

Folk Schools: Slow Education for Fast Times

By

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Abstract

Folk schools are an enduring vision of nineteenth-century Danish philosopher Nikolai Severin Grundtvig. These schools for life offer non-competitive, non-vocational, residential, youth and adult education. This thesis explores the historical and contemporary folk schools of the United States and Canada, addressing a lack of scholarly writing on North American folk schools. It is framed by the question, “What is the past and present state of folk schooling in the United States and Canada with respect to people, pedagogy, philosophy, and place; and what opportunities exist for folk schools to enact social change in today’s world?”

First I address the context from which this research arises: the history of folk schools. A review of the literature examines folk schools in national struggles for identity, and the lasting impacts of folk schooling in Scandinavia and in America. In the United States, the effect of folk schooling is apparent in contributions to the Craft Revival, Labour, and Civil Rights movements. The literature review also creates scholarly consensus around what constitutes a folk school.

I then develop an analysis of contemporary folk schools. Guided by methodologies of content analysis and comparative research, this qualitative, humanities-oriented research uses a historical and cultural lens for interpreting current web-based data and literature on folk schooling. I discuss contemporary North American folk schools and analyze them with respect to place, people, pedagogy, and philosophy. For the purpose of comparative content analysis, I examine folk schooling in five distinct yet related categories: *The Originals*, *The Spiritual Schools*, *The (Quasi)State and Institutional Schools*, *The Grassroots Schools*, and *The Roving Schools*. I then analyze modern folk schools as a unified branch of alternative, youth and adult education. In closing, I look to the future of folk schooling as sites of personal and social transformation, and suggest opportunities for living work that arise in response to this research.

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A School in the Mountains

In a small North Carolina mountain town sits a Danish school. Comprised of wooden barns, rustic cabins, and quaint farmhouses perfectly at home amongst the Appalachian landscape, it more closely resembles an old farm or pioneer museum. I've driven this down from the urban reaches of Knoxville, Tennessee through the Cherokee National Forest, to this peaceful school in the mountains. But this is no normal school. On this morning, folks go quietly about their business of tending the gardens, making soap, and hand-crafting dulcimers. They are quick to offer a smile and a wave to both acquaintance and stranger. The school feels much as it might have nearly a century ago, temporarily transporting one back in time to a long-gone past. Conspicuously missing is the regimental order found in most schools today. No ringing bells or dizzying shuffle from room to room and course to course, folks here move at a much more relaxed pace. But this school was intended as such, for it is a "school of life."

Founded in 1925 in Brasstown, North Carolina by Olive Dame Campbell and Marguerite Butler, the John C. Campbell Folk School is a hub of Appalachian culture and history (Davis & Hughes, 2007). This centre for non-competitive residential adult education is an American transplant of the Danish folk school movement that has captivated the hearts and minds of elite scholars and rural farmers alike. A hold-out for the love of all things slow and laboured over in a fast-paced modern world, this school is but one example of the lasting legacy of this nineteenth century Danish movement.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Context: A Call to Action

We live in fast times. The blazing speed at which we do nearly everything was mere science fiction only decades ago. And yet, it seems that we have not devoted our newfound speed towards work which will make us happier, more connected, or more humane. In a time of profound ecological, social, and economic crises, I am deeply skeptical of that which draws us apart rather than brings us together. I am concerned that our culture increasingly renders libraries as museums, schools as factories, and neighbours as strangers. I am fearful of this sense of estrangement, alienation, and profound individualism under the guise of progress.

I have become increasingly interested in ways of living that honour human dignity, value that which sustains us, and respect all that exists alongside of us in this world. Perhaps this work is driven in part by nostalgia for a simpler past; however, a very real sense that we are not better off for all of our so-called advances underlies my concerns. As an educator, I am interested in how education might lead us to live more intentionally and harmoniously. This project, then, is my attempt at slow writing through the process of enjoying and pondering good books, having spirited discussions with colleagues, and portraying a love of learning through scholarship. It is a labour of love toward my part of preserving this beautiful world we share with each other and with all beings. It will become clear, I hope, that a deep sense of optimism drives this work even in the face of daunting challenges ahead. If it were not for my belief that we can, should, and will act to create a better future, this work would be of little value. Therefore, I undertake this research with hope in my heart but eyes wide open.

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Purpose: The Transformative Power of the Folk School

Folk schools were first envisioned in the 1830's by Danish scholar Nikolai Frederik Severin Grundtvig (Coe, 2000). However, his vision of folk schools as “schools of life” for residential, humanistic adult education endures today. While folk schools wield profound cultural influence in Denmark and other Scandinavian countries, they exist all across the world. Here in North America, folk school history dates back to the turn of the twentieth century, although their influence here is perhaps less apparent (Stubblefield, 1990).

Throughout this research I seek to understand how the slow nature of folk schooling helps to foster relationships and collaboration between peers, how it builds patience, tolerance and self-sufficiency, and how it can transform the landscape of the mind. This work was undertaken in order to celebrate the folk school tradition, imagine further possibilities for folk schools in the modern day, and serve as a point of entry for others interested in the transformative power of folk schools in education and social change.

The purpose of this research is to lay a groundwork of folk school theory and history in order to examine present conditions for folk schools through a comparative content analysis with an eye towards the future of folk schooling in North America for folk school scholars and practitioners. Current folk school themes and societal overtones are examined in relation to their historical counterparts and it is my intention that this discourse provide insight into mainstream forms of education through the contrasting, alternative nature of folk schooling. Therefore, the central research question around which this study is focused is “What is the past and present state of folk schooling in the United States and Canada with respect to people, pedagogy, philosophy, and place; and what opportunities exist for folk schools to enact social change in today's world?”

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Rationale: The Necessity of Unearthing the Folk School Tradition

Folk schools, as will become clear in the subsequent review of the literature, are an especially powerful sort of education in social and cultural movements (Paulston, 1980). They are places of celebration of heritage, tradition, language, and culture. Contrary to conventional education, folk schools emphasize self-empowerment, the living world, and relationships with both people and place. However, alternative forms of education such as folk schooling have received less attention by scholars and educators. This is particularly true in English-speaking countries where the Scandinavian roots of the folk school movement have presented linguistic and cultural barriers for historians and scholars. Rolland Paulston (1980) also suggests that misinterpretation surrounding the political, social, and spiritual context from which folk schools arose has prevented effective scholarship outside of Scandinavia. In North America, folk schools have been more popular in practice than in literature and scholarship. Therefore, this work addresses a deficiency in English-language academic literature on modern folk schooling, supporting a more thorough and critical understanding of the folk schooling tradition here in North America.

But this work also has practical implications for contemporary scholars and practitioners. It endeavors to uncover what folk schools can tell us about the times we live in based on historical reference and suggests ways in which folk schools might adapt (or not) to a fast-paced, tech-savvy world. Following the comparative, content analysis of modern North American folk schools, I suggest possible linkages between folk schools and the back-to-the land notions of the slow movement and the sustainable living movement. I also propose how folk school pedagogies are and might be employed by activists and educators in the pursuit of social change.

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Scope of the Work

Myles Horton (1989, in Horton & Jacobs, 2003) said of his Highlander Folk School, “It was never supposed to be a school. It was never in competition with schools. It was never supposed to demonstrate what could be done in a school. It’s a different kettle of fish” (p. 61). Folk schools offer a unique education not found in many schools today. They are open to anyone willing to learn regardless of prior education or background, and are non-vocational and autonomous in nature (Canfield, 1965; Coe, 2000; Kavalier, 1962; Kulich, 2002; Pantzar, 1988). These schools of life are non-compulsory, offering intrinsic learning with the goal of individual emancipation and collective social progress. In a folk school, there are no marks or examinations, no quantification of learning. A folk school education relates to students’ lives and aspirations, and likens them to each other and to their environment.

Conventional schools have been characterized by critical educators as competitive and vocational. With the end goal of creating workers to uphold global economies, students compete for scarce rewards in the form of grades. Learning in conventional schools is measured and valued insofar as it correlates to strictly defined types of knowledge. Conventional schools, like the occupations that they prepare students for, are organized around disciplinary knowledge and often separate learning from life.

Folk schooling and formal schooling bear little resemblance on the surface—they are indeed a different kettle of fish (1989, in Horton & Jacobs, 2003). Through their very nature, folk schools present alternative philosophies and pedagogies that push against conventional schooling. This research analyzes the historical tradition and modern interpretations of folk schooling in order to link the past and present, and examine the role that folk schools play in society. This work does not focus on conventional schooling in contrast to the folk schools, as it

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is important to first seek to understand and articulate the folk schooling tradition within its own context in education. In the examination of folk school philosophies and pedagogies, I suggest ways in which the spirit of the folk school applies to our lives and to education. This is part of the living work that arises from this study of folk schooling as opposed to the subject of the study itself. Education and schooling are not necessarily one and the same. This study looks beyond the conventional schools that play a dominant role in education today to understand the lesser known and less common folk schools.

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On Reading a History

The smell of an old book—binding tattered and pages faded. It is unlike anything else in this modern world. Something to remind us of the very real history of what we read and speak about now. Folk schools—a vision admired across place and time. The old book smell is a reminder that a folk school education was just as relevant during the time of my parents and grandparents, and even their parents, as it is now. It is a concept, dare I say, that approaches timelessness. And with the survival of the folk schools, scholars and educators along the way have sought to preserve the history and philosophy of the schools through their writing.

For my part, I have been enamored with reading ever since my kindergarten teacher loaned me her lending library for the summer, realizing even then my fascination with books. It is curious then how this love has manifested itself in this research. My supervisor, David Greenwood, in all his wonderful realness, describes this project as reading a whole lot, thinking deeply and slowly, and then writing about it. I love the beautiful simplicity of this and I am fortunate beyond measure for the time and the ability to read such inspired texts, and to share their essence through this work. In the literature review that follows, I highlight some of the influential scholars, educators, and authors whose work has contributed to our understanding of folk schools in education and society. The old book smell is implied.

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Chapter 2: Schools Steeped in History**Introduction**

This chapter is organized around the following headings: *Scholar Before Researcher*, *National Struggle and the Rise of Folk Schools*, *What is a Folk School?*, *Teaching and Learning in a Folk School*, *Schools for Radicals*, and *Brace for Impact: The Legacy of Folk Schools*. *Scholar Before Researcher* is a reminder of the critical importance of traditional scholarship as the basis for effective graduate research. *National Struggle and the Rise of Folk Schools* examines the conditions that gave rise to folk schools and under which they have persisted for more than 150 years. In *What is a Folk School?* the more theoretical and philosophical aspects of folk schooling, as articulated by folk school founder Grundtvig, and subsequent scholars, are discussed. *Teaching and Learning in a Folk School* addresses the practical characteristics of a folk school such as the type of courses offered and how the exchange of information is enacted. In *Schools for Radicals*, the multitude of people involved in the folk school movement from scholars to educators, activists, artists, immigrants, youth, retired adults, and more, are identified and their significance to the folk school movement is described. The enduring effects of folk schools in society are highlighted in *Brace for Impact: The Legacy of Folk Schools*. This review of the literature, with emphasis on the above themes, positions an understanding of the theory and history of folk schooling in order to help answer the research question: “What is the past and present state of folk schooling in the United States and Canada with respect to people, pedagogy, philosophy, and place; and what opportunities exist for folk schools to enact social change in today’s world?”

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Scholar Before Researcher

I would like to emphasize the underlying approach to scholarship which supports this research. Boote and Beile (2005) argue for the centrality of the literature review in graduate research, or rather the “scholar before researcher” approach. They assert that most literature reviews in graduate theses and dissertations are poorly constructed and understated in importance in today’s graduate research programs. In accordance with Boote and Beile’s (2005) argument, as well as the philosophical and historical nature of this research project, I have followed the scholar before researcher approach in emphasizing an immersion in the literature and by taking a “slow” approach to this research. This has allowed for greater depth and a development of true scholarship for scholarship’s sake and not merely for the narrow aims of a novel research question. I believe that the scholar before researcher approach is also consistent with the intrinsic aims and purposes of education and our assertion that as educators, we are also lifelong learners.

Bullough (2006) tells us more plainly that we must (re)learn how to read, lamenting that educational history and philosophy are scarcely read by today’s educators and researchers, further marginalizing interdisciplinary research and cooperation between the humanities and social sciences. The constraints of graduate study do not always allow the time required for the sequence of “scholar before researcher” (Boote & Beile, 2005) in its purist sense. Throughout the process of reviewing the literature and early drafting, it became increasingly clear that research in this area could not be accomplished effectively without a thorough explanation of folk school history and theory, which is limited in the literature due to its obscure status within English language academic writing. In trying to envisage what would most usefully add to existing discourse and contribute to the scholarly discussion around folk schooling, the decision was made to focus this study on what folk schools are, what they have been, and what they might be.

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However, I have proceeded with flexibility and an open mind towards realizing the full potential and integrity of this exploratory research. My scholarship, in this regard, is my research.

David Greenwood (2010) stresses the importance of holding the tension of paradox between nature and empire. In the process of designing this project, this tension has been a constant with folk schooling more aligned with nature and graduate research tied to empire. Analyzing and interpreting the non-formal nature of folk schooling in accordance with the requirements of a more formal university setting presents a perpetual state of paradox in this work; however, I hope that this work speaks to both formal and informal settings. Although I sense that folk school founders would have advocated for an informal, conversational, experiential, and phenomenological approach to research, the scholarly narrative I present is a crucial addition to the conversations around folk schooling tradition and trajectory. It is probably inevitable, and possibly desirable, that some tension between non-formal and formal education exists in this final product as well. I am cognisant of this reality and have employed a humanities-oriented research approach which simultaneously communicates the authentic nature of folk schools while meeting the rigour required for salient educational research. This humanities-oriented approach (explained in Chapter 3) is embedded in the remainder of the literature review, with a particularly historical and cultural focus in the subsequent section, *National Struggle and the Rise of Folk Schools*.

National Struggle and the Rise of Folk Schools

The folk school tradition likely began, as many social movements have, with the French Revolution (Kulich, 1964). It is a product of the romanticism, nationalism, liberalism, and radicalism that swept across Europe in the 1800's. But more specifically, we can trace the roots of the folk school movement back to prominent Danish scholar, historian, theologian, and poet

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Nikolai Severin Grundtvig, who first conceived of these fundamentally different schools during a time of profound national struggle.

The early to mid-19th century was a time of vast upheaval in Denmark. This period of time, however, has been aptly characterized as one of “outward loss, inward gain,” and the saying has both literal and figurative connotations (Borish, 1991; Kavalier, 1962). In the literal sense, Denmark was losing great swaths of territory—Norway was liberated from more than four centuries of Danish rule in 1814 and the southern provinces of Slesvig and Holstein were ceded to the Germans in 1864 (Borish, 1991; Kulich, 1964). The loss of territory, combined with the agricultural and economic collapse which resulted from the fighting, caused an outmigration of Danes to the United States in the mid to late-19th century and led many to believe that Denmark itself might cease to exist (Borish, 1991). But despite territorial loss and cultural and linguistic threats to the Danish national identity, Denmark was indeed on a path to non-violent modernization.

Against a backdrop of emancipation in continental Europe in the early-19th century, Danish landowners were conferred new-found political power (Coe, 2000). In 1834, the Danish government established *Consultative Estates* which allowed the nobility, clergy, town people, and peasants to advise the King through their respective representatives (Manniche, 1952). While this was a positive advance in that a great many Danes gained a stake in the political process under what was previously a feudal monarchy, Grundtvig felt that the rural peasants ought to be educated to take their rightful place in the new order. He began contemplating the role that education might play in a national awakening of the Danish people (Manniche, 1952). Therefore, he envisioned folk schools as sites of empowerment for the peasant youth, as sites of resistance towards the urban elites and their Latin grammar schools, and as a central piece of myriad

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reforms intended to solidify the Danish national character and identity (Coe, 2000; Kavalier, 1962; Stubblefield, 1990). There can be no doubt that Denmark faced menacing problems from economic and agricultural collapse, loss of Danish language and culture through the grammar schools, Germanification in the southern part of the country, and loss of territory to both Norway and Germany. But in the face of both internal and external threats to Danish existence, over time, and often through the folk schools, the Danish people dug deep into their language, traditions, mythology, history, and culture to build the peaceful and prosperous nation we know today.

Historically then, folk schools have emerged under the most threatening of circumstances. In short order, as folk schools proliferated throughout Denmark in the mid to late 1800's, so too did the idea spread throughout Europe. The movement was popular throughout Scandinavia which shared northern folklore roots and culture, and where *friluftstiv* or “open-air life” was a natural way of being (Kulich, 1964). These rural, and often farm-like schools, related closely to the everyday lives of many Scandinavians. However, it is also interesting to examine the case of folk schools in the face of more domineering opposition that adamantly rejected the liberating nature of the schools. Take, for instance, the Polish folk schools.

The Polish state was severely compromised during the nineteenth century due to its division amongst the German, Austro-Hungarian, and Russian empires. In the Russian portion, the teaching of Polish language, culture, and history was strictly banned; however, seven Grundtvigian folk schools arose under the guise of agricultural centres and illegally taught Polish language, history, literature, and culture to foster a Polish national identity (Kulich, 2002). Although none of these schools survived World War I, the end of the war saw the re-establishment of the Polish state and the resurgence of the Polish language and culture. Folk schools rebounded after World War I, but by mid-century folk schools all across Eastern Europe

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were shuttered by Communist governments leery of the self-empowerment which resulted from folk school attendance. But in the 1970's illegal folk schools had once again emerged in Poland in the face of a repressive regime (Kulich, 2002).

Interestingly, although Communists were at work closing down European folk schools in the 1950's, at the same time, the Highlander Folk School in the United States was under intense scrutiny by an American government preoccupied with "McCarthyism" and the Red Scare. The Highlander Folk School, which had been influential in the Labour Movement of the 1930's and was deeply entrenched in the ongoing Civil Rights Movement, was labelled a Communist school and faced intimidation, threats, propaganda, physical violence, imprisonment of school affiliates, and ultimately, closure at the hands of a supposed democracy (Horton, 2003; Horton, Freire, Bell, & Gaventa, 1990). In a display of true persistence in the face of struggle and oppression, leader Myles Horton (2003) merely laughed as the school was locked up exclaiming, "Highlander is an idea—you can't padlock an idea" (p.119). He re-opened the school under the name Highlander Research and Education Center (HREC, 2014) the very next day proving once again the resilience of the folk school idea. While folk schools have operated under challenging circumstances for much of their existence, the idea of folk schooling for the emancipation and enlightenment of the people has withstood the test of time and place.

What is a folk school?

The "idea" that Horton was speaking of dates back to a series of lectures given by N.F.S. Grundtvig in 1838 (Coe, 2000). Folk school theory as conceived by Grundtvig was basic, yet guiding and influential. He imagined schools for the youth where the living word was portrayed by a charismatic teacher in pursuit of awaking the spirit of the people through the study of culture, language, tradition, and history—equipping them with the necessary skills to recognize

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disparity and act in everyday life. Although Grundtvig laid out the philosophy for the folk school movement, he never operated one himself due to the death of his ally King Christian VIII and subsequent loss of government support for his idea of a folk school at Soro Academy (Kulich, 1964). For the success of the early Grundtvigian folk schools, credit belongs to folk school principals such as Christen Kold and to subsequent folk school scholars who have identified the more practical aspects shared amongst folk schools. What follows is an attempt to describe these unique schools so ranging in composition. As will be seen below, folk schools are commonly held to be open and autonomous schools of non-competitive and residential, youth and adult education (Canfield, 1965; Coe, 2000; Kavalier, 1962; Kulich, 2002; Pantzar, 1988).

Firstly, folk schools are open to people from all walks of life. Folk schools did not and do not refuse students due to their educational background or socioeconomic status. Essentially, folk schools are for any person who wishes to learn. As folk schools have always provided education to those who did not traditionally have access to a formal education, they have made efforts to keep tuition costs to students minimal or even free. Although many historical and most modern folk schools impose a nominal tuition and materials fee, folk schools have also solicited government support and private donations, conducted fundraisers, given grants to offset the cost for low-income students, and even offered work study positions where labour or expertise is traded in exchange for program participation. All of this is undertaken in the name of making folk schools accessible to as many folks as possible.

As folk schools are open to those of all educational backgrounds, it is perhaps unsurprising that folk schools are mostly autonomous in nature (Paulston, 1980). They have generally operated separate from the formal school system and resisted government intervention. There have been cases however, particularly in Scandinavia, where governments have supported

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and even funded folk schools, such as in modern day Denmark and Norway where folk schools are heavily subsidized by the government and are a prominent cultural force (Carlsen & Borga, 2013; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, n.d.). Despite varying levels of government support, folk schools have mostly remained autonomous in their content and methods throughout their history and geographic range. The result is that folk school offerings are dynamic, and evolve over time in response to student needs and a changing social, economic, ecological, and political landscape.

Folk school courses today range from photography to sustainable living, and from handicraft to organizing and activism, but they share some common features. For example, a folk school education is non-compulsory and non-competitive. One might question the value of an education without marks, qualifications, and degrees, but therein lies the fundamental difference between folk school pedagogy and formal institutes of education. Folk school leaders believe that education ought to relate to one's past and future, providing opportunity for academic and personal growth that is both highly useful and rooted in peoples' realities (Borish, 1990; Kulich, 1997).

A non-competitive education was intended to foster camaraderie amongst pupils and community was largely built through the act of living together much as a family would. Initially, folk schools offered mainly long-term courses of several months up to a year and rural students attended for the winter when they were not so urgently needed on the farms (Coe, 2000; Kulich, 1964). The residential aspect of folk schools allowed for an easy flow between learning and life. Students moved seamlessly between farm chores, coursework, mealtimes, free-time, and bedtime, all while teaching and learning from each other through cooperation and conversation. Sadly, the residential requirement of folk schools has proved difficult to maintain in today's fast-

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paced age due to demand for mostly short-term programs and budgetary and infrastructure restraints. Scholars agree that it is preferable to maintain the residential aspect for community-building and immersion purposes, even as folk schools have offered increasingly shortened programs to cater to the schedules of industrialized society (Pantzar, 1988; Kulich, 1988, 2002; Stubblefield, 1990). Although some of today's folk school courses are shorter in length, most folk schools still offer accommodation to students in some shape or form. In the more established folk schools of Scandinavia, student dormitories are common. In today's North American folk schools, accommodation is more eclectic and may be offered onsite in various buildings or campsites, or even nearby in the local community. It is commendable that folk schools have attempted to stay true to this important tradition despite modernization, tightening budgets, and rising costs. As Myles Horton indicated, the residential component of folk schools is essential to the building of solidarity and brotherhood amongst the folk school community (Horton, 2003).

Although scholars such as Borish (1991) and Paulston (1980) have acknowledged the social aims of folk schools, social progress has largely been left out of the basic characterization of the folk school. But social progress is fundamental to the very purpose and practice of a folk school education. Although outcomes were neither explicitly taught nor rigidly dictated, the engagement and enlightenment that resulted from a folk education were intended to spark progress and preservation. Social progress takes a number of forms in the folk schools as they respond to people, place, and time. In this research, I use terms such as social progress, social justice, cultural preservation, cultural conservation, and cultural survival to describe social changes that stem from the folk schools in light of national, cultural, linguistic, and economic struggle. I would add to the characterization of folk schooling that these schools have always been sites of resistance, some more clearly subversive on the surface than others, but all intended

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to offer alternative ways of thinking and being. Folk schools have sometimes been labelled “radical” by governments, neighbours, and conventional educators and I would agree although perhaps with a slightly different connotation.

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2015) defines radical as: “very different from the usual or traditional; favoring extreme changes in existing views, habits, conditions, or institutions; associated with political views, practices, and policies of extreme change; advocating extreme measures to retain or restore a political state of affairs.” This definition appears to align closely with the purposes and practices of folk schooling, although the implication of “radical” as a positive or negative force depends largely on one’s perspective and place within the social order. But any school that educates its students to stand up for their interests and challenge dominant courses of thought, and laws or government, is surely somewhat radical in its reluctance to be restrained. This resistance can be seen throughout folk school history from the refusal of early Danish folk school principals to give examinations to their students or to include government-mandated subjects, to their insistence on teaching in the Danish language, to the underground folk schools in twentieth-century Europe battling cultural and linguistic oppression, to the racially-integrated and anti-capitalist ways of the Highlander Folk School in the heart of conservative America. Folk schools have a long and proud history of going against the grain, of offering critical thought and mechanisms for action. Therefore, I would describe folk schools as resistant, resilient, and radical—even in seemingly inconspicuous ways such as educating people in their own language, history, and traditions.

This section has characterized folk schools as often radical sites of open, autonomous, non-competitive, residential, youth and adult education (Canfield, 1965; Coe, 2000; Kavalier,

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1962; Kulich, 2002; Pantzar, 1988). The following section will build upon this by more closely examining the acts of teaching and learning in a folk school.

Teaching and Learning in a Folk School

Grundtvig had many radical ideas for his imagined folk schools. In pursuit of a transformative education for the Danish youth, Grundtvig felt that they needed to be educated for life, and so folk schools were conceived as schools of life where the living word was valued above the dead and bookish knowledge pedaled in the grammar schools (Canfield, 1965; Coe, 2000; Kavalier, 1962; Kulich, 1964). Grundtvig also believed something that today seems commonplace but was wholly unorthodox in his time—that schooling should be conducted in the common language of the people. This meant that the Danes ought not to be instructed in Latin as they were in the grammar schools, but rather in their mother tongue (Roberson, 2002). It meant too that oral history and Danish myths and traditions, became important parts of school life. The living word was meant to awaken the spirit of the Danish people, filling them with pride and solidarity in the face of social upheaval (Kulich, 1964). But teaching with the living word was not intended only as a methodology for the schools, it was meant to spur action, stewardship, and political engagement amongst students.

And although folk schools presented students new strategies for thinking and active participation in civic life and a sense of enlightenment through the living word, Grundtvig was careful to note in his vision for the folk schools that the goal was not to indoctrinate students with particular political or religious beliefs (Kavalier, 1962). Rather, folk schools were intended to help students critically evaluate the world around them, sorting through various options before forming their own spiritual or civic beliefs. Critical thinking was key to enabling students to advocate for their interests and for those of their people and nation. Despite the radical nature of

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folk schools and the often resistant stance they have taken against a dominant majority, folk schools are meant to develop active and critical students rather than ideological followers.

As the use of the living word may imply, folk schools did not mirror the school subjects taught elsewhere. Rather, folk schools were swept up in the romantic fervor for folklore collection where nationalist histories, traditions, myths, and songs were preserved and disseminated to the people (Coe, 2000). Folk school subjects were more cultural and local than classical in nature, and a sample timetable of an early Danish winter folk school session is included in the Appendix. According to Coe (2000) and Kulich (1997), early folk schools offered courses in Danish language, Danish literature, Nordic mythology, Danish history, world history, geography, geometry, German, arithmetic, gymnastics, drawing, and singing. Some also included religious teaching; however, this was not particularly condoned by Grundtvig who felt that education ought to be spiritual rather than outwardly religious. In the early folk schools, students also took part in running the working farm and doing chores. In their spare time, they could also bind books, make maps, and practice their hand at carpentry (Kulich, 1997). Most teaching and learning in early folk schools happened via rousing lectures, spirited debates, and enlivened conversations between students, teachers, and community members. An example can be seen in the case of Christen Kold and his folk school pupils.

Christen Kold, a folk school principal often credited (Kulich, 1997; Paulston, 1980) for the rise of the Danish folk schools, opened a series of folk schools in the 1850's and his model was widely acknowledged and replicated by future folk school leaders. He served as the principal for numerous folk schools over his career and many of his disciples and students went on to run their own folk schools (Coe, 2000). His folk schools resembled that of peasant farm life. Both pupils and teachers lived together as a family, flowing freely from intellectual

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discussion to farm work and to coursework (Kulich, 1997). Begtrup (as cited in Kulich, 1997) maintains that while it was somewhat of a Spartan lifestyle, students feasted on good words and discussed intellectual and spiritual matters late into the night. Kold taught his students in a language they could understand and relate to, contributing to his great popularity (Coe, 2000).

At his death in 1870, Kold was a renowned folk high school principal and a leader of the folk school movement in Denmark, having educated over 1,300 folk school students (Kulich, 1997). He was known to many as a sort of "peasant Socrates" (Coe, 2000). Borish (1991) indicates that Ludvig Schroder, Kold's pupil and eventual principal of Askov High School, wrote in an 1860's letter of Kold:

It is a kind of Socrates, who sits in his chair surrounded by a crowd of boys and girls from the farms. They have come a long way to be at the school, and the whole day he talks with all these people in such a way that he always awakens something in them. (Borish, 1991, p. 190)

This section has characterized teaching and learning in a folk school primarily through the use of the living word in pursuit of enlightenment and action. The following section addresses the "folk" portion of the folk school by describing the people, both educators and students, who have been involved in folk schools.

Schools for Radicals

Folk schools attract a diverse crowd. From the progressive educators and scholars that have long been drawn to the idea of a folk school education to the young rural farmers, union workers, minority groups, and even retirees who have attended these schools, folk schools have accepted people from all walks of life. What do these folks have in common? They have all been

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pushing back against the norms of their time. When national identity has been forced underground or when repression, conformity, and injustice have reigned, folk schools have offered refuge and resistance for cultural revitalization and personal development.

In early theorizations, folk schools were intended to be schools for young adults roughly between the ages of 18 and 25 (Kavalier, 1962). Grundtvig felt that young children were best educated by their families and in their communities as opposed to in schools, while adolescents were too restless to be interested in study and deep, intellectual thought (Kulich, 1997). Trying to reign in the adolescent spirit was not only a fruitless pursuit, but also potentially damaging to proper development (Kavalier, 1962). It was for this reason that Grundtvig believed that young adults held the most promise for an education that would bring about change in society—for the transition between childhood and adulthood provided youth with the maturity and desire for education, but also open-mindedness regarding the future. But folk schools did not exclusively educate youth. The folk school model was so powerful, and so needed in a great variety of circumstances where culture and prosperity were threatened, that folk schools grew to serve adults of all ages.

In today's European folk schools, as they mostly have since the beginning, folk schools serve primarily young adults. In Scandinavian countries, it is common for students to take time before, during, or after university studies to attend a folk school. Shorter format courses offered during the summer holidays provide more opportunity for working adults to attend, but the schools are primarily youthful in keeping with the Grundtvigian model (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, n.d.). In North America, folk schools have played host to a great age mix of ages. In schools such as the John C. Campbell Folk School or the North House Folk School in Minnesota, young adults learn alongside older folks in an intergenerational and open atmosphere.

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However it is also true that in North America, folk schools have had a more difficult time attracting a youthful audience in a society where students typically pursue post-secondary studies or employment opportunities directly upon their departure from high school.

It is also important to consider the educators who have been the backbone of the folk school tradition. In Grundtvig's view, a teacher's charismatic nature was more significant than their educational background in awakening the spirit of the people (Kavalier, 1962). This implies in no way that folk school teachers, then or now, were uneducated, but simply that many factors were important in the making of a successful folk school leader. Like folk school learners, folk school teachers are a varied bunch- they are academics, artisans, and activists. Below are but a few of these examples.

At the helm of Danebod Folk School in Minnesota in the late nineteenth-century were Danish immigrants who sought to preserve a Danish-American identity amongst their community (Danebod Folk Camp, n.d.). Likewise, Danish transplant Jens Jensen of The Clearing in Wisconsin, fulfilled a lifelong dream by opening a folk school upon retirement at the age of 75 just as the Great Depression was beginning to subside (Stubblefield, 1990). In early twentieth-century North Carolina, northerners John and Olive Dame Campbell were fascinated with the prospect of a Danish-type folk school in the Appalachian Mountains (Campbell, 2004; Stubblefield, 1990). Nearby in Tennessee, young educator and "radical hillbilly" Myles Horton stripped some of the more romantic ideals of the Danish folk schools but employed their impressive social progress credentials in founding the Highlander Folk School in 1932 to facilitate the organizing and activism of union leaders in the Labour Movement and later Black Americans in the Civil Rights Movement (Horton, 2003; Stubblefield, 1990). Along the way,

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Highlander attracted some of the country's most influential leaders such as Rosa Parks, Dr. Martin Luther King, and Septima Clark (Horton, 2003).

These so-called folk school radicals, who believed that people ought to be educated in their own language and culture, and that folks should fight for their rights in the face of cultural, economic, or racial repression, were all responsible for bringing Grundtvig's vision to life. Scholars (Canfield, 1965; Pantzar, 1988; Stubblefield, 1990) have sometimes focused on quantitative indicators such as enrollment numbers or the physical number of folk schools to determine the success or failure of the movement. However, I believe this type of representation to be largely incompatible with the purposes of the folk school and inadequate in portraying the social capital that these schools have exercised. Rather than counting the number of folk schools or folk school students across time and place, the success of these schools can be more aptly measured by their impact on their communities and society. In the following section, I argue that folk schools have been highly successful in this regard, wielding profound influence on social progress despite the many challenges to their existence.

Brace for Impact: The legacy of folk schools

Folk schools are small in number compared to formal educational institutions. It is this fact which scholars (Canfield, 1965; Pantzar, 1988; Stubblefield, 1990) and critics have mostly looked to in evaluating the success of the movement in Denmark and abroad. Small but mighty is perhaps a more fitting description of this tradition which has endured since the mid-1800's. In Denmark, folk schools were a part of numerous "Grundtvigian" reforms on the road to modernization (Paulston, 1980; Stubblefield, 1990). The influence of the Danish folk schools can be seen as Denmark modernized non-violently while putting to work a much diminished land-base to support a thriving nation (Paulston, 1980). Although the agricultural co-operatives that have

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played such a large role in the economic well-being of the Danes were not taught or organized explicitly through the folk schools, scholars (Kavalier, 1962; Begtrup, Lund, & Manniche, 1925) have expressed a link between the two. As rural youth were educated and empowered through folk school attendance, the formation of co-operatives was a natural extension among an enlightened and unified people. Poul la Cour, renowned Danish physicist and teacher at Askov Folk School, found in the 1890's that roughly 50% of dairy co-op managers and chairmen were former folk school students (Begtrup et al., 1925). Begtrup et al. (1925) also declare:

It is a fact that all the observers of Denmark's development are in remarkable agreement that the folk high-schools have been one of the most important—some say *the* most important—factors in the rise of the peasantry after 1864.

The High-School, however, is not content to be judged by its merits as an influence in social organization, in practical every-day work, and in the political and national development. It will gladly receive acknowledgement of this, but will ask, further, if its old students have not been helped to live a richer and fuller, a nobler and truer life. (p. 63-64)

Folk schools have also helped to preserve culture, language, identity, and tradition in many a country outside Denmark. In Norway, Poland, and the American South we can look to the following examples of folk schools as important pillars of cultural preservation and celebration. The Norwegians employed folk schools to rebuild their identity as a newly independent nation through romantic nationalism that manifested itself mostly as linguistic nationalism (Coe, 2000). Here, rural people were once again heralded as more authentically Norwegian than the urban elite which had been substantially influenced by Danish culture under their rule. Folk schools in Norway taught the country's folklore and Norwegian "landsmal"

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dialects found in rural parts of the country (Coe, 200; Kulich, 1964). In Poland, as mentioned, folk schools were pivotal in combating Russification in the struggle for independence by fostering a Polish national identity and through the forbidden instruction of Polish language and culture in the face of Communist control (Kulich, 2002). In the United States, folk schools helped to preserve Appalachian culture in a poverty-stricken and problem-afflicted region. Here, Appalachian hymns were collected and preserved, and traditional song, dance, and craft were celebrated through the Craft Revival Movement and the emergence of Appalachia as a distinct sub-culture and region within America (Davis & Hughes, 2007). The Brasstown Carvers located in the same mountain town as the John C. Campbell Folk School were but one example of the success that came from folk school cultural preservation. There, in the 1930's and 1940's, underemployed locals with a penchant for whittling garnered national attention and much-needed supplemental income through the folk school-affiliated carving cooperative which sold the small wooden carvings all across the country (John C. Campbell Folk School, 2015).

While the folks at John C. Campbell Folk School were working to preserve the pre-industrial cultural relics of Appalachia, Myles Horton advocated for the rights and welfare of disenfranchised Southerners. The citizenship schools, which grew out of Highlander's work in the Civil Rights movement, taught the literacy skills necessary to become eligible for voter registration (Horton et al., 1990; Levine, 2004). Tens of thousands of Black Southerners participated in the literacy programs which are credited in large part for the 2,000,000 Black Americans who registered to vote during the program's tenure from 1957-1970 (Schneider, 2007). This swell in voter registration is also thought to have precipitated the Voting Rights Act of 1965 which ended racist practices intended to prevent Black Americans from voting. In this

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way, the legacy of the Highlander Folk School lives on today through increased political participation and reduced systemic discrimination in the electoral system.

Despite a relatively small number of folk schools in any given country, folk schools have persevered for more than 150 years and with them brought great influence in society. Folk schools have helped to foster national identity, preserve language and culture, and teach students to organize and advocate for change.

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Conclusion

In summary, this chapter has argued for the social importance of folk schools in the face of national, cultural, linguistic, and economic struggle. It has identified the basic theoretical elements of folk schools as open and autonomous sites of non-competitive, residential education for youth and adults where learning is enacted in the language of the people through the living word with regard to any subjects pertinent to the students' lives. The people, from distinguished to marginalized, who have built this movement through their participation and leadership, have been recognized. And the lasting legacy of folk schooling through social change in Europe and America has been highlighted. This scholarship provides a foundation of folk school theory and history in order to answer the question: "What is the past and present state of folk schooling in the United States and Canada with respect to people, pedagogy, philosophy, and place; and what opportunities exist for folk schools to enact social change in today's world?"

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On Slow Writing

I've just started again. A blank slate. A new direction. Grundtvig wisely proclaimed, "Dead is all knowledge which does not find response in the life of the reader" (Davis, 1971, p. 60), and it is my deepest hope that this work comes something close to the ideal of the living word despite its written format. That it will, as Christen Kold advocated, treat education as "life as against death" (Davis, 1971, p. 99). Or rather, that it will awaken a spirit for living and for living well amongst the people. For in this time of environmental and social crises, education must fuel the struggle for life as against death perhaps more literally than ever. And yet, I desire not be alarmist in this approach to education, but rather slow and deliberate.

This project, I hope, will embody slowness. It has been envisioned and re-envisioned many times along the way, resulting in something richer than I could have ever imagined on a summer stroll when I first started exploring the possibility of this research. Ultimately, this project is a product of aiming higher and dreaming bigger, and of the relentless pursuit to continually push for more. I took the stories in front of me and let them dictate the direction of this project. It necessitated a much more comprehensive gathering of literature in order to properly ground this elusive subject matter and pointed me towards what could not be found—a contemporary analysis of folk schools in today's social movements and culture.

For the slowness and patience on behalf of all of those involved in this project, I am immensely grateful and I believe it has strengthened this work considerably. This immersion in the work is a nod to folk schools and their belief in immersion in community, fellowship, history, and art. In the methodology section that follows, the emergent nature of this research will become clear.

Chapter 3: Situating the Research

Introduction

Highlander founder Myles Horton knew that he would not find a singular and exact blueprint for a school in the mountains of Tennessee. Rather, in studying the Danish folk schools, he drew inspiration from their traditions as they would apply to the creation of his own uniquely American folk school (Stubblefield, 1990). Likewise, the nature of this research necessitates taking direction from a number of disciplines and research approaches. This study is a contemporary analysis of the folk schools in Canada and the United States today, supported by the historical and multicultural narrative of the literature review. Together, these approaches support a robust understanding of the past and present of folk schooling. While this endeavour is educational research at its core, it uses a historical, sociological, and at times political lens, to answer the research question, “What is the past and present state of folk schooling in the United States and Canada with respect to people, pedagogy, philosophy, and place; and what opportunities exist for folk schools to enact social change in today’s world?”

In pursuit of answering the research question, I have conducted a website analysis of modern folk schools in the United States and Canada, endeavoring to include all applicable examples of these schools in the research in order to determine what folk schooling looks like today and how folk schools might position themselves moving forward as relevant forces for cultural preservation and empowerment of the people. It is critical to understand how folk schools have changed and adapted to a modern world in order to understand how they might ensure the continued survival of this relatively old tradition. And while internet research may appear in stark juxtaposition to folk schooling methodology, it offers the ability to paint a picture of today’s folk school movement as a whole by enabling the collection of a vast amount of

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evidence regarding the state of folk schooling in the United States and Canada, which would otherwise be impractical for a project of this scope.

This chapter first unpacks the research question seeking to deepen the understanding of place, people, pedagogy, and philosophy as they apply to this research. I then outline the parameters of the research study, situating it in the field of qualitative research, more specifically, within Humanities-Oriented Research in Education. Lastly, this chapter illustrates how I employ comparative research and content analysis, through a historical and cultural lens, to conduct a comparative, content analysis of folk school websites in pursuit of answering the research question.

Exploring the Research Question

The research question asks, “What is the past and present state of folk schooling in the United States and Canada with respect to people, pedagogy, philosophy, and place; and what opportunities exist for folk schools to enact social change in today’s world?” In order to maximize the utility of the website analysis conducted as part of this research, it is critical to explore the research question in greater depth, particularly with regard to the implications of place, people, philosophy, and pedagogy. An overview of these aspects anchors further exploration into the state of folk schooling today. Place serves as the basis in which to ground the aspects of people, philosophy, and pedagogy as they pertain to modern folk schooling, and place-based education, and specifically a critical pedagogy of place, are crucial to this conversation.

Place-based education asks us to think locally about global issues to create culturally-appropriate and locally-responsive solutions (Gruenewald, 2003). In advocating for the synthesis

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of the place-based education and critical pedagogy traditions into a critical pedagogy of place, David Gruenewald (2003) pronounces:

Place-based pedagogies are needed so that the education of citizens might have some direct bearing on the well-being of the social and ecological places people actually inhabit. Critical pedagogies are needed to challenge the assumptions, practices, and outcomes taken for granted in dominant culture and in conventional education. (p. 3)

This conception of a critical pedagogy of place is particularly applicable to the meaning of place as it pertains to the research question. Folk schooling was always intended to have tangible implications on the life of its students, from the awakening and enlightenment which would invigorate the soul of the people, to the emphasis on keeping youth in their communities and learning to live full, rich lives within their place. The early Danish folk schools respected students' position as farmer and peasant whilst advocating for their empowerment (Kulich, 1997). Critical pedagogy, on the other hand, speaks to the aim of critical discourse as a method for deep analysis and collective action as a result of a folk school education. In fact, both place-based education and critical pedagogy have been linked to the folk schools previously.

In the North American context, a critical place pedagogies in folk schooling is reflected in Highlander Folk School leader Myles Horton, who worked within both the folk school and critical pedagogy paradigms. Horton (1990) and critical educator Paulo Freire identified commonalities between their own practice and shared their collective wisdom on education and social justice in the book *We Make the Road by Walking*. Although much of folk schooling literature is historical in nature and pre-dates the terminology surrounding place-based education, Andrew Rushmore (2009) connects the tradition of folk schooling to the pedagogy of place-based education. And while place manifests in folk schooling through pedagogy, the concept of

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place within the folk schools runs so deep, connecting people, place, community, and history. For the purposes of this study, the concept of place, or more specifically a critical pedagogy of place, serves to ground the other aspects of the research question—the people, pedagogy, and philosophy of the folk schools.

While other schools may have some emphasis on place in the way that they conduct education, folk schools are centrally built around this concept. It was Grundtvig who thought that education should not take people away from their lives, and it was for this reason that early folk schooling was conducted over the winter months when young farmers could be spared from their work in pursuit of an education. He thought that it was desirable that farmers remain as farmers—that folks could learn to improve their home communities. This is, I think, a radical idea hiding in plain sight even today. For conventional wisdom tells us that education offers an upward mobility allowing folks to escape their circumstance. But folk schooling, built around place as it is, seeks an investment of human capital from people in their place. Whether one considers the early Danish folk schools or the work done by Highlander, the premise behind folk schooling is building community and resilience, and uplifting all peoples.

Folk school leaders believed that students, imbued with pride in their history and culture, with a love of their land and people, would struggle for the good of others and the benefit of their communities. This was illustrated earlier in this work in the examination of the formation of the Danish co-ops which were a logical extension of the folk school tradition in Denmark and the Labour and Civil Rights movements that grew out of folk school activism at Highlander. Folk schools taught students to value their place and culture, and undaunted by circumstance, to rise individually and collectively to improve the lives of their people. At its foundation, place is imbedded in a folk school education by an appreciation of land, of community and culture, and

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as the key determinant in the work to be done. Therefore, there would be no way to discuss modern folk schooling in any full sense without understanding how the schools are grounded by and in place.

The topic of people in the folk schools, as it relates to the research question, must also be discussed. The people involved with folk schools are, of course, important in their individuality and uniqueness. However, for the purposes of this study, it is imperative to link these people in terms of their collective similarities and differences. The goal is to describe broadly the people who make up the folk schooling community and note the importance of demographic factors including age, race, culture, class, education, lifestyle, faith, profession, etc. While the study gathers as much of this data as possible, what is ultimately most useful are those elements which are most compelling either in their homogeneity or diversity. In describing the people behind folk schools I've examined, from students, to teachers and administrators, I share a bit about who they are, what makes them unique, and consider what factors lead these people to folk schooling.

The matter of folk school "philosophy" is somewhat more subtle than the demographic metrics used to describe the people involved in today's folk schools. Philosophy can undoubtedly be described in acute detail, filling alone an entire thesis; however, for the purposes of this research a baseline understanding will suffice. I do not imply philosophy in an abstract sense, rather, I mean philosophy as it pertains to education and to humanity. To elaborate, philosophy is the backbone behind the idea of "what education is for" and it is this notion which I strive to capture in this research. That is, what philosophies on the purpose of education drives these folk schools? What is believed about education and humanity that necessitates the creation and operation of these schools? And how are these philosophical underpinnings differentiated from those within mainstream education? What is important to consider is how views on education,

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life, success, and human rights motivate the folk schooling community to offer this humanistic and alternative education.

Lastly, I need to address the meaning of the term “pedagogy” in regard to the research question. Like philosophy, this is a matter which could be richly debated and serve as its own topic of research. But in trying to understand folk schooling pedagogy, or the method and practice of teaching, what I really seek to learn is the manner of delivery and reception of a folk school education. For instance, what is being taught at these schools and why? How is it being taught and how is it being learned? Is learning in a folk school scholastic in nature or more practical? Is it imbued with political elements of resistance, of change? Or is it more reflective of contemplation and individual lifestyles? All of these questions, naturally, stem from, and inform, the concept of philosophy. Additionally, the way that a folk school education is facilitated today provides an interesting comparison with the historical models of early folk school visionaries: that folk schools ought to relate to the life of the people, reach folks from all educational backgrounds, eschew dead and bookish knowledge in favour of the living word, and awaken an impassioned inspiration which students would carry with them throughout their life.

The themes of place, people, philosophy, and pedagogy guide my process in conducting, compiling, and communicating the website analysis of modern folk schools in the United States and Canada. Furthermore, I am concerned with the content and formatting of the courses offered at these folk schools. The schools vary considerably in practice from history to sustainable living to activism to the arts. The question of residential learning in modern folk schools is also examined. While theorized as an important aspect of folk schooling, it is one that is increasingly threatened by modern budgets and timelines. Also of interest here is the structure, funding, and affiliations of these folk schools. A review of the literature showed that autonomy has been a

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consistent feature of folk schooling; however, governments have at times funded and supported the operation of these schools. Studying this aspect of contemporary folk schooling not only tells us about possible relations with government, and even mainstream education, but is also useful in understanding how the folk school movement might move forward with increased strength and support. These are but a few themes that guide my analysis of the schools; however, the folk schooling data itself leads to other significant observations about the movement. I have strived to remain open to all of the possibilities that modern folk schools have to teach us about themselves, about education, and about our culture and times.

Research Study

This research takes the form of a website analysis of folk schools presently operating in the United States and Canada. It includes all applicable cases of folk schools meeting the following criteria in order to understand the broader trends in modern folk schooling and their place in society:

- currently operating in the United States or Canada,
- autonomous,
- non-competitive,
- non-credentialing,
- youth/adult education, and
- inspired by Grundtvig's ideals or by folk schools modeled after those ideals.

The criteria were determined on the basis of the description of folk schools crafted by Grundtvig himself as well as subsequent folk school leaders and scholars. These features were articulated in the literature review under *What is a Folk School?* and form the basis for what is

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considered as a folk school for the purposes of this research. The website analysis is an effective method for selecting cases which address the research question and build towards a collective analysis of the folk school movement and its modern implications. The fact that modern folk schools in the United States and Canada have not been studied as an entity compelled a description of the movement at a macro level and a website analysis enables this sort of expansive explanation. It is my hope that this overview of modern folk schools in the United States and Canada lays the foundation for more other forms of research to be built upon in the future.

In endeavouring to include all cases of folk schools which met the above criteria, I am able to analyze the cultural forces at play in today's folk schools as well as to understand what modern folk schools are pushing for or against. Including all applicable examples for analysis and discussion also provides a more comprehensive understanding of the movement in its present form than could be portrayed through a narrower case study approach. The main challenge to this analysis, and somewhat indicative of the folk school tradition as a whole, is the issue of accessing all applicable cases. Folk schooling in Canada and the United States today is grassroots-based, and its membership and organization is loosely organized. Some schools are well-networked and have a solid internet presence while others are smaller and more casual, relying on word-of-mouth and local support to host classes at farms or community sites as they are able. These schools are no less important to the folk school movement, although for the scope of this project, are much harder to identify and investigate. Where it was possible to locate them, I included these more underground schools in the analysis. It should be assumed, however, that there are many organizations working within Grundtvigian folk school spirit which are not presented here due to logical constraints of the breadth of this research project and the resources

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available. In the remainder of this chapter, I will further situate this research and describe its guiding methodologies.

A Qualitative Approach to Humanities-Oriented Research in Education

Quantitative approaches to education in the form of examinations and student marks have never been favoured in folk schools, and thus folk schools necessitate an equally compatible form of inquiry as a research subject. From the onset of this research, it was evident that any methodology and approach to understanding the essence of folk schooling should be qualitative in nature. Qualitative research approaches are common within education as a whole and are particularly congruent with folk school theory due to their humanistic and naturalistic methods of inquiry. Just as folk school theory indicates that learning must take place within the context of one's life, community, and identity, qualitative research approaches respect the environment and setting of the research context (Patton, 2002). Qualitative research also frequently incorporates the role of the researcher into the work itself. This, I believe is important because this research no doubt reflects my character as an educator and human being despite my aims to communicate the ideas of folk school leaders and scholars alike in describing the past and present of folk schooling.

The body of literature on folk schooling spans a multitude of languages, cultures, and places over more than 150 years. Approaching this history required a research methodology that is reflected in the American Educational Research Association's *Standards for Humanities-Oriented Research in Education*, which asks questions about how and why education occurs, what purposes it serves, and what results from education (AERA, 2009). Humanities-oriented research in education, much like folk schooling, views philosophy, history, and sociology as fundamental to an understanding of what education is and what it is for. The American

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Educational Research Association (2009) writes a powerful testament to the purposes of humanities-oriented research:

Throughout its history, the central purpose of humanities-oriented research has been the exploration and understanding of forms of human existence. In pursuit of this general purpose, humanities-oriented research undertakes investigations into the relationships among reason and emotion, the ethical life, the good life, the just society, the characteristics of the good citizen, and concepts of self, knowledge and its grounds, and the arts and their appreciation. Humanities-oriented research in education explores these issues within the specific domain of education, as in how reason and emotion are represented in school practices or what role education plays and ought to play in the formation of the citizenry.

Woven into the fabric of humanities-oriented research in education, as in humanities-oriented research more generally, are various forms of criticism intended to problematize unrecognized assumptions, implications, and consequences of various kinds of educational practice, policy, and research, as well as to challenge what these approaches take for granted as beyond questioning. In this way, humanities-oriented research in education is often intended to foster dissonance and discomfort with conventional practice and, in some cases, to suggest alternatives. (p. 482)

It is clear, then, that the purposes of humanities-oriented research in education are indeed congruent with the purposes of a folk school education and imbued with social, philosophical, and ethical dimensions. Humanities-oriented research in education often critiques mainstream educational practices just as folk schools have always distinguished themselves from more formal types of education. And while the status of the humanities within educational research has

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fallen out of favour in many faculties of education, focused as they often are on more quantitative and standardized measures, I believe it to be good and worthy. After all, humanities-oriented research often has the advantage of bringing marginalized knowledge forward for conversation and thought (AERA, 2009), and this is certainly true in the study of modern folk schooling.

In his article on the decline of humanities within the social sciences, Bullough (2006) criticizes scientific-based educational research as a baseless pursuit more concerned with buzz-words and best-practices than with understanding the human condition or the philosophical and historical underpinnings of education. And this is why humanities-oriented research in education is so critical. It is deep-reaching in its aim to underpin pedagogy and purpose in education within social, ethical, historical, and political contexts. Humanities are often seen as peripheral to teacher education and graduate studies in education today, but educational research and practice ought to be more holistic and reflective of the total human experience.

AERA (2009) also acknowledges that humanities-oriented research in education often contains political and ethical value dimensions, and these are certainly present in this work. Of course, it can be argued that all research carries certain value dimensions, but here they are addressed upfront and their presence is acknowledged openly. As Myles Horton (1990) indicated in his conversation with fellow radical educator Paulo Freire in their spoken-book *We Make the Road by Walking*, neutrality is just another word for the status-quo. It is, rather, a privilege bestowed upon the dominant majority in order to justify the current state of things and to pre-suppose their eventuality. Therefore, I should make it clear that this research is not neutral, as only those in the majority are granted such a luxurious illusion. Alas, folk schools have never been in the dominant majority and this research is certainly not advocating for the status quo in

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education and society today, as folk schools are designed specifically with social change in mind (Paulston, 1980). It is not my aim to maintain neutrality, but rather to tell the story of folk schools old and new, and to suppose how they might be useful in navigating a rapidly-changing world. Implicitly and explicitly, they challenge our assumptions about education's purpose and practice.

Located within the broad sector of humanities-oriented research in education are a number of compatible research methodologies. Some of these are particularly helpful in guiding this research, including comparative research and content analysis; however, there is no one methodology that rigidly dictates this research, as this study is about exploring the alternative and imagining possibilities. In the following section, I outline my methodological approach to understanding and interpreting folk schooling literature and research.

Guiding Methodologies

There are several methodologies that lend direction and rigour to this research. Namely, content analysis and comparative research. Comparative research studies a single phenomenon, such as folk schools, across different cultures in order to derive the universal and theoretical tenets of the phenomenon (Grimshaw & Armer, 1973). This is useful in contrasting modern interpretations of the Grundtvigian folk schools across Canada and the United States, as well as in comparing them to folk schools throughout history. Through this juxtaposition, one can better understand just what folk schools are and what they can be. On the other hand, content analysis, which is a research technique for making inferences from data to their context, assists in systematically gathering and analyzing data on contemporary folk schools (Krippendorff, 1989). Content analysis is more procedural in nature and provides structure to the research process. However, as the subject matter dictates, I took the Myles Horton approach of searching for

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inspiration rather than a blueprint, and employed these as guiding methodologies while being open to the opportunities that arose through this research to share a compelling narrative of these highly alternative and unusual schools. These methods cannot be put neatly in a box, bringing to light once again the tension of paradox in studying these unconventional schools through a more conventional framework.

Comparative research is particularly congruent with this research project as it uses the various manifestations of a phenomenon to identify favourable conditions as well as theoretical and/or universal aspects of the phenomenon (Grimshaw & Armer, 1973). Comparative researchers postulate that a phenomenon cannot adequately be theorized or explained without testing it out under different scenarios (Warwick & Osherson, 1973). This is useful in addressing those deep aims of humanities-oriented research in education such as the formation of a just society, the role of education in the formation of citizenry, and problematizing unrecognized assumptions. Although comparative research most often examines a phenomenon across two or more countries, it has also been employed to analyze a phenomenon in a single country by arguing that even within a single country many different cultures exist. In countries as large and varied as the United States and Canada, this is certainly true, and so the comparative framework provides a thorough analysis of the folk schooling tradition across both place and time.

Similarly, content analysis seeks to highlight the context behind content, and the social forces that shape its creation and interpretation. As Weber (1990) notes, content analysis is a powerful tool for identifying the focus of a group or institution. This is relevant to an understanding of the social mission which today's folk schools are carrying out. Content analysis, as a research methodology, also enables a researcher to systematically evaluate a large body of information in order to make interpretations about the subject matter as a whole

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(Stemler, 2001). The ability to distill the findings on twenty-six folk schools into a cohesive narrative is perhaps the most imperative advantage of this methodology. By analyzing the emphases and pedagogies of contemporary folk schools, I can infer what work is important to the schools and what factors are influencing today's folk schools.

A Historical and Cultural Lens for Interpreting Information

Just as content analysis emphasizes context behind content, a framework is to make sense of such a varied body of sources which includes historical documents, course catalogs, websites, blog posts, and newspaper and magazine articles. Of course, a text can never be interpreted with complete accuracy and nuance outside of its original context, and our interpretation of anything around us is embodied and imbued with our own culture and purposes. However, using a historical and cultural lens helps to situate content in its rightful place. I reviewed the folk school literature by considering its place and time of origin, in order to capture the historical purposes and significance of folk schools as I understand them to relate to this project and to education and society today. It follows then, that using a historical and cultural lens throughout the website analysis serves to properly communicate the aims and practices of today's folk schools informed by both their past, and by their people and place. As this research shifts from a historical understanding of folk schools to a more modern one, cultural context will remain critical to understanding what the contemporary data and discourse say about folk schools in today's society.

Employing a historical and cultural lens to understand and analyze texts is not without its difficulties. Although I have strived to interpret the folk school literature in its own context, I cannot completely extract my own cultural biases. This is particularly evident in the presence of linguistic barriers. For instance, folk school scholars (Borish, 1991; Paulston, 1980) have argued

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that early folk schools cannot be studied without reference to their Danishness. To abstract these folk schools from their period in history, political context, language, and religion would be at best an incomplete picture, and at worst, wholly incorrect. In this research, language arises as a formidable obstacle due to the lack of English writings about the Scandinavian folk schools. Paulston (1980) attributes the linguistic challenges in studying folk schooling to historical writing belonging primarily to the domain of historians who are trained mostly in the classical languages. Despite this clear shortcoming, I made great effort to acquire as much English language writing, and translated writings, on folk schooling as possible. The historical and cultural interpretation of the texts included in the literature review, as well as the contemporary analysis in the upcoming research section, will help to reveal the cultures that have produced these folk schools.

Using a historical and cultural lens to analyze the research, I borrow from the methodologies of content analysis and comparative research to help answer the research question, “What is the past and present state of folk schooling in the United States and Canada with respect to people, pedagogy, philosophy, and place; and what opportunities exist for folk schools to enact social change in today’s world?”

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Conclusion

Folk schools have existed for over 150 years and pre-date many of our modern educational practices. They are surviving in some places and thriving in others; however, they have proven that they have staying power, captivating a handful of scholars and educators in each generation. This chapter has explored the research question in greater depth, seeking to deepen the understanding of place, people, pedagogy, and philosophy as they apply to the research question. It has outlined the parameters of the research study and situated it in the field of qualitative research, more specifically, within Humanities-Oriented Research in Education. And lastly, this chapter described how I employ comparative research and content analysis, through a historical and cultural lens, to conduct a comparative, content analysis of folk school websites in pursuit of addressing the research question, “What is the past and present state of folk schooling in the United States and Canada with respect to people, pedagogy, philosophy, and place; and what opportunities exist for folk schools to enact social change in today’s world?”

In answering this question, the following chapter presents a timely analysis of North American folk schools adding to the scholarly narrative and linking folk schools to the challenges of our times. In the next chapter, I also suggest possibilities for society to support folk schools and vice versa, and challenge myself to question current mainstream educational practices through the study of folk schools. These radical, slow schools have much to teach us in a fast, modern world.

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A Patchwork Quilt

The folk schooling narrative has remained largely outside the reaches of academia in the past fifty, nearly one-hundred, years. And so it was a real concern of mine in the beginning that I would be unable to capture the essence of the tradition. What I knew of folk schooling seemed a patchwork of unrelated institutions and ideas.

Many educators know of Highlander Folk School through its work in the Civil Rights Movement. Or more likely, through Myles Horton's captivating spoken-word book "We Make the Road by Walking" with celebrated critical educator Paulo Freire. This was often the first response I would get, if any, when discussing my research in its early stages. Locally, a lot of people in Thunder Bay are familiar with nearby North House Folk School just across the border in Minnesota. Preliminary research swiftly identified the John C. Campbell Folk School as another institution central to the folk schooling tradition in America. Even amongst these three, it was hard to see what they had in common; how they could possibly be the same thing. An activist school, a Scandinavian school, and an Appalachian school.

Add to that a handful of other schools that David knew of, some of which bared the folk school name, and others that did not, and I just didn't see any unity. Some of these were craft schools. Others were about environmentalism. Some exclusively taught fine arts. And still others had a social justice focus. I wondered if there really was one folk schooling tradition in North America, or just some offshoots of the Danish idea that could hardly be mentioned together in the same breath. This chapter, I hope, creates a common thread with which to arrange the patchwork of folk schooling in North America.

Chapter 4: North American Folk Schools Past and Present

Introduction

“Is a tree transplanted to another continent the same tree?” (Brookes & Dahle, 2007, p. viii). This is the question that Andrew Brookes and Borge Dahle pose in their exploration of the Scandinavian concept of *friluftsliv* and its manifestations elsewhere. A worthy question, no doubt, and certainly applicable to the examination of the Danish folk schooling tradition in the modern folk schools of Canada and the United States. The similarities and differences to the early Danish folk school beginnings are examined through the research question which asks: “What is the past and present state of folk schooling in the United States and Canada with respect to people, pedagogy, philosophy, and place; and what opportunities exist for folk schools to enact social change in today’s world?” The chapter begins by exploring the “past state of folk schooling in the United States and Canada” through a historical lens on the folk schools that provided a model for those to come.

Emerging, American Folk Schools

The first quarter of the twentieth century marked the peak of American educators’ fascination with the Danish folk schools. A number of influential government officials and professors were beginning to study and advocate for the suitability of the Danish folk school model to the American context. Educational trips to Denmark and other Nordic countries to study the folk schools were common. This section details the pedagogical interest in the Danish schools that precipitated their introduction in America. It also connects the tradition of Danish folk schooling to the agenda of change and renewal in America during the first half of the

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twentieth-century. The history of folk schooling in America has great bearing in the modern day as many of these historical folk schools remain in operation today.

The folk school idea in North America. Danish immigrants seeking to replicate their beloved folk high schools first introduced folk schooling to the United States and Canada in the late 1800's. Today's folk schools in North America, however; are largely the result of advocacy by American government officials at the turn of the twentieth-century. The idea of a new, North American folk school originated from government official Philander Claxton and his associates H.W. Foght and L.L. Friend. A Tennessean and former professor at the University of Tennessee, Claxton served as the head of the US Bureau of Education from 1912 to 1921. He had visited Denmark and Sweden in 1895 and believed that the Scandinavian folk schools could be replicated to address the problem of rural education in America (Shapiro, 1978).

Thus, Claxton organized a group of educators and officials, including Friend and Foght, who traveled together to Scandinavia to study the folk schools. Afterwards, they disseminated information on folk schooling to American educators in a series of United States Bureau of Education Bulletins. They were encouraged by the successful implementation of folk schools in Norway, Sweden, and Finland. However, the failure of several of the early Danish-American schools indicated that pedagogical and structural changes were required to adjust to the American context (Friend, 1914). In a 1914 bulletin, H.W. Foght noted the Danish-American folk schools in Elkhorn, Nebraska; Nysted, Nebraska; and Tyler, Minnesota. He thought these schools held a certain degree of applicability in adapting the Danish schools to the English language and rural American life. Friend (1914), on the other hand, was concerned about the financing of private folk schools with federal funds. Although the Danish folk schools of that time operated in this way, he supposed it would be unacceptable in America. He believed that

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American folk schools would be best funded at a district or county level by voluntary taxation of the local populace—much as American public schooling (Friend, 1914). This never came to be. No broad funding measure was ever put in place and the American folk schools that followed operated like the earliest Danish schools, as charitable or private organizations sometimes with governmental support. The work of Claxton, Foght, and Friend, formed the scholarly basis for the new, North American folk schools. Remarkably, these schools stand almost one hundred years later as a testament to that vision.

Appalachian beginnings. Claxton, Foght, and Friend shared their research on the Danish folk schools within their networks, and to educators across the nation. And a number of enterprising, Appalachian educators came forward to fulfil their mission—just as Kold and other folk high school principals had breathed life into Grundtvig’s idea. The tradition’s early momentum in Appalachia is no coincidence. From 1910 onward, the Danish folk schools were thought to be most applicable where conditions were most like rural Denmark. Henry Shapiro (1978) suggests that political motives were responsible for targeting Appalachia as the most appropriate site for folk schooling. Problems in rural education had been identified in 1909 as a national issue; however, interference with rural education elsewhere in the country could have been highly contentious. Appalachia, long been stereotyped and discounted for its otherness, posed little risk for government officials (Shapiro, 1978). Thus, Claxton and associates began working with progressive educators in the Appalachian Mountains to institute folk schooling in the area.

The suitability of folk schooling to Appalachia also coincides with its emerging identity as region known for its own rich culture and traditions, and not merely for its perceived backwardness. John Campbell was an early proponent of Appalachian regionalism. His work in

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Appalachia as an educator and head of the Russell Sage Foundation's Southern Highland Division, led to the understanding of Appalachia as a region with a distinct culture (Fariello, 2006). *The Southern Highlander and His Homeland* (1921) was published posthumously by his wife Olive Dame Campbell and was among the first surveys of the region as a whole. John Campbell was introduced to Claxton at a conference, and learned of his desire to bring the folk schooling to the region (Fariello, 2006). John and Olive then planned to travel together to study the folk schools in Denmark in 1914. However, the outbreak of World War I prevented their excursion and John Campbell did not live to see the Danish folk schools or the folk school that bears his name (Davis & Hughes, 2007). Olive later visited the Danish folk schools in 1922 on an 18-month journey to Denmark, Sweden, Norway, and Finland supported by the American Scandinavian and Russell Sage foundations (Fariello, 2007; Davis & Hughes, 2007). Marguerite Butler of the Pine Mountain Settlement School journeyed to Scandinavia with Olive, and upon return, travelled around the Southern Highlands searching for a site to locate a folk school (JCCFS, 2017). In 1925, Olive opened the John C. Campbell Folk School in honour of her late husband and his work in the Southern Highlands.

Myles Horton was also instrumental in bringing the folk schooling tradition to Appalachia. Like Claxton, he was a fellow Tennessean and an educator. Horton had read about the folk schools through his study under Reinhold Niebuhr. But it was Danish Lutheran ministers Enok Mortensen and Aage Moller who convinced Horton of the compatibility of the Danish folk schools to his desired school in the southern mountains. He studied Campbell's *The Southern Highlander and His Homeland* (1921) before setting out to Denmark in 1931 to see the folk schools first-hand (Horton & Jacobs, 2003). By then, the Danish schools had become more specialized. However, Horton was motivated by the enduring concept of the early Danish

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schools and imagined that he could employ the structure as the basis of a school for mountain people. From his work in Ozone, Tennessee, he knew that he wanted a place for mountain folks to come together, collectively discuss problems, and implement acts of resistance (Horton & Jacobs, 2003). The folk school was the vehicle through which to achieve that vision. Curiously, he neither agreed completely with Campbell's assessment of Appalachian life nor was he fully impressed with the modern Danish folk schools. He thought Campbell too romantic about mountain life and felt that the Danish folk schools had lost sight of their social mission. Yet, both were influential in his creation of Highlander Folk School. He had at last found an appropriate starting point for his school in the mountains.

Horton returned to the United States and set about raising the funds for a folk school. He found a partner in Don West who had also studied the folk schools in Denmark. Dr. Lilian Johnson, a former student of John Dewey's, allowed them to use her property in Monteagle, Tennessee for the folk school. In 1932, less than a year after Horton had returned from Denmark, Highlander Folk School opened its doors to the mountain people (Glen, 1996). Although Highlander and John C. Campbell folk schools employed different pedagogies of change-making and resistance, both were part of the same task of cultural renewal in the American South.

Folk schooling in American renewal. From Grundtvig's first musings on his idea for folk schools, the concept was rooted in the school as a medium for social progress. This was true in the Scandinavian schools that flourished in the mid to late 1800's, and also as folk schooling sprang to life in North America in the first half of the twentieth century. Folk schools taught students the critical thinking and cultural values necessary to advance social change. They also organized students, workers, and communities, to improve living and working conditions for the

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oppressed. This was achieved through pedagogies of craft, at places like Arrowmont, Penland, and John C. Campbell folk schools, and activism at Highlander.

Penland School of Crafts, Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts, and John C. Campbell Folk School were, in fact, part of a much larger Craft Revival movement that flourished in the Appalachian Mountains from the 1890's to 1940's (Fariello, 2007). Influenced by Englishmen John Ruskin and William Morris, folk school staff and community leaders believed that the value of a handicraft depended on the soul of the craftsman and its manner of production. In their pursuit of economic justice and cultural renewal, folk school and craft revival leaders looked to traditions that strengthened, rather than undermined or exploited, mountain culture. Through this exploration of the Appalachian spirit, folk-art and crafts became an integral part of the folk schools and their communities—weaving and folksong in particular (Shapiro, 1978). The integration with the Craft Revival Movement served the dual purposes of naming and reinforcing Appalachian culture and tradition, and providing for the economic needs of mountain folks (Fariello, 2007).

At Highlander, folk school activism took a different form, but with the same goals of strengthening culture and community by fighting for economic gains for disenfranchised Southerners. Highlander Folk School changed the face of the south, and indeed, the nation. From the coal miners of the Appalachian Mountains to factory workers and union members in the industrial South, Highlander brought folks together and helped them work out an approach for economic justice (Horton & Jacobs, 2003). It was not long before Highlander also became involved in the struggle for racial justice in the South during the Jim Crow Era. Prominent Civil Rights activists found respite in Highlander's mountain campus where they collaborated and participated in workshops to embolden the movement's leaders. Rosa Parks, Septima Clark,

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Ralph Abernathy, Esau Jenkins, and Dr. Martin Luther King were all affiliated with the Highlander School in one capacity or another (HREC, 2017). Together they led a groundbreaking movement for change in the South from Park's Montgomery Bus Boycott, to Clark and Jenkins' Citizenship Schools, to Dr. King's March on Washington, and Selma to Montgomery. Collectively, these acts of resistance gave rise to the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

The historical record is clear that folk schooling played a major role in social change, as well as the revitalization of craft knowledge. This distinguishes folk schools favorably from conventional schools that are frequently critiqued for reproducing the status quo and failing to offer practical knowledge to their students. The legacy of these early folk schools in the context of American change and renewal looms large in their modern-day presence. Most of these schools operate in the present and are included in the comparative, content website analysis on modern folk schooling outlined in the following section.

Modern Folk Schools

This section communicates the results of the comparative, content website analysis on contemporary folk schools in the United States and Canada. Using the inclusion criteria outlined in the *Research Study* section of Chapter 3, twenty-six schools were included in the analysis. Information on twenty metrics were included in the data set. These included measures such as type of organization, governing body, number and type of course offerings, accommodation information, tuition fees, and links to other past and present folk schools. From this data, five categories emerged in response to the research question's inquiry into place, philosophy, pedagogy, and people. Each of the categories contains difference along one or more of these attributes when compared to the other groups.

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The Originals are five long-standing folk schools similar in form and style to the early Danish schools. They directly link the Scandinavian and North American folk schooling traditions of residential, non-competitive, and autonomous youth and adult education. *The Spiritual Schools* are founded on an underlying philosophy of religious, holistic education. *The (Quasi)State and Institutional Schools* are operated through place-based partnerships with governmental organizations and non-profit institutions. *The Grassroots Schools* are autonomous schools with communities and leaders who mobilized behind the folk school idea. *The Roving Schools* are five schools where folk schooling is offered throughout an array of community sites and private homes. They represent the notion that a folk school is not a school, but instead an idea. A brief summary concludes this chapter and an analysis of the research as a whole is presented in Chapter 5.

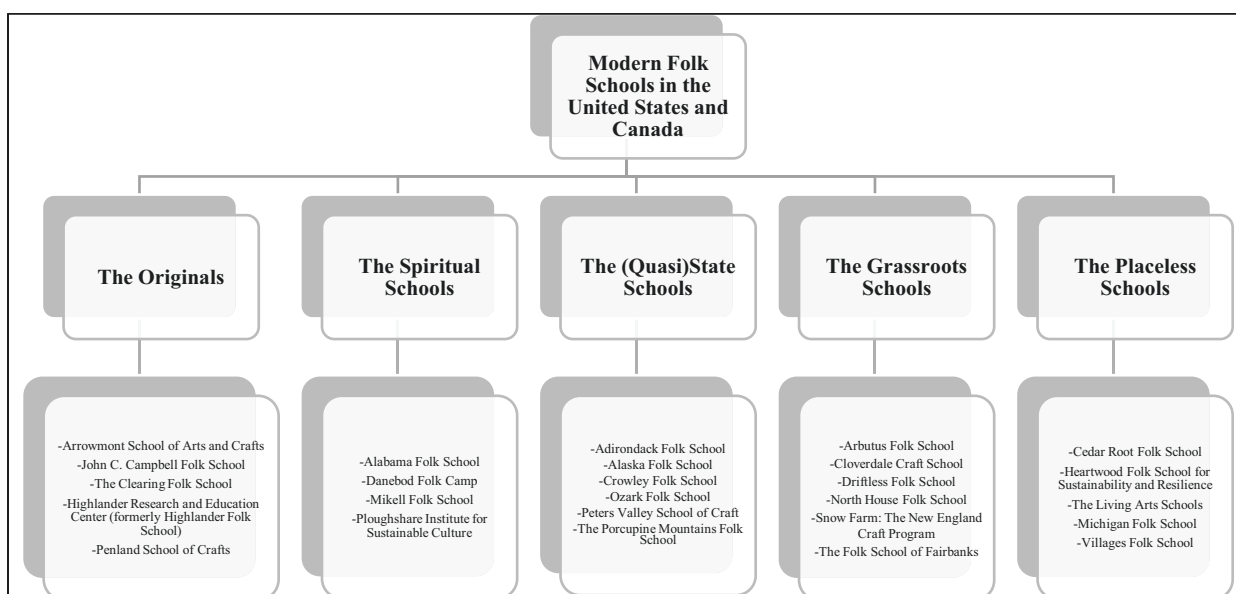


Table 1. Modern Folk Schools in the United States and Canada

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The originals.



Figure 1. Scene at John C. Campbell Folk School. Originally conceived as a folk school and model farm for agricultural viability in the mountains, the school's rural campus provides a serene setting for folk-arts and craft programs (JCCFS, 2017)

The Originals have been in existence since at least mid-twentieth century and form the basis for a model of folk schooling in North America. Bastions of residential youth and adult learning in America for nearly one hundred years, the Originals are an impressive group. John C. Campbell Folk School (1925), Penland School of Crafts (1929), Highlander Research and Education Center (formerly Highlander Folk School, 1932), The Clearing Folk School (1935), and Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts (1945) (formerly Pi Beta Phi Settlement School) are the “Original” North American schools in operation today.

Many of the Originals were highlighted in the previous discussion of the past state of folk schooling in North America. They were influential in bringing the Scandinavian tradition to America and adapting the concept to create a sustainable and impactful model for folk schooling in the United States and Canada. The website analysis provides an update on the modern-day workings of these schools with regard to people, pedagogy, philosophy, and place.

Arts and the struggle for progress in the mountains and beyond. American folk schools of the past were involved in the task of renewal through strengthening culture and tradition, and deploying human and capital resources to social movements. The Originals remain relevant

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forces of cultural preservation and social justice through arts and activism. Craft revival at John C. Campbell, Penland, and Arrowmont, heavily influenced the pedagogy of modern folk schooling in North America. And in 1951, The Clearing Folk School, previously a training ground for landscape architects, adopted their craft-based approach as well.

The Craft Revival Movement is said to have taken place in Appalachian America, beginning in the 1890's and lasting half a century (Fariello, 2007). Through the Originals, and the many folk schools that have since adopted the model of craft-based, experiential education, craft revival remains. Today, a pedagogy of teaching and preserving culture through folk-arts and crafts is employed as a means to combat the advances of alienation and globalization. This is achieved through a return to traditions and to slower, hands-on ways of connecting to our lives through art. In the Originals, an emphasis on various art forms is found both in the mission and philosophy of the schools. It is also found in the pedagogy of teaching through song, dance, and handicraft. Cultural renewal in the Originals is grounded in the elements of people and place which determine what work is relevant and required, and for whom. Penland's expressed vision, expresses many of these aspects (PSOC, 2017):

Penland's programs engage the human spirit which is expressed throughout the world in craft. Penland enriches lives by teaching skills, ideas, and the value of the handmade. Penland welcomes everyone—from vocational and avocational craft practitioners to interested visitors. Penland is a stimulating, transformative, egalitarian place where people love to work, feel free to experiment, and often exceed their own expectations. Penland's beautiful location and historic campus inform every aspect of its work.

This vision describes the human element of Penland, both craft practitioners and visitors. It articulates a philosophy of stimulating, transformative, and egalitarian education which

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enriches lives and engages the human spirit. It communicates a pedagogy of enlightenment through the hand-making of crafts and the process of experimentation. And situates the reader in place on Penland's beautiful, historic campus in the Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina.

The importance of folk-arts and crafts in the task of renewal are integral to North American folk schools. This stems from the five Originals and their incorporation of craft into the pedagogy of the schools, and distribution of these arts across the country for the purposes of economic, racial, and social justice. The arts are valued in today's Originals through the support of artists, craft education, and community-based art programs. Both The Clearing and John C. Campbell folk schools host a variety of community-based art programs. These include weekly concerts by folk musicians and Contra dances for both folk school students and the community. Song and dance are employed as a pedagogy for building a spirit of community, togetherness, and culture. This use of the arts also strengthens the place-based stature of these schools as they invite the community into the life of the school and support cultural programming for residents. At Arrowmont and Penland, art is used as both pedagogy and subject, as these schools focus exclusively on arts and crafts. The use of arts in the struggle for economic and social justice seen in their support for artists, who form the basis for craft revival and renewal in and out of the schools. Both schools host resident artists who are housed, employed, and provided space to create, demonstrate, and display their work. Such programs are critical for preserving and strengthening the arts, and for creating economies where art is valued and viable.

While Highlander may seem estranged from the artistic traditions of the other Originals, with its focus on organizing and activism, the arts have long been integral to Highlander. Myles' wife Zilphia impressed the importance of the arts in activism and the effective use of song in social movements. One of four core pedagogies at Highlander is cultural organizing which it

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defines as “the strategic use of art and culture to promote progressive policies with marginalized communities” (HREC, 2017). This philosophy of the arts in education and social change are demonstrated by the Zilphia Horton Cultural Organizing Project which strengthens social movements in the South through art and brings artists and culture leaders into grassroots movements. The “We Shall Overcome” Fund “nurtures grassroots efforts within African American communities to use art and activism against injustice by supporting organizing in the South that is at the nexus of culture and social change” (HREC, 2017). Both projects assist organizations in their efforts to incorporate the arts into activism and to create original art to support issue campaigns. It is the foundation for the arts in folk schooling and the struggle for progress, as demonstrated by the Originals, that formed much of the pedagogy and philosophy of education that are seen in Canadian and American folk schools today.

Living, Learning, and Leading in the Originals. A shared experience of living and learning exists amongst the Originals. All five Originals offer extensive year-round programming on established campuses for residential youth and adult education. These schools embrace the philosophy for immersive, residential and place-based education. When judged against the standard for transformative, residential, youth and adult learning set by the historical folk schools of Denmark and the United States, the Originals are quite successful. The experience of personal transformation, kinship, and fulfillment in the Originals is illustrated by former student Satina Anziano who recalls the lasting impact of her encounter at John C. Campbell Folk School a decade ago (JCCFS, 2017):

I spent Christmas Week at the John C. Campbell Folk School. It has been ten years now, and still the memories are alive. My heart often goes back to the woods and the buildings, and finds unity with the spirit that dwells in that place. I arrived alone, not knowing

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anyone. I came for the dancing, for the live music, and to spend the holiday among happy people. After those short seven days, I left feeling like each musician was a personal friend, though I have never seen them again.

Mornings begin in the large dining hall. I bring my tray to the table and serenely wait for the music. Everyone stands, and a capella we sing the Shaker song. Tis a gift to be simple, tis a gift to be free.... After breakfast I bundle up and go for a walk through the woods. I visit the many unique buildings. The dance gazebo in the woods, the stone house are enough for one morning's muse. One morning I walk before dawn. I used to write a lot of poetry, but not now. Yet this morning, in the chill, I stop to sit by a tree and watch the sun burn its thawing rays towards the hoary ground. And with it comes the muse. When New Year's Eve arrives, I offer the frail imagery to my newfound friends, a gift.

The schedule is crowded, though I can choose to walk away from it at anytime. Sometimes I sit in my dorm room with an elegant southern lady, who boldly sips a fine single malt scotch, a forbidden bit of mischief. Or sit in the library, browsing among the collection. In the afternoons a gathering is organized for the library, a group singalong from folk music books, or readings from our own writings. And dancing, always dancing. Workshops in the mornings or afternoons, dancing in the evenings. Contra, square, round. We try for days to learn that Danish dance, the Hambo. Some actually get it, but everyone enjoys the try.

Satina speaks of a modern folk school experience that largely resembles a folk education in early-twentieth century America or nineteenth century Denmark. A sense of slowness and peace permeates her account and is increasingly at odds with modern society. Place is an

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incredible component of the John C. Campbell Folk School, which is situated on a 300-acre mountainous campus with some thirty buildings housing the school's many folk-art and crafts courses. Satina speaks of dual dimensions of place: the infrastructure of the folk school, from the dining hall where the Shaker Song ushers in meals to the dorm room where forbidden Scotch is sipped, and of natural aspects such as walks through the woods and poetry-writing beneath a tree as sunshine illuminates the frozen mountain landscape. She confers the philosophy of learning for personal growth and intrinsic purposes as she describes a steady, but wholly optional, schedule of living and learning together in unity. Satina's experience at John C. Campbell Folk School is interweaved with the people and pedagogy that made a lasting impression on her as she recounted her experience ten years on. She learned with and from others, from the musicians who set the scene for dancing, to the happy dancers, new-found friends to share poetry with, and an elegant, rebellious "southern lady" of a roommate. It is these people who shaped her learning experience through a pedagogy of fostering relationships and of learning through dance, song, reading, and writing.

A simple life is also reflected in the one-week residential courses offered between May and October in The Clearing Folk School's Summer Program. These programs make up the heart of communal learning at the school, as Danish founder Jens Jensen intended it. In each session, 25 to 35 students and teachers live together at the Clearing (TCFS, 2017). They share family-style meals and become rejuvenated through learning and living amongst others in a beautiful, natural setting (TCFS, 2017). Placing great value on residential learning, the Clearing Folk School (2017) describes the experience of staying on its campus:

Accommodations at The Clearing can best be described as inviting, cozy and simply furnished. The Clearing's retreat-like environment is meant to help guests reconnect with

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the peace and calm of the natural world. Therefore, you won't find tv's, radios, clocks or telephones in any of the rooms. What you will find, however, are things like: colorful hand-made quilts on comfortable beds, solid maple writing desks, modern plumbing fixtures and tranquil views into cool forest foliage.

This speaks to the philosophy of connecting people to place through intimate experiences with each other and with the land. That is best achieved, according to Grundtvig, through residential learning that is immersive and intensive, like at The Clearing. This stretches the boundaries of learning from the classroom to the outdoors to everyday tasks of living together on-site. The Clearing Folk School, and all of the Originals, have gone to great lengths to preserve a simpler life, which can be experienced on their campuses through residential learning free of many of the distractions and disconnections of modern life. The Originals form the basis for the model of folk schooling in the United States and Canada. The next section details *The Spiritual Schools*, which operate under a philosophy of the synthesis of spirituality and education.

The spiritual schools.



Figure 2. Danebod Folk School. The original school building was renovated and reopened by Danebod Lutheran Church in 1946. Today, the site hosts four weeklong folk-camps each summer. (Danebod Lutheran Church, 2017)

Folk school visionary N.F.S. Grundtvig did not intend for folk schools to be explicitly religious. He imagined folk schools as having elements of spirituality, but was wary of the indoctrination of youth in any form. The success of the folk schooling tradition is often

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attributed, rather, to folk school principal Christen Kold whose schools served as a prototype for proliferation amongst Danish folk schools. Kold's model for the religious folk school still remains in today's Spiritual Schools. As this section explores the Spiritual Schools within the broader context of contemporary North American folk schooling, Kold's vision for the synergy of folk schooling and spiritual life is brought into the modern day. Alabama Folk School, Danebod Folk Camp, Mikell Folk School, and Ploughshare Institute for Sustainable Culture comprise *The Spiritual Schools*. They are distinguished from their modern counterparts for their philosophy of religion and spirituality in folk schooling.

A holistic education. In the Spiritual Schools, spirituality and fellowship are infused in the elements of place, people, philosophy, and pedagogy. Folk school student Elizabeth Ansley Allen invites readers to experience the interplay of faith and education in "An Invitation to Mikell." She penned the poem during a walk on Mikell's campus in Toccoa, Georgia during the 2012 Autumn Mikell Folk School session. An excerpt (Allen, 2012) is reprinted below and encapsulates holistic education in the Spiritual Schools:

We'll pick a porch and rock a bit,
 Admire the new fishpond and waterfall,
 Sit on the bench to contemplate the Cross,
 And plan a time to hike that hill.
 Follow red-black speckled leaf-strewn paths
 To the creek and several bridges.

Look for bird houses scattered through these woods
 And names on the wetlands boardwalk.

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Kneel there to follow those tiny mites
Skimming across dark water.

Listen to the song of nearby rippling creek
Until happy shouts drown out that sweet sound:
The contrasting cheers of a team-building win enriches nature's passion,
And reminds us that human saints then and now
Are part of this place
Whether honored by name or unknown.

Allen's personal account is one of learning on the land, through introspection and an awareness of the natural, human, and spiritual elements of the school. She describes place vividly from the porch to the paths, boardwalk, and bridges, to the creek, the hill, the woods and wetlands, and the fishpond and waterfall that make up the campus. She connects people to place through the comradery fostered through a team-building exercise and the juxtaposition of the human cheers rising above a rippling creek. The intersection of those two elements draws her to a philosophy of spirituality evoked by the mutual enhancement of human and non-human elements of learning and being in the Spiritual Schools. Lastly, she speaks of a pedagogy of learning through intimate experience with the land and with others. This takes the form of front-porch rocking, observing water features, bird houses, and insects, and silent contemplation. Allen's account speaks to the intrinsic and enriching learning that occurs in the Spiritual Schools. By offering folk schooling as part of a broader faith-based organization, a unique synthesis of pedagogy and place has occurred in the development of a new offering: the folk-camp.

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The folk-camp. The Spiritual Schools are operated by parent organizations, and their pedagogy varies in format and length from other contemporary folk schools. The Spiritual Schools are operated out of sites held by religious organizations and their congregations (people). Their campuses are often multi-use places, and the Spiritual Schools have adapted to leverage these spaces in a folk-camp format. Folk school courses are offered during several weekend or weeklong sessions each year, when their sites are not in use. This folk-camp format is a unique pedagogical element and, again, demonstrates the flexibility of the folk school model.

At Alabama Folk School, Mikell Folk School, and Danebod Folk and Family Camps, church-owned land and buildings become makeshift folk schools several times each year. The Alabama Folk School is operated out of the Episcopal Diocese of Alabama's Camp McDowell. It typically offers one themed folk-camp per month with courses in folk music and arts. The sessions have several classes running in tandem over two to four days. Mikell Folk School is offered by the Episcopal Diocese of Atlanta at Mikell Camp and Conference Center. Mikell Folk School hosts weekend-long folk-camps several times each year and students choose a specific course for the session. The Spring 2017 Folk School Session offers basket weaving, copper enameling, creative writing, felting, knitting, photography, quilting, spinning, stained glass, tile mosaics, weaving, and wood turning (MCACC, 2017). At both Alabama and Mikell, the event-type folk school sessions lend a camp-like feel that is somewhat different than the year-round folk schools. These schools spring to life from what are usually church retreat centres.

At Danebod, four week-long folk camps are offered by groups associated with Danebod Lutheran Church. The site is home to the former Danebod Folk School, which was opened in 1888 by Danish immigrants (Danebod Folk Camp, 2015). Rather than a single area of concentration, all students at the Danebod folk-camps participate in a variety of communal

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activities. This format is similar to the earliest Danish folk schools, but is rarely seen elsewhere in Scandinavia or North America today. Danebod's family camps consist of morning singing and dancing, discussion, games, crafts, tea time, swimming, evening singing, campfire, and late evening dancing (Danebod Family Camp, 2017). The varied folk-camp format at Danebod is distinctive in modern folk schooling.

The folk-camp is a pedagogy of event-like, immersive, short-term teaching and learning. It has been employed by Alabama, Danebod, and Mikell folk schools as a response to the element of place. The folk-camp makes use of often underutilized spaces to offer a folk school education. Ploughshare is operated somewhat differently than the folk-camp model seen in the other Spiritual Schools due to its place on the full-time homestead of an intentional agrarian and faith-based community. More insight is provided on the relationship of the folk school and the farming community at Ploughshare in the following section on nature, culture, music, and religion in the Spiritual Schools.

Nature, culture, music, and religion. Grundtvig imagined schools for life, where students would become enlightened and empowered to live boldly and fully. He envisioned spirituality as a key component in that endeavour, and Kold introduced religion overtly in the schools. Today, a synthesis of spirituality and religion are present in the philosophy of the Spiritual Schools, comingled with pedagogies of learning through nature, culture, and music. This section addresses the intersectionality of these themes as they play a critical role in self-work, and community and culture-building, in the Spiritual Schools.

At Danebod, the folk-camps are a hub of Danish culture in America. Historically, the Danish Lutheran Church was the heart of most Danish-American settlements. The church's philosophy was to preserve a Danish identity and culture amongst Danish immigrants to North

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America. Danebod's placement on an early Danish American settlement in Tyler, Minnesota is significant: Danebod is the only remaining relic of the several Danish American and Danish Canadian folk schools that once existed. At Danebod, the Danish culture and community are celebrated to this day. Families share in fellowship as part of the Danish Lutheran Church congregation's daily devotions. Through the folk-camps, they participate in Danish language and culture workshops, and partake in singing and folk dancing much as in the early Danish folk schools. No distinction is made at Danebod between culture and religion—both are imperative to the prevailing Danish American identity.

Ploughshare Institute for Sustainable Culture is located on a Waco, Texas homestead. Heritage Homestead (2017) has operated the folk school for approximately twenty-years on four dedicated acres of its 410-acre homestead. An intentional Christian community, Heritage Homesteaders practice a “nonviolent, nonpolitical, simple agrarian lifestyle with its traditional Christian values.” Courses at Ploughshare are meant to share the groups' agricultural and craft expertise through a philosophy of education for sustainable culture. The institute shares the living arts of animal husbandry, blacksmithing, pottery, woodworking, basketry, sewing, and quilting with students through dual pedagogies of online and in-person learning.

Religion fuses with culture, nature, and especially music, at the Alabama Folk School. The prominence of music in the folk school is a logical fit based on the significance of music to both religion and culture. Here, music takes on elements of spirituality in the religious themes built into Southern folk music, hymns, and ballads. But folk and Cajun music are also indicative of secular culture in America's Deep South. Like the revival of craft traditions in cultural preservation and renewal in the South, music has played a large part in culture-building in the region. Alabama Folk School provides “an opportunity at Camp McDowell to be inspired and

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renewed in a supportive community while learning from and experiencing master artists, artisans and musicians” (Alabama Folk School, 2017). Through its mission statement, Alabama Folk School communicates a philosophy of inspiration and renewal, in place at Camp McDowell, through pedagogies of learning from and with experienced people including master artists, artisans, and musicians. It is clear that music as a method, is congruent with both the cultural and spiritual elements of the folk school. Nowhere demonstrates this more clearly than Alabama Folk School. The narratives of Danebod, Ploughshare, and Alabama folk schools show the inseparable bonds between religion, culture, nature, and music in the Spiritual Schools. The next section examines folk schools that are affiliated with secular organizations, these are *the (Quasi)State and Institutional Schools*.

The (quasi)state and institutional schools.



Figure 3. A blacksmith at work at Ozark Folk Center State Park, home of the Ozark Folk School. Through this place-based partnership, hands-on learning of traditional skills preserves craftsmanship in the Ozarks. (OFCSP, 2017)

Like the Spiritual Schools, the (Quasi)State and Institutional Schools, also operate in conjunction with parent and affiliate organizations. I call these the (Quasi)State and Institutional Schools because they demonstrate the Danish folk school model of autonomous cooperation. These types of relationships have been employed with success in Scandinavian countries. The main advantages of this model are rooted in place, as the schools are situated on land owned by their parent organizations. The (Quasi)State and Institutional Schools are Adirondack Folk School, Alaska Folk School, Crowley Folk School, Ozark Folk School, Peters Valley School of

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Craft, and The Porcupine Mountains Folk School. The following section addresses the collaboration between folk schools and partner organizations for adaptive re-use of existing spaces. All six (Quasi)State and Institutional Schools are a result of such adaptive re-use.

Adaptive Re-Use. Whereas the Spiritual Schools leveraged existing, underutilized sites to offer folk schooling in the format of folk-camps, the Quasi(State) and Institutional Schools have facilitated the adaptive re-use of spaces for folk schooling. The (Quasi)State and Institutional School operate on a more full-time basis, and their ingenuity in creating folk schooling opportunities in existing spaces is savvy and resourceful. Two such cases of adaptive re-use are shown below.

The Friends of the Porkies is a group of people who partnered with the Porcupine Mountains Wilderness State Park in Ontonogan, Michigan (place) to preserve and utilize endangered, historical park buildings. Since 2006, the Porcupine Mountains Folk School has operated out of the original carpenter's shop at the 60,000-acre wilderness park. The folk school gained a home through the adaptive re-use of the carpenter's shop, whilst the park was able to preserve and use one of its historically-significant buildings.

Adirondack Folk School's beginnings also provide a compelling example of collaboration and adaptive-reuse. For three years, Jim Mandle struggled to attract businesses to the vacant old Town Hall building in Lake Luzerne, New York. After a visit to North House Folk School in Grand Marais, Minnesota, Mandle was inspired to open Adirondack Folk School (2017). The school was a community effort launched through partnerships with the Town of Lake Luzerne, Adirondack Community College, and the Adirondack Museum (people). Lake Luzerne's Old Town Hall building hosts the folk school inside the six-million acre Adirondack State Park (place). Adirondack Folk School (2017) has flourished through the "outpouring of

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support from the local town's people within our greater community, the elected officials of our local government, community college, and merchants – all willing to pitch in and see our seed germinate.” The partnership benefits both the school and the community. Visitors flock to the town and the formerly vacant building is now a hub of culture and craft in the community.

This account speaks to the possibilities that exists when people form partnerships in pursuit of a philosophy of community-based and place-responsive pedagogies of craft and culture in modern folk schools. At Adirondack, a folk school stands today in place of a vacant building overlooked by businesses for years. It is renewed with people learning folk arts and mountain culture in the Adirondacks. Successful examples of adaptive are encouraging for the potential of folk schooling in modern-day Canada and the United States. The following section examines the impact of these partnerships, particularly as they pertain to place.

Place-based partnerships. Five of six (Quasi)State and Institutional Schools are located on park or preserve land. The other, Alaska Folk School, is located just beyond the Southeastern boundary of Denali National Park and Preserve in rural Alaska. As demonstrated in the previous section, potential exists for symbiosis between folk schooling and parks/preserves. State and national, and provincial and federal parks, have an abundance of land preserved for conservation and public education. In many parks, underutilized space exists and could be leveraged to attract visitors and support conservation education through folk schooling. Partnerships like these are predominantly place-based in that they provide folk schools with a home where they may host courses. Peters Valley, Porcupine Mountains, and Ozark folk schools, are also able to offer residential education out of their campuses.

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Kristin Muller is the executive director of Peters Valley School of Craft. Muller (2017) speaks to adaptive re-use, place-based partnerships, and nature in the (Quasi)State and Institutional Schools:

We do exist in partnership with the Delaware Gap National Recreation Area. We have a very extensive campus as a result. And these vintage buildings that are ... examples of mid-1850's farmhouses. And so, when people come here, one of the unique qualities is that you are in nature and you have lots of open space, lots of time to contemplate....

A lot of the creative moments people have, happen when it's quiet. When you have that time to open your mind. People meditate for that reason and this environment really allows you to. Artists are often drawn to nature for inspiration. So it's an ideal setting.

Here, Muller encapsulates the defining features of the (Quasi) State and Institutional Schools. She communicates the adaptive reuse of the old farming village of Bevans in a place-based partnership with the National Parks Service (people). Situated in Layton, New Jersey's Delaware Gap National Recreation Area (place), Peters Valley School of Craft has offered a folk education in a natural environment since 1970. She describes the confluence of art and nature, articulating the importance of the natural environment to creating and learning in the (Quasi)State and Institutional Schools (pedagogy). This relationship leads to an emphasis on conservation (philosophy) and the environment in these schools.

Conservation Content. The (Quasi)State and Institutional Schools' place in the parks leads to a philosophy of conservation through education, and a pedagogy of learning on and from the land. These schools have a focus somewhat more rooted in conservation and

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environmentalism than most modern folk schools. Folk-arts and crafts are present in the (Quasi)State and Institutional Schools too, as culture and nature are inextricably linked to place.

The 190-acre homestead in Sarasota, Florida (place), donated by descendants of pioneer John Crowley (people), is today known as the Crowley Museum and Nature Center. The family intended the land to be used, in part, for a philosophy of teaching practical living skills and self-sufficiency. Thus, the Crowley Folk School was born (CFS, 2016). The Museum and Nature Center offers a wide variety of youth and adult programming, while the folk school offers a small number of short-format, hands-on courses, lasting hours, not days (pedagogy). These courses include nature-based courses like vegetable growing and fermenting, composting, and creating food forests, as well as nature photography, nature journaling, and natural medicines.

Alaska Folk School operates under a philosophy of teaching the folk arts in order to foster lifelong passion through a pedagogy of “hands-on learning in a community setting, [where] we connect people to real experiences in a positive atmosphere” (Alaska Folk School, 2017). Courses include natural and conservation topics such as permaculture, natural dying, foraging for mushrooms, creating birch bark baskets and twig birdfeeders, and making poplar bud salve or wooden paddles. This framework is rooted in place in the school’s Alaska home.

The (Quasi)State and Institutional Schools are an interesting modern-day adaptation of the state-sponsored folk schools of Scandinavia. They exist primarily in places provided by parks and preserves, and offer a folk education based on the philosophy of transformative, enlightening education through pedagogies of conservation and craft. The next section examines *The Grassroots Schools*, whose people persistently pursued a vision for folk schooling in their place.

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The grassroots schools.



Figure 4. Located on the North Shore of Lake Superior, North House Folk School's campus offers hands-on learning to impart Scandinavian ways of making crafts, tools, homes, and watercrafts. (NHFS, 2017)

Much like the Originals in their early days, the Grassroots Schools are raised from the ground up by educators, activists, artisans, and community members. These people are the driving force behind the Grassroots Schools, and their dreams have manifested themselves in a plethora of modern day folk schools. In the Grassroots Schools, one sees folk schools in varying stages of development, from four to thirty years in operation. The Grassroots Schools are Arbutus Folk School, Cloverdale Craft School, Driftless Folk School, North House Folk School, Snow Farm: The New England Craft Program, and The Folk School of Fairbanks.

A humanizing education. Folk schools have long spurred social change through national, cultural, and linguistic struggles for progress. At the forefront of folk school philosophy was a focus on the enlightenment and empowerment of the individual. It was thought that by enhancing the individual's ability to reason and act, collective progress would follow. In the Grassroots Schools, a focus on the individual experience of growth and enlightenment remains today. Driftless Folk School's once Program Director Mark Sandberg discusses the philosophy and pedagogy of learning at Driftless (2017), which are indeed characteristic of the Grassroots Schools:

A folk school not only connects us to our past but it also helps us to connect to the materials we use and therefore to our environment, to our food, our shelter, and our own

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survival. In the process we establish or strengthen connections to one another, and to our own potential. This is why I think it is so gratifying to complete a folk school class. It seems so familiar. It makes us feel human. And in the fast-paced world we live in where disconnections are common, to feel human and connected to our environment, our selves and one another - is welcome.

This quote artfully illustrates the folk school experience at Driftless and is representative of the Grassroots Schools' deep connections to people and place. At the Driftless campus in Viroqua, Wisconsin, students learn through a philosophy of fostering connections to people and place. The school practices a pedagogy of learning about the past and each other through classes like beekeeping and blacksmithing, swapping tools and techniques, and sharing meals and stories with one another (Driftless Folk School, 2017). The process builds community and resiliency amongst students in the region and provides a humanizing education—pushing back against the disconnections of modern life.

A transformative and humanizing education is linked to craft revivalist philosophies at North House Folk School in Grand Marais, Minnesota. Kristi Downing teaches raku pottery at North House. With over 50 years of experience in her craft, Downing (2017) describes the impact of the school's craft-based pedagogies:

My greatest passion is sitting at the wheel throwing. But it's not done then.... Someone once said, when you put your heart and soul into making that pot, the pot can break, but your essence has been built in with the process of forming it.

Downing's experience parallels the early Craft Revival Movement. She speaks of the shared philosophy of the heart and soul of the artisan in handicraft, demonstrating the duality of

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the term “living arts.” Not only are these arts that find practical purposes in our everyday lives, they are alive with the intention and essence of their creator. At North House, students build their soul into their work and, in the process, form connections to people, place, and the past.

Located on a historic 1700’s New England farmstead, Snow Farm: The New England Craft Program (SFTNCP, 2017), operates on a philosophy of preserving craft traditions in a region with an abundance of working artisans. The cornerstone of Snow Farm’s programs is its High School Summer Program, where youth experience a pedagogy of learning the traditional and living arts in a hands-on, non-competitive, residential setting. The school also offers Elderhostel programs that provide intergenerational opportunities for mature adults to learn alongside youth through the practice of craft (Clark, 2009). These experiences preserve culture and knowledge between generations as they learn and grow together. Catherine Newman (2015) describes her account of intergenerational learning as she recalls an encaustics course at Snow Farm in 2015 with her adolescent daughter, Birdy:

We were sitting by an enormous bonfire, under the stars, while sparks swiveled up into the air like fireflies. If you have ever had, known, or been a teenager, then you might understand the rare loveliness of talking quietly with one, looking into the embers. No pressure. No meaningful eye contact or drilling questions. Just easy being together.

We were in the middle of a two-day craft workshop at Snow Farm in Western Massachusetts, and that’s more or less what our entire weekend was like: companionable side-by-side activity.... They fed us simple, delicious meals; they housed us in a perfectly cozy room with plain blankets and elaborate views; and they offered the space, materials, and instruction to do something creative together. Everybody powered off their phones. It was magical.... It was exciting for us to work with so much talent around us, and to have

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access to such professional materials: deeply pigmented waxes, tubs of brilliant white gesso, stacks of prepared boards for us to work on, a jar of gold flakes. I loved the smell of the hot wax and the luxurious stretch of uninterrupted hours to work in....

A weekend arts class is just the thing: kind of grown-uppy, definitely unexpected, an occasion for bonding, and something to look forward to. "I wish we could live here," is what Birdy actually said, sighing as we left. It was her favorite thing all fall, and one of her favorite things ever.

Newman describes the intangible quality of folk schooling, which is just as much about self-empowerment and bringing people together (philosophy) as it is about skill-building (pedagogy). This is a particularly powerful aspect of folk schooling when it involves seemingly distant peoples. In this case, teenagers and grown adults. Or in the case of Highlander, Black and white folks, in an era of segregation. In the self-contained environment of the folk school, some of the divisions that normally exist between people seem to recede. The process of living and learning together in an immersive fashion helps folks find common ground.

The impact of locality. The Grassroots schools are not backed by a long history or a parent organization. Owing to their grassroots beginnings, most of these schools are local or regional in nature. This sense of locality impacts all elements of the research from the people who attend, to the philosophy of what a folk school education is for, to the pedagogy of the schools' content and how it is taught. In the Grassroots Schools, size and autonomy present opportunities in terms of responding to emerging needs. These schools strengthen community bonds and create a knowledge base and resiliency within their locale.

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The Folk School of Fairbanks (TFSOF) takes cues from its local environment in Fairbanks, Alaska (place). Students at the Folk School of Fairbanks learn about their Alaskan home by spending a “Week in the Woods” or a “Week on the River” during the folk school’s summer programs. Methods of food preservation are taught through hands-on practice (pedagogy) to savour the bounty of Wild Alaska in order to foster sustainable practices and lifestyles (philosophy) (TFSOF, 2017). It is a small, simple folk school. It started as a Roving School (the final category of modern folk schools), until an estate was donated by a folk school patron in 2013 to house the school. The Folk School of Fairbanks caters to the needs of local residents and showcases the spectacular Alaskan landscape and bounty. The school offers “TFS ByDemand,” where students can request classes like boatbuilding, embroidery, soapmaking, and stand-up-paddleboard building. These classes are offered with flexible scheduling to private groups on-demand.

Classes at Cloverdale Craft School can also be offered upon request, with students often dictating the form and content of the courses. Matt Jenkins co-founded the school in Selkirk, Manitoba, to celebrate traditional practices like blacksmithing and Indigenous arts, craft, and culture in the Canadian Prairies. An instructor at John C. Campbell Folk School, Jenkin’s home also serves as a Bed and Breakfast and the Cloverdale Craft School. Like early Highlander, students contact Cloverdale to request a specific program. The school is affiliated with many local artisans and can offer a variety of courses as requested by students and residents.

Grassroots push for cultural preservation. The focus on cultural preservation (philosophy), in conjunction with locality (people and place), is a defining feature of the Grassroots Schools. Spread geographically across the United States and Canada, the task of cultural preservation is unique in each school. The previous section detailed how The Folk

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School of Fairbanks upholds the natural and sustainable practices of the Alaskan Wilds, while Cloverdale Craft School seeks to preserve the living arts and Indigenous ways native to its area. Such efforts to preserve culture and tradition are shared amongst each Grassroots School.

North House Folk School takes cues from its Northern environment and nearby Scandinavian settlers, to preserve Nordic craft and tradition in the Midwest. The school was founded twenty years ago by community advocates, with the support of the municipality. Today, its programming rivals that of the largest, most established folk schools in the United States and Canada. Nestled within the picturesque artist's enclave of Grand Marais, Minnesota, North House is set before a watery backdrop, with Lake Superior serving as both its backyard and playground. Executive Director Greg Wright (2017) sets the scene:

If timbers could talk, no doubt there would be stories. Two timbered buildings, built in the 1930's by the Civilian Conservation Corp as warehouses for the Forest Service, stand on the edge of the Grand Marais harbor. Workspaces on a working harbor, the buildings served an important purpose for decades. Built by the hands of experienced woodworkers, their elemental timbered trusses and rugged black iron tie bolts seem almost to speak—durability, beauty, purpose, simplicity.

One red, one blue, today the buildings still stand, solid and present on the Grand Marais harbor. The core of North House, their timbered trusses now soar across woodworking, boatbuilding and traditional craft classrooms, sunlight streaming in through the windows. Sawdust still waits on the floor to be swept. Sharp saws still slice. Tales are still told. Purpose is still strong and vibrant. Bowl carving, shoemaking, blacksmithing, woodcarving; durability, beauty, purpose, simplicity.

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North House preserves the living history of the Grand Marais harbour-front and uses its natural and built elements to offer culture-building education to local residents and visitors. The place has a Nordic appeal in its rugged landscape and cold climate, which are reminiscent of the Scandinavian folk schools. And the region is host to a significant population of Scandinavian and Eastern European descendants. Thus, the geographic and demographic features of people and place have led to a focus on the cultural preservation and celebration of Scandinavian ways of making clothes, tools, homes, and watercrafts. These are the focus of many of North House's programs. In a promotional video for the school, instructors discuss cultural preservation through Northern craft. Instructor Mark Hansen has long been interested in traditional Northern modes of transportation. He teaches birch bark canoe-building and Norse pram boatbuilding at North House (NHFS, 2017). Hansen (NHFS, 2017) describes his personal interest cultural preservation:

I like the work boats. The old working boats.... because they've [been] time-tested.... They've gotten fisherman home, they've gotten loggers home. They were designed by people that knew what they were up against. They knew what the wave action was. They knew where the shoals were. They knew what they needed to get out of a boat.... And so that's what I enjoy about wooden boats is you've got old-timey ideas connected to them. They're proven.

Peter Henrikson is a timber framing instructor at North House specializing in traditional Norwegian styles of joinery like Grindbygg and Stavlinebygg. Henrikson (2017) emphasizes the role of traditional knowledge and its dissemination, in the task of cultural preservation:

Timber framing involves a lot of real, historical knowledge, and passing on that knowledge. And a big part of timber framing is the joinery of how the timbers fit together to form a building, to create a structure of some kind.

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In addition to being directly responsive to place, these are examples of pedagogies of cultural preservation in the Grassroots Schools. This section also examines cultural preservation and renewal of Northwestern craft and culture at Arbutus Folk School. At Arbutus (2017), the philosophy of “enriching lives and building community” is enacted by pedagogies of “joyful, hands-on learning with master artisans.” Courses range from historic preservation, to music and dance, to cooking and preserving food, and traditional and folk arts. The school’s founder Stacey Waterman-Hoey (people) imagined dual purposes of cultural preservation and sustainability (philosophy) through teaching Northwestern craft (pedagogy) at Arbutus Folk School (2017) in Olympia, Washington (place):

Stacey began to see the potential for craft education in leading a shift toward local, sustainable, empowering economic development. These skills have served our social, economic and environmental needs for millennia until the last few generations which have pushed historically common skills into elitists realms. Stacey is deeply motivated to provide skills for making useful or beautiful items (as well as music and storytelling) which people want for their own lives and that require minimal technology to achieve.

The Northwest’s cultural heritage, passed down between generations speaks to the people of and around Arbutus, and the Northwest communities to the place of learning, and the content and focus of the school. The Grassroots Schools operate under philosophies of humanizing, transformative education. These are enacted by pedagogies of cultural preservation through craft and tradition, in response to the people and places that comprise the folk school communities. The following section examines *The Roving Schools* and their plasticity of place.

The roving schools.



Figure 5. The Living Arts Folk School rotates amongst various sites in Boulder County, Colorado. In this photograph, students learn methods of fruit tree care and pruning in pursuit of sustainable living. (TLAFS, 2017)

Due to the centrality of place within the folk schooling tradition, conventional wisdom dictates that the more advanced or desirable state is for a folk school to have a set place to call home. That is not necessarily the case in the Roving Schools. *The Roving Schools* describes a number of schools that are place-based in that they have dynamic relationships with their communities and local residents (people and place), but no physical campus. These schools operate out of various public spaces and private homes, demonstrating a fluid sense of place and community. The Roving Schools are CedarRoot Folk School, Heartwood Folk School for Sustainability and Resilience, The Living Arts School, Michigan Folk School, and Villages Folk School.

The Plasticity of place. In an experiment to consider if a place-based school can be considered as such without a physical home, I look to Highlander Folk School Founder Myles Horton for wisdom. Highlander initially maintained a campus in Monteagle, Tennessee, but its home was later revoked based on governmental resistance to its activism (HREC, 2017). Horton, in turn, suggested that a folk school is actually not a school, but an idea—one which cannot be barred or padlocked (Horton & Jacobs, 2003). Through this revolutionary statement, Horton laid the groundwork for the Roving Schools. This plasticity is a reassuring element for the Roving

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Schools. In a rapidly changing world, it is beneficial to understand folk schooling as an idea rather than a series of schools. This is more readily apparent in the Roving Schools, but is true of the entire folk schooling tradition.

The Villages Folk School (VFS, 2017) is named for its place in the eleven historic villages of Van Buren County, Iowa, with each village contributing something unique to the folk school. Classes are held throughout the eleven villages “in peaceful rural settings so students can return to a simpler time and witness the importance of the artisan in village-life” (VFS, 2017). The school harnesses the individuality and strengths of its surrounding places to add depth and dimension to the people and pedagogy of the school, demonstrating a plasticity of place. Although the school maintains no static location, it is very much involved in community-building and place-making in Van Buren County. The school has participated in several new construction and restoration projects in public spaces. In collaboration with partners, Villages Folk School helped to re-purpose a donated building into a Welcome Center and build a sculpture honouring the county’s agricultural heritage on local fairgrounds. The school also helped to restore buildings at Lacey-Keosauqua State Park and Morris Park, and a community hall known as the Stone House. Additionally, the school participated in the design and build of an accessible cabin at Waubonsie Park to increase inclusivity and access to the grounds (VFS, 2017). These projects benefit not only the folk school, but the entire community. Through its connections to place and people, all eleven villages of Van Buren County are its home. Work that uplifts the community and work that supports the folk school are one and the same. The community is the folk school.

While they are without a campus in the physical sense, I argue in the next section, that the sense of place is heightened in the Roving Schools by the people and communities that work

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to offer a folk education in their place. These schools show that folk schooling can be offered just about anywhere, so long as there is community support for the idea.

Community-based, literally, education. The Roving Schools are community-based in every sense. They are based, literally, in their communities from personal homes, to community buildings, and the outdoors. CedarRoot Folk School in Norland, Washington, Heartwood Folk School for Sustainability and Resilience, on Pender Island, British Columbia, The Living Arts School in Erie, Colorado, Michigan Folk School in Ypsilanti, Michigan, and Villages Folk School in Keosauqua, Iowa all utilize donated class sites, or use the outdoors as their classroom, eschewing a traditional brick and mortar site altogether.

Like the Spiritual Schools and the (Quasi)State and Institutional Schools, the Michigan Folk School (TMFS) uses partnerships to offer folk schooling to local residents. But folk school classes rotate between various partner organizations and the community (TMFS, 2017). Its partnership with Dixboro United Methodist Church, likens Michigan Folk School to the Spiritual Schools. In its partnership with Washetena Community College, it is similar to a (Quasi)State and Institutional School. And in its use of instructors' homes as class sites, it is much like the Grassroots Schools in the people and community support that make the school possible. The freedom from a static location, however; allows Michigan Folk School to creatively leverage its numerous partnerships and sites to accommodate a variety of courses. This flexibility also supports the school's mission "to build community by providing educational programs that promote learning, teaching, and renewal of traditional folk arts and to promote the preservation of forest and farmland" (TMFS, 2017). By offering classes across the community, and often on farms or outdoors, the school is inviting the community into these spaces. This fosters an

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appreciation and familiarity with the land, through a pedagogy of teaching and renewing folk art traditions.

Michigan Folk School's (2017) website states that they are actively working towards finding a full-time home for the folk school. Perhaps the folk school will one day find a permanent place. Until then, its partnerships with people and place position the school for continued prosperity. Although the Michigan Folk School is working towards finding a full-time location, that is not so for all of the Roving Schools. This section demonstrates the benefits of autonomy and elasticity to the Roving Schools. When enacted strategically, their agility creates opportunities for learning without the financial burden associated with maintaining large campuses for residential education. This further reiterates the vast possibilities that the folk school model offers in terms of adaptability to a variety of circumstances.

Heartwood Folk School for Sustainability and Resilience (HFS, 2017) was founded just five years ago and describes itself as an "evolving" folk school. The school offers programming that is not otherwise accessible in the island community, and local residents provide suggestions to the Heartwood Folk School Society, who reviews and implements them. This student-centric approach has led to courses in sustainable energy, traditional arts and skills, technical skills, and food growing and preservation (HFS, 2017). The school also operates on a philosophy of community capacity-building as part of its mission. One such community-based project, is the Gulf Islands Registry and Co-operative which aims to create a centralized resource for visitors to the Southern Gulf Islands (HFS, 2017). The website will serve as the primary source of information on educational and cultural programming offered within the community. All providers will become members of the co-operative to support capacity-building in terms of coordinating schedules, and supporting resource-sharing and collaboration amongst members

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(HFS, 2017). While the project utilizes modern technologies, it is similar to the work that the Campbells did in coordinating various benevolent organizations working in Appalachia (Shapiro, 1978). Heartwood is initiating the project through grant funding awarded to the school, but it will be a community-held resource, finding a home wherever it best fits (HFS, 2017). This fluidity in building community resources and infrastructure is possible for the Roving Schools as they are likewise community-held resources.

The Living Arts Folk School (TLAFS, 2017) also develops programming and projects based on community input. The school grew from community need as founder and educator Elizabeth Ulrich searched fruitlessly for opportunities to learn with her hands about homesteading and sustainable living. Today, programming is offered throughout Boulder County at partner sites whose setting (place) and philosophy align with the school's mission to "enrich our community's natural, cultural and artistic legacy, and to support a movement of the people towards heart-centered resiliency and awake, aware living" (TLAFS, 2017). One intriguing partner site (place) is the Shepherd Valley Waldorf School (TLAFS, 2017). It brings the possible synthesis of pedagogies of children's education with the alternative, youth and adult, folk schooling tradition. The Living Arts Folk School was founded only four years ago, but is rapidly building youth and child programming in addition to its traditional living arts folk school courses. Its Homeschool program offers traditional living skills and folk-arts and crafts, weekly, to students aged 6-14. The program is held on McCauley Family farm, a working farm that provides both indoor and outdoor spaces for students, and opportunities to collaborate on meaningful work around the farm. In the fall of 2017, the folk school will introduce a Forest Kindergarten program based on the Scandinavian forest schools. Located at an alternate site from its Homeschool Program, the folk school's rotation across Boulder County allows for a large

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variety in programming—organizing simultaneous adult, youth, and child courses. The partnerships that are created as part of the Roving Schools introduce possibilities for the folk schools to branch out beyond their traditional scope and practice.

Great amounts of land and capital go into most modern schools. The Roving Schools demonstrate that this is absolutely optional. Others have attuned to this idea, including graduate student Andrew Rushmore. Rushmore (2009) created a roving, urban folk school in Vancouver as part of his graduate research. He wanted to determine if folk schooling could create community and resilience in an ad-hoc manner. His research demonstrated that his roving school created at least temporary community between participants while offering skills for sustainability and artful living (Rushmore, 2009). It also surfaced the great amount of interest in this type of learning that exists even in urban places.

The Roving Schools serve as a compelling model and entry-point against the many obstacles that face emerging folk schools in the United States and Canada today. The resilience of these schools provides hope for the future of folk schooling and for the potential of the folk school idea to be employed within education and everyday life. The spirit of the folk school is more essential than any physical component. Therefore, I see the growth in the future of folk schooling in North America in these conceptual folk schools. There is something radical and unshakeable about the strength of a school which exists as an idea alone.

Conclusion

The folk schools of Canada and the United States today are cultural change-makers. They preserve our histories and traditions through pedagogies of experiential and enlightening education. As sites of slow, intentional education and transformation, today's folk schools are

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radically different from conventional schooling. This chapter examined the past and present of folk schooling in North America, as indicated by the research question, “What is the past and present state of folk schooling in the United States and Canada with respect to people, pedagogy, philosophy, and place; and what opportunities exist for folk schools to enact social change in today’s world?”

A historical and cultural lens was used to uncover the past state of folk schooling in the United States and Canada, highlighting the schools that provided a North American model of folk schooling for folk schools to come. This chapter also explored the present state of folk schooling in the United States and Canada through a comparative, content website analysis of twenty-six folk schools in five categories delineated by people, pedagogy, philosophy, and place: *The Originals* are long-standing folk schools with sprawling campuses for residential youth and adult education in arts and activism. *The Spiritual Schools* operate on a philosophy of holistic education in conjunction with faith-based organizations. They have developed a unique pedagogy in their folk-camps with an emphasis on nature, culture, music, and religion. *The (Quasi)State and Institutional Schools* are operated through place-based partnerships with governmental organizations and non-profit institutions. Their adaptive-reuse of spaces in parks and preserves dovetails with pedagogies of conservation and environmentalism. *The Grassroots Schools* are built from the ground up by people and communities who sought to offer a humanizing education in pursuit of cultural preservation in their place. And *The Roving Schools* are community-based schools where folk schooling is offered through a variety of sites. They represent the notion that folk schools are actually an idea rather than a series of schools.

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On Resonance

Resonance. It's a word that surfaced repeatedly in discussions with my gracious committee member Bob Jickling. What is it about folk schooling that resonates with me as an educator? What is the resonance to our time and place? Resonance.

The word itself temporarily transports me. I think back to the adolescent joy of making music in school, an exuberant teacher leading a motley crew of teenagers with band instruments. Resonance. The sound that fills a room with harmony when each person works in unison, contributing to the sound of the whole. Resonance. It also humbles me. It reminds me of my roots. Of my upbringing just a few counties beyond the reaches of Appalachia. One that that resembles the struggles there that the folk schools were so attuned to. The resonance is for me, and for my home in the hills of Kentucky. Folk schools are powerful in imagining what could be.

But back to the research—What is the resonance? The optimism that pulses through the schools tugs at my heart strings. I've always had the inclination that learning should be joyous and hopeful when done correctly. I think folk schools have got that right. Folk school leaders have been highly conscious of the struggles of their people and their times, but have met those problems with passion and positivity. I think of our times—the challenges, the crises—and I have no choice but to face them with courage and compassion. Folk schools values and priorities can help us find our way as educators, and as human beings. They remind us to slow down, embrace our surroundings and each other, and to live with intention.

Resonance. Music to my ears.

Chapter 5: Folk Schools Looking Forward

Introduction

If we wish to benefit from the folk high school idea, and I think we could and should, we need to be equally creative now, as our Danish and other colleagues have been before us, in our appreciation of the idea and its application to *our* needs, *our* situation, and *our* people. (Kulich, 2002, p. 53)

Highly adaptable to time and place, folk schools have flourished where the model has been applied liberally, not literally. The success of the folk schooling tradition for over 150 years has hinged on its malleability. A folk education today does not correlate to a strict adherence to the format of early Danish, or even American, folk schools. Their merit, lies rather, in their ability to transform to the ever-changing needs of people and places. Folk schools are a commanding tool in the struggle for justice and wholeness—they are timely and stand at the ready to tackle evolving issues.

This chapter analyzes contemporary Canadian and American folk schools as a unified branch of alternative, youth and adult residential education in *New, North American Folk Schools*. In *Insights and Significance of the Study*, I explain the importance of the comparative, content website analysis to scholarly literature on modern folk schooling. *Fast Times and the Impact of Technology* highlights the context for today's folk schools, making folk schooling more essential than ever. *Slow Schools and the Quiet Resistance* demonstrates how folk schools are rising up in response to this societal context, and how the folk school idea is current and ready for deployment. Lastly, I address the *Living Work* that arises for scholars, educators, and citizens in response to this research.

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New, North American Folk Schools

A comparative, content website analysis was conducted to answer the research question: “What is the past and present state of folk schooling in the United States and Canada with respect to people, pedagogy, philosophy, and place; and what opportunities exist for folk schools to enact social change in today’s world?” Five categories of contemporary folk schools emerged as a result of this analysis: the Originals, the Spiritual Schools, the (Quasi)State and Institutional Schools, the Grassroots Schools, and the Roving Schools. These modern folk schools vary considerably, but remain true to the fundamentals of folk schooling that have held for over 100 years. Many aspects of modern folk schooling harken to their nineteenth century beginnings. Some of the details such as course lengths and content areas have changed, but the setting remains much the same. Folk schools are rural havens for open and autonomous, youth and adult learning. Although a folk education draws many similarities to the past, education in a folk school today is further removed from the context of modern life. In their early days, folk schools taught the peasant youth in an agricultural setting that paralleled daily farm life. Today, due more to change in society than changes in folk schooling, most students’ outside lives are dramatically different than life in the folk schools. No longer the realm of solely the peasant youth, today’s folk schools teach a broad swath of youth and adults. This section looks at living and learning in contemporary folk schools as a whole through the aspects of philosophy, pedagogy, place, and people.

The comparative, content website analysis yielded a significant commonality in the pedagogy of today’s folk schools—deep learning over time. Or, as the title of this project indicates, true slowness in learning. Long gone are the days when most folk school courses lasted for months on end, but today’s North American folk schools continue to offer long-term

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learning experiences to adults who have few opportunities for extended education. The universal curriculum that was offered to all folk school students in the past has been supplanted by a specialized focus, to accommodate for the shortened course format. Through non-competitive and non-vocational, experiential learning, over several days or weeks, one becomes well-acquainted with a subject matter. Students have the time and space to learn slowly and deeply in today's folk schools. In doing so, they partake in a radical resistance to the fast-paced and consumeristic ways of modern living.

Today's folk schools also find resonance in the task of building resiliency. It is a profound response to people and places whose existence is threatened by the bigness and quickness of life today. This resistance, in the form of teaching skills for resilience, supports more sustainable and equitable ways of living. As Bowers (2001) notes in his critique of education for emancipation:

[Educators]... continue to frame their recommendations for educational reform in ways that ignore the cultural roots of the ecological crisis. The various approaches these educational theorists take in conceptualizing how educational reform can alleviate social injustices contain a double bind. Their view of social justice, which is couched in Enlightenment language of emancipation of the individual, involves achieving equal standing in a culture that is overshooting the sustaining capacity of natural systems. (vii)

Liberal education often operates on a premise of uplifting marginalized populations to equitable, but ultimately, unsustainable positions. Folk schools avoid this double bind (Bowers, 2001) by promoting equity and sustainability through a critique of contemporary society. And through philosophies of connection and self-sufficiency amongst people in their place. Slow learning, and the building of resilient people and communities, also helps to combat a host of

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modern issues like consumerism, climate change, colonization, and urbanization through an emphasis on cultural preservation and self-sufficiency.

The comparative, content website analysis revealed that today's folk schools remain overwhelmingly rural. It is unsurprising that today's folk schools are bucolic, teaching primitive traditions and skills of yesteryear. The rural-urban and contemporary-historical tensions have long existed in folk schooling and likely account for their distribution today. As the world becomes increasingly urbanized and we become further removed from the land and the systems that sustain us, it is inevitable that push back will be found in the fierce advocates of agrarian life and craft traditions. Nonetheless, folk schools today do important work from their rural homes, far from the bustle of modern, urban life.

Today's folk schools also offer possibilities to mitigate the impacts of climate change and consumerism. The philosophy of folk schooling for transformative education, leading to informed and enriched lives, is enacted through pedagogies of craft revival and cultural preservation. As modern folk school students participate in slow, deep learning that counters convenience culture, threads of resistance form. Shifting priorities away from consumerism toward craft and culture will have an impact on our environment as these values are enacted in people's everyday lives. When we begin to place value in the living arts, as well as the art of living well in our place with our people, we can foster communities and cultures less at odds with each other and the Earth. The folk schools offer real possibilities for settler Canadians and Americans to reacquaint ourselves with our own cultural heritage and histories. In doing so, we might continue the path towards reconciliation and decolonization. Today's folk schools foster sustainable and resilient rural communities, rich with skills and traditions, where the possibility of equity for all exists on the path to reconciliation.

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Insights and Significance of the Study

The folk schools of the United States and Canada today are part of a burgeoning folk school tradition of alternative, transformative, youth and adult education in North America and Europe. With roughly half of the schools in this study opening in the past twenty years alone, pedagogical interest in the “schools for life” remains strong in North America. Yet, folk schools here have never become the ubiquitous cultural forces for change and enlightenment that they are in Scandinavia. American and Canadian folk schools experience a great deal of success on-the-ground, as described in the comparative, content website analysis, through cultural preservation, renewal, and advocacy. But they remain virtually unknown in society and mainstream education today and exist on the margins of modern conventions. Nevertheless, this study has argued for the significance of the folk school model for education in contemporary society. It is a model that has demonstrated its ability to adapt to time, place, and culture, and to thrive during times of profound struggle. And when folk schools are viewed as an idea, rather than as a school, the future of folk schooling is particularly promising. The philosophy of folk schooling, as life-enriching and empowering sites of education and transformation, and the pedagogies of slow learning, by hand through stories, traditions, and craft, are applicable to education and to our daily lives. Folk schools place an emphasis on learning from and with each other, and on culturally relevant learning, rooted in the histories and landscapes of place. These aspects of folk schooling have powerful potential for cultivating community and self-sufficient, sustainable regional economies. The folk schooling model in its traditional sense, and the folk school idea, or spirit, both provide significant possibilities for social progress.

This analysis serves to position folk schools within the conversation of the future of education and possible responses to cultural changes and crises. I therefore assert that this

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historical and contemporary study makes an important contribution to the body of scholarly literature surrounding the folk schools of North America. It is the first comprehensive, scholarly study of modern folk schools on this continent since Jindra Kulich's 1964 assessment of the Danish folk high schools at home and abroad. Much has changed since then, as Kulich (1964) thought that folk schools in North America had likely peaked at eight or nine schools in total. With the inclusion of twenty-six schools in the folk school spirit for this study, the discussion can now pick up where he left off over half a century ago. This research highlights the continued success of the movement, and its small, but increasing momentum in North America, through an analysis of the past one-hundred years of folk schooling here up to the present day.

The comparative, content website analysis also serves to unite the modern folk schools of the United States and Canada. On the surface, they appear too varied and eclectic to be considered within the same educational tradition. The schools range from Roving Schools operating in renegade-style out of homes and farms, to the Originals, which maintain vast campuses for residential education. The content of the schools ranges from leadership and activism, to fine arts and folk-arts, and from sustainable living to Scandinavian culture. And yet, these schools are very much part of the folk schooling tradition descended directly from the folk high schools of Denmark. Despite differences in infrastructure and focus, they operate under a philosophy of transformational learning through a pedagogy of hands-on, deep learning with people in their place. A grounding of the research in the historical and theoretical aspects of folk schooling was foundational to synthesizing this diverse group of schools into one educational tradition. I now endeavour to address opportunities for the folk schools to live out their dual purposes of individual enlightenment and collective social change.

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Fast Times and the Impact of Technology

The time is nigh for a profound cultural shift in the ways we live and learn. When I think of opportunities as they relate to folk schooling, the possibilities become very real. Folk schools are not the answer to every problem in our society or even within education, but they do have much to offer. Today's folk schools operate in pursuit of crafting lives that are whole, sustainable, connected, and beautiful. Myles Horton (1989, in Horton & Jacobs, 2003) asserted that folk schools are a different kettle of fish as compared to conventional schooling. And as society has continued to evolve under the guise of progress, this is more accurate than ever. Folk schools are not meant to be like other schools, nor are they intended to reflect or reproduce modernity and society unconditionally. Folk schools hold fast to the traditions and history that uphold our cultural roots, and advocate for lifestyles that are sustainable, equitable, and joyous. The differences between folk schooling and society today say as much about society as they do about the folk schools.

Early folk schooling in Denmark and in the United States looked much like rural life there and afforded students the opportunity to learn while retaining their agricultural lifestyles. But today, folk schooling looks much different than urban, and even rural, life in modern times. Folk schools have not changed all that much, but society has transformed greatly over the past century or so. As land ownership has concentrated under industrial agriculture, many rural folks today commute to urban and suburban areas for work, while others suffer from crippling poverty as a result of the desolation of rural life with fewer viable economic opportunities. Folk schools have the ability to teach, celebrate, and uplift traditional rural life and skills in America and Canada. If modern folk schools remain rooted in their past by leveraging historical strengths in cultural preservation and renewal, they may very well play a large part in stemming the suffering

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in rural areas. This also requires societal shifts in priorities and ideals that value agrarian lifestyles and traditions, and national and global policies toward rural renewal, but folk schools can very well play a part in beginning to alter attitudes. Folk schools affect change on the individual level, but as shown in the history of folk schooling in Europe and North America, those singular transformations can eventually add up to collective social change on a national level. Today's folk schools have the capacity to showcase rural ways of living that are more sustainable and equitable, and currently threatened by urban sprawl and urbanization.

Along with urbanization, modern technology presents both opportunities and challenges to folk schools. The remainder of this section addresses technology in our fast times, as it relates to contemporary folk schooling. Digital technology has largely remained an enigma to the folk schools. Folk schools have employed computerized technology in requisite ways, but have mostly responded to a shifting technological landscape rather than leading with modern technology. Digital technology, too, has imposed change on the folk schools. There once was a time, just over fifty years ago, when folk schools were the hub of several social and cultural movements in rural America. Today, activism and advocacy have largely moved online into the realm of social media, changing the role of folk schools in social change. Advocacy in the folk schools has shifted from organized social movements to slow, underground resistance to contemporary life through preservation of craft and culture.

In terms of the relevancy of folk schooling in a high-tech world, folk schools are becoming more necessary than ever as valuable cultural traditions slip away. Not just primitive skills, but entire lifestyles are in danger of becoming obsolete. Folk schools offer a powerful mode of resistance and culture-building to counter cultural homogenization. Disparity exists between the integration of technology into all aspects of modern life and the primitive skills and

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pedagogies of the folk schools. Yet, folk schools have a great potential to leverage digital technology in authentic, impactful ways in terms of organizing and marketing the schools' slow learning to a wide audience through the internet and social media.

If folk schools are to recapture a youthful audience, they must do so in a language that resonates with a digital generation. The very fact of completing a website analysis of twenty-six modern folk schools speaks to the evolution of folk schools together with technology. It also signifies the importance that folk schools are placing on utilizing new technologies to reach potential students. But even online, folk schools remain loosely organized. Learning about the North American folk school tradition, and finding contact and programming information on the schools, is a series of rabbit holes. An organized and robust online source on North American folk schooling would serve to elevate the tradition and assist interested folks to learn about and locate the folk schools, promoting greater participation. If folk schools today have any glaring problem, it would be in their obscurity within popular culture. I am not convinced that this is related to the resonance of the folk school concept. In fact, most of my peers, colleagues, family, and friends, were not at all familiar with the schools. It is more likely that a lack of reach is responsible for the anonymity of the folk schooling tradition in North America. In this regard, technology holds great potential, perhaps paradoxically, for amplifying the significance of folk schooling in our culture through marketing and social media. It provides an opportunity to introduce the folk school tradition and its importance here and abroad, to Canadians and Americans at-large.

Technology also provides opportunities to centralize material about the North American folk schooling tradition—offering the possibility of sourcing information, schedules, and even registering for courses online. This does not exist yet beyond individual folk school websites, but

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the technology to do so clearly does. The internet also offers possibilities in terms of the proliferation of online learning. E-learning is possibly at odds with folk schooling philosophy and pedagogy. Living and learning in the folk schools is, I think, best left to its traditional ways wherever possible. At the heart of folk school learning is an emphasis on human connections and collaboration. Or as Myles Horton described it, solidarity and brotherhood (Horton & Jacobs, 2003). This aspect of folk schooling would be exceedingly difficult to replicate in an online format. But in their drive to recover and preserve traditional ways of living, online learning could extend reach and address some constraints around equitable access in the folk schools.

Ploughshare is already offering a variety of e-courses in homesteading skills and other schools could soon follow suit. My hope is that e-learning could enhance and extend traditional in-class offerings, rather than replace them entirely, as the people and places of the folk schools are key to transformative learning.

We live in fast times. Technology has rapidly crept into most aspects of modern life. But there is still a place for slowness and connection. This is in spite of, or maybe even because of, the technological advances of society. The proliferation of nearly half of today's folk schools in the age of the internet speaks to a profound resistance as people crave low-tech, intimate experiences in learning and living.

Slow Schools and the Quiet Resistance

In fast times such as these, it seems to some extent necessary to call for the innovation and integration of folk schools with the technology most people use in their everyday lives. And I feel that some opportunities do exist to that end. But I believe that there is much about these slow schools that is digital tech-free and worth retaining in modern times. In the folk schools today, one finds a window to the past and to ourselves. The schools are reminiscent of the rural

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ways of living close to the land that were once the foundation of life in post-colonial North America. As the world changed around them, and as education grabbed on to each new pedagogical fad, folk schools remained grounded in their traditions. Folk schools, then and now, have addressed a lack of meaningful, relevant education for cultural preservation and survival. Advocates of agrarian life and culture, folk schools have fought a so-far uphill battle—making their work all the more vital.

In today's folk schools, slow, connected, and intentional learning experiences celebrate our cultural heritage. Quietly, they are cultivating collective identities, much as the Danish folk schools awakened a national spirit amongst the Danish peasantry. Canadian and American folk schools have deep connections to their communities, and to local and regional efforts for arts and cultural preservation and economic justice. They work co-operatively with their neighbours to provide relevant learning in the schools and to enrich their communities with cultural programming. While it is not often that we hear about folk schools in the media, or even within education, they are quietly cultivating a sense of place and an appreciation of folk-arts and culture. It is a slow, gradual, and unyielding process. And I sense that we are just beginning to feel the full impact of a nascent, modern folk school movement, as many of the schools are but five, ten, or twenty years old. While many of the schools are still in their infancy, they offer transformative and lifelong learning, which has long-lasting impacts.

Some of these effects can already be seen, others are likely still emerging. Amongst the visible shifts in culture that are in line with modern folk schooling are the slow movement and a renewal of craft traditions. Knitting, crocheting, sewing, and other textile arts are experiencing a resurgence in society. In addition, homesteading and sustainable ways of living are slowly transforming many urban, suburban, and rural homes. The growth of permaculture landscapes,

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biodynamic agriculture, community gardens, community-supported agriculture, and farmer's markets all indicate a desire to live closer to the land. In contrast to the folk schools, which receive almost no media attention, climate change is a well-known phenomenon. The increasing severity of the impacts of climate change and environmental degradation are causing folks to become more aware of the dire need for societal change. Folk schools offer at least one response to these ecological challenges. Myles Horton (in Jacobs, 2003) spoke of folk schools as encountering movement periods and periods of preparation. He felt that this was natural, and a requirement, if folk schools were to be poised for maximum impact in social change. I imagine folk schools today as being on the cusp of advancing such change. There are signs that societal priorities and needs are changing, and folk schools offer a return to the land and to traditional ways of living. If folk schools remain receptive to the needs of their communities, they may well be positioned for prominence in the re-making of culture.

Living Work

Folk schools have long embodied the capacity for creating social change through education. The Danish folk schools, in just a generation or two, transformed the Danish countryside into the home of an enlightened and co-operative citizenry. In Appalachia, folk schools like John C. Campbell Folk School, Penland School of Crafts, and Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts led the Craft Revival Movement to celebrate the culture and traditions of mountain life, providing an infusion of money to local artisans (Fariello, 2007). At Highlander Folk School, Myles Horton and his staff provided leadership and capacity-building to the Labour and Civil Rights movements (HREC, 2014). This precedent provides inspiration for the future of the folk schooling, and their opportunities to enact social change. Social change today must be viewed within the context of fast times and technology, as communicated in the previous section.

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The living work that arises as a response to this research, helps to address the second half of the research question which asks: “What opportunities exist for folk schools to enact social change in today’s world?” This section addresses some of the most compelling prospects. It also examines future questions into folk schooling which may prompt further research and analysis.

Folk schools have the possibility of being of, by, and, for their people and communities. By shifting the power dynamic in education to local people and places, folk schools can be authentic and impactful by addressing pressing needs within the community. This was the case at Highlander, as local folks brought their problems to folk school leaders who then helped them to find solutions themselves by connecting them with each other and with appropriate resources. It was also the case at John C. Campbell where the school served as a model farm to help local folks undertake economically-viable agriculture in the mountains. Likewise, today’s folk schools are pliable due to their locality and autonomy. They can respond swiftly to emerging community needs. This requires uplifting the voices of the local people and remaining entrenched in place.

The spirit of the folk school offers even greater potential. Although folk schools are geographically widespread in the United States and Canada, they remain miniscule in relation to the population of the two countries. Twenty-six schools for some 350-million people presents challenges in effecting broad social change. And therein lies the value of the folk school “idea.” Or rather, ways that folk school living and learning can be extended to our everyday lives. The values of non-competition and non-quantification of learning offer an important lesson for education and industry. Imagine if schools reversed their drive towards standardization through testing and grades, and instead promoted the spirit of cooperation and the value of the individual in collective learning and success. Both schools and workplaces could take a page from folk schooling and offer learning that is both non-vocational and self-enriching. Happy people are

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often also productive and creative people. However, we have not yet reached a cultural tipping point with non-competitive, non-vocational, and intrinsic learning. Therefore, these folk school values have a great deal to offer to contemporary society.

The value of the living word and hands-on, experiential learning have the ability to re-shape our ways of living and learning. As a pedagogical approach, experiential learning has developed a devoted following within certain segments of education. Sadly, this is often constrained to arts and science courses. The folk school values of experiential learning and the living word can be incorporated in education in myriad ways. The inviting-in of community members and elders offers the ability to learn history and culture first-hand and to experience place in new ways. In workplaces, we can learn more by doing and sharing, rather than solitary toil. In our everyday lives, the values of the living word and experiential learning encourage us to communicate with each other and share knowledge, culture, and stories, and to be active participants in our own survival. They encourage us to live more harmoniously with nature and with each other, and to strengthen connections to people and place through support of regional economies and sustainable ways of living. The living word also implies that learning should be pertinent to our lives. It can help to combat estrangement from traditions and the abstraction and alienation that define modern life.

In their North American form, folk schools also encourage us to embrace folk-arts and crafts. Although folk arts are somewhat less refined than their fine art counterparts, they are important to the life and spirit of the people. Craft can serve as both product and critique. Participation in craft allows us to retain our cultural heritage by producing something of lasting value, while combatting consumerism and acculturation. Craft is a quiet, renegade way of incorporating the folk school spirit into everyday life, while strengthening our traditions. It could

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also find natural places within formal schooling and post-secondary institutions by connecting youth with culture and living history, leading to richer, more beautiful lives grounded in our collective customs.

I have argued for the incorporation of the folk school spirit into our lives, schools, and workplaces through the creation of authentic, hands-on opportunities for non-competitive, communal learning with real-life implications. I would now like to consider, within the context of folk schooling opportunities, possibilities for scholarly research and discourse. This is critical as academia has largely left folk schooling in North America to on-the-ground practitioners rather than scholars. As a result of the comparative, content website analysis, three main topics of inquiry surface as living work that may arise for academics concerned with folk schooling. First is the topic of youth in American and Canadian folk schooling. Originally intended strictly as schools for Danish youth aged 18-25, today's folk schools in the United States and Canada cater to a broader segment of adult learning. This, in itself, is not particularly problematic, but the disappearance of youth in our folk schools is quite concerning. Scholars might look to the success of Scandinavian folk schools today to understand how we might better encourage folk schooling as an attractive option for our own youth. Scholarly inquiry is also merited into whether adaptations to the folk school model or the folk school spirit might create relevant opportunities to engage urban folks in folk school-type learning. Although they have long served rural people, demographic shifts of traditionally rural folks towards urbanization prompt the consideration of what, if anything, folk schools might offer to urban populations.

Lastly, the history of folk schooling in Europe and North America has demonstrated the success of folk schools amidst national, linguistic, cultural, and economic struggle. In North America, folk schools flourished in the period between the two world wars, and again as the

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prosperity of the 1990's dot-com era gave way to the Great Recession and wars of the 2000's. Scholarly inquiry into the place of folk schools within periods of prosperity would provide a valuable contrast to the narrative of folk schooling and struggle. By examining past periods of prosperity and the North American folk schools, and contemporary folk schools in Scandinavia, folk school scholars can look to the possibilities of North American folk schooling in the future, whether tumultuous or prosperous.

These opportunities to enact social change—to incorporate the folk school spirit into everyday life and for scholarly inquiry—comprise the living work that may arise as a result of this research. Grundtvig thought that the living word was enlivened through the response of the learner. Such is the value of this research in-so-far as it creates opportunities to enact change and to celebrate the past, present, and future of folk schooling in Canada and the United States. This chapter has united North American folk schooling under one educational tradition. It has communicated insights garnered through the comparative, content website analysis and asserted the significance of this study. It has examined these slow schools and their quiet resistance within the context of fast times and technological innovation. And lastly, it has addressed the living work that arises from this research by way of opportunities for social change and extensions of folk school learning, and possibilities for further scholarly inquiry. As such, it is my hope that this research supports and uplifts the folk schooling tradition in North America as a serious, and successful, branch of alternative education.

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Conclusion

This research sought to answer the question, “What is the past and present state of folk schooling in the United States and Canada with respect to people, pedagogy, philosophy, and place; and what opportunities exist for folk schools to enact social change in today’s world?” Chapter 1 noted the importance of this scholarship in response to a lack of English-language writing on folk schooling and a void of scholarly writing on contemporary North American folk schools. I indicated my scholarly interests in the schools as a “slow” response to a dizzying, modern world. Chapter 2 placed the history of folk schooling in the context of profound struggle and named them as open, autonomous sites of non-competitive, residential education for youth and adults, where learning is enacted through the living word. I argued that folk schools have a proud legacy of impact in social change, which can be seen in the rise of the Danes and in social justice movements in the American South.

Chapter 3 addressed the guiding methodologies of this research project. I outlined my comparative, content analysis of modern folk school websites in order to showcase the historic and modern American and Canadian counterparts of the old Danish tradition. Chapter 4 communicated the findings of the comparative, content website analysis of twenty-six contemporary Canadian and American folk schools. The schools were described in categories of *The Originals*, *The Spiritual Schools*, *The (Quasi) State and Institutional Schools*, *The Grassroots Schools*, and *The Roving Schools* in the context of their people, place, pedagogy, and philosophy. Chapter 5 unified the modern folk schooling tradition as one branch of alternative, youth and adult education. It discussed opportunities for folk schools to enact social change through scholarly work and the incorporation of the folk school idea into our daily lives. The research closed with suggestions for living work that arises as a response to this analysis.

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We Make the Road by Walking

As this research comes to an end, I issue a challenge to myself. It is my hope that this research will live on in my own journey and in my life's work, forever altering what might have been a divergent direction. The study of folk schooling has congealed many of my beliefs about education into one tradition and practice, unlike any I have encountered before. I anticipate that the folk school spirit will carry on in my own education and in my role as an educator, pointing down a path of emancipatory, experiential education for social renewal.

Folk school great Myles Horton was likewise wary of the well-trodden path. He preferred rather to forge ahead and create a new one. "We Make the Road by Walking" was not just the title of a book, it was representative of the lives of two transformative educators and change-makers who embodied that ideal. Horton (in Jacobs, 2003) wrote from Copenhagen on Christmas night of 1931:

I can't sleep but there are dreams. What you must do is go back, get a simple place, move in and you are there. The situation is there. You start with this and let it grow. You know your goal. It will build its own structure and take its own form. You can go to school all your life, you'll never figure it out because you are trying to get an answer that can only come from the people in the life situation. (p. 3)

These words profoundly touch me, particularly as I near the end of this journey and the future lies ahead unclear, but replete with opportunity. I am reminded to start small and to remain open to possibilities which are yet to take form. And most importantly, to start, simply by starting.

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