert asks me “you know Judy, do you?” I tell him that I don’t, just from his story. I ask Bert where he went down south, and he says “well, I didn’t take the cat.” Then he adds “well, we traveled around down south,” and uses his hand to make a circular motion as he says this. I asked if he went to Florida, and he replies “oh yeah, we stayed there all winter...for three months.” Flo says “Daytona,” and Maggie tells the group that Flo went south on a motorcycle with the Throttle Twisters. Flo says “that was our group.” Maggie has written the phrases down on the flipchart, composing a story from the one Bert told.

going south
can’t get the cat
out of the car (Soul Session Poets)

Maggie has been using the phrases about crows to write two new poems, and then reads them to the group.

crows
right near my back step
must do some good (Soul Session Poets)

crows are good if they are tame
can sit at the table with you
and don't make a mess (Soul Session Poets)

After reading the second one out loud, she says "that's Frances's work," and I add "that one was yours, about the crows." Frances says "yes." Bert yawns. We are now 45 minutes into the session.

We then move to the topic of applesauce. Maggie reads the phrases that are recorded. Immediately, Flo adds "skin off the apples." Maggie repeats it as she records it. I repeat it, and then ask the group what we add once the apples are in the pot. The woman beside Bert replies first with "sugar" and then adds "cinnamon." Frances says "really, by the time it's finished it will be fall again." I suggest to Maggie that she use the phrase from before: "eat warm with more sugar," and everyone laughs.

skin off the apples
add sugar and cinnamon
eat warm with more sugar (Soul Session Poets)

Flo says "raisins," and Maggie replies "you want to add raisins...that would be good." Maggie asks Dave if Miriam made applesauce and he said that she did. Maggie then asks Miriam, and she replies "no." Maggie says, "Dave says you made good applesauce...he's probably right, men never forget good food. Are you a good cook, Miriam?" Dave replies "yes, she was," and Miriam looks up at the ceiling and around.

Maggie likes "tomboy, town boy, luxury farmer," and we decide to keep it as a poem just as it is. Frances smiles as Maggie reads it.

tomboy
town boy
luxury farmer (Soul Session Poets)

Then Maggie asks "do you want a poem about creamed potatoes, Bert?"

He had been stroking Flo's hair when the question was asked, so I repeat it: "creamed potatoes, did you ever have that?" Bert replies "creamed potatoes...oh yes, my mother always made them." I ask him if his part was just to show up, and he says "eat it." Jackie adds something and uses a hand motion to indicate it too. I repeat it loud enough for the group to hear "oh, you licked the bottom of the dish." Bert adds "that was the best part about them." After saying it was kind of brownish, Maggie says "just basically lovely sautéed cholesterol." Everyone laughs. Gina suggests using something that Bert said. Maggie says "licked the bottom." I say "he was licking the bottom...Bert said that he used to do that too, it was the best part." So the last line is changed from "loved to eat them" to "licked the bottom of the pan," which was Bert's recent comment.

creamed potatoes
my mother always made them
licked the bottom of the pan (Soul Session Poets)

Maggie suggests doing one last poem about the snow angel. I ask "does anyone want to volunteer something about the snow angel?" Maggie says "well, I'm going to just read to you," and she reads all the words and phrases from the previous discussion about snow angels. She says "I like 'snow angels fly away,'" and then uses several more of their phrases to complete the poem.

snow angels fly away
make sure no one is there
they might object (Soul Session Poets)

Bert shrugs his shoulders. Arthur shifts in his wheelchair. And Frances lowers her head and appears to doze again. Jackie has stacked the knitted items with two pairs of mitts on top of a hat, and smooths her hand over them. We are about 50 minutes into the session.

We read through our list of poems one last time. When I come to the one about the cat, Maggie says “this one is Bert’s.” After it’s read, everyone laughs. Bert says “it’s hard to get them through the border.”

After I read the poem about the applesauce, I say “I’m starting to get hungry.” Then I read the poem about the creamed potatoes. Flo turns to Bert and says “stop drooling,” and we laugh. Bert is laughing and says “I can just see those mashed potatoes right in front of me.”

I read the poem about the snow angels, and Maggie says “that’s Frances’s.” Frances lifts her head. After the poem about crows, everyone laughs.

Maggie says “well, thank you, that was **wonderful**. Those are **wonderful** poems. I like them better than the ones we started with...I think your poems are much more lively.” She asks the group if they had fun, and many respond “yes.” Roy shares a poem that he wrote many years ago about a blue jay.

Today, a Jay
graced my garden.
He perched on a stump
and twitched his rump.
He looked all around
at the sky
and the ground.
He peeped not a peep
nor jayed not a jay
and then with a twitch
he flew away.

(Roy Holloway, used with permission)

We all respond in appreciation by laughing and clapping. Miriam has been holding the haiku cards. She takes one and looks at it, and then turns it over to see what’s on the back. As I take a chair and sit down beside Miriam, she laughs and hands the cards to me.

Maggie asks Gina and Roy to join the group for the closing prayer. Roy moves slowly over the table, and comments “it’s like getting up from a snow angel.” Everyone laughs, and Maggie adds “we were talking about car trips and about how hard it is to get out of the car.” Roy sits down beside Dave. Most participants join hands. Maggie speaks the closing prayer.

Gracious and loving God, we thank you for this time together and for time to share and to bring back memories, memories of those wonderful potatoes your mother used to make, applesauce, and all the wonders of the winter world outside. We thank you for the chance to share those today and we ask you to bless all those who helped this group get together this morning, and to bless each person here and their memories and those things that they love. Amen.

Many participants join in with “amen.” Maggie blows out the candle. Gina asks Miriam if she’s feeling warmer, and she says “not really.” Maggie asks her if Dave held her hand. Dave replies “sure I did.”

Maggie puts on the song *Frosty the Snowman* sung by Gene Autry, and starts to sing along. So do some of the participants. Frances is keeping time to the music with her feet, and then starts to clap her hands. Everyone claps when the song finishes.

I say “thank you all for joining in this morning.” Maggie tells them “and in two weeks, we’re going to do this again...but we’ll have different poems next time.” Frances says “that’ll be nice.” Bert says “what do you mean *different poems*?...I thought maybe you wanted the dirty ones.” Flo turns to Bert and grabs his arm, and says “oh, Bert.” Maggie says “I don’t think they’d let us do that,” and Bert says “they’re not that bad.” Maggie says “maybe that’s the one with the snow angel where no one is looking...that’s the dirtiest we get around here...either that or snow.” Flo looks at Bert and laughs with him. Maggie wheels Arthur out of the room. As Gina says goodbye to him, she holds his hand. I follow her lead and when I say goodbye to him, I hold his hand as well. Bert says

“come back again...and stay longer.” Many of the participants stay seated, and Gina comments “you’re not ready to go.”

One hour has passed. Gina is able to continue filming with her camera, and does so as Miriam engages Dave and me in conversation. Miriam turns to me and says “but you know... you know what?” Dave stands up and leans towards Miriam to listen as I do. She continues “people think it’s funny and whatever...but we’ll always remember it.” I say “that’s right.” Miriam says “my mother told me that. If you want to be good, and a nice nice place, I can tell you it’s...it’s good. So I never thought anything about it...I went back around...” Then she turns to her right and when she sees Dave, she says “oh, who’s here.” She laughs and puts her hand up onto his shoulder. Dave smiles broadly. Miriam turns back to me and asks “do you know this guy?” I say “I do,” and she laughs. And then I ask her “do you know this guy?” and she says “yes.” We all laugh together. As Dave walks around behind Miriam’s chair, she says “I’ll take him.” I say “you’re going to take him?” and she replies “I’m gonna take him...yeah.” I say “all right,” and she laughs again. I tell her it was good to see her and thank her for coming to the group. She replies “you’re welcome.”

I move to the other side of the table and thank the others for coming. Frances says “thank you for inviting me.” I tell her it was a pleasure to meet her, and she replies “thank you, and you too. Thank you so much.” I say goodbye to Flo and Bert and tell them that I hope to see them again some time. Bert says “you bet.”

There is some laughter and lots of raised voices as people say goodbye. Gina talks with Miriam who has placed the haiku cards into the empty tissue box. Maggie leads one of the other participants back to the lounge. Dave says goodbye to Bert and Flo as they

leave. Miriam reaches up and touches Dave's face. He asks her if she's ready to go. He turns her chair around, and holds out his hands to help her stand. As they leave arm in arm, he turns to Gina and says "thanks." Then Miriam turns around, waves her hand and says "see ya."

Session 2: Love

It is early February and two weeks since the previous Soul Session featuring haiku. We have never held two haiku sessions so close together before. This will represent the second of my research sessions. I am not sure whether the material from both of these sessions will be enough for my thesis research, or whether I will require another one. I will wait and see.

In our planning for this session, Maggie and I have decided on the theme of *love* since Valentine's Day is near. Maggie has used this theme in a previous Soul Session, so she already has a CD of songs including several by The Beatles (*She Loves You* and *Love Love Love*) and Elvis Presley (*Love Me Tender* and *I Can't Help Falling in Love with You*). I have selected haiku that focus on love. We have decided to use more music and fewer haiku as prompts than we did in the last session. Again, I have printed the poems in a large font on index cards. We have more poems than we will probably use, so if things move along quickly we will have enough material for the hour.

It is sunny today. The light streams in the window in the Country Kitchen on the secure dementia floor. We've arrived about 40 minutes early in order to set up the room. Both Gina and Roy have volunteered once again to run the video cameras during the session. I have a digital recorder and place it on the window ledge. I'll turn it on as the participants start to gather.

We put on some music while we set up. We move the table to the centre of the room, on more of a diagonal than last time. This will give Roy more room to set up his camera. He'll be in the same place as last time, videotaping individuals opposite the

window. Gina has moved her camera to allow her to videotape individuals in front of the window and at the front of the table. It is 9:30 now, and Jackie and Harold show up at the door. We tell them that the program won't start for another half hour.

As other prompts, we've brought the regular items that are part of the sessions: the bright yellow tablecloth with the border of red flowers, and the candle in its hurricane lantern cover. We have a large stone vase as well as a glass vase filled with bright yellow chrysanthemums. There are two heart-shaped candy tins (one large and one small). We also have paper valentines that have bright graphics and sentiments like "cutie pie," "sweetheart" and "we're all in it together." We place all of these things down the middle of the table, along with the microphone for Roy's camera. Maggie tapes flipchart paper on the cupboard doors for recording responses. Because everyone watches what gets written down, this becomes the front of the room.

Notes from my journal remind me of how I felt during this time.

Everything about today was easier. The getting ready (even though we forgot the tripod & I had to run down and get it)... Right from the start, the session felt livelier. Was it because it followed so closely on the other one. Were they anticipating (Harold & Jackie arrived 30 mins. early).

I wonder if it was *my* anticipation that heightened the feeling for me. And if it was easier for me because *I* had so recently participated in a similar session.

As participants join the group, we are playing *Mockingbird* sung by Carly Simon. Flo, Frances and Harold are all singing along. I stay in the room while Maggie leaves to assist others. There are several conversations going on at the same time. Before the recorder was turned on, there were several remarkable responses that I recorded in my journal. Harold had commented "looks like the clan is getting together." And Frances had

said "music helps you express your feelings...if you have any...that's just a slip of the tongue."

As we begin the group, Maggie chooses the song *My Funny Valentine* sung by Nat King Cole. Miriam is rubbing her hands together. Others pick up things from the table to look at—especially the valentines. Dave, Miriam's husband, comes in and Miriam laughs and reaches out to him as he sits down. Maggie picks up the red heart tin and holds it up saying "I've got a big heart for you," and Miriam laughs. Miriam points out the flowers to Dave. I ask Frances if she knows this song, and she replies "just the tune." Maggie sings the words along with Flo. When the song ends, there is applause on the recording and several participants clap as well. Frances asks "who was that?" When we tell her it was Nat King Cole, she says "oh, yeah. Oh, that was good."

There are 14 of us in the group this morning, one more than last time. Maggie and I will co-facilitate the session, and Gina and Roy will videotape it. Maggie stays mostly at the front of the room so she can record things on the flipchart paper, although she will move around to talk directly with the others. To her left is the woman who is younger than many in the group. Along the side of the table by the window is Frances, Alice (who did not attend Session 1, but attended a haiku session a year ago), and Miriam. Her husband Dave sits at the corner of the table and Harold sits at the end. On the side of the table near the door is Flo, Bert, Jackie who is in a wheelchair, and Arthur who is also in a wheelchair. Several of these individuals at the front of the table are quite softly spoken, and it will be easier for Maggie to hear their responses if they are closer.

Maggie says "one more and then we'll start. I think you know this one." The song is *Let's Fall in Love* sung by Frank Sinatra. I say "if you know it, sing right along."

Miriam says “oh, yeah...I guess so...because it’s very, very **civil**,” and makes a motion with her arm to emphasize the last word. Frances asks me “do you want to sit in my chair?” I thank her and tell her I will stand so I can move around.

As the music begins, Flo starts swaying in her chair and clapping her hands to the music. Maggie asks Harold if he knows who is singing. The woman at the front of the room says “Frank Sinatra,” and I say “right on.” She says “it was a guess.” Maggie is singing along “*let’s fall in love...why shouldn’t we fall in love...*” Then she realizes she’s forgotten to bring the lighter along for the candle. I ask Jackie if she likes the song. Maggie asks Alice if she knows it. Then Frances says “you really do some nice things for us, don’t you? Well, I was just saying...getting together to sing the old songs...makes you feel young again.” Maggie responds “does it make you feel young again?” Frances says “yes, indeed.” Maggie tells her “that’s **good**. Well, we are young again.” Frances laughs and says “well, we pretend to be young again.” Maggie tells her that she now has wisdom in her life. Frances says “that’s very polite,” and then continues with “well, it’s really great how you take your time and give it to us for this. Because in some families, it’s only one person, you know...lonely...thinking about the past...and you give it all back to us. Thank you very, very much.” Maggie tells her that she has a lot of fun doing it, and Frances says “I’ll bet you do.” Harold touches the hem of the tablecloth and looks at it. Dave leans toward Miriam to hear what she is saying.

Maggie reminds them that we were here two weeks ago and that we talked about winter. She tells them that the branches we had then have started to bud and blossom. She continues “and so, welcome to this group this morning. We have two people filming. Does anyone mind their picture being taken?” Several respond “no.” Maggie continues

“there’s two people on the camera...this is Gina...do you remember pretty Gina?” Flo says “oh, she’s beautiful,” to which Gina replies “I love coming to this group.” Maggie then introduces Roy and me. She says “we’re here to have more fun with poems. And I’m Maggie. You remember me?” Flo tells her “beautiful Maggie.” Then Maggie asks her what I am, Flo says “she’s very pretty.” Maggie teases her saying “oh, she’s pretty, but I’m beautiful.” Flo says “you’re **older** than she is,” and then puts her hand over her mouth and laughs. Maggie also introduces Dave as Miriam’s husband.

Maggie asks them if they can guess what the topic is for today, and Flo says “it is what it is.” Maggie walks over and picks up the red heart tin and asks if they can guess what day is coming up in February. Flo says “Valentine’s Day.” And Maggie continues “**Valentine’s Day**. So, we’re going to talk about love today.” Frances leans back in her chair and says “oh, golly.” Maggie tells them that there are two couples in the group: Dave and Miriam, and then she turns to Bert and Flo and says “you two are pretty good friends, aren’t you?” Flo agrees “we’re friends, yeah,” and Bert takes her hand and says “I can’t say any more...the real one might be listening.”

Maggie invites everyone to hold hands for prayer. She is standing between Flo and Harold. She asks Harold if he’s got his hearing aids in, and after she repeats the question, he says he only has one of them in. Maggie says “oh, one. It’ll be hard for you to hear.” Harold is quick to respond with “well, I haven’t heard much since...just chitter-chatter,” and smiles at her. She says “that’s right. Well that will be about it.” Everyone laughs. Jackie places her hand on Arthur’s arm, as I do as well. Arthur sits with his eyes closed. Maggie prays.

Gracious and loving God, we ask that You bless us today. We thank You for Your love which holds us all, and we also thank You for the love of our families

and our friends, and most of all we thank You for those people who occupy a **special** place in our heart, those people that we love with all our heart. We ask You to bless each and every one of them, and bless us as we share our experiences and talk about love. We ask this in Your name. Amen.

Many in the group repeat the “amen.” Flo looks up at Maggie and says “thank you.”

Maggie tells them that I’ve brought some poems. I say “like we did last time...they’re very little poems, and we’ll read them out, and then we’ll see if there’s... ah, see what they have to say to us today.” I ask the woman at the front of the table if she’d like to begin. She reads it out loud, and then I read it again louder. Maggie asks me to repeat it a third time.

the table filled
with out-of-season flowers
first kiss
(Charles Trumbull)⁸

Harold shrugs his shoulders. I ask “so, do you...” Flo says “never mind,” and there is loud laughter from the group. Maggie asks them “first kiss...how many of you can remember your **first** kiss? Can you remember that? Your first kiss?” She asks Bert directly, and he replies “oh, gee, I’d have to go back a long ways.” When she asks him how old he was, he says that he was 10 or 11. Flo says her first kiss was from her dad. Maggie asks her if she remembers her first kiss from someone else besides her dad. Flo says “oh” and starts to laugh. Bert interjects “she doesn’t want to say it in front of me.” Everyone laughs, and Flo says to Bert “you nut.” Maggie asks a different question: “can you remember a particularly nice first kiss? How about that?” To which Flo replies “are there any such things?” Maggie asks “are there? You don’t like kissing?” and Flo says “well, it’s all right.” Everyone laughs, and Maggie asks her if holding hands is better, and she says “yeah.” Maggie asks Jackie if she remembers her first kiss. Jackie nods her head.

⁸ This haiku appeared in *RAW NerVZ HAIKU*, X(3), 4.

I listen and then repeat her response “you remember, but you don’t know how old you were.”

Maggie then asks them “how many of you remember the name of the person you had your first kiss with?” Bert puts up his hand, so Maggie asks him directly, “Bert, what was her name?” He replies “Sandra.” He says that she was 10 or 11. When Maggie asks him if it was a good one, he says “yes, it was. I still remember.” Maggie asks Jackie who indicates that she remembers. Maggie then asks Arthur. He opens his eyes. Maggie leans in to hear him. He moves his hand on the wheelchair shelf in front of him. She asks Flo, who says “I don’t remember.” Bert looks at her and says “you don’t want to remember, do you?” Maggie asks Dave and Miriam who are holding hands. Dave replies that he was 13 or 14, and that “her name was Beryl.” Maggie then directs the question to Alice, “do you remember your first kiss?” Maggie asks her a further question, “would it have been in Holland?” and Alice responds “yes.” Maggie says “yes, when you were young. I think you’re starting to remember. I can see the look on your face.” Alice seems engaged with the valentines that are on the table. She picks them up and reads them, moving her lips as she reads.

When Maggie asks Frances, she replies “it was my mother, I think, on my way to school.” Then Maggie asks her about her first romantic kiss. Frances says “a schoolteacher,” and Maggie repeats “a schoolteacher kissed you?” Frances says “oh yeah. But he’s dead now, or I wouldn’t be saying it.” When Maggie asks the woman beside Frances, she replies “a kiss from my mom and dad.” Maggie says to her “yes, they loved you,” and the woman nods and says, “they did.”

Maggie continues “it’s a special thing, isn’t it, your first kiss.” Bert says “the last one...the last is good too.” Maggie repeats his answer “the last is good too, is it?” And Bert says “it takes in a bit of territory.” Maggie repeats his answer and writes it down. From across the table, Miriam points her finger towards Bert, laughs and then says “don’t you worry now.” Dave is holding Miriam’s hand, and she places her other hand on top of his. Frances adds “depends on the kisses.”

Maggie says “but I think that’s true, in a way...you know, your first kiss is, you don’t know the person, do you?...But the last kiss says what?” Frances replies “says it won’t be long until the next time...perhaps.” Maggie says “yeah, it’s a parting kiss, isn’t it?” And Frances responds “yes, that’s right. They’re probably thinking ‘I’ll not be doing this again.’” Everyone laughs. Harold pulls his chair back from the table. Bert talks with Flo, and Miriam is talking with Dave. When Maggie suggests that you never know when the last kiss will be, Frances says “no, you don’t, do you?”

Maggie asks Frances another direct question “would you **like** to do it again, or is it just maybe there’s no one else to come and kiss you if you’ve ended a relationship.” Frances says “oh, I’d like to do it again if they’re nice.” Frances then speaks to Maggie “yes, I was wondering about you. How do **you** manage it all?” Several people in the group laugh. Maggie says “how do I manage? That’s a very personal question. Well, the only kisses I get are from my grandson right now.” Frances says “oh, you’re lucky.” Maggie tells them her grandson is 5, and that “I get good ones from him. He puts his arms around my neck and practically makes my neck fall off and he gives me a big **smack** on the cheek. And my kids.” Frances says “well, I’m glad.” Amidst laughter,

Maggie says “are we done with this poem? I’m embarrassed now. I’m almost as red as my jacket. Hope you’re not filming that.” Bert says “you better be careful.”

We move along to the next poem, and I ask Flo if she’ll help me read it.

Valentine’s Day –
she reminds me
to fasten my seatbelt (Michael Dylan Welch, used with permission)

I read it again twice, louder than Flo had. I ask Frances “did you hear that one, Frances?” and she replies “I’m still trying to figure it out.” When Maggie asks them what it means, Flo replies “she’s driving the car and he didn’t fasten his seatbelt.” I say “right,” and Frances gets it, saying “ohhhh...” Maggie asks “why would she want him to fasten his seatbelt?” Flo replies “it’s the law...well, it’s for safety purposes.” Maggie says “she doesn’t want to lose him, does she?” and Bert says “it all depends.” Maggie teases him saying “you are naughty,” and Flo tells her “I agree with you.”

Maggie continues “so it all depends. Well, it must mean she loves him if she wants to keep him around. She wouldn’t remind him otherwise. Do you think he gave her a present on Valentine’s Day?” Flo responds right away with “he better.” Bert turns to Flo and says “are you expecting one?” Flo bursts out laughing and says “no.” Maggie says “you’re **not** expecting a present? Oh no, don’t tell him that. So, what do you think he might have got her for Valentine’s Day...Bert, what do you give people for Valentine’s Day, without blowing any secrets here?” Bert replies “no problem. A box of chocolates... I always got her that.” Maggie says “that’s good. And would she have been happy with that?” Bert says “yes...I bought 40 boxes of chocolates.” Maggie writes this down and asks him “did you help her eat them?” When he replies “yes,” everyone starts to laugh. He adds “I didn’t want her to get too fat, so I helped her eat them. I remember she

chewed at me all the way.” While he’s been talking, Bert has been smoothing his hands over the table cloth. Miriam also touches the floral border of the tablecloth which hangs over the edge of the table. Flo looks at me standing beside her and shrugs her shoulders.

Maggie then asks Dave “what did you used to give for Valentine’s Day, or do the English do that?” Dave replies “flowers and chocolates.” Maggie repeats this “**flowers** and chocolates. Okay. These are good men.” Bert looks at Dave and says “you gave them **both**?” and Flo says emphatically “**yes.**” Everyone laughs, including Dave, who says “it depends.” Miriam laughs and says “never you mind.” Maggie teases Bert “gee, he one upped you there, Bert. I think you better start to revise there.”

Flo leans forward and asks Dave “you’re from England?” When Dave answers “yes,” then Flo tells him “so am I.” She adds “I was born in London.” Bert adds “they eat a lot of different stuff over there.” Maggie tells him “they have flowers there, too, you know.” Bert nods at Flo and says “I know one thing...she’s pretty hungry when she got here.” Flo puts her arm on his shoulder and gives him a little shake saying “stop it.”

Maggie then asks Frances “what did you used to get for Valentine’s Day? Do you remember?” Frances replies “mostly flowers.” Maggie repeats her answer and asks another question: “mostly flowers. And who would give them to you? Was it your husband?” Frances says “yeah. When I told him to...well, I had to remind him.” Maggie then asks her what her favourite flowers are. Frances asks her to repeat it, then says “savour flowers?” Maggie repeats “favourite.” Then Frances points to the yellow mums on the table and says “favourite. Those ones have a beautiful colour.” Maggie comments “aren’t they lovely? They’re sunshine.” And Frances asks “oh, are they? You’ve made me think more of them than I did.” When Maggie asks her what other flowers she likes,

she says daffodils and violets. Maggie says “well, you’re English too, so they would have been out by Valentine’s Day.” Frances adds “but they soon die, those flowers...that come from England.”

Maggie then asks Jackie what kinds of flowers she used to get from her husband. When Jackie replies “carnations,” Maggie asks her what colour they were. Jackie lifts her hand toward her nose to mimic smelling flowers. Then Maggie says “they smell good. That’s true. That’s **also** true, they’re beautiful... and carnations, they smell.” Flo adds “so do roses.” Maggie mentions that the flowers on the table smell today, and asks Frances if she would like to smell them. As she leans forward to smell them, Frances says “because the sun is out perhaps.” Frances says she can’t smell anything, and Maggie holds them out to Alice who says “I smell those.” Maggie asks Alice “did you get things for Valentine’s Day? Do people in Holland have Valentine’s Day?” Maggie then holds the flowers out for Jackie to smell. At the other end of the table, Dave lifts the flowers and smells them and then holds them out for Miriam to smell. She smells them and then says “put it down.”

Bert shifts in his chair and puts his arm along the back of Flo’s chair. He smiles at her, and Flo says “what are you laughing at?” Bert says “I was going to say something,” to which Flo remarks “don’t you dare say anything.”

Frances continues about the flowers “it doesn’t smell of anything and then it’s the sight of them and knowing that the other person thought enough to send them.” Maggie says “that’s right. Even though they were told, right?” Frances says “it means that somebody cares,” and Maggie adds “and that’s really important, isn’t it?”

Maggie holds up one of the valentines and asks the group “so Valentine’s Day is coming up. **How many** of you used to make valentines and give them to each other at school?” Several participants put up their hands. Dave nods when Maggie asks if he made his own. Then Maggie asks “Harold, did you make valentines?” He says firmly “**yes, indeed.**” Maggie asks him “did you...in Saskatchewan?” And he says with a smile “even in Saskatchewan.”

Maggie picks up several valentines and reads them “so you see this one says ‘love’ ...and look at this little clown, he says ‘are you my valentine?’ He’s all shy...and look at this one, it says ‘puppy love.’ And here’s one with a cat on it...it says ‘cutie pie.’” Maggie asks “did you used to send these?” Bert replies “all the time.” I say “there’s another one about love.” And Frances says “just knowing this person cares.” Maggie and I are passing the valentines around the table. When I hand one to Harold, he looks at it and then puts it back on the table. Flo looks at me and laughs saying “they are cute.” While everyone is looking at the valentines, Miriam says “oh, that’s too bad.” Frances picks up one and comments “we noticed this one... ‘I smell as good as I look—be mine’ ...he’s proposing to her.”

Maggie notices that Arthur is saying something. She asks him “what did you used to buy [your wife] for Valentine’s Day?...a card? Did you give her something? I know you loved her very much. Still do!” Maggie is leaning towards Arthur and has placed her hand on his. Arthur looks at Maggie and raises his hand to his face. Maggie continues “you’ve been married over 60 years, haven’t you?” And he softly says “yes.” Maggie tells the group “it’s amazing, Arthur and [his wife] have been married for over 60 years.” Frances says “my goodness, they deserve something, don’t they?” Harold ties his shoe.

Miriam picks up several valentines to look at. And Bert leans towards Flo and talks with her.

Maggie tells the group a story: “I once was in the park, last year, and I was out walking my dog. And this man who lived in a group home came up, and he came and he said ‘it’s Valentine’s Day.’ He was a man who had some difficulties. He said ‘it’s Valentine’s Day, and I don’t have anyone who loves me.’” The group collectively says “ahhhh...” Maggie continues “and he came and he said to me ‘do you have people who love you?’ and I said ‘yes, but I’m sure you have people who love you.’ I said ‘you have a Mom and a Dad?’ ‘**Oh yes**’ he says, ‘I do. **They** love me.’ And I said ‘do you have brothers and sisters?’ and he said ‘oh, I feel much better,’ and he ran off.” Everyone laughs. Frances says “we take so many things for granted, don’t we?” Maggie says “we do. We’re pining for that one love, and we have all this other love around us, don’t we? And so sometimes we have to stop and be **grateful** for all the love we have.”

We move along to the next poem. Maggie says “this is a cute one.” I ask Frances if she would help me read it, and she says “I’ll try.”

washing windows
me inside he outside
the smiling glass

(Winona Baker, used with permission)

Then she reads it a second time, but adds two words to the second line.

washing windows
me inside **FULL STOP** he outside
the smiling glass

Then she adds “it doesn’t make sense.” I ask her “what kind of window? What are they doing?” and she replies “washing windows.” Maggie repeats the poem with some emphasis “washing windows, **he** outside, **me** inside, **smiling** glass.” Frances says “must

be saying that he's making somebody else outside... pretending to be behind the glass...I don't know." Maggie asks "have you ever washed windows with somebody? Bert, have you washed windows?" He says that he has. Maggie asks "what do you do when you're on one side...and on the other? What if you're on the ladder outside and she's inside washing the windows. Smiling glass...what does that mean?" Frances says "I don't know." Both Maggie and I mime washing windows by raising our hands and moving them in circles, as if we're cleaning something. Bert says "I can't tell you what we did." Maggie says "oh, come on." And he says "it was fun." She asks him "did you flirt with each other through the glass?" Bert says "oh yes...always." Maggie continues "oh yes. I had to pull that one out of you, didn't I? So, washing windows, it was a chance to kind of..." Bert adds "get together." Everyone laughs, and for the rest of the session *washing windows* becomes a double entendre. Then he says "it took us a long time to wash the windows. One year we didn't even get them done." Everyone laughs. Maggie says to him "you just didn't get them done. It just didn't seem to matter." Bert says "no," and adds "she's in heaven now, though."

Maggie asks Dave if he and Miriam ever washed windows. He says "I used to wash the windows." Bert says "he didn't get her trained right, did he?" There is laughter. Maggie says "so you used to have to do them all by yourself. Harold, did you and [your wife] ever wash windows?" Harold says "say that again." When Maggie repeats the question more slowly, he replies "I never thought of that. No, I don't think we did." Frances interjects "now's a good time to start." Harold says that he washed the outside of the windows using a ladder, and his wife washed the inside. Maggie asks him if he ever flirted with her, and then walks over to where he is sitting and repeats the question for

him. He replies “I never wasted my time,” and then smiles broadly. Everyone laughs. When Maggie says “that’s not a waste of time,” everyone laughs some more. Harold says “well, if you ask a stupid question,” and Flo joins him in saying “you get a stupid answer.” Maggie asks several others if they ever washed windows, and Frances says “I’ve washed the floor.” Maggie says “it’s not the same, is it?” She then asks Flo, who says that she washed the windows by herself. Bert says “so I don’t have to help her now, you see. She been used to doing them by herself.” Maggie asks Bert “so what do you think she needs?” and Bert replies “good utensils.” Flo turns to Bert and says “who says that I’ll clean your windows?” Bert replies “what’s that? You say you’ll clean my windows.” Flo says to him “I did **not** say I would clean your windows.”

Maggie says “how about we have a little song?” We play *Love Me Tender* sung by Elvis Presley. Many sing along with the music, including Alice who has her head bowed as if resting but who is moving her lips during the song. Maggie puts her arm along Arthur’s shoulder, and he turns to look at her. At the end of the song, Bert leans over to Flo, puts his hand on her face. Flo laughs and says “you nut.” Then he kisses her, and she says “**Bert.**” Maggie says “looks like somebody got a kiss there.”

We move along to the next poem. We decide this one will be the last one before we start writing them. Maggie agrees to read it, and reads it twice.

wedding ring worn thin
she kneads dough
in autumn sunlight

(John O’Connor, used with permission)

Flo says “she wants a new ring.” Maggie repeats “she wants a new ring...does she, do you think so?” and then writes it down. Bert says quietly “she’s asking too much,” and I repeat “he says she's asking too much.” I am standing beside Frances and she points out

something on her sleeve for me to see. Maggie asks “what do you think... ‘her wedding ring is worn thin’...how is it worn thin? Jackie, do you know how that happens?” Jackie shakes her head “no.” Flo answers “a long marriage...she needs a new ring.” Maggie repeats “she needs a new ring, or she needs....” Bert says “or a new husband.” Flo points her finger at Bert and comments “**you said it.**” And Bert says “I think the other one was wore out.” Flo adds “if she gets a new husband, she gets a new ring.”

As she makes a kneading motion with her hands, Maggie asks them “what's she doing with it? She's doing something with her hands.” Flo replies “mixing the dough.” Maggie asks them what they think she is making, and repeats “she kneads the dough.” Jackie speaks softly and Maggie repeats “pie. Yes, she could be making pie.” The woman sitting near Maggie says “she could be making bread.” And beside her, Frances says “well, it's another...it's a nickname for money, isn't it?” Maggie says “yes, that's true...**she needs the dough.**” I repeat “she kneads the dough,” as Maggie writes it down. Frances smiles and says “well, I'm just trying to get things.” Maggie tells her “that's **excellent.** Nickname for money.” I ask Frances if she ever baked bread or pies, and she says she did. Maggie asks her “did you knead the dough?” She replies “yeah, I did...but not with money. Except you have to buy, you know, things to cook with.” Maggie says “you need the dough to make the dough,” and Frances says “yes, certainly.”

Maggie notices that Arthur is talking, and she asks him “what did you say, Arthur?” He is too softly spoken for Maggie to hear. She asks the group “she's kneading the dough in the autumn sunlight, can you see where she is? Where is she?” Flo says “in the kitchen looking out the window.” When Maggie asks “what's she thinking?” Flo replies “I wish it was over.” As Maggie writes it down, Flo continues “it takes a long

time to knead the dough.” I say “it does, doesn't it? It takes a long time.” And Flo says “yeah...and she just wanted to have it over with.” Frances comments “aren't these flowers a beautiful colour...they brighten everything and everybody up, don't they?” Maggie asks the group “she's kneading that dough. Sunlight's coming in...maybe the sun is shining on her hands, and maybe she sees that ring of hers. What do you think...what do you think she'd be thinking looking at her **very thin** wedding ring?” Dave replies “the past.” Maggie repeats “she's thinking about the past, that's right. How many of you would do that?” Frances replies “well, we all do that...thinking about the past.” When Maggie asks what she might be feeling, Flo says “sad.” When asked why, she adds “well, her husband's gone.” Maggie is talking with Flo, Dave leans in to hear what Miriam is saying, and Frances asks me again if I'd like to sit down—all at the same time. Maggie asks Flo “what if her husband's still home? What if she still has her husband?” Flo says “well, she should be cheerful, not sad.”

Maggie tells them that with this poem we can put in our own feelings, that “the poem leaves room for our space.” And Frances says “oh, yes.” Maggie asks her how she might feel looking at her wedding ring in the sunlight as she's kneading dough. Frances says something about “always taking the darn thing off...well, it gets bigger sometimes and some days smaller...depending on what we're wearing, of course.” Maggie responds “yes, that's true. So sometimes, yes, if your wedding ring is worn thin...it may be loose on you...and your finger might be thinner too.” Maggie asks Alice if her wedding rings still fits. Alice looks at her hand and says “it fits all right.” Flo puts her hand up and waves her fingers, and says “mine still fits.” Maggie speaks again about the poems, saying “so it's one of those poems where we can really imagine what she's thinking, can't

we?” She asks the woman sitting at the front “what would you think...you've got quite a nice ring there.” She replies “thank you. Ah, I think I'd be happy.”

Maggie tells them a story about herself. “I used to have a house in New Brunswick where I'd make dough. I'd make bread first thing in the morning, then my kiddies would go off to school, and the sun was shining on me...and you'd leave it in the sun to rise. And it's just lovely.” Harold checks his watch. Frances responds about living through something like that. Maggie asks her “do you think you have to live through something like that?” And Frances says “oh yes, I would. You've done so much, I'm not doing very much at all.” Maggie tells her “oh, I don't think that's true.” Frances says “you're always making me some money or something.” When Maggie responds “well, I think you also do,” Frances says “well, I pretend to” and then laughs.

We move to another song with Elvis Presley singing *I Can't Help Falling in Love with You*. Bert puts his arm around Flo. He sings for a while, then puts his hand over his mouth, and then sings again at the very end. Many others sing along with the music as well. After it's over, Maggie asks “how many of you have danced to that song?” Frances replies “oh, I'd like the opportunity.” Flo says “it's a beautiful song.”

We decide to move into the part of the session where we collaborate on making poems. We are 45 minutes into the session. Maggie says “so shall we try and make some poems out of our thoughts today? Can I read you everything here...do you want to talk about kisses here first?” I suggest that the first three lines might make a poem. Maggie reads the phrases: “first kiss, kisses are all right, holding hands is better, last kiss takes in a bit of territory, depends on the kiss, probably thinking ‘I'm not doing this again,’ we

take so many things for granted.” She asks “what are we going to do with these kisses here? Do you just want to do the first kiss...this is our poem?”

first kiss:
kisses are all right
holding hands is better (Soul Session Poets)

Maggie asks them if they agree with that, and Frances says to her “well, **you** have the experience.” Everyone laughs. Maggie repeats to her “that's true. **Thank you**, Frances.” Frances says “well, I'm sorry, I didn't mean to....” Maggie reassures her by saying “I'm just teasing you.” She points to Flo and says “holding hands is better...you said that, didn't you? Take heed there, Bert.” Bert turns to Flo and says “did you say that?” And Flo replies “no, I didn't say it...**you** said it.”

Maggie reads some phrases again, and I suggest the order of some lines that might go together. Miriam yawns. After laughing at something Bert said, Flo says to him “you're crazy.”

Maggie reads some more lines: “I bought 40 boxes of chocolates and helped her eat them so she wouldn't get too fat.” At this, the woman at the front of the table bursts out laughing. Maggie continues reading: “flowers and chocolates, mostly flowers when I told him to, they mean someone cares, even in Saskatchewan, I never wasted my time.” I suggest “that the flowers and chocolates, and they mean someone cares.” Miriam is reading a valentine. As Maggie keeps writing out the poem, Frances comments “I think you should have a good bonus for going through all that...you've been working all day.”

Maggie says “here are the first two lines: ‘flowers and chocolates,’ and ‘they mean someone cares’...and what line would you like to put after that?” Jackie leans forward in her chair, and Maggie moves toward her and then repeats her response “do

you remember them?" I say "thank you, Jackie," and Maggie also says "excellent... thank you, Jackie." She then reads the first two poems again.

first kiss:
kisses are all right
holding hands is better (Soul Session Poets)

flowers and chocolates
they mean someone cares
do you remember them? (Soul Session Poets)

We move to the phrases from one of the other discussions. Maggie reads from the recorded words: "she wants a new ring, asking too much, or a new husband, long marriage, kneads the dough, nickname for money...I love that...pie, bread, in the kitchen, looking out the window, wants it over with, thinking of the past, sad, husband gone, thin finger, take the darn thing off." Maggie asks me and I suggest that "kneads the dough" needs to be in one of the poems. Maggie says "yeah...just wondering about the new ring...needs the dough, she wants a new ring?" Miriam looks at me and says "I traded one once...a long time ago." I repeat "you traded them a long time ago, Miriam?" Miriam looks at the valentines she's holding in her hand and says "two, four, six, eight." Maggie continues with the poem "kneads the dough...she wants a new ring...or a new husband?" I laugh and say "I don't know about that one." Others laugh too. I suggest "long marriage" for the third line, or that maybe we could ask the group. Miriam laughs and says to me "you're terrible." I reply "we're terrible, are we? We're sort of teasing on that poem." Maggie reads the first two lines of the poem "kneads the dough...she wants a new ring." And she asks "and the third line... 'or a new husband.'" Flo says "she should keep her ring." Maggie leans towards Jackie and repeats her response "to bring those memories back, that's right." Then she adds "or, what do you think... 'long marriage' or

‘she wants a new husband.’” Flo says “if she wants a new ring, she should go out and work for it...he's gone.” Dave speaks up “I would just add ‘long marriage,’” and Bert says “that's right.” Maggie asks “that says a lot, does it?” Frances leans forward and says “they don't really mean to be rotten, do they?” Maggie reads the final version of the haiku.

kneads the dough
she wants a new ring
long marriage

(Soul Session Poets)

I ask “do you want to do one in the kitchen about baking, and using ‘thinking of the past’ ...you were saying that, Frances, ‘thinking of the past’ ...we do a lot of that, don't we?” Frances says “yes, and more as we get older.” I repeat “and more as we get older.” Maggie writes these lines down. I repeat “‘a lot of that’ ... ‘and more as we get older’ ... thank you, Frances.” She says to me “thank **you**...we mostly remember the past.” When I repeat “we mostly remember the past,” she adds “especially the good parts.” Maggie asks “so, I wanted to ask you, do you...how do you feel about...when we're doing these poems...how do you find remembering...does it help or not?” Frances says “oh, it helps.” Maggie repeats “it helps,” and Frances adds “oh, don't you think so?” Maggie looks at Flo who says “it helps you remember.” Frances adds “sort of re-living it again.” Maggie repeats “you're re-living it,” and then asks her “and how do you do that?” Frances says “well, we benefit by calling it up in our minds, so we can follow it, and we're happier almost...sort of thing.” Maggie responds with “good, good, excellent,” and then reads the poem.

thinking of the past
we do a lot of that
and more as we get older

(Soul Session Poets)

Frances laughs. Maggie says “that’s nice...that’s a lovely poem.” As Frances leans back in her chair, she adds “and we keep getting older...**darn it.**” When everyone laughs, Frances says “well, it's not fair, is it?” Miriam has been laughing loudly and I repeat what she’s said “Miriam says that's very good.” Maggie also repeats “that's very good.” And then Frances says “oh well, if she says it, then it must be good.”

Maggie and I consider several lines for the next poem about “the last kiss.” Frances looks at me and asks “but how about you and all the work you've put into this...thinking.” I tell her that it’s been fun for me. She says “to a certain extent.” I reply “yes, to a certain extent, but it's fun to be here.” Frances says “oh, it's not something you felt you **should** do, it's something you **wanted** to do.” I tell her that it is something I want to do. She replies “great. Thank you.”

I’m standing beside Flo and she looks at me and smiles. Bert picks up the small candy tin from the table. We have two lines of the poem: “last kiss” and “takes in a lot of territory.” Maggie suggests using “I never wasted my time,” and asks Dave what he thinks. Dave says “even in Saskatchewan.” Everyone laughs. Miriam taps Dave with her hand and says “you’re awful.” I say “he’s awfully good.” Maggie tells him “how lovely, Dave, thank you,” and I add “thank you...we were a little stymied.” Maggie then reads the poem out loud, and looks at Harold as she reads the last line.

last kiss
takes in a lot of territory
even in Saskatchewan (Soul Session Poets)

Harold says “I can't hear you,” and Maggie suggests that I move to his other side to “tell him in his good ear.” I speak the poem to him again. When I’m done, he replies “that's not funny,” and then laughs as he looks at Maggie and then me. Many in the group laugh

again. I say to Harold “no? Are you teasing us?” and Maggie says “why would we make fun of Saskatchewan...I don't know.”

Maggie suggests using “I bought 40 boxes of chocolates and helped her eat them.” Flo comments “he must have a lot of girlfriends.” I say “or a lot of years...it could have been the same person across a lot of years too.” Maggie reads “Valentine's Day...I bought 40 boxes of chocolates...and helped her eat them.” Gina joins in and says “I love the one where you used ‘so she wouldn't get too fat’ because [someone] just roared at that.” So we remove “Valentine’s Day” and use “so she wouldn’t get too fat” as the last line.

I bought 40 boxes of chocolates
and helped her eat them
so she wouldn't get too fat (Soul Session Poets)

I say “we've got a lot of poems,” and Maggie reads them again. When she comes to “do you remember them?” she makes a point of mentioning that this was Jackie’s line, and when she reads “and more as we get older” that it was Frances’s line. After reading “even in **Saskatchewan**,” she looks at Harold and says “he doesn’t find that funny.” Harold is smiling and I when I ask him “are you teasing her?” he nods his head. After reading all of the haiku, Maggie says that's good...that's excellent...six poems. That's amazing. That's wonderful. Congratulations, you did a great job.” And everyone starts clapping.

The session is coming to a close. Maggie says “I'm just wondering if we want to hold hands for a minute and we'll have a little prayer, and then we'll sing.” I move so that I am standing between Flo and Harold and we hold hands as Maggie prays.

Gracious and Loving God, we thank you for all those opportunities to experience your love. We thank you for all those people who love us, for all the loves we have had in our lifetime, for all those people who have been our first kiss, for all

of our partners that love us so much, and for all of our family and friends. And we ask your blessing on each person here, both now and always. Amen.

Many in the group also say “amen.” Flo turns to me as the prayer ends and says “I can feel your pulse right down into your hands.” We continue to hold hands and laugh together. Then she adds “your heart’s beating good, girl.”

Maggie says “thank you. That was just a wonderful time...I had a great time. Well, I think we've got Connie Francis here.” The song is *Love is a Many-Splendored Thing*. Frances comments “wasn’t that enjoyable...it was better than going out and picking up...moving it up...and all that” as she moves her hands over the table as if she’s picking up and putting down things. I say “this has been really a lot of fun.” Flo and I are still holding hands. I say to her “thank you for being here this morning,” and she replies “well, thank you for having us.” Then I say “it has been fun...remembering lots of things,” to which Frances says “it will last us right to the next one.” Miriam is showing Dave the valentine that she’s been holding for a while. Frances says “it’s worth getting up in the morning.”

Maggie is helping Jackie with her wheelchair. Jackie has said something, and Maggie repeats it louder “you’re going to get a hot chocolate? Oh, when you get chocolates, you’re going to share them...ah, thanks, Jackie.” I tell her “have a good day. It’s good to see you again.”

Most of the participants stay seated. Some of them are looking at the valentines that are on the table. The song continues to play, and Frances and Flo sing along. Miriam is laughing and talking with Dave. I walk around beside her and ask her if she’s had a good time. She says “yes.” I tell her she can take the valentine she’s holding with her if she’d like. I turn to Dave and say “thanks for your help with the poems...you’re a natural

at this.” Miriam laughs and says “oh, that’s the ticket.” Dave stands and puts his hands out to help Miriam from her chair.

Maggie walks towards Arthur and he turns his head to look at her. She pushes his wheelchair and they leave the room. Everyone else is still seated. Gina brings Harold’s walker over to him. She tells him “you did a good job today...you’re quite the poet ...good job.” Harold thanks her for helping him with the walker. When he stands, he turns to her and says “I guess it’s over, is it?” She says “it’s all over,” and he smiles and leaves. At the door he meets Maggie who says “you know, I’m sorry I teased you, but I really meant it.” Harold replies “well, it was obvious you didn’t know what you were talking about.” He seems quite serious, and then gives her a big smile.

The next song that plays is *You’re the One I Love* sung by Celine Dion. Gina and I say goodbye to Dave and Miriam as they leave hand in hand. Maggie comes back into the room and tells Gina that Miriam told her “I was just thinking as I was getting ready for bed, why don’t we do this more often.” And Gina repeats what Frances had said earlier “this should last us until the next time...good for my heart.”

While Maggie talks with Bert and Flo, I’m at the front of the table where there are still three others sitting and looking at the valentines: the woman who has sat at the front of the table, and Frances and Alice at the side of the table. I tell them they can take a valentine to their room if they’d like. I ask Frances “you found a nice one?” and she replies “they’re all nice.” I say “I think sometimes children have them in their classes, so these are ones they can give a bunch of other people, other kids, in their class...that would be a good idea, too, wouldn’t it?” Frances replies “and it’s children love them anyway, don’t they?” We talk about one of the valentines that says “puppy love,” and

Frances comments “it means you don’t know what you’re doing.” We keep looking at different valentines and reading them out loud. Frances says “it’s always fun when you’re around.” I tell Alice she can take some valentines with her if she’d like, and then say “you’re right, it’s fun when you’re around, Frances.” Frances says “well, I was thinking the same thing about you...you initiate it, think it out and do the work.” I say “thank you.” She continues “you always stop and ask somebody how they are and all that stuff...oh, don’t thank me.” She reads from one of the valentines “best friends always.” I ask her if she has a best friend, and she replies “well, if it’s all the same to you, I’ll count you among them.” I say “I don’t mind, that would be wonderful.” Frances says “I haven’t been here long enough to have best friends. I only moved here a few months ago.” I say “oh, you did?” And she says “yes. You’re welcome here anytime.”

Maggie’s conversation with Flo and Bert has been happening at the same time as my conversation with the three women. Bert has his arm around Flo. Flo shows Maggie a valentine she’s holding, and Maggie says ““from me to you’...do you want to keep it?” Flo leans forward to give it to Maggie, but Maggie says “no, you can keep it. You might want to give it to someone you love.” As she says this, she makes an exaggerated wink and nods towards Bert. Then Maggie says to Bert “oh, did you give it to her?” Bert replies “no, she has another love.” Maggie says “does she...I don’t think so.” Both Flo and Bert laugh. Maggie says “you two are pretty happy with one another, aren’t you?” Bert replies “yes, we are.” Maggie says “that’s really nice to see.” Bert says “long ways apart.” Maggie tells them “that’s good...makes life filled with happiness.” Bert turns to Maggie and says “I felt all these things away” as he raises his hand like he’s pushing something away. Maggie asks “a little bit lost, maybe?” Then Bert moves his hand in a

smooth line and says “when she came along, everything seemed to smooth right out. I never thought I’d feel this. In a small town, you don’t do that.” Maggie asks him about the small town where he lived. Then she turns to Flo and asks her “and how did you feel when you met Bert?” She replies “he’s a very nice man.” Bert looks at her and says “you never told me that.” Flo responds “I don’t tell you everything.” They laugh together. Then Maggie says “you both helped each other...because you both look like you’re full of candles...you’ve got a glow there.” Bert moves his hand to his heart and says “I don’t know how to explain it...I never had the same feeling.” Maggie tells him “we’re happy for you...that’s nice...gives us all hope, eh?” Bert says “thank you very much.” Maggie says goodbye with “all righty...well, you have a great day...both of you.” Bert replies “we will.” As they leave, Flo turns to her and says “it’s just a good friendship.”

Interviews

I held the following interviews around the haiku sessions:

- with Maggie, the co-facilitator and chaplain (after Session 1 and after Session 2);
- with Gina, a nurse and researcher in the long-term care facility who ran one of the video cameras (after Session 1 and after Session 2);
- with Maggie and Gina together (a week after Session 2);
- with Roy, a volunteer from the community who ran the other video camera (after Session 2); and
- with Dave, a family member whose wife lives on the secure dementia unit (a week after Session 2).

All of these participants attended both of the haiku sessions, and their perspectives added to my own as participant-researcher.

During one of the conversations, Maggie asked the question “why does this group work?” And then she commented “I want to take the wheels off the group and see ‘**how** does it function?’... ‘**how** does this happen?’” There is no single answer. Yet the following discussion might illuminate some of the contributing elements.

One of the first things the persons with dementia encounter when entering the meeting room is how it looks. Gina commented “when I walked in and I saw it, and the sunlight coming in, and the yellow flowers...I thought ‘oh, this is lovely’...The setting right away just looked special. It was very inviting.” She wondered if the residents might have been cued to relating it to past experience, such as “this is a social, we’re at a party, or we’re going to play cards, or we’re going to have dinner.” She asked Maggie if these

cues were used just as hospitality, and Maggie replied “no, because it works...and the same thing with the music.”

When we discussed the sensory objects that are provided as prompts, Maggie commented on their importance: “what’s on the altar of the table is **extremely** important. So many of them were watching what was on the table.” Gina observed that she could see Maggie “using almost every opportunity there was to bring in the flowers, the senses...the hearing of the music, the smelling of the flowers.” But she also noted that Maggie took her lead from the people in the group in using an opportunity that arose, rather than trying to stage it or set it up. Gina said “I thought that’s probably key to the facilitation.” For some of the persons with dementia, the objects provide a way for them to participate, even if they are not part of the group conversation. For example, Miriam examined the tissue box in the first session, placed a pine cone on top of it, and later placed the haiku cards in it. Gina recalled that Miriam said “now, where do these go?” before she put the cards in the box. In the second session, Miriam held several valentines in her hand most of the time. Maggie commented that Miriam “does better when she has something in her hand to manipulate.” This was also stated by Dave who said she seems to find picking up the objects and feeling them “soothing.”

Although the objects (such as the mittens or the valentines) change from session to session as the theme changes, there are some constants. Maggie always uses “the **same** tablecloth” which is brightly coloured and made of cotton. As well, she said that the candle is “the gathering point,” and that “lighting the candle really kind of says ‘there’s a spiritual presence here, you know, there’s something undefinable going on in this group, and we’re going to belong to that.’” Gina said “the prayer to me lends a sacredness

too...I get a sense there's almost a promise." She also wondered if the prayer, similar to prayer in a spiritual setting such as a church or a synagogue, helps to establish "a sense of the norms that go with that behaviour." Maggie replied "I don't have very many 'poophead' moments in the group, and I wondered about that... because there is very little acting out in the group."

Another key consideration is that participants hold hands during the opening and closing prayer. Early on in Soul Sessions, Maggie incorporated this when she realized "how little they actually held hands." She feels this is now an important part of the session.

...There's something about holding hands that takes them [Maggie makes a *whoosh* sound]...that takes them right in. It's like they **wake up**... "okay, I remember this." So it's the tactile remembrance of "**I belong** to this group, we hold hands, that's part of what we do."...And the prayer is just to kind of focus us on being part of the group, and the pleasure that being part of the group will bring, and bless whatever happens in the group. And then at the end, [the prayer is] to say "thank you for this." Again, it's the opening and closing, and I think it **really** has to be physical for them in order for them to remember. But I've so often seen...you light the candle, and then you hold hands, and it's like [she makes a *whoosh* sound again] they **arrive**.

Music plays an important part in Soul Sessions. Maggie noted that in the second session "everyone but Arthur sang today. Every last person. That's really nice." She also mentioned that she tries to get "the same recordings...in the same voice they would have heard in the 50's or 60's. I try to get the same artists...so it's going to pop open their memories." Gina observed that the group seems to acknowledge Maggie not only as a leader, but also as a part of the group since they feel free to ask her questions too. Gina attributes a lot of this to the singing: "when a song comes on, [Maggie] sings." Dave also saw the music as important:

There were some people that are not going to participate, because they can't. But you could see by looking at...observing their faces and their eyes that they were engaged...and enjoying it. And then you did have the music, and that was an important thing...And you played some really good stuff. You know, I really enjoyed that.

All of these things—sensory objects, tablecloth, candle, holding hands, prayer and music—help to establish a familiarity for the participants. And these things also invite them to connect to their senses. Maggie asks “don't you think that someone's sensory education needs to be important? And what's left for people with dementia?”

Both of the haiku sessions were videotaped. Maggie noticed that “Flo was acutely aware of the camera at first...but after they [Gina and Roy] were introduced, they didn't seem aware of them at all. They didn't seem anxious.” She felt that “the two camera people melted away. Really we were just happening as we always do—without too much worry.” In contrast, Dave attributed some of Miriam's reaction to the presence of the camera: “it may have been the video...the camera...that she was right in front of the camera. It distracted her.” Indeed, when I reviewed both of the videos, it appeared that Miriam was aware of the camera on and off throughout the session. It looked like she was staring directly at the camera. Whether she was aware of being filmed, or whether she noticed the person standing beside the camera would be difficult to know.

In their separate interviews, both Gina and Roy talked about what it was like for them. Roy said “I found it interesting. And you sort of think as you go along too...you know, what sort of answers would you toss into the pot.” Gina talked about the time that she participated during the poem-making process: “So, it was hard for me at the end when you were doing the poems not to step in, because I could just see that that poem

was there, and that she [one of the participants] loved it.” She added “so, yes, you want to be part of it. It’s hard being on the periphery.”

An aspect of the sessions that Gina commented on was consent.

The sense...gets back to what they want to do...like the man who wanted to leave and left...it’s giving consent in a different kind of way. He felt comfortable enough to get up and leave and was not cajoled into staying. He was expressing desire not to continue to participate at that moment which is his right regardless of any signed consents and that choice was respected.

She noted that although consent to participate had been obtained from the person with legal authority for the person with dementia, that it still seemed significant to her that Maggie checked things again “in the moment.”

Typically, you gain consent from the person to participate...that’s typical research protocol. If you can’t get it, you go to the proxy....That’s fine to set it up [consent ahead of time], but it means nothing in the moment...for example, [Maggie asked] “is it okay about the cameras?”

As well, there were several individuals for whom consent had been obtained who chose not to participate when they were asked just prior to the session. Their choice was respected.

Both Maggie and Gina talked about what happens when something is disclosed within the group. Maggie referred specifically to a disclosure by Frances during the second session.

Her comment about the schoolteacher kissing her, and “I’ll tell you now because he’s dead.” That was a little shocking....But I don’t want to forget it because there was more to that story, not that we would do that in a group...but that came out in the group. And so it made me aware.

Gina commented that part of the safety in the group might happen because participants “are free to tell us as much or as little as [they] want...and there’s no pestering.” She added that “it’s not about **us** learning about you, it’s about **you** participating in whatever

way you want.” I was concerned about this particular issue, because it seemed to raise an ethical question of whether or not any follow-up was required. Maggie told me that disclosure had happened before in the group, and that as their chaplain she held the awareness of what had been said in the group when she ministered to them outside of the group. She felt that to have their story heard and therefore witnessed was the greater good, rather than going back to probe the person with dementia about something they may not recall again, or they may not be able to talk about due to communicative limitations. She spoke about Frances’s story, as well as other deep sharing that had occurred in a Soul Session focusing on Remembrance Day.

But it was also maybe very sacred for her to say that...you don’t know whether she **ever** stated that before. Arthur stating about the things that happened during the war: “we never spoke about those things.” And then somebody said “no, **we** never did either” [and] “my husband didn’t”...they were speaking about the things not spoken. You don’t have to go to those things, but just to acknowledge that somebody’s had the wherewithal to admit that those not-spoken things exist, and that they’ve carried those things...to be **heard** in that way is **huge**...that you’ve carried a weight all your life [that] you’ve never dared express.

Maggie acknowledged that one of her challenges as facilitator is how to focus attention on the group at the same time as maintaining engagement with individuals who need more one-on-one attention.

Somewhere there’s a balance between skating with the group and engaging with an individual, otherwise the group would stall....You want to build *communitas*⁹ in the group. You want the group to have a through thread and also have a sense of excitement and purpose, and all of that **while** not losing anyone.

⁹ *Communitas* is an intense community spirit. It occurs when individuals “are during the seclusion period ‘neither here nor there’; they are subjected to the rest of the community and treated as equals to one another, creating a generic bond and a sentiment of ‘humankindness’ between them” (Deflem, 1991, p. 14-15).

Gina noticed as well that for some individuals “their abilities might be hidden, might be silent, might need different stimulus, more one-on-one,” and therefore attention to their *non-verbal responses* was critical. Maggie agrees.

...when you start to watch for the words, even counting the flickers of the eyes, how much eye contact. I just sense that Arthur has quite a sense of humour...he had “the kind of cat that everybody had.” What does that **mean**? It means all of those things...that’s why it tickles you so much.

Gina also noted the importance of the group interaction.

... because creating community in a nursing home is **no small feat**. It’s **incredibly** difficult. And I think one of the things is because with people with memory impairment, you know, how do you create the sense of **belonging** if you forget that that person was there.

For Gina, this belonging has extended beyond the sessions into her work in the long-term care facility.

I felt a connection to these people. When I see them now, I feel so connected... and I hardly go onto their [unit]. But when I do, I’m connected, you know, with Flo and Bert and Frances...and I know nothing about them from their charts. I know nothing about their past. I just know who they were in that session, and what they said.

Gina’s reflection about feeling connected echoed my own that I had recorded after the second haiku session.

They blessed me today. I felt my heart open up—not only to their warmth, but because I could feel a “shift” inside of me. I said to myself “ah, do you get it, Phil, life is about connections and commitments.” (journal entry)

I felt these connections informed me as I reviewed the transcripts and videos, and during the process of writing this thesis.

One of the constants that could help build connection from session to session is Maggie as the facilitator. Her voice and presence may provide a kind of *anchor* for the persons with dementia. Maggie shared a story that implies this may be true.

[V]ery early on when somebody said “I know you, but I don’t know who you are”...I thought that was such a true statement on that floor... [it means] that “I know you in **some** way, I know we have a connection, but I can’t place you.”

Maggie also wondered if having two facilitators in the haiku sessions may have influenced the interactions.

I think, too, having a multiple focus of two people really makes a difference. And I think your energy and my energy...they can sense we’re friends...so we have this kind of continuity between us, and I think that’s really helpful as well.

Gina also noticed there seemed to be a sense of fun in the sessions, partly because “there’s a back and forth...between [the co-facilitators].” She also identified humour as a big part of the group interactions, and felt “it’s important for the person who is facilitating to know the person and to know the era.”

Although there was a lot of humour in the haiku sessions, there were also many poignant moments. Maggie noted that discussion in the group can often veer from the theme, and she may or may not try to re-direct the group depending on what they say. She shared a story about another Soul Session.

My topic was “together,” so I had all kinds of music about being together. Well, right from the get-go, they didn’t like that...they wanted to talk about being separate, and being lonely, and being lost. And they didn’t **want** to talk about “together”...so, we’d have these songs and then this counterpoint. And one woman started to cry and was saying “I’m **so** unhappy here.” Well, the group actually said “don’t worry, we’re here with you, and we understand, and we feel this too...we’re here, and we’re your friends now, and you’re part of our family”...and **they** said it!

Gina observed that sometimes individuals were able to think abstractly (for example, the remark by Frances that *dough* is a nickname for money), and at other times may not be able to do so.

I think what is so key for people with dementia is that we don’t put everyone in the same box...and we don’t say “okay, they are all concrete thinkers, they all

have impaired communication”... because then we go down to that level.... You’re looking at a room full of people who have varying abilities.

There is an openness to participation that Gina noticed.

[Maggie] didn’t see it as “oh, she doesn’t get it” or “oh, you’re wrong”...but [she held a] yearning to see things from their point of view. That is very resident-centred and wonderful.

Indeed, Maggie admits “I go in expecting this rich symbolic language. I mean, I go in **expecting** that!” For example, during the second session when Frances said “thank you for taking your time with us,” Maggie felt that Frances may have also been saying “[thank you for] taking your time slowly, not rushing us.” Maggie and I had talked about the pace of the first session, and felt that we had shared too many poems at the beginning. Therefore, it was a conscious decision to open the second session with more music and fewer haiku.

Like the music that was chosen for the session, the haiku were selected for what might resonate with the past experiences of the participants. Maggie said “I don’t think they had an *aha moment*, but it built over time.” She added that because haiku do not have the emotion identified, that participants are sometimes able to project their own feelings onto it. Although accessing those feelings may require a prompting question or story, the haiku allows for many different responses. Maggie was often the person who recorded the phrases that would later be used in creating poems.

I would relish what was going on so much I would forget to write, and then there would be a string of works that I felt moved by. When I was reading them back out to people...the huge power of them.

She mentioned that she tries to use the *exact* words because “there’s a power in the phrase that they have actually spoken.” As to the non sequiturs, Maggie said “I find them so rich with a kind of poetic image of reality.”

Dave noted that “haiku has impact and [the participants] might have difficulty relating to something more complex.” This may be true for both the reading and later the collaborative writing of the poems. Similarly, Gina said “I don’t know that [haiku] could be any better suited...for the amount of time, for the interaction of the group,” and also because the participants “don’t have to speak in a full sentence.” There is an apparent ease in the group, even though the facilitator(s) may be working quite hard to direct the session and stay open to spontaneity. Dave commented on this ease.

One of the good things is that [the participants] don’t have to do anything physically, or don’t have to write anything. And they can sit, enjoy the music, and enjoy the participation. It’s easy for them. And that’s just what they need.

The words and phrases by the participants are often validated repeatedly during the session: when they’re spoken, when they’re written down, when they’re re-read before poem-making, and again at the end of the session if they appear in one of the haiku. Dave commented on the importance of this.

I think that another thing was that whatever people came up with was written down, so that when you put the poem together, people could say “that’s **my** contribution.” So you’re getting great involvement...Well, the thing was they could see it...I know one gentleman is hard of hearing...I don’t know what the hearing skills of the others are... or their memory skills. But it was all written...all the different ideas that came out were written up on the [flipchart paper.] And so they could see it, and that was important. They could hear it and see it. If they can’t take it in, they could see it.

Maggie spoke of her delight when participants shared something in the group: “it’s a pleasure. And, I mean, I’m just **thrilled** when somebody says something.” She also spoke of her intention (that she makes prior to the session) to hold the group with kindness.

You know, there was that little saying that as kids “if you love someone, their name is different in your mouth”...the words are different in your mouth...you’re holding them in your mouth and you’re writing them down, and saying “oh, these are so wonderful,” and “**you** did this.”...When I read the poems, I said “oh,

Frances, that's from you" or "Jackie, that's from you"... you know, attributing it back, of ownership and of participation in the poem.

From her experience over the past four years, Maggie has learned to anticipate the possibility of deep sharing in the group. She remarks "out of their words came these incredibly juicy pieces of writing, just filled with heart." And then she adds "I guess you have to believe in their capacity to delight."

From my experience in Soul Sessions, Maggie's belief in "their capacity to delight" appears to be the bedrock upon which the program rests. Her belief permeates the environment: she holds a kind regard for all participants and a deep acceptance of their contributions. I've chosen the following examples to illustrate these assertions.

Her regard for participants seems to be a constant dance between open-ended prompting of the group, and a more direct questioning of one person. At the beginning of Session 1, she asks the group "did you ever have a cat?" After most of the participants have shared a story, she turns her attention directly to Arthur and asks him "Arthur, did you ever have a cat?" and then asks him again more softly "did you ever have a cat, Arthur?" Arthur was not able to participate in the same way that the others were, so Maggie made a special effort to include him by having him sit near her and by asking him questions with one-on-one attention. This kind attention is reciprocated by those in the group. In Session 2, I felt there was a *joie de vivre* and a willingness to share much more openly than in the first session: perhaps because the topic of *love* was more personal, and perhaps because the second session followed so closely after the first and allowed a familiarity. After Maggie had asked participants a question about kissing, Frances had asked her directly "yes, I was wondering about you. How do **you** manage it all?" I believe that this kind mutuality happened because of hospitality within the group.

In one of her interviews, Maggie referred to *communitas* where everyone is treated as equals and there is a kindness between individuals. Her intention is to create this kind of sacred space in the group. I have witnessed her employing all manner of facilitation skills and multisensory pathways to try and build this kind of deep connection, but the heart of the matter is that she sees the possibility of it before she sees it happen.

Maggie's belief in the possibility of building *communitas* is mirrored by her belief in the possibility of inviting deep conversation. She herself admits that "I go in expecting this rich symbolic language. I mean, I go in **expecting** that!" And all responses are validated whether they appear to follow the discussion or not. In Session 1, when Maggie asked Harold if he could hear what was going on, he replied "well, I haven't heard much since...just chitter-chatter." She responded "that's right. Well that will be about it." Again in Session 1, when Maggie asked what you might wear to go out and play in the snow, Frances answered "shorts." After clarifying with Frances that she meant "shorts in the snow," Maggie commented "you were tough. The British never gave in." Although others in the group had shrugged their shoulders or rolled their eyes at this response, Maggie accepted it and moved along with the discussion. I wondered if Maggie's acceptance of all kinds of answers, including what appeared to be non sequiturs, allowed the group to experience enough emotional safety to risk sharing more deeply. In Session 2, when Maggie is talking about how special a first kiss can be, Bert commented "the last one...the last is good too." When Maggie repeated his answer "the last is good too, is it," he added "it takes in a bit of territory." From across the table Miriam pointed her finger towards Bert, laughed and then said to him "don't you worry now." Would these interactions have occurred if Maggie had not been accepting of responses such as

wearing shorts in the snow? I don't believe so. I am reminded that the German word *selig* is the root of the English words *silly* and *holy*.

In her role as coordinator of the ongoing program, Maggie brings a continuity to the group. As she mentioned in one of her interviews, Maggie understands that the participants recognize her in some way as one resident had told her "I know you, but I don't know who you are." It was into this setting of familiarity that I was invited first as a guest poet and later as a researcher as well.

I felt welcomed into the group from the first session onward, but I was challenged by all that was unfamiliar to me—especially being with persons with dementia. The nature of conversation is different as a person with dementia does not often initiate their own responses. They do respond to prompting questions, but even then the responses are often fragments. So, for me, the usual cues I depend on for interaction were missing. During the sessions from 2004 to 2006 that preceded the two research sessions, I followed Maggie's lead as she asked prompting questions and validated responses. As a guest, I knew that I was bringing my expertise and enthusiasm about haiku and that I would not be solely responsible for leading the group. Even with the reassurance of working with another facilitator and discussing beforehand what might happen in a session, I had one experience of feeling *lost*. It was frightening.

I'm not sure if this reaction was because this was the first floor for the second round of sessions, or because of my emotional reaction to the members of the group. I do recall that I did not take the few moments that I usually did to centre myself (prayer-wise) before entering the group. By the time we came to the end of the session where we were writing the group haiku, I felt ungrounded and lost. With having Maggie co-facilitating this part of the group, I was able to do the writing of the haiku on the flipchart instead of helping to compose. This feeling lasted until the session ended and we began to clear the room. Afterwards, I discussed this with Maggie and we decided to try and come up with a signal if I needed help in subsequent sessions. (personal notes from August 2005)

The restrained tone of these notes does not capture at all the feeling of being lost and not knowing what to do. This was the only time that I experienced this during any of the sessions, and I believe the trust I held in Maggie helped me continue despite feeling unsure of myself. There were joys in participating in Soul Sessions, but I don't want to gloss over the challenges that someone coming from outside the field of dementia care may encounter in their interactions with persons with dementia.

Before the two research sessions in early 2007, I had participated in three sessions as a guest poet. The third session had happened almost one year earlier, and had been particularly vibrant. However, as I entered the research sessions I was now both researcher and guest poet. The responsibility of being the researcher weighed heavily upon me. One of the reasons was because I was new to conducting research. I noted in my journal between the first and second research session: "I find it a real challenge to live in the spontaneity of research."

However, the second session felt brighter right from the start. Perhaps it was the yellow flowers and the sun shining in the window that helped. Perhaps it was the topic of love that opened up such lively interactions. And perhaps it was because the previous session had occurred only two weeks prior, and I and the other participants were now acquainted with each other. I felt happy to be there. I had somehow jumped right into "the spontaneity of research" and found it enlivening.

In the middle of Session 2, I knew that the material from the two sessions would be enough. They contrasted with each other in some ways, but both sessions showed such vibrancy. The material was gathered, and I accepted the challenge to showcase this

vibrancy through my writing so others could catch glimpses of what happened in the sacred space of Soul Sessions.

CHAPTER 3: AFTER

I finish my tea
the cup still full
of warmth

Philomene Kocher

Reflections

Recently I visited with my aunt who has dementia. My visits are limited because of distance, and I've seen her only once a year for the past several years. She has lived in a long-term care facility for the past seven years, and has increasingly required assistance.

Two years ago I visited her with my sister who, during our conversation, called her "my favourite aunt." My aunt immediately put her index finger and thumb close together to indicate a little thing and said "oh, you probably mean a favourite ant." This was after I had met persons with dementia through Soul Sessions, and I recognized my aunt's play on words to make a joke for us.

Last year when I visited, we were able to carry on a conversation, although I noticed that she often repeated herself. She recognized me, though, and I remember our time together as very sweet.

Last week, she was different again. I'm not sure that she recognized either me or my sisters. We took turns holding her hand, meeting her gaze, and smiling with her. Her conversation did not appear to be coherent, but she spoke with us and laughed regardless. She had been a school teacher for most of her life, and I wondered if this was why she was still able to read things to us: the words that appeared on the television through closed captioning, the words that appeared on the picture on her wall of "Jesus walking on the water," and the words that appeared on a coffee mug where each letter of her name began a word or words that described her. Some of the words were "mesmerizing," "fascinating," and "a true star." She read her mug over and over again. Her brow was

furrowed as if she was trying very hard, and perhaps our visit extended too long.

Although as we left, she knew that she was collecting kisses and counted them.

My aunt was different—and so was I. My encounters with persons with dementia over the past several years have somehow softened me. Two years ago, after our visit I barely made it to the elevator before breaking down in tears. I wanted my aunt to be the way she was before dementia. She is my mother's younger sister, the only surviving member of her immediate family. We became close friends after my mother's death, and I remember her vitality and independence: visiting her friends who were confined at home, working at the homeless shelter, and so independently looking after her own home. Last week I tried to meet her where she lives now—a woman with dementia who depends on others to care for her.

Was my grief two years ago only about her, or was I also facing my own fear of vulnerability? I faced this fear early in this project as well.

When I first went to [the long-term care facility], I was startled by the unfamiliarity of the place and the vulnerability of the people who lived there. Now, after several years of periodic visits and with Maggie's mentoring, I have a comfort level there....Perhaps an encounter with vulnerability in another is always an encounter with my own vulnerability. (journal entry)

I am aware that I can hardly begin to understand the daily challenges that face a caregiver for someone with dementia. My visits to the long-term care facility have allowed me glimpses of these challenges. My visits have also allowed me to learn more about how to be with someone with dementia. I was able to attend a training session at the long-term care facility on *resident-centred care*, and learn about what this kind of care looks like in a person-to-person encounter. I was also able to watch others with more experience in dementia care as they modeled this kind of person-centred interaction. This knowledge

helped me immeasurably during my research. My experiences in Soul Sessions have given me a perspective of possibility that I did not hold before, and a trust in personhood knowing it withstands even dementia.

A passage that I read recently speaks to me on many levels. The musings are similar to my own as a child, and they also hint at the shift in perspective that I have experienced—from one of anxiety to one of possibility.

I can remember, as a child, lying on the living room floor, looking up at the ceiling, and trying to imagine our house being upside down. I would then be able to walk across the ceiling, and there would be much more room for me to move around. The furniture would all be stuck high overhead, out of the way. And I would have to step up gingerly, over foot-tall transoms, to pass through doorways. It was fun, even then, to invent a new way of doing things and to see the world a bit differently. (Thorp, 2000, p. 22)

This change in perspective means that I can look forward with more possibility, and I can also look back at my memories with a more spacious view. As this research project nears completion, I have pondered where my experiences in Soul Sessions might find resonance with my past experiences. There are three arcs of resonance: poetry at age 9, music at age 16, and a classroom experience at age 18. These memories relate directly to what I consider three of the most important elements of Soul Sessions: the poetry, the multisensory cues which include music, and the hospitality established within the group.

Memory 1. Age 9. I am in Grade 3 in a three-room school. There are three grades in the classroom, and my younger sister is in Grade 1. There are probably 10 students in each grade. One of the things we do is Recitation. I am to memorize a poem from the reader and then take a turn standing at the front of the classroom reciting it. In the reader, there is a picture of a young girl standing beside a door. The poem is Some One by Walter de la Mare.

It's strange that I can remember the picture in the book and at least the first part of the poem, but not the actual experience of reciting the poem to the class. What surprises me is how much this poem flows once I have the first two lines. Except for a few words that I

seem to have adapted but that still fit the rhythm, the first part of the poem was the same word for word as the version I found recently on PoemHunter.com.

Some One

Some one came knocking
At my wee, small door;
Someone came knocking;
I'm sure-sure-sure;
I listened, I opened,
I looked to left and right,
But nought there was a stirring
In the still dark night;
Only the busy beetle
Tap-tapping in the wall,
Only from the forest
The screech-owl's call,
Only the cricket whistling
While the dewdrops fall,
So I know not who came knocking,
At all, at all, at all.

In Grade 4, Public Speaking took the place of Recitation. We wrote short speeches, memorized them, and delivered them to the class. And although I remember the topics of some of those speeches—shoes, zebras, Bermuda—I don't remember any lines of them other than the joke I used to open my speech about zebras (what is black and white and red all over: a sun-burned zebra).

Most of the participants in Soul Sessions would have memorized poems as I had in school. Their reciting of the poem *The Highwayman* along with Maggie when she had first read it to them was her catalyst for exploring poetry further, and for eventually inviting me to the group. Might these early encounters with poetry (anchored through memorization) be important for building a foundation for and an appreciation of poetry that can extend beyond the school years? I believe so. And this importance is not only so that poems can be recited in later years, but because poetry allows the development of a

metaphorical understanding. As previously mentioned in the literature review, Elliot Eisner (2002) describes work in the arts as a way to develop “a disposition to tolerate ambiguity, to explore what is uncertain” (p. 10). Metaphorical understanding that allows room for ambiguity and uncertainty may provide balance for the increasing specificity of technology. And for persons with dementia, metaphorical language may represent a doorway to communication. As Tom Kitwood noted: “the stories people tell about events in their past are often rich in metaphor related to their present situation” (Kitwood, 1997, p. 73).

Memory 2. Age 16. I am a big fan of the singer Olivia Newton-John. I play her cassette over and over again. I love singing but do not have a facility for remembering lyrics, so I memorize the song by reading the miniscule liner notes along with the music.

I often listen to the radio and recently heard one of these songs in her original version. I sang along to the music and realized I could remember the lyrics even though I had not heard them in years. Besides the pleasure of singing, I also remembered a glimpse of myself as a teenager: *I am in the kitchen helping my Mom get supper ready. The radio is on and the windows are steaming from the potatoes cooking on the stove.* This does not happen with all old songs, but I wondered if these ones in particular stirred both lyrics and memory because they had been rehearsed so often.

In my elementary school years, singing was the only form of music instruction that was offered. A visiting music teacher gave lessons classroom by classroom. There are some songs that I still remember such as *Gypsy Rover, the Paddle Song, and Un Canadien Errant*. Again, perhaps this recall happens because of the extensive rehearsals that often preceded school performances. The high school I attended did not have a music program.

In Soul Sessions, many of the participants are able to sing along to the songs and seem to enjoy doing so. Those who don't sing often keep the rhythm by tapping their hands on the table or moving their feet. Maggie makes an effort to obtain a version of the song that features a singer they might recognize (such as Elvis Presley with *Love Me Tender*). This link to both lyrics and memory serves in this program to invite connection: partly group connection as individuals sing together, and partly individual connection to their past experience. The research by Anne Basting and John Killick (2003, as cited in Bortnick, 2005) that was previously mentioned found that “in looking at those with dementia, for many seniors it is music and the other arts that continue to hold out the chance for continued cognitive involvement and emotional stimulation when other modalities become problematic” (p. 210).

Memory 3. Age 18. I am in a Grade 13 Biology class taught by a teacher new to teaching and to the school. He is enthusiastic about teaching and asks us questions to invite discussion. Rarely does any student put up their hand to volunteer an answer. One day he closes the door of the classroom and stands in front of his desk. He tells us he is frustrated by the lack of response in the classroom and asks us why we don't participate. One student tells him that it's because a wrong answer means that the student will be teased about it outside of the class. The teacher invites us to risk answering as a way to learn and to encourage each other. From then on, there is a fun atmosphere where wrong answers as well as right answers just become part of the discussion. Now when he asks questions, several hands go up.

I don't remember much of the biology material, but I have always remembered how this teacher changed the classroom atmosphere from fearful to welcoming. His enthusiasm and hospitality invited student participation.

In Soul Sessions, participation is invited through prompting questions and is validated through repeating the response or commenting on it. This builds rapport between Maggie and the participants and often also between the participants. This

mirrors the understanding that teaching methods that provide “a relaxed, trusting, mutually respectful, informal, warm, collaborative, and supportive learning environment” (Sipe, 2001, as cited in Kerka, 2002) are more conducive to learning at all ages. Particularly in adult education, this kind of welcoming environment encourages the learners themselves to draw upon and share from their own experiences, skills, and values.

My experiences in Soul Sessions changed me. I was invited into a welcoming environment where poetry acted as a catalyst for making connections. Going into these sessions, I was aware that the intention of the program was to invite connection so that the persons with dementia could, at least during the time of the session, connect to their memories and to others in the group. What I had not anticipated was that the sessions themselves would act as a catalyst upon me. My perspective shifted around how I viewed persons with dementia. I experienced a relationship with them, and through this relationship witnessed their capacities shining through their storytelling despite their limitations. This deepened my understanding of personhood. My perspective also shifted around how I viewed the arts. Prior to these sessions, art-making was more of a private endeavour even when I might have participated in classes or workshops. Soul Sessions showed me the capacity of the arts to foster community. This deepened my understanding of relationship and belonging. And, finally, my perspective shifted around my capacity for ambiguity. I have previously mentioned how I felt reluctant to move from my familiarity with a poetry reading or workshop setting into the unfamiliarity of Soul Sessions, and my challenge with the “spontaneity of research.” But the acceptance I received from my co-facilitator and the other participants allowed me to immerse myself

in the experience and go with the flow. I was still aware of my roles as poet and researcher *and* I was also fully present as a participant. Paradoxically, easing up on my role-bound identity deepened my sense of self.

This connection-building capacity of arts activities has been described by Rosling and Kitchen (1992, as cited in Bortnick, 2005) as “a bridge of communication and interaction” between “the external world of things and events...[and] the inner world of senses, feelings, and meanings” (p. 209). However, collaborative art-making extends this even further, so that “participants develop relational skills and emotional intelligence, two attributes that are finally being recognized as crucial to lifelong success” (Cooper & Sjostrom, 2006). The arts represent an incredibly valuable resource for helping us make meaning of our lives, and can influence how we see, know, and experience the world. I believe that an integration of arts education into all levels of formal education from elementary school through high school to college and university is crucial. Educator Parker Palmer (1993) describes the possibility for education in this way.

Ultimately, an ethical education is one that creates a capacity for connectedness in the lives of students....Critical thinking can be taught as a mode of citizen participation, and tolerance of ambiguity can be taught as a way of listening to others without losing one’s voice. But if community is not a foundation stone of the educational enterprise, these skills quickly degenerate into the capacity for disconnectedness. (p. xviii-xix)

I can think of no better way to foster this “capacity for connectedness” than through arts education. I feel it is particularly crucial for the arts to be included in the early school years because it builds foundational skills not only for future learning, but for navigating the complexities of life that follow graduation.

And one such complexity that occurs most often in the elder years is dementia. As the demographics change over the next decades, the number of persons with dementia is

expected to increase significantly. Therefore, pioneering programs like Soul Sessions and TimeSlips have much to offer in building an understanding of what works and an awareness of what is possible. The advisory board for the recently established *Society for the Arts in Dementia Care* includes representatives from the fields of medicine, psychology, poetry, arts education, art therapy, music therapy, and research. Clearly, there is a growing interest in exploring the arts as a way of fostering the “capacity for connectedness” with persons with dementia.

Soul Sessions is a spiritual care program. Although the following recommendations are based on this specific program, I believe they represent important elements to consider in both dementia care and arts education. (1) Before the program, set your intention to be open to the possibility of connection. (2) Create a safe environment. This includes building some familiarity into the program by having it in the same place each time, and by having a format that is generally consistent. It also includes creating a *no-fail* environment where individuals can feel free to contribute. (3) Invite and validate participation. Prompting questions (both general questions directed to the group and specific questions directed to an individual) allows the persons with dementia to respond without having to initiate the interactions. Repeating responses, building on them with comments or further questions, or writing them down are all ways of validation. (4) Use multisensory cues. Consider incorporating the use of as many of senses as possible into the program. Music is a powerful avenue to engagement, particularly with songs that the participants can recognize. (5) Acknowledge both the joys and the challenges of being with persons with dementia.

The person-centred approach advocated by Tom Kitwood (1997) influenced the development of Soul Sessions. Despite the neurological impairment and the physical and behavioural challenges, he saw the whole person behind the pathology. We are invited to do the same.

Memory may have faded, but something of the past is known; identity remains intact, because others hold it in place; thoughts may have disappeared, but there are still interpersonal processes; feelings are expressed and meet a validating response; and if there is a spirituality, it will most likely be of the kind that Buber describes, where the divine is encountered in the depth of the I-Thou relating.
(p. 69)

Ripples

Starting after the first haiku session in the autumn of 2004, there has been a *ripple effect* from the haiku sessions. The ripples began in the long-term care facility, moved into the dementia care and haiku communities, and now extend to a much wider audience.

After the first haiku session, the collaborative haiku from the group were printed on large cards and placed on display on the dementia unit. In this way, they were shared with other residents, staff, and family members. Later, a *poetry book* was created using a binder and plastic pages to contain the haiku poetry created by the participants, and also to contain many poems (both classic and contemporary) that had been used in other Soul Session programs. Family members were invited to read from the poetry book in dialogue with the person with dementia, or for themselves.

One of the most visible ripples has been the inclusion of three haiku on murals that were created for the garden that opens from the dementia unit. Large plywood panels featuring brightly painted pictures were created through a project that invited developmentally challenged adults from a local art studio to work with the persons with dementia on the dementia unit. The panels were mounted on the wooden fence that surrounds the garden. An open house celebrating the artists and their work brought attention from the local community. Once again, the words of the persons with dementia were validated—this time in a very public way by being displayed in the garden for many to see and enjoy.

Maggie and I have shared selected haiku at two conferences: a dementia care conference in May 2006, the Second International Conference on Creative Expression, Communication and Dementia (which featured many arts-based activities and therapies for persons with dementia); and the annual Haiku Canada conference in May 2007. The haiku touched audience members at both conferences as revealed to us by their comments after our presentation.

We also applied for and received a grant from a community foundation to fund publication of a small book of the collaborative haiku. This book, *signs of spring: haiku poems by persons with dementia*, was published in late 2007. The intention behind this project was to celebrate the words of persons with dementia—words through which we glimpse the stories and memories that are retained despite the limitations of dementia. The language in the haiku is vibrant and sometimes luminous. We wanted to bring attention to their capacities, and to invite others to consider seeing persons with dementia in a different way. When the book was ready, we held a book launch on the secure dementia floor to which staff and family members were invited. All residents on the floor received a copy of the book, and those individuals who had been part of the haiku sessions also received an inscribed medallion. Several of the Soul Session Poets agreed to read from the book of poems for others at this gathering. Special recognition was given to the artist whose painting graced the cover of the book. We celebrated with ice cream sundaes. In this way, we tried to validate once again the contribution of the Soul Session Poets. This little book continues to find its way into the world through the families and staff of the long-term care facility, and through the local community as well as the dementia care, health care, education, spiritual care, and haiku communities (both

nationally and internationally). About 800 copies have been distributed. From the many comments received, only a few questioned the quality of the haiku or the authorship of the poems. The overwhelming response from others has been to appreciate the poems for being able to touch them so deeply. Many replies were received from individuals who knew someone with dementia, and the wit and wisdom evident in the poems may have resonated more poignantly because of this relationship. One person commented that she felt as if the poems allowed her “to see into their soul,” perhaps glimpsing her own sacred interiority as well.

In reviewing my journal, I see how much this process challenged me: Was it possible to write haiku in a group? Could the collaborative haiku stand on their own without the surrounding context of the stories themselves? Were the haiku any good?

In the haiku communities to which I belong, there is a lot of emphasis on “quality” of haiku. This also challenged me to see that the haiku, which may or may not have been technically “successful,” did have a life of their own, flowing from the experience of sharing time together. (journal entry)

Haiku has been called *poetry of the moment*, and the poems captured glimpses of the stories we shared, including the story of the session itself. In this way, they are all successful. But would they be able to touch others who had not attended these sessions? Would others be able to read between the lines of the poems to hear the humour or touch the sadness or see the beauty? My wonderings reflected my own firm ideas for what constituted a *real* haiku, and my questions about the collaborative haiku were answered in different ways.

Maggie told me a story that featured the haiku about strawberries.

raiding my grandparents' garden
squishing the strawberries
as I run away

(Soul Session Poet)

One of the residents who had lived on the dementia unit had been moved to another floor when she became wheelchair-bound and was no longer at risk for wandering. She had attended Soul Sessions prior to her move, and had participated in several of the haiku sessions. Maggie met her and her daughter and was telling them about the recent haiku session. She recited to them the haiku about running barefoot in the strawberry patch. The resident was in her wheelchair and appeared to be sleeping, and her daughter was sitting beside her. When the resident heard the haiku, she put her back and laughed out loud. The story from one woman with dementia had spoken to another woman with dementia. I was moved when Maggie shared this story with me, and I realized that the haiku from Soul Sessions were finding their own way into the world and touching others along the way.

When Maggie and I presented our work to an audience of haiku poets, I wondered how this group would receive not only the novel approach of sharing haiku with persons with dementia, but also the unique haiku that were created. Here again, the haiku spoke to the audience in a profound way as shown by their comments after the presentation. In particular, several individuals told us that they themselves yearned for the kind of fun, creative, *no-fail* atmosphere that we described as integral to Soul Sessions. And others, mostly those who had known someone with dementia, were encouraged to hear that such arts-based programs were available and becoming more widespread in the field of dementia care. The audiovisual technician who had stayed after setting up the equipment for our presentation said he was touched by what we had shared and was glad he had stayed. These responses calmed my questions, and reminded me of what had first called me to haiku: its elegance and its power.

Will the ripples continue? At the present time, an article about the book of poems will soon appear in a local magazine. As well, articles describing the overall Soul Sessions program as well as the haiku sessions are forthcoming in the UK-based *Journal of Dementia Care*. Presentations are planned for administrative staff and family members at the long-term care facility where the research was conducted as a way of sharing what the research showed. And several presentations are planned for educational conferences. These efforts to share the research will hopefully add to the conversation about dementia care, and also to the conversation about the power of creative arts expression across the life span.

As a poet, I have been charmed by the power of haiku for almost two decades. I began as a solitary poet until I connected with a community of other haiku poets. My work flourished as I listened and learned during the annual Haiku Canada conferences. In one way, these gatherings were rather formal as we followed the weekend's agenda. Yet, in another way, they provided enough informal space for sharing person to person. In this welcoming and hospitable environment, year after year, I learned to stand in my personal authority and to share my poetic voice. Paul Newham is a widely recognized authority on the psychology of the human voice. What he has to say about singing could as easily describe what happened for me over the years, and what happens potentially in all expressive arts.

Ultimately, the vocalist has the answer themselves and the best gift which the healer can offer is a playful environment in which the client can discover their own method of vocal liberation. The act of play synthesizes art and science, music and medicine. (p. 169)

The persons with dementia responded in the playful environment of Soul Sessions. They voiced their stories, although sometimes fragmented, with honesty and joy. We were all

involved in sacred play. As Rosamund and Benjamin Zander describe in their book *The Art of Possibility* (2000, p. 3): “Art, after all, is about *rearranging* us, creating surprising juxtapositions, emotional openings, startling presences, [and] flight paths to the eternal.”

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APPENDICES

Letters of Information and Consent Forms

A1: Letter of Information for Person with Legal Authority for Person with Dementia for Haiku Session (videotaped)

Dear

I am writing to request your assistance in determining if <insert name> would be willing to participate in research that will explore how poetry (especially haiku poetry) may help us to connect and communicate with people with dementia. The goal of this research is to see the effects of such engagement, and to share this information with others who care for people with dementia.

I am a graduate student in the Master's of Education program at the Faculty of Education, Queen's University. This research has been cleared by the Queen's University General Research Ethics Board, and also by the Ethics Committee of <name of long-term care facility>.

In this research, I am planning to work with Chaplain Marjorie Woodbridge to share haiku poetry as part of the ongoing Soul Sessions program already in place at <name of long-term care facility>. I am planning to conduct 2 or 3 group sessions that will involve approximately 10 residents on the secure dementia floor in each session. Each session will be approximately one hour. The goal of the session is to provide stimulation and a welcoming environment to encourage connection with people with dementia. The session will be structured (opening and closing with a prayer), however the flow of the session is the responsibility of the participants. After a haiku poem is read, open-ended questions will be used to prompt discussion (for example: "what do you think is going on?" and "does this remind you of anything?"). Sensory cues such as tomatoes and strawberries may also be brought to the session. From words and phrases offered by the participants during the session, haiku poetry will be written collectively by the group, and the poems will be read out loud before the session ends.

I would like to videotape these sessions, so that I can record the conversations as well as the interactions in the group. The video and the written text from the video will be secured in a locked office, and will not be made available to anyone else except my Master's supervisor, Dr. Rebecca Luce-Kapler. These materials will be kept until my graduate studies have been completed, and then they will be destroyed.

I do not foresee any risk in their participation in this research, as the haiku sessions will be a part of the ongoing Soul Sessions program already in place at <name of long-term care facility>.

Because <insert name> may be unable to understand this letter of information and its consequence, I would like to ask for your assistance in obtaining consent for their participation. Their participation is entirely voluntary. They are free to withdraw from the

study without reasons at any point, and you may request that I do not use the parts of the written text from the video that are about them.

This research may result in various types of publications (for example, my thesis or a journal article) and presentations (for example, at a conference or teaching session). You have the option of choosing a pseudonym to replace their name, or else allowing their given name to be used.

If you have any questions about this project, please contact me at (613) 549-2811 (email: kocherp@post.queensu.ca) or my supervisor, Dr. Rebecca Luce-Kapler at (613) 533-6000 extension 77267 (email: rebecca.luce-kapler@queensu.ca). For questions, concerns or complaints about the research ethics of this study, contact the Dean of the Faculty of Education, Dr. Rosa Bruno-Jofré, (613) 533-6210 (email: brunor@educ.queensu.ca), or the Chair of the Queen's University General Research Ethics Board, Dr. Joan Stevenson, (613) 533-6288 (email: joan.stevenson@queensu.ca).

Sincerely,

Philomene Kocher

Please return ONE COPY of the consent form by <date> to:

Chaplain Marjorie Woodbridge
<name of long-term care facility>

A2: Consent Form for Videotaping (for Person with Legal Authority for Person with Dementia)

Title of the Research Study:
Connecting with People with Dementia Through Haiku Poetry

Consent Form for the Use of Videotape

Name of Participant in Haiku Session: _____

Name of Person with Legal Authority: _____

I understand that the video will not be viewed publicly.

I understand that quotes written from the video may be used in publications and presentations.

I choose one of the following options for <insert name>:

their given name may be used in identifying them

I would prefer this pseudonym be used instead of their given name

pseudonym: _____

I do not wish to have their name used, but the quote may be used

I agree to allow Philomene Kocher to use quotes written from the videotape of the haiku session for one or both of the following purposes:

1) Quotes from the Session in a
Thesis or Publication

Signature:

2) Quotes from the Session in a
Presentation

Signature:

Date:

B1: Letter of Information for Participant (chaplain, family member and staff member) for Haiku Session (videotaped) and Interview (audiotaped)

Dear

I am writing to request your participation in research that will explore how poetry (especially haiku poetry) may help to connect and communicate with people with dementia. The goal of this research is to see the effects of such engagement, and to share this information with others who care for people with dementia.

I am a graduate student in the Master's of Education program at the Faculty of Education, Queen's University. This research has been cleared by the Queen's University General Research Ethics Board, and also by the Ethics Committee of <name of long-term care facility>.

In this research, I am planning to work with Chaplain Marjorie Woodbridge to share haiku poetry as part of the ongoing Soul Sessions program already in place at <name of long-term care facility>. I am planning to conduct 2 or 3 group sessions that will involve approximately 10 individuals in each session. Each session will be approximately one hour. The goal of the session is to provide stimulation and a welcoming environment to encourage connection with people with dementia. The session will be structured (opening and closing with a prayer), however the flow of the session is the responsibility of the participants. After a haiku poem is read, open-ended questions will be used to prompt discussion (for example: "what do you think is going on?" and "does this remind you of anything?"). Sensory cues such as tomatoes and strawberries may also be brought to the session. From words and phrases offered by the participants during the session, haiku poetry will be written collectively by the group, and the poems will be read out loud before the session ends. I would like to videotape these sessions, so that I can record the conversations as well as the interactions in the group.

Also, I am planning to conduct interviews with individuals who have participated in one or more of the research sessions with haiku poetry. The interview will be approximately one hour, and there may be a second follow-up interview. You do not have to answer any questions that you find objectionable or that make you feel uncomfortable. The interview will be arranged at a time and place that is convenient for you. I would like to tape-record the interview, and then transcribe the audiotape.

The video from the haiku session (and the written text from the video) and the audiotape from the interview (and the written text from the audiotape) will be secured in a locked office, and will not be made available to anyone else except my Master's supervisor, Dr. Rebecca Luce-Kapler. These materials will be kept until my graduate studies have been completed, and then they will be destroyed.

I do not foresee any risk in your participation in this research. Your participation is entirely voluntary. You are free to withdraw from the study without reasons at any point. You may request that I do not use the parts of the written text from the video that are about you, and you may request removal of all or part of your interview data.

This research may result in various types of publications (for example, my thesis or a journal article) and presentations (for example, at a conference or teaching session). You have the option of choosing a pseudonym to replace your name, or else allowing your given name to be used.

If you have any questions about this project, please contact me at (613) 549-2811 (email: kocherp@post.queensu.ca) or my supervisor, Dr. Rebecca Luce-Kapler at (613) 533-6000 extension 77267 (email: rebecca.luce-kapler@queensu.ca). For questions, concerns or complaints about the research ethics of this study, contact the Dean of the Faculty of Education, Dr. Rosa Bruno-Jofré, (613) 533-6210 (email: brunojor@educ.queensu.ca), or the Chair of the Queen's University General Research Ethics Board, Dr. Joan Stevenson, (613) 533-6288 (email: joan.stevenson@queensu.ca).

Sincerely,

Philomene Kocher

B2: Consent Form for Videotaping for Participant (chaplain, family member and staff member)

Title of the Research Study:
Connecting with People with Dementia Through Haiku Poetry

Consent Form for the Use Of Videotape

Name of Participant: _____

I understand that the video will not be viewed publicly.

I understand that quotes written from the video may be used in publications and presentations.

I choose one of the following options:

my given name may be used in identifying me

I would prefer this pseudonym be used instead of my given name

pseudonym: _____

I do not wish to have my name used, but the quote may be used

I agree to allow Philomene Kocher to use quotes written from the videotape of the haiku session for one or both of the following purposes:

1) Quotes from the Session in a Thesis or Publication

Signature:

2) Quotes from the Session in a Presentation

Signature:

Date:

B3: Consent Form for Interview for Participant (chaplain, family member and staff member)

Title of the Research Study:
Connecting with People with Dementia Through Haiku Poetry

I have read and retained a copy of the letter of information concerning the research study “Connecting with People with Dementia Through Haiku Poetry.” All my questions have been sufficiently answered, and I am aware of the purpose and procedures of this study. Also, I have been informed that the interview will be recorded by audiotape.

I prefer the following option:

- a) I allow my given name to be used for the purposes of this study.
- b) I choose the following pseudonym to be used in place of my given name for the purposes of this study.

pseudonym: _____

I have been notified that participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw at any point during the study. I may request the removal of all or part of my interview data without any consequences to myself. I have also been told the steps that will be taken to ensure confidentiality of all information.

I am aware that if I have any questions about this project, I can contact Philomene Kocher at 613-549-2811 (email: kocherp@post.queensu.ca) or her supervisor, Dr. Rebecca Luce-Kapler at (613) 533-6000 extension 77267 (email: rebecca.luce-kapler@queensu.ca). I am also aware that for questions, concerns or complaints about the research ethics of this study, I can contact the Dean of the Faculty of Education, Dr. Rosa Bruno-Jofré, (613) 533-6210, or the Chair of the Queen’s University General Research Ethics Board, Dr. Joan Stevenson, (613) 533-6288 (email: joan.stevenson@queensu.ca).

Participant’s Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____