

Learning Through Relationship: In-Context Development for Teachers of Indigenous Students

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Educational Studies

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Abstract

In this study, I explore the experiences and qualities of productive learning relationships shared by Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators in K-12 public education contexts. I know from my own teaching experience and from existing research that non-Indigenous educators often have much to learn about teaching Indigenous students well, and about respectfully incorporating Indigenous perspectives in their daily work. This study springs from my experience as a Canadian teacher of English, Irish, and Scottish heritage who is growing through working alongside and relating with Indigenous colleagues and community members. Through a narrative inquiry approach (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), I present stories drawn from conversational interviews (and in one case, observations) with Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators who have worked together in ways they believe have positively influenced the non-Indigenous educators' practices with respect to Indigenous students. Each of these eleven stories is represented individually, including a piece of art, a context statement, a multi-page story, and a summary statement. In the discussion chapter, I draw out connecting ideas based on what I have learned from the stories. These include qualities such as being open, being genuine, trust, being centred on students, and emotional dynamics like fear and confidence, fun and laughter. The conclusions emphasize the variety of ways in which productive learning relationships arise and are sustained by Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators of unique personalities, backgrounds, and approaches. I point to some supporting factors, such as time and specific roles that can facilitate these learning opportunities.

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“To the Author of Life: Be the author of my life.” (-Phil Joel)
Thank you Father, Son, and Holy Spirit for life and hope, guidance and peace.

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Chapter One: Introduction

In this introductory chapter, I begin with sharing some of my professional and personal story to offer readers a sense of how I arrived at this research, recognizing, as Kovach (2009) said, “We know what we know from where we stand” (p. 7). I then present the research questions¹, which are the framing concepts for the present study. In the remainder of the chapter, I gradually unpack the research questions by presenting background information, significance and purpose statements, and limitations, delimitations, assumptions, and definition of terms that frame how I approach this study.

My Story (a few excerpts of it!)

Hello! Boozhoo! Martha Moon nindizhinikaaz. Peterborough Ontario nindoonjii. I come to this research as a PhD student who is following up on master’s research where Indigenous colleagues provided a new way for me to think about Indigenous students’ school success (Moon, 2014). I found this to be an inspiring and rich research and personal experience. “Relationship” was one strand of what I learned there, and this study was an opportunity to learn more about what it is like for Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators to relate and learn together in publicly funded school settings.

I come as an elementary school teacher—a supply teacher right now, and a classroom teacher and outdoor education teacher in the past—and as a contract lecturer for Bachelor of Education and Classroom Assistant courses. Within these contexts, I am actively learning from Indigenous (and non-Indigenous) educators, families, and students around me. I come as a Canadian citizen, a person who is very thankful to live in Thunder Bay, Ontario. I live and work

¹ As seen in Appendix C, the research questions are phrased as “research topics” in the conversational interview guide. A participant in my master’s study pointed out that opening opportunities for stories can be more effective than asking many questions.

on the traditional territory of the Anishinaabe of Fort William First Nation in the Robinson-Superior Treaty area. I recognize that this place is, and has been, significant for many First Nation and Métis people over time. I come as a member of the Moon and Gleeson families, a settler Canadian of English, Irish, and Scottish heritage, the descendant of family members who immigrated to Ontario several generations ago. I come carrying guilt and some disillusionment regarding what it means to be part of the heritage of colonization. I come with the joy of teaching in outdoor settings, through music, and in those beautiful moments when a student comes to understand something new, or even better, further understands how precious and gifted he or she is.

I come as someone who began to learn more about Indigenous education as an undergraduate student at university, and has since wanted to be part of acknowledging these ways of knowing, and of helping to shape schooling to honour Indigenous students. A memorable time for me was reading about the Dene Kede curriculum in the Royal Commission on Aboriginal People (1996). I was intrigued by this curriculum developed by local Elders and based on respectful relationships with self, others, the spirit world, and the land (see Northwest Territories Education, Culture, and Employment, 1993). This learning about education had some overlap with personal learning and new connections in Indigenous communities through volunteering, sports, an undergraduate thesis (Moon, 2008), and a teaching placement.

I come as a Christian who wants my life to be shaped by my Maker, who loves breathing in that sweet spring breeze and thinking about how this relates to my life before God, who is connected with Church community and thrives on worship and prayer and big discussions about how God is guiding in our lives. I come as someone with unresolved questions about what it means to acknowledge spiritual practices and journeys that are not my own while ultimately

seeking to follow Jesus and enjoy His presence in my life, savouring when these two seem to coincide nicely, and feeling conflicted when that does not seem to be the case. This spiritual thinking—and the accompanying anguish at times—has led to many conversations with Indigenous and non-Indigenous friends and colleagues. These have been meaningful to me. I have also been coming to see that Christians have varying views and experiences in this area.

Recognizing that many of the Church's practices have caused great harm to large numbers of Indigenous people (P. Cormier, 2014) through force and abuse, particularly in the Indian Residential School system (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015) is hard to work through as a White Christian teacher. For example, what does it mean to be an active member of the Church—both the local organization and the global body of those who seek Jesus—in light of shameful and harmful practices in which Canadian church denominations have participated? How do I wonder about this, engage in the struggle in my own heart, and live daily community life as an educator, a friend, a mentor (and mentee!), and a member of Christian organizations? While the aforementioned spiritual and religious tensions have been at the forefront of my own heart and thoughts throughout this study, these tensions were not prominent in participants' conversational interviews. Some participants and I did discuss our own spiritual views or those of others in a direct manner, yet most who spoke about spiritual practices or spiritual learning integrated those topics into the general flow of their ideas and stories. In keeping with their approach, I wrote about participants' spiritual views and experiences within their contexts, not separating out spiritual considerations.

I come to this research as someone who genuinely loves a good conversation; this interpersonal, story-based research resonated strongly with me. I come as a Canadian and a teacher who is concerned that Indigenous students' school completion statistics are lower than

those of other Canadians (Statistics Canada, 2017), particularly because I have worked with smart, intuitive, witty students who I see as above average, yet some are not easily engaged and assessed in the present school system. I come wondering how school might be better for them, and how non-Indigenous educators like me might learn to play a part. I am also coming to recognize how schooling in Canada has meant Eurocentric teaching (Battiste, 2013) that tends to exclude Indigenous perspectives and has quite often demeaned Indigenous people. I come hoping for change in that, including the painful honesty about how laws like the Indian Act, policies like land-grabbing and Indian Residential Schools, and ongoing views about White superiority affect us today.

I come with respect for Indigenous educators who know more than I do, and are often so willing to teach me. I come with thankfulness that they were willing to share with me in this research context, and I am grateful to the non-Indigenous teachers who joined in sharing their stories, time, and relationships. I come drawn to ways of educating that value personal connections, story, rootedness in the Creator and creation, learning across generations, and with love, joy and kinship at the core (see Archibald, 2008; Canadian Council on Learning, 2007; Hampton, 1995; Simpson, 2014). I love the idea that people are on learning journeys that proceed at different paces and ways, and that this should be honoured. These are teachings that I have picked up from Indigenous educators (including some in this study) as well as Elders and scholars, most recently Elder John Sawyer at the Canadian Symposium for Indigenous Teacher Education in North Bay, Ontario who spoke about the importance of listening to one another's stories, and of building on our own experiences.

I think that is it for now. Thanks for engaging with me in these Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators' stories. I take responsibility for any errors and appreciate feedback.

Maybe one day we can have a good sit down conversation about it all. Or even better, let's go paddling or for a big walk and talk! Truly, though, please be in touch (my email is memoon@lakeheadu.ca) if there is something you would like to say or further discuss. I have a lot to learn.

Research Questions

The following research questions provide the framework for the present study:

1. How do non-Indigenous educators and Indigenous educators and community members describe experiences and qualities of the productive learning relationships they share?
2. How are these relationships initiated and sustained, and how do participants believe they affect non-Indigenous educators' practices with respect to Indigenous students?

Brief Background for the Present Study

The research questions, which draw attention to non-Indigenous educators' learning as it affects their teaching practice with respect to Indigenous students, address some major societal issues in Canada. One is the stereotyping and lack of knowledge about Indigenous perspectives that exists in the Canadian population (Environics Institute, 2016) and the associated lack of knowledge in teacher populations (Godlewska, Moore, & Bednasek, 2010). Another is the statistically lower academic achievement of Indigenous students relative to their non-Indigenous peers (People for Education, 2016). The approach I take to addressing these two issues is based on the idea that non-Indigenous educators' knowledge and attitudes impact Indigenous students' school success (National Indian Brotherhood/ Assembly of First Nations [NIB/AFN], 1972). It is also based on the idea that teachers' knowledge, attitudes, and learning influence society at large since historical information, values, and information about present society are transmitted and legitimized through schooling (see Apple, 2004; McLaren, 2009).

As Justice Murray Sinclair stated (Truth and Reconciliation Commission [TRC], 2018), “Reconciliation is about forging and maintaining respectful relationships. There are no shortcuts.” This research was designed to study educators’ learning relationships, and to do so in a relational setting. Drawing on conversational interviews with Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators meant hearing multiple perspectives on the research questions, often through shared stories since many of the participants were interviewed with a colleague or two, building on one another’s views and telling their stories together. These perspectives add to growing resources that highlight Indigenous educators’ views and stories, such as St. Denis’s (2010) study conducted with Aboriginal public educators across Canada, the Knowledge Keepers video by the Ontario College of Teachers (2016), and the Aboriginal teacher profiles created in Manitoba (Manitoba Education and Training, n.d.).

Story and relationship are key principles winding through the literature, methodology, findings, discussion, and conclusions of the present study. The work of Indigenous scholars (e.g., Donald, 2012; Kovach, 2009) and narrative inquirers (e.g., Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Hollingsworth, Dybdahl, & Turner Minarik, 1993) is referenced in forming a basis for these principles. Clandinin and Connelly’s (2000; 2006) three-dimensional narrative inquiry space is the theoretical framework through which I analyzed the stories and key themes.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research was to gather and consider stories about productive and meaningful learning relationships shared by Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators in publicly funded school settings. I know from my own experience and from academic literature (Blimkie, Vetter, & Haig-Brown, 2014; Oskineegish, 2015) that learning alongside Indigenous educators and community members can be a meaningful, formational experience for non-

Indigenous teachers. The stories shared in this research provide eleven examples of relationship-based learning in various publicly funded elementary and high schools in Canada. The purpose of sharing these stories is to invite readers to listen in and to learn from others' experiences (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

Significance of the Study

This research responds to gaps in the literature. While there is an established body of literature on Indigenous education traditions and principles (e.g., Battiste, 2013; Hampton, 1995; Little Bear, 2009) and several examples of professional development where non-Indigenous teachers have engaged with Indigenous community members and educator colleagues (e.g., Burrige, Whalan, & Vaughan, 2012; Dion 2016a; Korteweg et al., 2010), I have found little description of *how* these relationships form and operate at personal and interpersonal levels. This research offers in-depth stories from multiple publicly funded school contexts where Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators were working together for the benefit of students.

Limitations

One limitation of this study is that it is a non-Indigenous person's account of the learning relationships experienced by Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants. Even though both Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants are included and I sought out the guidance of Indigenous academics, Elders, friends, and educators as part of the research process, the study is heavily shaped by my own frame of reference. Coming from a Eurocentric heritage in terms of family, research, religious practice, and schooling influences my ideas and my style, and likely limits my ability to recognize certain insights. While "race" and ethnicity are complex concepts in the Canadian context (Satzewich & Liodatis, 2007), and while factors other than ancestry affect identity, I would like to be transparent about my background as a non-Indigenous

Canadian. At the same time, I am very thankful for Indigenous colleagues and friends in my life, and for the ways in which they have helped me to see certain things in new ways.

I chose to study the contextual stories of people at the individual, pair, and trio level. As with other narrative inquiry studies, the small sample size and personalized approach limits generalizability (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). For me, the trade-off is worth it; I present stories and invite readers to consider these in their own contexts (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). The discussion section of this dissertation is not a conclusive model, but an opportunity to present some of my own considerations as I too reflect on these stories. Findings about the dynamics of one relationship in one place may be applicable within that relationship or within that setting but not duplicable in another.

I framed this study around productive learning relationships shared by Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators and community members. While some participants spoke about negative experiences, the recruitment process favoured successful relationships. As a result, readers may lack access to stories that give balancing perspectives. My choice was built on the assumption that there is value in practitioners sharing their experiences of development and positive change, tenets of the appreciative inquiry approach to research (Reed, 2007).

In this narrative study, I limit detail about the people and places represented. This is to respect school boards' requirement not to be named and the resulting anonymity commitment that I made with participants. This process of making the stories general enough to be anonymous has the built-in effect of removing details that could provide context for readers. I regret not being able to name specific First Nations or Elders whose teachings participants credited. Further, without naming specific places, readers are not offered the opportunity to make connections between the politics of a province, the current policies and conversations in a

school board, and the one-on-one learning relationship that is recounted. While some of these elements are presented in general terms, the specifics are purposefully omitted. Practical information like the name of an organization that was particularly meaningful to a teacher, the specific First Nation or Elders whose teachings were being shared with students, or which city was the context for a teacher's observations of race-based divisions and misunderstanding are not shared. I tried to find balance between providing meaningful detail for readers and honouring school boards' and participants' anonymity as promised in the ethics and consent processes. I intended to err toward anonymity when I was making judgment calls on this.

Delimitations

While non-Indigenous educators may influence their non-Indigenous colleagues in ways that benefit Indigenous students, I limited this study to focus on relationships between non-Indigenous and Indigenous people. I suspect that non-Indigenous educators who could serve as mentors in Indigenous education are likely to have gained some of the wisdom and experiential knowledge that they hold from their own learning relationships with Indigenous people. By focusing exclusively on Indigenous-non-Indigenous learning relationships, I studied how knowledge and experience were shared across differences in culture and identity. This is not the same as a study about sharing knowledge within identity groups.

I limited the present study to publicly funded schools. These are at the heart of my own teaching experience, which allows me to feel familiar with the contexts studied. In other words, I have a sense of belonging in urban publicly funded schools and a sense of responsibility to walk alongside my non-Indigenous colleagues in deepening our knowledge and improving our practice.

I chose school-based learning as another boundary in this study. While I believe that many of our most important teachers in life do not work in classrooms nor hold Bachelor of Education degrees, and while Indigenous educators centre community and kinship based learning (see Canadian Council on Learning, 2007; Simpson, 2014), I based this research on schools as central institutions in our current society. Indigenous leaders indicated that change within schooling is an important factor in societal-level processes like coming to “mutual understanding and appreciation of differences” (NIB/AFN, 1972), renewing the Indigenous-Canadian relationship (RCAP, 1996), and it is part of calls to action in Truth and Reconciliation (TRC, 2015).

I sought out non-Indigenous educators who taught Indigenous students. I am drawn to Ojibwe/Odawa scholar Toulouse’s (2013) statement that “Indigenous education is Canadian education” (p. 17) and agree with Dion (2009) that the way teachers present information about Indigenous-Canadian relations is an important aspect of *all* students’ education, ideas which also surface in the findings and discussion of the present study. In designing the present study, I thought that talking with educators about their shifting practices might be most concrete and applicable if they could give examples of how they interacted with Indigenous students, families, and communities.

Assumptions

One of my central assumptions was that there are non-Indigenous educators who are relating with Indigenous educators and community members in ways that positively influence how they teach Indigenous students. I know this from personal and interpersonal experience. In terms of formal learning, there are school boards that offer non-Indigenous teachers the opportunity to learn from Indigenous educators, and organizations like Indspire (2016) and

Teach for Canada (2019) offer teachers mentorship and training with Indigenous educators, leaders, and community members.

While formal programs and approaches may be part of participants' stories, my focus was the interpersonal relationship itself. "Relationship" implies sustained contact and mutual benefit of some sort, which could include mentorships, friendships, collegial relationships, and other relational forms that I did not imagine at the outset. Thus, I assumed that learning through relating was a personal choice; not all people in this study were part of formal learning programs and not all people involved in such programs would self-select to participate in this study.

I did not assume that every instance where non-Indigenous educators and Indigenous educators and community members relate is positive; the literature suggests they are not all positive (Cherubini, McGean, & Kitchen, 2011; St. Denis, 2010). Through processes detailed in the methodology chapter, I selected examples of positive learning relationships by recruiting Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants who indicated that they found their learning relationship productive.

While I researched adult-to-adult learning relationships in the present study, Indigenous students' school success was the larger focus. I assumed that when non-Indigenous educators shaped their teaching practices, learning to respectfully incorporate Indigenous people and their perspectives into their lessons or to relate more effectively with Indigenous students and families, for example, that Indigenous students would experience greater engagement and achievement in school (see Oskineegish, 2018). I assumed that the present study was about practical gains for Indigenous students and did not simply provide an account of knowledge acquired by non-Indigenous teachers. As the Ontario College of Teachers (2010) stated, "When teachers are better prepared to work with Aboriginal students in the classroom and beyond, the

benefits to the students themselves flow forth” (preface). As noted in the delimitation section, non-Indigenous students’ learning was also important to me and to participants while not directly stated in the research questions.

When I was considering non-Indigenous teachers’ practices and how these might shift, I was assuming relational, content, and teaching method gains. I was assuming better teaching meant better connections with students (Whitley, 2014). I thought this might come as a package with teaching better content; students might feel more engaged with a teacher who honoured their heritage, people, and experiences than with a teacher who did not acknowledge these. As stated in the foundational document *Indian Control of Indian Education* (1972), “Non-Indians must be ready to recognize the value of another way of life; to learn about Indian history, customs and language; and to modify, if necessary, some of their own ideas and practices” (p. 26). Teachers’ improved connection with students might also be based on improved connections with family and community members who were important to the student, through changes in the teachers’ attitude, or through changes in how the teacher introduced content, all of which were factors that Indigenous colleagues pointed me toward in earlier research (Moon & Berger, 2016). Content gains included respectfully integrating Indigenous perspectives in varied, deepening, and community-contextual ways that enrich the information presented to students at school. Teaching method gains meant improved pedagogy, or positive change in how learning activities were designed (see Goulet & Goulet, 2014).

I worked from an assumption of high expectations for students and educators. While statistics have indicated that non-Indigenous students’ school achievement is lower than that of their non-Indigenous peers (People for Education, 2016), Indigenous students are capable learners. I know this from my own experience with Indigenous students and from literature that

has indicated that when educators set high academic expectations, this benefits Indigenous students (Castagno & Brayboy, 2008). Thus, educators who believe in Indigenous students and who are skilled in engaging them play an important role in their school success (Bishop & Berryman, 2010; Oskineegish, 2013; Whitley, 2014).

While Canadian universities have often left educators underprepared or even ignorant about Indigenous perspectives (Godlewska, Moore, & Bednasek, 2010), there are educators who learn on the job about local Indigenous perspectives and relevant ways of teaching (Korteweg et al., 2010; Oskineegish & Berger, 2013; St. Denis, 2010). As Tanaka (2009) indicated in her study with pre-service teachers, “preservice teachers are not deficit learners” (p. 230); deep learning can occur for non-Indigenous educators who are learning alongside Indigenous knowledge holders through ongoing relationships. Thus, I held high expectations for both Indigenous students and non-Indigenous educators. While both groups have been presented as deficit in certain literature, the present study was meant to contribute findings that addressed conditions for their flourishing in public school systems.

I assumed that non-Indigenous educators’ development and growth varies in direction and pace. Participants reflected Dewey’s (1938) definition of learning through experience; their experiences fostered in them the desire for more learning. I did not include a requirement or measurement for having attained a particular standard of knowledge, and did not assume that participants saw themselves as experts in Indigenous education. Rather, I recruited people who saw themselves as part of productive and meaningful learning relationships. When a non-Indigenous educator and an Indigenous colleague agreed to participate in the study together, this implied that the non-Indigenous teacher was a public educator who at least one Indigenous educator or community member believed was growing in effectiveness. In the case of the non-

Indigenous educator who interviewed on her own, a recommendation was given by an Indigenous educator.

One method for drawing non-Indigenous people into deeper understanding of Indigenous philosophy was presented by Friesen and Friesen (2002):

A Blackfoot (Siksika) informant once suggested that a favored tribal way of teaching a ritual, ceremony, or other revered practice was in four steps. *First*, initiates would verbally be informed about the ritual or sacred practice; *second*, they would be invited to observe it; *third*, they would be invited to participate in it; and, after sufficient such experience would; *fourth*, be permitted and authorized to teach it to others. By continual enactment of the revered practice, the essence of the practiced ceremony would more indelibly be stamped in the individual's mind and heart.

The Siksika teaching method makes good sense and should perhaps should [sic] be taken up by national Indian leaders and knowledgeable elders in relation to the education of nonNatives. (p. 19)

The authors then made parallels between the four steps and the ways that non-Indigenous people were coming to engage with Indigenous traditions and ways. For me, this quotation raised considerations about the depth of knowledge that non-Indigenous educators might be seeking and the extent to which they were qualified to share it.

As I designed the present study, I did not imagine speaking with non-Indigenous educators who became prepared to pass on spiritual teachings. Rather, I pictured speaking with educators who, through learning more about Indigenous philosophies, perspectives, histories, pedagogies, and current issues through relating with Indigenous educators or community members, became more sensitive in how they interacted with Indigenous students. In other words, non-Indigenous educators whose ways of teaching become increasingly beneficial to Indigenous students through relational processes. I imagined them encouraging students to share their stories, inviting Elders to interact with their classes, and presenting students with Indigenous historical, political, and social perspectives across multiple subject areas (see Korteweg et al., 2010; Moon, 2014; Toulouse, 2011). The Friesen and Friesen (2002) quotation

in the preceding paragraph is a reminder, however, that learning can have multiple levels. Verbal communication, observation, participation, and authorization or preparation to share information with others may be important aspects of non-Indigenous educators' experiences as they relate to Indigenous educators and community members. This is also a reminder that the non-Indigenous educators with whom I spoke were likely to be on a "journey toward acquiring knowledge in a good way" (F. Deer, personal communication, May 29, 2016).

While I framed the research questions around one-on-one interpersonal learning, I assumed that such learning relationships do not occur in isolation. For the purpose of the research, I planned to speak to one Indigenous person and one non-Indigenous person in each learning relationship, and was open to the ensuing variations (see methodology chapter). I recognized that in reality, it was likely that more than one Indigenous person—maybe several colleagues in education settings, a family, or a wider community—had affected each non-Indigenous educator. It was also likely that an Indigenous educator or community member who influenced one non-Indigenous educator influenced many. I assumed this might occur as talk around staffroom tables, work on committees, engagement in friendships outside of school, or relating through formal professional development.

While I focused this research on the development of non-Indigenous educators, I worked from the assumption that Indigenous educators are pivotal to Indigenous students' success and that more Indigenous educators are needed in Canadian school systems (Moon, 2014; NIB/AFN, 1972; Tompkins, 1998). In 1972, the National Indian Brotherhood recommended that there should be a ratio of Indigenous staff that takes into account the Indigenous population within the student body. From another angle, the legacy of Indian Residential Schools lives on when Indigenous students continue to be taught primarily by White teachers delivering Eurocentric

content, an idea that Hookimaw-Witt (1998) helped me to consider when she critiqued content, methods of teaching, and underlying assumptions that reflected those of Indian Residential Schools. While initiatives such as Native Teacher Education Programs have been in place for decades, Indigenous educators continue to be underrepresented in Canadian schools (see Cherubini & Barrett, 2013). Factors such as systemic racism in school systems (St. Denis, 2010) and the expectation that Indigenous teachers will take on extra liaison, advocate, and peer coaching roles (Cherubini, McGean, & Kitchen, 2011; St. Denis, Bouvier, & Battiste, 1998) may contribute to this reality. Thus, I acknowledge the importance of research concerned with Indigenous educators, their views, stories, and experiences, and their impact on public education.

The reason that my research questions addressed the development of non-Indigenous educators within Indigenous-non-Indigenous learning relationships is that I want to speak to experiences closest to my own. As a non-Indigenous educator myself, I am increasingly aware of my own group's need for learning in areas like history, current relations, pedagogy, and respectful communication styles and protocols. As noted later in this chapter, this does not preclude forms of two-way learning, but it does place the emphasis on my own side of things.

Another reason I focused on non-Indigenous educators is the practicality of demographics. A majority (82% in Ontario) of Indigenous students attend provincially funded schools (People for Education, 2016) and the vast majority of public educators are non-Indigenous (Ryan, Pollock, & Antonelli, 2007). Thus, non-Indigenous educators' practices impact the quality of Indigenous students' school experience. As Lamoureux (2016) stated in a panel reflecting on implementation of the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission* recommendations, non-Indigenous teachers' learning through relating to Indigenous people in their lives is important.

Another assumption that underlies the present study is that most schools in Canada are Eurocentric. This means that, by default, educators are passing on European-influenced political, historical, and social views to the exclusion or diminution of Indigenous ones (Battiste, 2013). It would follow that most public educators have been raised in school systems that promote Eurocentric views and practices, and are therefore positioned to continue that tradition. Opening up discussions, ways of teaching and learning, and school-community dynamics to views and practices that originate in Indigenous traditions is likely to represent a move away from schooling norms these educators have previously known (see Dion, 2016a).

Assuming that school systems are Eurocentric also implies continuity with an oppressive history in Canada. If teaching methods and content continue to be derived from outside of Indigenous communities, then the legacy of Indian Residential Schools lives on (Hookimaw-Witt, 1998) and a form of “cognitive imperialism” (Battiste, 1998) continues to take place. Thus, I assume that deep and active philosophical and practical change is needed for schooling to break its oppressive history with respect to Indigenous students, families, and communities. While education led fully by Indigenous people themselves might be the most genuine solution to this problem (Hampton, 1995), I assumed that current educators of Indigenous students also have a role to play in understanding oppression and taking action against it in areas within their reach (Tolbert, 2015).

I assumed that there are many forms of Indigenous education, Indigenous knowledge, and Indigenous beliefs and practices (see Kovach, 2009). Individual people and communities have differing experiences. On a related note, I assumed that different Indigenous educators would bring different bodies of knowledge—something that a participant in this study pointed out

during a conversational interview—and that different learning relationships would give rise to different content and forms of learning.

A final assumption is that teacher development, which is the core of this research, represents one small part of a much larger system. If Canada is to shift toward a rebalanced, reconciled relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people (RCAP, 1996; TRC, 2015), it will be a large-scale occurrence with millions of parts working together, which we can see in the diverse recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (2015) *Calls to Action*. Schools, as agents of political and social influence (Apple, 2004), could be one part of this change. Within school systems there are several interacting factors like school board structure, staffing, policy, curriculum, administration, physical design, inclusion of families and communities, assessment and testing, timelines for coursework and graduation, coordination of services, and educators' knowledge and practices (see Bell, 2004; Moon, 2014; NIB/AFN, 1972; Toulouse, 2013). Thus, while educators play an important part in students' lives through daily personal contact (Lamoureux, 2016), I recognize that they are not the sole factor affecting Indigenous students' schooling. Educators' development is, however, happening on a daily basis and at an interpersonal level. This is an exciting area of study because it can occur without board mandates or large-scale political change; it can happen as one person opens her heart and mind to learning from those around her. While the development of one educator may not shift the whole system toward respectful, equitable Indigenous-non-Indigenous relations, one educator's development may affect a group of Indigenous students' school experience in a significant way. Further, since social systems are made by people and with purpose, learning relationships may have greater effects than anticipated.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are described according to how I use them in the present study. I recognize that they may have multiple and differing meanings in other contexts.

The present study refers to the doctoral research that I have conducted. I use this term instead of “my study” because, while I was responsible for collecting, analyzing, and presenting data, many other people were involved, and ultimately the stories and insight of the nineteen participants form the foundation of the work. When I refer to other studies alongside my own, the term “present study” refers to my own work for the purpose of consistency.

Indigenous refers to people who first inhabited the land we now call Canada and their descendants. This term is used by the United Nations (2007) and many Indigenous scholars (e.g., Battiste, 2013; Iseke-Barnes, 2008; Kovach, 2009). I use the term with respect to how people identify with this land and its original peoples, not in reference to government designations of “status” and “non-status” “Indians.” People who identify as First Nation, Métis, and Inuit are included. From my understanding, Métis people may identify as “Indigenous,” since some of their ancestors were original inhabitants of this land, and they may also identify with their “non-Indigenous” ancestors who came to this land from other places.

Non-Indigenous refers to people who settled in Canada within the last 500 years (approximately) and their descendants.

Both “Indigenous” and “non-Indigenous” encompass multiple groups, histories, and identities; the terms are internally diverse (see Satzewich & Liodakis, 2007). Further, many people in Canada identify with both. While I have applied these definitions for the purpose of the present study, I acknowledge that there are different ways to describe identity, including factors like community membership and belonging.

Education refers primarily to learning occurring in a school setting. I use the term “educator” to refer to people who are contributing to learning in this system. I include people who do not hold formal teacher roles because they are educating their colleagues for the purposes of this study. While Indigenous concepts of education refer to interrelated processes such as learning from family, the community, the natural world, Elders, and traditions and ceremonies (Canadian Council on Learning, 2007), I focus the present study on formal school-based learning.

Non-Indigenous educator is the word I use to specify people who identify as non-Indigenous and who are certified teachers in formal school systems. They may hold administrative or specialist positions, but must also have teaching degrees and experience in classroom teaching. Except in cases where classroom teachers are the focus or occasionally for flow, I use “educator” because it is broader than “teacher,” inclusive of people whose current roles include shaping public education from outside of the classroom. While I highly value the work of student support people, I focused the present study on certified teachers as the formal instructional leaders at the classroom level.

Indigenous educator refers to a person who identifies as Indigenous and holds a teaching or guiding role in a school or school board. This might include administrators, cultural support workers, language teachers, student support people, board or Ministry of Education specialists, classroom or specialist teachers, school-family liaisons, and after school workers.

Colleague is a term I use to indicate the interpersonal dynamic of sharing a work or study environment. I sometimes write “educator colleague” to denote both the role (educator) and relational/spatial position (colleague).

Indigenous community member means a person who identifies as Indigenous and is engaged in a community that is associated with the school in some way. The person might be a band member of a First Nation that is connected through sending children to the school, physical proximity, or consultation. The community member might be a person living in the city, town, or rural area where the school is situated. The community member may also be part of an Indigenous community organization.

Elder refers to a special kind of Indigenous community member. Elders are recognized within their communities as examples of living a good life, as people who are dedicated to the well-being of others (Ellerby, 2001), and as holding wisdom and expertise (Adams, Wilson, Heavy Head, & Gordon, 2015). They are known for their dedicated support of others in areas like spiritual leadership, healing, and teaching (Ellerby, 2001). The term “Elder” can hold different meaning in different communities.

Learning through relationship; learning relationship; learning partners are terms that I left purposefully open to include varying forms of relating that the Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants found productive and led to positive shifts in teacher practices with respect to Indigenous students. This left room for two-way dynamics where participants learn from one another, deepening what Hollingsworth and colleagues (1993) termed “relational knowing” (p. 31) through sharing school-based experiences, questions, and concerns and being open to support and critique from one another. Olson and Craig (2001) described similar dynamics in “knowledge communities” where “teachers validate and consolidate their experiences.... where tensions are revealed and where insights are offered” (p. 667). In planning the study, I anticipated that while mutual sharing and growth might be an important element in how some relationships in the present study were initiated or sustained, other relationships might

have more of a one-way nature, closer to “mentorship” as it is defined in existing literature (e.g., Ragins & Kram, 2007).

Non-Indigenous educators’ practices with respect to Indigenous students is a description that I left purposefully open. I did not define educators’ practices using a particular set of metrics, nor did I narrow the present study to consider a certain aspect of teacher practice.

In-context development is a term referring to processes where educators are learning within their workplaces or with people who are around them.

A note on the capitalization of terms: I noticed variation in the capitalization of certain terms in the literature. I looked to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2015) report as a guide and used lowercase for the terms “residential schools,” “reconciliation,” “truth,” and “land,” except for when these words were used in titles, and used capitals for “Indian Residential School” and “Treaty.” I capitalized “Elder,” guided by the work of Indigenous scholars such as Donald (2012) and Little Bear (2009).

Summary

In this introductory chapter, I described how I arrived at my research questions, and the stance I took in addressing them. My personal and professional story surfaced in several places in order to show my own position within this work (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Kovach, 2009). I now turn to academic literature related to the research questions.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Rationale, Structure of Literature Review

In Chapter One of the dissertation, I briefly addressed elements of the historical and social context that makes meaningful change in the school-based education of Indigenous students an imperative. I sharpened the focus to consider how the learning and development of non-Indigenous Canadian educators is pivotal to many Indigenous students' experiences in school. I framed the research questions within my own experience as a non-Indigenous teacher whose practices were greatly shaped by my interactions with Indigenous educator colleagues. I now turn to academic literature to draw in theoretical conceptualizations and practical examples regarding relationships between non-Indigenous educators and Indigenous educators or community members that result in non-Indigenous educators' learning and development. Since I found few studies that address the phenomenon in a direct, extensive manner, I offer multiple angles from several related fields of study. I describe the search process more fully in the "literature review procedure" section that follows. In several cases, I also describe the methodology of the study I am reviewing because it helps to position the present study. To conclude the literature review, I restate how my proposed research question will add to the current scholarly literature.

Literature review procedure. To search for studies that focused directly on learning relationships where non-Indigenous classroom teachers engaged with Indigenous educator colleagues or community members in order to enhance their teaching of Indigenous students, I conducted a systematic literature review. Having consulted with the education librarian at Lakehead University, I searched five major databases: "Search it all" (Lakehead University library holdings), "Google Scholar," "ERIC," "CBCA," and "Education Source." I paired the

search term (Aboriginal OR Indigenous OR First Nation* OR Native) with the search phrase “teacher education” OR “teacher development” and with the search phrase “teacher” AND (mentor* or guid*). To extend the search on the Ebsco databases (ERIC, Education Source), I used the following system-provided subject headings paired with the (Aboriginal OR Indigenous OR First Nation* OR Native) search term: inservice teacher education; teacher effectiveness; professional development; teachers – attitudes; mentoring in education. I chose these particular Ebsco subjects because they had been assigned to some of the relevant articles from the first phase of the search. Some searches turned up thousands of articles and some very few. When thousands were listed, I narrowed the search to 2005-2015 in order to focus on current practices in the field, expecting that older foundational articles would be frequently cited and found in the reference lists of relevant articles.

Since this literature search did not return many studies that were a close fit for my research topic, I engaged in several other methods of searching for literature. I went back to course readings and other literature that I have encountered through my master’s and doctoral work, conversations with colleagues, and graduate assistant work. I also searched the reference lists of relevant articles, books, and reports. As I wrote up the full first draft of this dissertation, I searched the literature once again. I used “Search it All” through the Lakehead University library and “Google Scholar,” keeping similar search terms to the original literature search and adding “relat*” and “learn*” and “educator.” I also drew on Google Scholar’s “related articles” and “cited by” features and looked for recent articles (2015-2018) in journals that often publish applicable studies, namely the *Canadian Journal of Education*, *Canadian Journal of Native Education*, and *in education*. I found many relevant articles and books but few that were

precisely related to non-Indigenous and Indigenous educators' shared learning and teaching relationships.

The resulting compilation of literature is a core of studies that have some direct relation to my research questions as well as several bodies of literature that have some degree of theoretical, methodological, or practical relevance to the topic. Below, I explain how I have organized the wide range of literature in this chapter.

Organization of this literature review. In the first section of this literature review, I introduce studies that directly address contexts where non-Indigenous educators shaped their practice through interpersonal learning relationships with Indigenous educators or community members. These are studies that I see as most closely related to the present study. In the second section, I address studies where pre-service teachers learned relationally alongside Indigenous educators or community members. This takes a step away from my research by focusing on pre-service teachers, but remains in the field of teacher development. In the third section, I broaden the scope further to include literature where professionals outside the field of formal schooling learn through relating to Indigenous colleagues or community members. In the fourth section, I briefly engage with both Indigenous and Eurocentric traditions in learning through relationship. In the final section, I introduce several theoretical or conceptual models that relate to the intersection of Indigenous and Eurocentric traditions. Thus, this literature review is comprised of a constellation of studies and theoretical works drawn from a variety of fields and traditions, with most in teaching, activism, and research. This approach opens the door for multiple connections with existing theoretical and empirical work, which is important because minimal published work directly addresses the stories of non-Indigenous educators and Indigenous educators or community members as they relate in Kindergarten to Grade 12 (K-12) learning

environments. I refer to authors' work in past tense to recognize that their stated views applied at the time of publication but may have expanded or changed since then.

Educators Learning through Indigenous-non-Indigenous Relationships

In this section, I review studies that address non-Indigenous educators' learning through relating with Indigenous community members or educator colleagues in K-12 education settings. Since this is the area of research that is closest to my own topics, I critique both methods and findings for many of these studies. Studies are organized into three subsections: 1) educators learning through relationships in First Nation and Inuit schools; 2) educators learning through relationships in public school boards; and 3) educators learning through relationships in board-mandated projects. In each subsection, the relationships described are between non-Indigenous educators and Indigenous educators or community members. When studies address both First Nation schools and publicly funded school boards or when it is not entirely clear from the methods section what type of school is being described, I place them in the subsection that appears to be the best fit. To conclude this section on teachers' learning, I summarize some pertinent themes and point to unanswered questions.

Educators learning through relationships in First Nation and Inuit schools.

Oskineegish (2013; 2015) conducted a study that directly addressed the phenomenon of non-Indigenous teachers learning alongside Indigenous educator colleagues or community members. Through semi-structured interviews with Indigenous and non-Indigenous teachers who had extensive experience teaching in First Nation schools in northern Ontario, she sought to find out what makes new non-Indigenous teachers successful educators in those settings. She found that learning through relationships was a primary factor in teachers' success. Open-minded, engaged teachers who learned from students, families, coworkers, and community members were able to

develop mutual trust and to teach and assess meaningfully through integrating local language, land-based learning, and an understanding of their students (Oskineegish, 2013; Oskineegish & Berger, 2013). Her findings revealed many aspects of these positive learning relationships including reciprocity, willingness to share their own knowledge and skill as well as seeking out that of the community, being flexible and adaptive, and learning from mistakes, sincerity, and humour.

Oskineegish also pointed to the importance of teachers viewing themselves as visitors in the community who seek to understand the values, priorities, and practices there instead of imposing their own. Thus, successful teachers were marked not only by what content they teach and in what way, but also by their underlying attitudes and personal qualities (Oskineegish & Berger, 2013). These findings and conclusions raise several questions: Would the same qualities and attitudes pertain to educators in public school boards? Would similar relationships produce similar reported effects in urban settings? Oskineegish's work showed the *effect* of respectful relationships with Indigenous community members and educator colleagues; through what *processes* and in what *conditions* did the relationships develop?

Some of Oskineegish's (2013) findings resonate with Taylor's (1995) earlier work on the role of non-Indigenous teachers in First Nation communities. Reflecting on his own experiences in two First Nation communities and visits and conversations with those involved in other First Nations communities, he stated the importance of factors such as teachers' integration into communities, showing respect, and social interaction. Involvement—which I would frame as relationships—with students, teachers, parents, and the community at large, he claimed, would define how these teachers were seen and therefore how effective they were. From Taylor's perspective, “increased awareness of community will lead to culturally appropriate teaching

styles and materials” (p. 241). Like Oskineegish (2013), Taylor (1995) commented on the importance of teachers’ openness to the community’s way of doing things, recognizing that this may differ from the norms in urban or southern communities where they grew up. While encouraging openness and the development of ties, Taylor (1995) also acknowledged the presence of culture shock and the effort it takes to implement his recommendations. Again, this raises questions about non-Indigenous teachers’ learning in more diverse settings. How might “awareness of community” and connections with Indigenous community members affect and shape teachers’ practices in schools serving students with multiple heritages? When “community” is less clearly defined than a particular First Nation community, what might “ties” look like, and how might they develop and be sustained?

Goulet (2001), a non-Indigenous educator and scholar, conducted a study on teachers’ promotion of Indigenous students’ learning. Some of her findings imply that effective teaching springs from openness to learning through relating to local community members. She interviewed and told the stories of two teachers (one Dene, one non-Indigenous) who she identified as “known to be effective” in the northern Dene and Cree communities where they taught (p. 68). She explicitly focused on how the participants attended to integrating local Indigenous culture, language, values, norms, and community members in their teaching as well as how they addressed colonization, recognizing the need for “more equitable power relationships” (Goulet, 2001, p. 68). Thus, she framed learning relationships within the broader contexts of Indigenous-Canadian relations and the definitive imbalances and oppression therein. Goulet (2001) highlighted effective practices such as speaking to students in their language, fitting academic curriculum to seasonal and community events that were meaningful to the children, connecting families and schools, and involving Elders and community members

through interviewing, letter writing, and visits. The teachers identified “relationship” as central to the effectiveness of their teaching.

While Goulet’s (2001) discussion of relationships was focused primarily around students’ learning, she incidentally described teachers learning from students and students from teachers. She also recounted examples of teachers and students learning alongside one another and from family and community members. She used the Swampy Cree word “*weechiyauguneetowin*,” which expresses partnership or being on the same team (p. 75), to describe the type of relating that she observed. Goulet’s (2001) article did not describe how the learning relationships in the article came to be and how they were sustained. She focused on trust; how was this established and maintained? Thus, in a way, Goulet’s work is a springboard for my own. She showed that strong relationships between non-Indigenous teachers and Indigenous community members can exist and can benefit students, but did not provide great detail regarding these relationships’ qualities and development.

In addition to describing multiple forms of teachers’ learning through relationships, Goulet’s (2001) study is relevant to my own in terms of its design. She interviewed practicing teachers and shared their stories. She recognized that the stories were highlights, not complete accounts of the teachers’ practices (p. 69). This approach was both resourceful and humble; it drew upon the wisdom and experience gleaned from speaking with teachers and observing them in action, but did not claim full knowledge or understanding of them.

Goulet, the non-Indigenous teacher and researcher whose work is described above, coauthored a book with her *Nehinuw* (Cree) husband (Goulet & Goulet, 2014) in which they presented a *Nehinuw* framework for learning with direct examples from classroom teaching. Although the authors focused primarily on students’ learning rather than teachers’ learning, the

book provides a framework that is useful in thinking about how Indigenous approaches to relating and learning can apply within the institution of school as it is typically set up. They contrasted “self-determined, interactive, and collective ways of coming to know through *kiskinaumasowin* (teaching oneself) and *kiskinaumatowin* (teaching each other)” with “Eurocentric, hierarchical, and individualistic ways of knowing and coming to know” (pp. 139-140). As Berger and Epp (2006) stated, supporting Indigenous control and radical reforming of schooling is highly important, yet in the meantime, “thoughtful action at the school and classroom level should not wait for this to occur” (p. 12). In the present study, non-Indigenous teachers’ learning through relationship within existing school structures is a form of thoughtful action that could be informed by work like that of Goulet & Goulet (2014).

The work of Goulet and Goulet (2014) used stories as a primary means of conveying teachers’ experiences and beliefs about education. Teachers’ stories appear to be presented in their original words, spanning several pages and including plenty of detail and anecdotes. The authors include photos of students and teachers. The overall effect is a book with clear connections to daily classroom practice, an outcome to which I also aspire in the present study.

Tompkins (1998), whose research method involved reflecting on her journals and memories as a Qallunaaq (non-Inuit) principal in an Inuit community, also wrote about the importance of non-Indigenous teachers learning through relating with Indigenous educator colleagues. In her case, many of the formally qualified teaching staff were Qallunaat (non-Inuit) from southern Canada while some of the formally qualified teaching staff, many of the teacher trainees, and the language instructor were from the local Inuit community. Tompkins (1998) endeavoured to honour local Inuit language and culture within the school while also applying teaching practices like whole language literacy, learning centres, and small group instruction that

were proving effective in southern Canadian schools. This was accomplished in an evolving way as Inuit and Qallunaat teachers worked in teams, each bringing their strengths, to plan coordinated sets of activities based on locally relevant themes. Through this collaborative planning, Qallunaat teachers learned about Inuit cultural perspectives and how they might apply in school. The result was cohesive, meaningful, and challenging learning opportunities for students in Inuktitut and English across multiple subject areas.

While Tompkins (1998) did not describe in depth the interpersonal dynamics of these learning relationships, she wrote briefly about her interpersonal learning experience and alluded, from her experience as a principal, to some factors that could be pertinent to the present study.

Of her own teaching experience, she wrote:

There were many times, in Pangnirtung and beyond when I was inappropriate in my way of interacting with students, of disciplining them, and of dealing with parents. I was exceptionally lucky to have worked for two years with a very good teacher trainee, and from watching her I think I learned some about what was appropriate and not appropriate. It is not so easy for teachers who come to the North and do not have the privilege of working with an Inuk in the classroom. (p. 102)

Tompkins indicated the importance of working with her Inuk colleague and her view that this type of interpersonal learning within the classroom setting could be beneficial for other teachers as well.

Time and attitude were two examples of factors that were central to the “teaming and theming” (p. 50) approach that Tompkins (1998) developed over time to integrate the learning and instructional planning of Inuit and non-Inuit staff. Since this team planning was valued and coordinated by the principal and the education authority, they set aside time by replacing staff meetings with team planning time and by dismissing students early twice per month. In addition, educators regularly spent time meeting together after school. Tompkins (1998) noted that the greatest barrier for Qallunaat teachers was attitude; while many of the teachers from outside the

community engaged well in co-learning and co-planning, others resisted teaching in a way that was different from their previous experience or had a “bad attitude” toward Inuit children (p. 104). Relating with community members and teaching students was damaged when teachers held unresponsive attitudes.

In reflecting on this, Tompkins (1998) noted: “Many Qallunaaq educators feel that cross-cultural understanding involves learning more about Inuit people. I feel that our first step as Qallunaaq is to examine the cultural values and beliefs we bring as non-native people” (p. 104). Tompkins thereby pointed to self-reflection regarding one’s own identity and culture as a key factor in non-Indigenous teachers’ engagement with Indigenous people around them. Dion (2009), who wrote about preparing non-Indigenous teachers to respectfully incorporate Indigenous stories into their lessons, also focused on critical self-reflection. In an urban context, Dion’s focus was drawing educators away from a “perfect stranger” stance (p. 178) where they claimed ignorance of and a lack of connection with Indigenous people, and toward the recognition that they were in fact connected, and often in problematic and under-examined ways.

On a broader scale, Tompkins (1998), like Goulet (2001), contextualized school concerns within the wider picture of colonization. This reflects findings in my master’s study where Indigenous educators pointed to Indigenous-Canadian relations—both historical and present—as the larger relationship within which school-based relationships are nested (Moon, 2014). It is important to note that Tompkins (1998) came to believe that hiring more Inuit teachers was the best way to support Inuit students in their education; while Qallunaaq teachers’ development was a central part of her work, finding ways to hire, support, and train Inuit educators was her first priority. In sum, through presenting her story and analysis of it, Tompkins (1998) provided an example of how non-Indigenous teachers can learn alongside Inuit educator colleagues for the

benefit of Inuit students. Factors like administrative support, provision of shared planning time, and shaping curriculum around locally relevant themes were practical considerations that helped to initiate and sustain the relationships and may be relevant in other contexts. The underlying idea that non-Indigenous teachers have much to learn from local community members aligns with my own beliefs about Indigenous-non-Indigenous learning relationships in schools.

Berger (2008), whose dissertation work addressed Inuit community members' visions for their children's schooling, also drew attention to the importance of non-Inuit teachers learning from Inuit. Berger described a community in Nunavut that employed many EuroCanadian teachers. One of his focal points was the differing views on raising and educating children between the Inuit community members and the outsider teachers. Berger advised that teachers acknowledge their tendency to judge based on a Eurocentric reference point and recognize that their cultural frame of reference is one of many. He also recommended that schools honour the community's predominant vision for education, which included increased teaching of Inuit knowledge, skills, and language, involvement of Elders and higher academic standards (p. ix). This implied the need for teachers to relate to community members, and to do so from a position that values Inuit ways and is cognizant of their own. Thus, while Berger (2008) did not write extensively about what the learning relationships between non-Indigenous teachers and Indigenous educators and community members might look like, his findings show the importance of such relationships within Inuit visions for their children's schooling.

Lipka is another non-Indigenous scholar; through his work in (Yup'ik) Indigenous Alaskan communities he also brought relationship to the forefront. Lipka et al. (2005) focused on school-community relationships with the purpose of curriculum development in mathematics. They reported on the cases of two teachers—one local Indigenous teacher and one “cultural

‘outsider’”—who were successful in delivering “math in a cultural context” (p. 367). They indicated that students’ improved math achievement scores were facilitated by “changes in the teachers’ relationship to the content, culture, community, and students” (p. 369). The process through which the non-Indigenous teacher connected with and learned from Indigenous educators or community members was not the central focus of the study, but findings implied that such connections were part of how the teacher was able to form strong, effective classroom relationships with the students. This opened the door for considering how non-Indigenous teachers’ learning through relationship within Indigenous communities might affect Indigenous students’ school success.

Harper’s (2000) findings showed that teachers, who were primarily young females from southern urban communities, believed they were unprepared for teaching in a remote First Nation community. Concerns included lack of clarity around their roles in the school and community as outsiders and transient professionals, questions about the legitimacy and permanence of their presence in a climate where Indigenous educators were preferred, and feelings of isolation. The teachers were emphatic about their under-preparedness and dubious as to whether they could have been prepared. While this article was written from the perspectives of the non-Indigenous teachers, I would be interested to hear community members’ views on the same phenomena. I wonder if community members’ experiences and stories could interact with teachers’ questions and doubts in a way that would lead to rich opportunities to learn through relating with one another?

Summary: Educators learning through relationships in First Nation and Inuit schools.

The studies reviewed above contain elements of educators’ learning through relationship in the Indigenous communities where they worked, but did not focus exclusively on how these

relationships looked, or how they were initiated and sustained. Taken as a set, however, they showed that educators' relationships with community members, Elders, and families were important because they: 1) positively impacted Indigenous students' engagement or achievement in school (Goulet, 2001; Lipka et al., 2005; Oskineegish, 2013; 2015; Tompkins, 1998); or 2) facilitated the inclusion of local language and culture in school, which honoured some community members' wishes for their children's education (Berger, 2009; Oskineegish, 2013). It is worth noting that these studies were presented largely from the perspectives of non-Indigenous educators and researchers; K. Goulet is the only author in this section who identified as Indigenous. In most cases, non-Indigenous first authors presumably led the data analysis (e.g., Berger, 2008; Goulet, 2001; Lipka et al., 2005; Oskineegish 2013, 2015; Tompkins, 1998) and data were drawn largely from non-Indigenous educators' views of their own work (e.g., Harper, 2000; Tompkins, 1998). Oskineegish's (2013, 2015) work was an exception, where both Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators spoke in general terms about non-Indigenous teachers' attitudes and practices.

Educators learning through relationships in publicly funded schools. In this subsection, I retain my focus on studies that refer to teachers' relational learning alongside Indigenous colleagues or community members. I shift the context, however, to public school settings. While non-Indigenous teachers are often visitors (Oskineegish & Berger, 2013) or cultural outsiders (Lipka et al., 2005) in First Nation or Inuit schools, they are often part of ethnically diverse student bodies and communities when they work in public schools. The studies in this section, then, tend to describe non-Indigenous teachers' work with both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students.

Beatty and Blair's (2015) research in a public school near Pikwàkanagàn First Nation is an example of how public educators have engaged with Indigenous community members and educators. The researchers, who are non-Indigenous themselves, formed a research team comprised of Algonquin and non-Indigenous teachers as well as an expert loomer who also managed the Pikwàkanagàn museum and cultural centre. The team met with Elders and interacted with community members and families in a cyclical process of connecting local Algonquin knowledge with the Ontario curriculum. Decision-making and progress on the process was thus generated in a collaborative manner. Lessons on beading were led by the local loomer to ensure that "Algonquin content could be taught effectively, passionately, and authentically" (p. 10). The researchers showed that Algonquin and non-Indigenous Grade 2 students demonstrated understanding of mathematical concepts and that learning about local Algonquin knowledge together allowed Algonquin and non-Indigenous students to connect in new ways, particularly as Algonquin children had the opportunity to speak about parts of their lives outside of school such as making regalia.

While Beatty and Blair's (2015) study is an example of non-Indigenous teachers' involvement in learning firsthand from Indigenous community members, the authors did not directly discuss the process of teachers learning alongside educators, Elders, or the looming expert. The findings established the importance of Algonquin and non-Indigenous students learning alongside one another but did not address how this affected teachers. It is not clear if teachers sustained the relationships that they developed with Elders and community members, or how non-Indigenous and Algonquin educator colleagues related after the researchers left.

Another instance where Indigenous community members were connected with school learning was the "Show Me Your Math" project described by Munroe, Lunney Borden, Murray

Orr, Toney, and Meader (2013). The authors showed links between the “21st century learning movement” (p. 317) and Indigenous ways of knowing through inviting Aboriginal students to seek out math knowledge in their own communities. The researchers were inspired by an Elder’s description of measuring circles for porcupine quill boxes through a “three and a thumb” method and educators connecting this with the “pi” concept. This demonstrated actively applying Mi’kmaw traditions instead of trying to squeeze them into Eurocentric frameworks (such as pi calculations). Although the cultural identities of the researchers and educators were not directly stated, I infer that non-Indigenous and Mi’kmaw educators were working side by side in this integrative learning process. While the article’s focus was the project’s content and outcomes, it seems that non-Indigenous educators learned alongside Indigenous community members or educators somewhere in the process. In the present study, I focus on the nature and development of the learning relationships. Munroe and colleagues’ study indicated that learning partnerships exist and function in a beneficial way, even if it is unclear whether the relationship was ongoing or whether it was bounded by the study itself.

Dion, an Indigenous (Lenape-Potawatomi) scholar, and D. Cormier (2015) spoke about a collaborative inquiry project on Indigenous education where the Ontario Ministry of Education facilitated teachers’ learning together and with their students through interaction with Elders and Indigenous community members. They found teachers to be open to learning from Indigenous people and perspectives, and credited the collaborative learning premise of the project as a factor in that success; teachers did not feel the pressure to be experts in Indigenous education but were learners (Dion & D. Cormier, 2015). They also noted that Indigenous students’ engagement in school increased when their teachers were engaged with these Indigenous community members. Teachers who participated did so voluntarily. They asked for an extension of the project—and

therefore of their learning in that form—but were also criticized by some of their colleagues for their participation in the project. This conference presentation reminded me that teachers’ learning involves intersecting emotional and relational elements. Teachers were learning in a way that was initiated and supported by their school systems, and yet was sometimes challenged by their peers. These peer dynamics are interesting to consider in light of the collegial dynamics described in the present study. Reports from this collaborative inquiry are now available (Dion 2014, 2015, 2016a), referenced in the discussion section with relevance to particular topics.

As part of her Canada-wide study funded by the Canadian Teachers’ Federation, Cree and Métis scholar St. Denis (2010) addressed the phenomenon of Indigenous and non-Indigenous teachers learning through relating with one another in public school settings. She conducted open-ended questionnaires and focus group interviews with Indigenous educators regarding their knowledge and experiences within public school systems and analyzed findings through a grounded theory approach. One of her data collection areas was asking Indigenous educators about the characteristics of allies of Aboriginal education. A grounded theory approach was used to present findings in aggregate.

Among other qualities, the findings indicated that teachers identified as allies were those who were open or proactive in learning from their Indigenous educator colleagues and treated them as equals. Allies “tended to be genuine, honest and trustworthy, positive, open-minded, and good listeners; they were persons who made an effort to learn and to change.... In general, these allies showed respect and support for Aboriginal people” (St. Denis, 2010, p. 61). In one participant’s words, “a good ally is somebody who will not only push themselves but push you further” (p. 54). Allies were described by participating Indigenous educators as people who sought guidance but also shared their knowledge, who developed interpersonal connection

through support and encouragement and spending time together. Non-Indigenous allies did not impose their way on Indigenous educators or believe they were experts but valued and supported the work of Indigenous educator colleagues and communities and chose to draw upon community resources. Findings from this study also indicated that not all teachers are allies; non-Indigenous teachers can negatively impact Indigenous teachers through racism and questioning Indigenous teachers' qualifications and abilities.

The work of St. Denis (2010) provided grounding for me, a non-Indigenous educator and researcher, as I approached the question of how Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators might engage in learning relationships. Regarding the opportunity to share insight on Indigenous education that was presented through the study, one participant said, "You would think that non-Aboriginal teachers could have said sooner, 'This is the wrong way,' 'can we do this any other way?' Change could have happened a long time ago" (participant in St. Denis, 2010, p. 23). In other words, Indigenous educators have wisdom to share with other teachers but are not always asked to do so. This statement could be read as an invitation to non-Indigenous educators to engage with their Indigenous educator colleagues as knowledge holders. As noted in the paragraph above, St. Denis also showed that *how* this engagement occurred was highly important. Thus, her study relates to the present study by establishing that Indigenous-non-Indigenous school-based relationships are important and by pointing to certain features that make them respectful and effective.

An earlier study conducted by St. Denis, Bouvier, and Battiste (1998) also explored the experiences and views of Indigenous educators—in Saskatchewan public schools in this case. Two of the key findings could have direct implications for the present study. One is that Indigenous teachers came from diverse backgrounds, experiences, communities, and even

languages. Asking them to be experts on every topic relating to Indigenous education was seen as a form of stereotyping. Valuing their particular knowledge, which included areas outside of “Indigenous education” was preferable. Another is that responsibility for equity and inclusion of Indigenous content in the core curriculum was not seen as the sole responsibility of Indigenous teachers. Non-Indigenous teachers also had a role to play. This required support for teachers, such as “partnership with Aboriginal communities and elders” (p. 78). Thus, Indigenous educators clearly stated that support for teachers is needed, but that they were not the sole form of that support. This comes to bear on the present study as a reminder that Indigenous educators are diverse, and that they may—or may not—wish to offer specific expertise to non-Indigenous colleagues who are seeking to better understand their roles within Indigenous education and to become better teachers.

Interestingly, a study with a similar premise to that of St. Denis (2010) was published in Australia around the same time. Santoro, Reid, Crawford, and Simpson (2011) conducted semi-structured interviews with fifty Indigenous teachers in Australia to form qualitative case studies addressing participants’ experience in the school system as students and teachers. The discussion of Indigenous teachers’ knowledge includes themes about Indigenous students’ learning, their out-of-school experiences, and the importance of teachers’ relationships with students and families. The main recommendation was that Indigenous teachers be sought out and formally recognized through positions and pay as mentors for non-Indigenous teachers and as teacher educators in the university system. This recommendation was in response to Indigenous teachers’ view that they were not listened to by their non-Indigenous educator colleagues, and in fact, that they were seen as less, or their qualifications questioned.

Formalizing a mentoring process was the authors' response to concerns that if Indigenous teachers are to be informally sought for advice, they may be over-worked and under-recognized.

Many of the concerns expressed by Indigenous educators in St. Denis, Bouvier, and Battiste's (1998) study are reflected in recent publications. In Ontario, Cherubini, McGean, and Kitchen (2011) showed that Indigenous teachers felt vulnerable due to stereotyping and the expectation that they consult on Indigenous education on top of their regular duties. In the Australian context, Indigenous educators spoke of the "generic 'Indigenous Teacher' label" (Reid & Santoro, 2006, p. 151) that colleagues assigned them. Again, this was accompanied by the expectation that they would teach their non-Indigenous colleagues and by the expectation that they would take responsibility for Indigenous students when teachers asked. While Indigenous teachers may have specific expertise in Indigenous education, they want mentorship and collegial support themselves (Wimmer, 2009). This may connect to defining allies in Indigenous education as people who are willing to share their expertise in a reciprocal, two-way fashion (St. Denis, 2010).

The recurring theme that Indigenous educators are pressed to fulfill regular teaching duties in addition to consulting with non-Indigenous educator colleagues about matters pertaining to Indigenous students and Indigenous content has relevance to the present study. While some learning relationships might take place in contexts where Indigenous educators or Elders are recognized for their guiding roles through formal positions, release time, or honoraria, other relationships might take place informally and without recognition. Hearing more about these relationships through asking about people's stories provided insight into people's experiences in both formal and informal roles. In designing the present study, however, I needed to be aware of the overburdening that is reported in the literature (Cherubini, McGean, &

Kitchen, 2011; Santoro, Reid, Crawford, & Simpson, 2011) and to respect Indigenous educators' decision not to participate if they so chose.

In my own master's thesis work (Moon, 2014), I interviewed Indigenous educators and administrators in a large urban centre. In a large school board setting, Indigenous education was funded in such a way that all teachers had access to Indigenous educators and liaisons to support their professional development and interaction with Indigenous students and families. This access was available through the opportunity to meet with, co-plan or co-teach with Indigenous educators who were on special assignment to support colleagues in that way, but it was not mandated. This, according to some of the participants, was important. They believed that they needed to be invited into schools and classrooms on the teachers' own volition in order to see productive teacher development.

These educators also framed educators' learning through relationship in a broader sense, including the importance of connecting with families in order to establish fruitful learning environments for children. One participant explained how this could happen through students' own sense of belonging at school, which would lead them to draw their own families into the school space and to meet teachers. Another spoke about being "collaborative and proactive" (Moon, 2014, p. 86) in establishing trust, responsibility, and accountability in a positive manner. Some participants also spoke of relating to the broader community through approaches such as depending on Elders' presence and guidance in schools, seeking out stories about the land, and connecting schools, Indigenous organizations, government services, and other bodies to effectively deliver education at all levels. Another spoke about the importance of reciprocity in relationship. Thus, my master's thesis, which was about Indigenous students' success, showed that educators' learning relationships are of high importance. Participants' insights and

anecdotes have given me a starting point from which to explore how these relationships may be initiated and sustained and how they might be experienced. In the present research, interviewing both Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants about their learning relationships added nuance and multiple perspectives.

The availability of Indigenous educators to help guide the practice of educators was the concern of another study—de la Garza’s (2014) dissertation on “pedagogical mentorship” in Guatemala. In that context, rural teachers were often hungry for more resources and training on current education methods, and benefited from formal mentorship within their school system in the form of educators who could assist them in developing their practice. Mentors who could assist with education that was bilingual and intercultural were highly valued. de la Garza’s conclusions showed that this mentorship was highly valued, but that it needed to be undergirded by teacher education and curricula that were responsive to the people and contexts in rural Guatemala, not just the urban centres from whence they originated. This raised a point that I see as intrinsic to my own work: non-Indigenous teachers’ learning through relationship can be highly valuable and can help them to respond more effectively to Indigenous students in various contexts. This, however, is one aspect of a much larger picture; systemic work on curriculum and teacher education must also be done in order for Indigenous students to be honoured within the present system.

Archibald (2008) presented another angle on the necessity of teachers’ learning through relationship by writing about her process as a Stó:lō woman learning from Elders in her own community as she sought to integrate Stó:lō stories into teaching resources for teachers’ use in British Columbia. Her commitment to honouring her Elders’ leadership meant not rushing through the process and not dictating the end product, but rather honouring the relationship she

shared with them and respecting how they guided the project. On the other hand, she shared brief stories of non-Indigenous teachers whose attempts to use local stories in the classroom were unsuccessful and even disrespectful. She pointed out that if these teachers had had the guidance of an Elder, the outcome might have been positive. This serves as a warning that meaning well or including local content may not be enough—relating interpersonally with an Elder can give the direct guidance that is needed to do such work respectfully. Archibald did not elaborate on how non-Indigenous educators, who I would assume are less likely to have long-standing ties with local Elders, might seek out and respectfully sustain such a learning relationship. While the Indigenous educator colleagues or community members in the present study were mostly public educators instead of Elders, I wondered how Archibald’s process of “coming back to the Elders to learn more... in order to see whether I am doing it in the ‘right’ way” (p. 153) might apply to how non-Indigenous educators interact with them. By sharing what she learned, Archibald provided guidance that I can take up as a non-Indigenous researcher and that could be applied to non-Indigenous educators’ process of learning through relationship. For example, “patience and trust are essential for preparing to listen to stories,” and, “as the Elders say, it is important to listen with ‘three ears: two on the sides of our head and the one that is in our heart’” (p. 8). Archibald’s account, which was both personal and professional, provided insight into how one might listen.

Summary: Educators learning through relationships in publicly funded schools. In this section, I addressed studies with elements pertaining to non-Indigenous educators learning through relationship in public school board settings. These studies indicated that there were both non-Indigenous and Indigenous public school educators who valued relationships where they could learn from one another (Moon, 2014; St. Denis, 2010) and that these relationships existed

in many locations. Some studies were focused on specific learning projects—community-based math or storytelling, for example—and some on the interpersonal dynamics shared by Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators, with positive features including openness to learning, respect, and support. In many instances, teachers, students, and community members were interacting or learning together. This does not mean that all relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators were positive; stereotyping and making assumptions can cause problems (St. Denis, 2010; St. Denis, Bouvier, & Battiste, 1998). On the other hand, non-Indigenous teachers who delivered Indigenous content without engaging with Indigenous knowledge holders may be at risk of negatively impacting students through disrespecting their community's stories through improper telling (Archibald, 2008).

Educators learning through relationship in board-mandated projects. In some school boards, learning relationships between K-12 teachers and Indigenous community members or educators have been a formalized aspect of Indigenous education strategies. Depending on the programs in place, this sort of learning may be a departure from the informal and seemingly spontaneous or organic learning that was described in the previous two sections. Here, I highlight studies that contain an element of learning through relationship for non-Indigenous educators in Indigenous education with an eye to how their central findings and the questions they raised may impact the present study.

Deer (2014) reported on two Aboriginal education projects in a school board in a Western Canadian city, one specifically for Indigenous students and one that was run in a centralized location for all students to visit. Through a combination of methods including interviewing educators, observing classes, and engaging in participatory research in certain learning activities, he sought to investigate the initiatives and programs that had been established and the

institutional and community resources that facilitated them (Deer, 2014). The person to person level of non-Indigenous teachers' learning alongside Indigenous educators and community members was not the study's central focus, but quotations and findings reflect on those relationships. In the program for all students, which included 40 schools and about 4000 students in one year, teachers were learning at the same time as their students. "Community support workers," Aboriginal "support" staff who took a large leadership and teaching role, were often consulted by educator colleagues "when information on Aboriginal knowledge, heritage, consciousness, and tradition is required" (p. 11). Elders also shared teachings and led ceremonies. Thus, non-Indigenous teachers were in contact with Indigenous educator colleagues and community members who supported families and students, but these colleagues also influenced their own learning as they provided "specialized cultural integration" and supported "specific cultural knowledge" in classrooms (p. 11). While in-depth stories of how this occurred are not present in the article, the inclusion of these phrases indicated that person to person learning is an influence to follow up.

In another study, the reports that followed the Urban Aboriginal Education Project funding in three Ontario school boards, while not focused specifically on learning through relationship, again provide some hints in that direction. In the Thunder Bay report (Korteweg et al., 2010), non-Indigenous secondary teachers noted that they highly valued the side-by-side mentorship that was available to them by Special Assignment Teachers who were in schools and became "their liaison to Aboriginal families, community, experts in Aboriginal cultures, local events and... Aboriginal education initiatives" (p. 30). While the day-to-day interactions between non-Indigenous teachers and these Special Assignment Teachers—who I assume were Indigenous educators—were not described in depth in this report, teachers valued these

educators' support in integrating traditional Anishinaabe knowledge in the classroom as well as in interacting and communicating with Indigenous students. These teachers also stated their desire for more opportunity to connect with Indigenous parents and community. One participant described the experience of learning alongside an Elder, indicating that this teacher's view of learning was impacted through being with an Elder in the presence of students.

Elementary teachers in the Thunder Bay Urban Aboriginal Education Project study (Korteweg et al., 2010) generally felt that they did not have enough "individualized mentorship (coaching)" (p. 15) nor teaching tools and resources to help them incorporate Indigenous perspectives into their teaching. Secondary teachers' appreciation of Indigenous educators' mentorship and elementary teachers' desire for more of it could both be seen as indicators that participating teachers valued and sought out this form of learning.

In the report on the Urban Aboriginal Education Pilot Project in the Toronto District School Board, Dion, Johnston, and Rice (2010) presented some similar findings through interviews and talking circles, observations, and surveys. "Support" (Dion et al., 2010, p. 36) was a word often used in this report. Teachers called for more support in learning more deeply and teaching more effectively about Indigenous people, history, and culture, and noted that of all the professional development they received as part of the project, "direct and ongoing contact with Aboriginal teachers, scholars, artists, and community members" was the most significant (p. 38). This statement spoke to the importance of learning through relationship; in their responsibility to learn and teach with the goal of "decolonizing and indigenizing schools" (p. 35), teachers needed resources, materials, and direction, but they stated that most important was Indigenous people to relate to them in the process. The present study focuses on the interpersonal level of how such relationships were experienced, initiated and sustained. In the

board-mandated projects reviewed above, findings were presented at a system level rather than an interpersonal level, and in a thematic rather than narrative manner.

Large-scale board-wide Indigenous education projects were also the subject of academic writing in other countries. I now address two studies: one from Australia and two from New Zealand, both of which have parallels with Canada as Euro-colonized countries where populations now include both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. In Australia, a research team studied multiple schools whose staff were engaged in action learning with a focus on Indigenous education (Burrige, Whalan, & Vaughan, 2012). They did so through pre- and post surveys with teachers and administrators in addition to field visits, meetings, interviews, and focus group discussions. The scope and funding of the professional development included Indigenous community member participation in school planning, the opportunity for guest speakers from the community, and greatly increased resources for learning and teaching about present day Indigenous communities. Interestingly, teachers seemed to choose text and media based sources of learning over people sources such as guest speakers, and where community connections were made, they were not often sustained: “Despite the project, a majority of respondents continued to be uninvolved in any discussions or exchanges with the local Aboriginal community on education issues” (Burrige, Chodkiewicz, & Whalan, 2012, p. 38). Similarly, discussions with Indigenous parents—at least in the manner measured by the survey question—did not increase as a result of the project. The article did not address reasons for these trends. These findings raise questions about the difference between board-initiated and teacher-initiated entry into learning relationships. Even when boards provided extensive resources and opportunities for community engagement, teachers made individual choices about how they related.

In the Māori context, Tolbert (2015) wrote about “culturally responsible mentorship” (p. 1325) for secondary science teachers. Through Te Kotahitanga, an educational reform project in Aoteroa/New Zealand, teachers were supported by facilitators who helped them to take up science reforms and develop culturally sustaining teaching practices with a focus on Māori students. The participants included educators of Māori, Anglo European, and Pacifica heritages and the research methodology included interviews and observations. The facilitators provided individual support to teachers that was not linked to formal evaluations, and yet involved specific goal setting. The facilitators pointed to principals’ and administrator teams’ support as an important factor in their effectiveness. Tolbert (2015) drew out four main themes for culturally responsible mentoring in science, stating that mentoring dialogue was focused on racism, relevance, relationships, and instructional complexity. This included learning about racism issues that students face and how to work against racism in school, how teachers could make their science instruction more culturally relevant, developing relationships with students that demonstrated “an ethic of care” and “creating a sense of ‘welcoming’ and ‘family-ness,’” and how to hold high expectations for students, support them individually, and provide opportunities for collaboration on complex topics (p. 1341). While Tolbert’s (2015) study was not exclusively about Indigenous educators mentoring non-Indigenous educators, the themes resonated and the long-term project was fascinating to consider.

Tolbert’s (2015) study was closely linked to the long-term commitment of Russell Bishop to Māori education in secondary schools. According to the Te Kotahitanga website (New Zealand Government, 2018), that research and professional development program built on his 2001 study with students, families, teachers and administrators where an Effective Teaching Profile was developed. Bishop and Berryman (2010) noted that Māori students “clearly

identified that the main influence on their educational achievement was the quality of the in-class relationships and interactions they had with their teachers” (p. 175). In response, the Effective Teaching Profile stated that “effective teachers of Māori students create a culturally appropriate and responsive context for learning in their classroom,” including that they “positively and vehemently reject deficit theorizing as a means of explaining Māori students’ educational achievement levels” and “know and understand how to bring change in Māori students’ educational achievement and are professionally committed to doing so” (p. 176).

Bishop and Berryman (2010) wrote about six observable ways of doing so which I will not outline in full, but briefly quote from or paraphrase here: 1) Manaakitanga: caring for students as “culturally located human beings above all else;” 2) Mana motuhake: caring for students’ performance; 3) Whakapiringatanga: managing learning environments in ways that involve both “routine pedagogical knowledge” and “pedagogical imagination;” 4) Wānanga: engaging with “Māori students as Māori through teaching interactions of sharing knowledge; 5) Ako: interacting in a way that involves teachers and students’ dialogic learning relationships; and 6) Kotahitanga: monitoring outcomes collaboratively (p. 176). The professional development program that was developed over several phases focused on teacher growth through mentorship. Some findings included that focusing on student achievement, not just professional development, was key, a full school approach was preferred in order to affect school culture, and countering deficit thinking was important. In its fullest form, the professional development involved an induction workshop, usually in a Māori meeting place “with elders present and actively engaged” (p. 179) to provide the goals and outline for the professional development, and then multiple stages where individual teachers were observed, given initial feedback, met with colleagues in groups to “co-construct,” and were coached to meet their goals. Bishop and Berryman’s work

(2010) emphasized the importance of relationships. Teacher-student relationships in teaching settings were at the forefront, and educator relationships supported this. Community relationships were also central.

Savage and colleagues' (2011) mixed methods multi-part study in mainstream schools in New Zealand provided another angle on how professional development affected teachers' practice with respect to Indigenous students. Interviews with students and systematic classroom observation formed the basis for the findings on a unique professional development approach that was based on individualized teacher development through "narratives of experience" (p. 186). The narratives were developed by researchers through "collaborative storying" with Māori students and their families as well as teachers and principals (p. 185). The storying process showed that the students and their families and principals viewed "caring and learning relationships" (p. 185) as central to students' school achievement while teachers attributed student underachievement to lifestyle factors outside of school.

Through the stories, teachers were offered the opportunity to hear about students' school experiences, to reflect on their own "discursive positioning" and to develop "effective teacher profiles" (Savage et al., 2011, p. 186). Based on their effective teacher profiles, teachers also received specific feedback on their own teaching, collaborative problem solving opportunities with their colleagues, and one-on-one coaching. The results showed that the professional development affected how teachers taught, and especially how they related to students. The authors concluded that even when teachers made positive changes such as creating environments where students were proud of their identities, where teaching and learning relationships were developing, and where Māori language and practices were part of classroom life, this was not enough to change the school environment. In order for young people to "learn without

sacrificing who they are” (p. 196), change beyond the classroom level was also needed. With respect to learning through relationship, Savage et al.’s (2011) study was important from a few angles: 1) learning from Indigenous people took an indirect form, as seen through the narratives shared with teachers after researchers’ interactions with Māori students and families; 2) teacher development was shown to be important but not the only factor in school change, which is important for me to remember as I research in the area of teacher development with high hopes for positive change for school systems in Canada.

Summary: Educators learning through relationship in board-mandated projects.

While the studies presented above were drawn from diverse contexts and have diverse implications, they reinforce the idea that non-Indigenous educators’ learning through relating to Indigenous educators and community members can be an effective mode of developing their practice for the benefit of Indigenous students. In large, comprehensive projects where educators had access to many forms of resources (human and material), they may point to relating to Indigenous educator colleagues as pivotal to their development (Dion et al., 2010; Korteweg et al., 2010). However, teachers’ connections with Indigenous community members during a bounded, funded study does not necessarily mean that the connections are sustained afterward, which was indicated by Burrige et al. (2012). I find it intriguing to consider that teachers might learn through relating with Indigenous educators or community members but might not actively continue the relationship after a specific funded project is complete. In the present study, some learning relationships began through formal school board Indigenous education roles, others happened outside of these, but still in publicly funded school contexts. It is interesting to consider the coexistence of opportunities and climates developed by boards and personal factors and motivations.

Concluding words: Educators learning through Indigenous-non-Indigenous relationships. This section on educators learning through relationship in First Nation schools, public schools, and mandated school board initiatives sets the stage for the present study by showing that non-Indigenous educators learn through relating to Indigenous educators and community members in a variety of settings. The studies indicate that non-Indigenous educators' learning through relationship is related to Indigenous students' success, either by making this connection directly (Oskineegish & Berger, 2013; Oskineegish, 2015), which seems fairly rare in the literature, or by mentioning educators' learning through relationship as part of a larger set of influences (e.g., Deer, 2014; Dion et al., 2010). Much of the literature takes an overview or thematic approach. The present study contributes to the literature by studying the relationships shared by Indigenous educators or community members and non-Indigenous teachers at a personal scale. Through asking both Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants about *how* learning in relationship occurred and how these relationships are initiated and sustained, stories at a day-to-day, on the ground level are available for educators, administrators, and policymakers to consider.

Pre-service Teachers Learning through Indigenous-non-Indigenous Relationships

The previous section was about non-Indigenous educators learning about Indigenous education through relating to Indigenous community members and educators while on the job. The current section addresses teachers' learning before they enter the workforce. Some Bachelor of Education programs now include courses on Indigenous education, and many of those enrolled in the courses are non-Indigenous. Many of the teacher educator / researchers who are publishing on the topic have pointed to relationships or community connections as key aspects of pre-service teachers' learning. Although literature exists on Indigenous education courses for

Indigenous students as well as mandatory Indigenous education courses for all B.Ed. students at some universities, the set of studies I review here refer primarily to non-mandatory courses open to students of all heritages. I make this choice to highlight learning relationships between Indigenous educators or community members and non-Indigenous pre-service teachers that are undertaken in a voluntary manner. While this form of learning is a mandatory part of the course, engaging in the course itself is a personal choice (although the authors also explain that sometimes timetabling issues affect students' choice). Thus, I believe that the findings could be closest to the types of relationships in the present study: engagement that is voluntary and interpersonal.

In Lakehead University's *Indigenizing Perspectives and Practices in Education* course (for which I was a teaching assistant for a year), some high-impact elements were guest speakers, field trips, and "cultural immersion experiences" (Korteweg et al., 2014). In each of these course elements, pre-service teachers interacted with Indigenous community members—either through listening, as in the case of the guest speaker on Indian Residential Schools, or through informal interactions, as in the case of a joint field trip to an historical park with Indigenous high school students or "cultural immersion hours" where they attended a local event of their choice run by Indigenous community members. While the particularities and possible problematics (see Donald, 2012) of these contexts were not discussed in depth, a central finding was that "engagement in developing Indigenous-non-Indigenous relationships with students, families and community" (p. 26) was a major movement in "beginning teachers' stances as they grapple with challenging concepts of de/colonization and indigenization" (p. 20). While the relational contact built into the course was short-term, it impacted pre-service teachers.

Clarke's (2015) thesis work, related to the course taught by Korteweg, highlighted the role of being in outdoor contexts with Indigenous students in pre-service teachers' development. Through a one-day event at a heritage park and a one afternoon a week, six-week dogsledding program, pre-service teachers, Indigenous students, and their non-Indigenous teacher and dogsledding leader related outside of school walls. While the events were not led by an Indigenous educator, pre-service teachers expressed that being outside with Indigenous students and engaging in traditional Indigenous activities facilitated a shift in the way they thought about the natural world, about Canada's colonial history, and about their own roles as teachers. Clarke found that ongoing outdoor experiences with Indigenous students had a greater impact on pre-service teachers than an isolated one-day event. All of the non-Indigenous pre-service teachers in Clarke's study recognized that they had much to learn about how they might respectfully integrate Indigenous perspectives into their teaching. Those who had participated in the six-week dogsledding program with Indigenous students seemed most open to integrating their growing awareness into their teaching.

Clarke's (2015) study serves as a reminder that Indigenous students are also Indigenous community members. Teachers' learning may occur with Elders, community leaders, or teacher colleagues, yet it may also occur through experiential learning alongside Indigenous youth. This view of students is affirmed in Bissell's (2015) thesis, also related to Korteweg's research, where Indigenous students and non-Indigenous pre-service teachers, a classroom teacher, and a researcher were able to share their own stories and deepen their relationships with one another. Bissell found that digital technologies were a means for stories to be introduced. Once again, relating with Indigenous students through a purposeful project aided non-Indigenous pre-service teachers in shifting their perspectives.

Another study on pre-service teacher education that pointed to the importance of non-Indigenous teachers' connections with Indigenous community members was conducted by Nardozi, Restoule, Broad, Steele, and James (2014). They wrote about establishing the *Deepening Knowledge Project* at OISE/University of Toronto to “infuse Aboriginal education throughout all components of the initial teacher education program” (p. 109) and the experience of working closely with those involved in a cohort of 70 elementary pre-service teachers with this focus. When they asked the question, “Which strategies used within [the cohort focused on instruction on Aboriginal content] are most powerful in increasing teacher candidates’ willingness and readiness to incorporate Aboriginal knowledges and pedagogies into their classroom practice?” (p. 109), a central answer was “first voice testimony” (p. 118).

Many pre-service teachers stated that Indigenous guest speakers and Elders had a high impact on their learning. More specifically, pre-service teachers wanted to learn about Indigenous perspectives from “diverse voices” through contact with a variety of community members, and preferred learning from Elders over non-Indigenous instructors. Learning through relationships also came into play through pre-service teachers’ stated need for a “sound, confident knowledge base in order for me to teach this curriculum respectfully” (participant, cited in Nardozi et al., 2014, p. 116). Interestingly, one participant showed how learning through relationships can be part of this, referring to teachers learning alongside students: “If you don’t know enough then that is a wonderful opportunity to learn with your class... you are part of the learning community and you make that collaborative event with your student; you make your classroom stronger” (participant, cited in Nardozi et al., 2014, p. 117). This study, then, touched on the high value pre-service teachers placed on learning directly from Indigenous Elders and

community members, as well as the willingness of some to learn side-by-side with their students on topics relating to Indigenous education.

Blimkie, Vetter, and Haig-Brown (2014) reported on another Bachelor of Education instructional format that pointed to relationship as a major form of learning for pre-service teachers in Indigenous education. Their “infusion” approach to courses and teaching placements at the Barrie site of York University meant that every required course had Indigenous content and pedagogies through “academic readings, films, assignments and assessments, field trips, guest speakers, and everyday teaching practices” (p. 48). The authors found that learning from Indigenous people and communities was highly effective for the pre-service teachers; developing such relationships during placements was significant to almost all participants, and the opportunity to learn from a guest speaker’s story about residential school and through cultural and education events had high impact. Pre-service teachers recommended that more time be spent in local Aboriginal communities. In this study’s infusion approach where Indigenous perspectives informed all subject areas, the actual person to person learning time where Indigenous community members were involved in pre-service teachers’ learning greatly influenced these teachers’ development. While the authors did not discuss the specifics of the learning relationships that pre-service teachers experienced, they emphasized their importance.

Tanaka, in her (2009) study at the University of Victoria, described another high impact approach to connecting pre-service teachers and Indigenous community members. Artists in residence, knowledge keepers, and mentors from local First Nations formed an instructional team for a course entitled *Earth Fibres, Weaving Stories: Learning and Teaching in an Indigenous World*. This instructional team guided pre-service teachers, graduate students, and some “faculty observers” through the process of creating an earth fibres piece for display at the university,

working within Indigenous traditions of teaching and learning instead of Eurocentric theoretical frameworks on education. Tanaka (2009) noted that the course provided participants “opportunities to listen across worldviews as well as to think reflexively on their roles as both learners and teachers” (p. 4). “Working and walking-alongside” (p. 225) is a phrase Tanaka (2009) used frequently to describe the type of learning and relating that took place. This occurred through wisdom keepers and the pre-service teachers walking alongside one another in their learning and creating (p. 225), the pre-service teachers walking alongside one another (p. 225), and her hope that teachers think about walking alongside Indigenous communities in the future, not solely engaging in service projects “for” them (p. 231). With respect to walking alongside the wisdom keepers, pre-service teachers were able to “notice the energy and intent. . . and to adjust their ways of proceeding accordingly” (p. 226). This meant putting down their familiar notebooks and taking up new practices like being open to the spiritual and emotional nature of learning. Tanaka’s (2009) view was that pre-service teachers’ sustained involvement with Indigenous wisdom keepers throughout the course created a learning environment that differed greatly from typical Eurocentric courses and made relationship central to learning.

Summary: Pre-service teachers learning through Indigenous-non-Indigenous relationships. The studies reviewed in this section were selected because they included some form of opportunity for non-Indigenous pre-service teachers to learn alongside or from Indigenous Elders, community members, or educators. It is noteworthy that learning through relating was identified as highly effective for pre-service teachers, even though most studies included multiple modes of learning. While many of the studies in the previous section addressed teacher learning within a wider set of influences on Indigenous students’ school learning, the studies in this section make pre-service teachers’ learning their specific focus.

While the pre-service studies in this section addressed short-term engagements within teacher education contexts, not longer-term relationships developed by in-service teachers, if learning through Indigenous-non-Indigenous relationships is important to pre-service teacher education, then it is worth considering for practicing teachers.

Story and Relationship as Key Principles

Story and relationship wind together as foundational ideas in the present study, both in the methodology (see Chapter Three) and within the content of the findings and discussion (see Chapters Four and Five). In this section of the literature review, story and relationship are explored as key principles by drawing on academic literature at a conceptual level. The concepts I compile here are drawn from multiple academic fields, authored by people of varying heritages and identities, including both Indigenous and non-Indigenous thinkers. This is not to imply that all the authors would be in agreement with one another, or even with my interpretation of their views. Rather, at this juncture in the literature review, I am taking the opportunity to share concepts that have influenced my thinking as a non-Indigenous educator and researcher in the fields of public and Indigenous education. I acknowledge the Indigenous educators who were participants in my master's thesis and greatly influenced my understanding of shared relationship and shared story as key principles to inform teaching in public schools (Moon, 2014, 2017; Moon & Berger, 2016).

In this section, I consider theory about nation to nation or societal level relations as well as concepts of person to person relationships. Simpson (2010), a Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg scholar, stated that when interactions between Indigenous people and those with whom they form alliances involve “interact[ing] with each other in a respectful, responsible way,” this “promotes the kind of justice we are seeking on a grander scale” (p. xiv). This position connects the

interpersonal relationships that are the subject of the present study to happenings at a “grander scale” (Simpson, 2010, p. xiv). From another angle, Connelly and Clandinin (2006), whose research framework is central in Chapter Three, wrote about inquiries that are situated within temporality, sociality, and place (p. 479). The learning relationships that participants in this study described (Chapter Four) were situated in specific places within personal, interpersonal, and societal histories and experiences. Specific aspects of those stories are the subject of Chapters Four and Five. First, I begin with a long timeframe, a large place, and broad social dynamics (see Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) by considering Indigenous-non-Indigenous relationships² and stories at the nation to nation level in the land now called Canada. Second, I narrow to a discussion of education systems as a subset of societal relations. Third, I conclude with models of interpersonal relationship at the person to person level. Story and relationship are the uniting principles here, carried into the methodology chapter.

Our shared story as people living in the land we now call Canada. Indigenous and non-Indigenous relationships are centuries-long and ongoing in the place we now call Canada. An Indigenous research participant in my master’s research (Moon, 2014) explained it this way:

The Crown and Aboriginal people, it’s the second-oldest relationship in North America... And that relationship was built out of trust, and over the years that trust has been shifted and changed, and the dynamics of the relationship have become unstable, but that relationship has to still exist. (p. 64)

Hearing this helped shape my own sense of how we as Indigenous and non-Indigenous people are linked through historical ties and an ongoing relationship at a societal scale.

Donald (2012), a Cree scholar, wrote poignantly about how Canadian citizens and educators see themselves with respect to Aboriginal people, critiquing colonial assumptions of

² A fuller backdrop would include Indigenous history preceding European contact.

separation and difference as expressed through “pedagogy of the fort” and inviting engagement in “ethical relationality” (p. 93). Pointing out assumptions of superiority in assimilation and elimination efforts and thinking (p. 101), Donald described ethical relationality as a “decolonizing form of curriculum theorizing” (p. 102). Inspired by teachings shared by *Kainai* (Blackfoot) Elders, the interconnectedness of all living things is a major principle in ethical relationality. From this view, Aboriginal people and Canadians are intrinsically related, not separate and irreconcilably different (p. 91). Given that relatedness, Donald advocated for “an ethical stance that requires attentiveness to the responsibilities that come with a declaration of being in relation” (p. 103).

For me, this is profound in the context of non-Indigenous educators who are teaching Indigenous children and youth. Donald’s (2012) approach can be seen as calling us to live well in existing relationships, deepened by the reminder that he brought from *Kanai* Elders: “Teaching is a responsibility and an act of kindness viewed as movement towards connectivity and relationality. Through the reciprocal process of teaching and learning, we move closer together” (p. 102). This does not dismiss painful realities of oppression and harm, but establishes a shared basis for societal relationships and education: “If colonialism is indeed a shared condition, then decolonizing needs to be a shared endeavour” (p. 102). From Donald’s writing, I take the invitation to acknowledge our connection as Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, interpreting this as seeking to live with increasing integrity and respect. Love even. Donald invited consideration of “layers of historical interactions with Aboriginal peoples” (p. 96) and the questioning of oversimplified history and social relations based on a European-Canadian perspective that supports certain agendas. In sum, “Ethical relationality is an ecological understanding of human relationality that does not deny difference, but rather seeks to

understand more deeply how our different histories and experiences position us in relation to each other” (p. 103)

Donald (2012) developed the concept of ethical relationality by drawing on Ermine’s (2007) work on “ethical space.” This, in turn, was inspired by Poole’s (1972) concept of ethical space, but applied specifically to Indigenous-non-Indigenous relations. Ermine (2007), who published in a law context, asked: “How do we reconcile worldviews?” He named this as the “fundamental problem of cultural encounters,” stating that “the Indigenous-West encounter is about thought worlds” (p. 201). When Indigenous and Western thought worlds are recognized as distinct, there is the opportunity to interact in an intentional and thoughtful way:

Since there is no God’s eye view to be claimed by any society of people, the idea of ethical space, produced by contrasting perspectives of the world, entertains the notion of a meeting place, or initial thinking about a neutral zone between entities or cultures. The space offers a venue to step out of our allegiances, to detach from the cages of our mental worlds and assume a position where human-to-human dialogue can occur. (Ermine, 2007, p. 202)

Thus, Ermine presented a theory of interaction that is based on difference—not assimilation or an artificial sense of sameness—and at the same time equity. Ermine’s (2007) invitation to “assume a position where human-to-human dialogue can occur” is at the centre of the present study. Since the setting is schools, “thought worlds” and knowledge bases are highly important, taken up in a coming consideration of Battiste’s (2013) work.

Another way to consider the long and ongoing relationships shared by Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in the place we now call Canada is through a Treaty lens. The idea that “We are all Treaty people” (Epp, 2008, p. 133) is evident in academic work and can be seen in public settings and schools (see Deer, 2018; Office of the Treaty Commissioner, 2016; Switzer, 2011). Treaties form the legal connection between First Nations and the Crown and have direct implications for education (Henderson, 2009). Both the spirit and specific terms of treaties have

been violated, yet their legal authority remains, as does the desire of many to return to the equality, mutuality, and trust they imply (Battiste & Henderson, 2000; Kovach, 2013; Tupper & Cappello, 2008). Kovach (2013) wrote about how the peaceful and just relations promised in treaties can inform classroom practice. In this way, teaching about Treaty can provide an understanding of our shared history of relational connection as Indigenous and non-Indigenous nations.

While the “treaty people” (Office of the Treaty Commissioner, 2016; Wilson, 2012) orientation may provide legal and historic grounding for the idea that we are connected with and responsible to one another as Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, not everyone looks at treaties as models for education. McPherson and Rabb (2011), for example, described treaties as a government method for “deal[ing] with the ‘Indian problem’” (p. 46). They showed how the agreements contained within treaties were for the benefit of colonizing and settling peoples rather than portraying treaties as equitable agreements. They went on to argue that in the wake of education of Indigenous students that was led by European Christians, it is important that Indigenous people’s education be developed by Indigenous people themselves. They advocated for education where Indigenous people interpret Indigenous philosophies and create their own ways of educating in their current contexts. While a discussion of treaties preceded this assertion, McPherson and Rabb (2011) took a much different tack on the connection between treaty and education than did scholars such as Kovach (2013). From my perspective, these differing views on Treaty education can be a platform for exploring the complexity of Indigenous-Canadian history. Treaty-making in Canada took place in several phases and included different approaches, and there is still disagreement on the interpretation of Treaties (Satzewich & Liidakis, 2007). Elements of greed and deceit are part of the Treaty story, as are

moves toward alliance and trust. While treaties are highly important to Canadian society, few Canadians understand them thoroughly (Fenge & Aldridge, 2015, p. 3).

Oppression and pain in our shared story. This is a reminder that our shared story carries marks of paternalism, oppression, and colonization (Gkisedtanamoogk, 2010; Swamp, 2010; Woodworth, 2010). In the case of education, Hampton (1995) stated that most past and current practices in “Indian education” consist of non-Indigenous imposition for non-Indigenous, assimilative purposes. Paternalistic, oppressive, and colonizing tendencies can take many forms. Hart (2002), writing in the social work field, stated: “Colonialism in the helping professions is so discreet, as it hides behind its altruism and ignorance. Yet, it is found in all aspects of the professions” (p. 34). He gave multiple examples such as introducing models developed by Elders in Indigenous contexts into the profession without due acknowledgement, training new professionals through only Eurocentric teaching modes, and even how conversations take place.

Mik’maq scholar Battiste (2013) showed how colonization has affected, and continues to affect, Indigenous and non-Indigenous relations in the land we now call Canada. She used the terms “cognitive imperialism,” “Eurocentricism,” and “decolonization” to show how Indigenous knowledge and Indigenous students’ formal education are affected by colonizing structures. She opened a discussion on how “Canadian and other nation states have a chance to comprehend another view of humanity as they never have before. They should understand Indigenous humanity and its manifestations without paternalism and without condescension” (p. 26). Regarding cognitive imperialism, Battiste (1998) drew attention to the ongoing “colonial siege” (p. 19) in Canada where schooling has been a tool to “destroy all of their collective knowledge enfolded in their own language” (p. 19). This was contrasted with the purpose of including education in treaties between the Crown and First Nations, which was to “enable the nations to

be enriched by new knowledge that supplemented Aboriginal knowledge” (p. 19). Battiste showed how Indian Residential Schools, legalized by the Indian Act, were part of the colonial siege that has continued through the required use of Eurocentric provincial curricula and standards and making Indigenous contributions add-ons instead of core knowledge. In general, Battiste (1998) showed how school systems in Canada “maintain the legitimacy of only one language, one culture, and one frame of reference” (p. 20), thereby framing Eurocentric knowledge as universal.

Battiste’s (1998) words are a reminder that decolonization is complex and intense; it not only requires coming to terms with the deep pain of colonization and understanding its source, but it requires treating knowledge differently. Writing to Indigenous educators, Battiste stated:

We cannot continue to allow Aboriginal students to be given a fragmented existence in a curriculum that does not mirror them, nor should they be denied understanding the historical context that has created that fragmentation. A postcolonial framework cannot be constructed without Indigenous people’s renewing and reconstructing the principles underlying their own world view, environment, languages, and how these construct our humanity. (p. 24)

Battiste tied this renewal to connection with Indigenous languages and “the spirit of the lands” (p. 24), thereby indicating that decolonization is a transformative, deep, and far-reaching process. In my mind and heart, theories of decolonization help me to remember the injustice, loss of trust, and lack of integrity that have been part of non-Indigenous interactions with Indigenous people through colonization in the land we now call Canada. P. Cormier (2010) wrote, “In Canadian society, the structures designed to educate and create healthy Canadian citizens and protect our youth, in fact, create circumstances that contribute to the marginalization and subsequent youth violence within the Aboriginal community” (p. 25). If education and oppression continue to be tied, change is urgently needed.

New possibilities in relations and education. Given the understanding that Eurocentricism has been prevalent in Canada, including in our schools (Battiste, 2013), some conceptual frames exist regarding how education might become more balanced. Some of the concepts have been addressed in previous subsections, and more are layered in at this juncture. In some cases, I am applying authors' concepts to "story" and "relationship" although they may not be writing directly about person to person relationships or even nation to nation relationships. I make some of those ties more explicit near the end of this section.

Battiste and Henderson (2009) and Little Bear (2009) wrote about "naturalizing Indigenous Knowledge." In this view, Indigenous knowledge is part of the "collective genius of humanity" (Battiste & Henderson, 2009, p. 5) and should be taught on an equal plane with the currently prevalent Eurocentric knowledge. Battiste and Henderson (2009) stated: "The primary source of [Indigenous Knowledge] is in Indigenous languages and teachings.... learning is viewed as sacred and holistic, as well as experiential, purposeful, relational, and a lifelong responsibility" (p. 5). Little Bear (2009), a Blackfoot scholar, argued that Indigenous knowledge is "a necessary foundation for Aboriginal education" and that naturalizing Indigenous knowledge "can begin to neutralize racism, colonialism, and assumptions of the inferiority of Aboriginal peoples" (p. 23). Thus, naturalizing Indigenous education is an approach that recognizes the ongoing colonization that occurs in Canadian schools and offers a way forward that includes language, learning form place, honouring "customary protocols for learning and teaching," and valuing the presence of Elders, knowledge keepers, and cultural workers (p. 23).

Saul (2008), a non-Indigenous scholar, argued that Canada's identity and values are inspired by those of the First People in this place. Whether we admit it or not, peace and inclusion are ideals drawn from Indigenous, not English or French or American origins. Taken

together, Saul's (2008) views and naturalizing Indigenous knowledge might be a way of recognizing the already-present impact of Indigenous ideals on Canadian society as a whole with public education as a potential site for that learning.

Stairs (1995) wrote about "genuine two-way brokerage" as a way to draw upon Indigenous and non-Indigenous education traditions:

Canadian education has much to gain as well as to give in brokerage with Native cultures. I suggest in closing that genuine two-way brokerage between Native culture and formal schooling validates Native ways of learning, responds to urgent mainstream needs, and is our collective path to success in Native education. (pp. 150-151)

Referring to Indigenous teachers, Stairs (1995) described the following example of how two knowledge and learning traditions can come together in school through the teacher's mediation:

Native teachers integrate at least some aspects of schooling back into their culturally valued processes of learning, as exemplified by an Inuk teacher who takes his class out into the community to help with repairs and getting water in exchange for legends and stories, old words no longer in common use, and demonstrations of sled-making and string games.

Through this Inuk teacher's connections to community members and his formal role as a school teacher, he was able to expose his students to two forms or cultures of learning. Stairs (1995) did not frame this as an easy role to play. She gave other examples of difficulties that can arise in bringing Indigenous and Eurocentric traditions in teaching together. In the present study, I was interested in how Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants experienced the interface between Indigenous and Eurocentric knowledge systems, wondering if this "broker" idea might apply.

For me, ideas about "walking in both worlds," "walking in two worlds," or the related concept of "two-eyed seeing" have connections to cultural brokerage. The idea of Indigenous people succeeding according to Eurocentric standards while remaining connected to their own traditions and ancestry is present in the literature (e.g., Castagno & Brayboy, 2008; St. Denis,

2010). It is fair to note that while the “walking in two worlds” metaphor has been commonly used, it has also been criticized (Henze & Vanett, 1993). Relating to the difficulty of walking in two worlds, McPherson and Rabb (2011) wrote about “the possibility of the incommensurability of worldviews” (p. 147), noting that elements of language, style of thinking and reasoning, and philosophy can differ so greatly between cultures that the two are incommensurable, and should be accepted as such (p. 147). Henze and Vanett also problematized the concept of walking in two worlds along many lines, showing that each “world”—such as an Indigenous worldview—can be internally diverse, that combining two value systems can cause great internal conflict, and that a lack of immersion in either culture may not allow children and youth the ability to understand either one enough to choose which aspects of the “worlds” to pursue. Finally, they argued that the “walking in two worlds” metaphor implies that schools offer students that opportunity, when they actually only promote one Eurocentric world:

None of the school principals or the non-Yup’ik certified staff could claim fluency in Yup’ik. That the Caucasian faculty, for the most part, walked only in one world confounded the message that school policy aspired to convey and teach. It appeared that Yup’ik people were expected to walk in two worlds, but Caucasians did not need, want, or have to. This double standard had the potential to diminish the value of bilingualism and biculturalism in the eyes of the students. (p. 129)

This raises a major question: Does, should, and how could a “walking in two worlds” metaphor apply to non-Indigenous educators? The literature on walking in both worlds seems to be shifting from the assumption that Indigenous people must learn two worlds in order to ensure their well-being to the view that those entrenched in a Eurocentric worldview also have much to learn from Indigenous peoples and traditions.

Barnhardt and Kawagley (2005) made the argument that integrating two worldviews does indeed apply to non-Indigenous people:

Native people may need to understand Western society, but not at the expense of what

they already know and the way they have come to know it. Non-Native people, too, need to recognize the coexistence of multiple worldviews and knowledge systems, and find ways to understand and relate to the world in its multiple dimensions and varied perspectives. (p. 9)

The authors gave examples of ways in which the Alaskan school district they studied integrated both Indigenous curricula and Indigenous pedagogy in respectful and effective ways. These included multimedia sources that integrated Indigenous knowledge, involving parents in sharing their ways of knowing, creating cultural camp settings where Elders instructed, and networking and leadership opportunities for Native educators. Their challenge, which they described as “devis[ing] a system of education for all people that respects the epistemological and pedagogical foundations provided by Indigenous as well as Western cultural traditions” (p. 10) is one that some scholars seem to be exploring.

In the Canadian context, Iseke and Desmoulins (2015) also argued that non-Indigenous educators have a role in the interaction of Indigenous and Western approaches to science. They noted that Indigenous students have often been required to find their way through learning Western science at school and integrating it into Indigenous science knowledge. When science learning is considered a “two-way street” (p. 31), non-Indigenous scientists and educators have the opportunity to integrate the systems. Through Elders’ stories and Indigenous youths’ accounts about science learning, the authors pointed to concepts that science educators could take up in order to take up this two-way approach where mainstream science classrooms and Indigenous science can meet. Some of these concepts were “experiential learning,” “recognition of sacred teaching and learning so the knowledge is respected and used appropriately,” and “a relational approach in which students learn these concepts from Elders and other knowledge keepers” (p. 46). These practices open a way for both non-Indigenous educators and Indigenous students to engage in learning in school.

Aikenhead and Elliott (2010) discussed Saskatchewan's new curriculum where both Indigenous and Eurocentric science concepts were presented to all students, applying the concept of two-eyed seeing to non-Indigenous students as well. This implied that as they engaged in learning from two worldviews, students were learning to walk in two worlds. While teachers' learning was not the emphasis of Aikenhead and Elliott's (2010) study, it leads me to wonder about non-Indigenous educators' roles.

Concerning Indigenous and Eurocentric views of success and their intersection in schools, Berger, Epp, and Møller (2006) raised questions about Eurocentric assimilation in Inuit schools. In the context of the present study, Berger (personal communication, 2018) challenged me to consider whether educators were helping Indigenous students succeed in a school system that was assimilative. He also spoke about the balance of considering parents' desires to have their children learn to succeed in both Western and Inuit ways (Berger, 2008). These matters can be blurry for non-Indigenous educators (Berger, personal communication, 2018). While it is good to think about this question, the stories in Chapter Four of this dissertation reveal a variety of forms of teacher learning and hopes for student learning, some that may fit easily with current school board directions and some that challenge or extend them.

As a White educator and researcher in the field of public and Indigenous education, ideas like cultural brokerage, naturalizing Indigenous Knowledge, and walking or seeing in two worlds (pertaining to students and educators of Indigenous and non-Indigenous backgrounds) provide conceptual frames for thinking about person to person learning for educators in Indigenous education.

Person to person learning. Given our shared history and shared publicly funded school systems, it is interesting to consider how educators might relate in ways that lead to learning and

respectful relationships (see Donald, 2012). Several conceptual entry points are offered below.

Freire (1970), from the context of adult education in Brazil, wrote about oppression, its dehumanizing effect, and liberation from it. He pointed out that schooling can serve to further oppress people who are already being excluded from an equitable place in society. Part of this oppression occurs through imposing school programs on people that “have little or nothing to do with their own preoccupations, doubts, hopes, and fears—programs which at times in fact increase the fears of the oppressed consciousness” (Freire, 1970, p. 96). His antidote for this problem was “to dialogue with the people about their view and ours” (p. 96). Thus, while Freire indicated that educators are by default caught up in a system that is dehumanizing because it sustains oppression, he also pointed to dialogue as a mode of interrupting that reality. This has direct bearing on the present study because dialogue depends on interpersonal relating:

In dialogical theory, at no stage can revolutionary action forgo *communion* with the people. *Communion* in turn elicits *cooperation*, which brings leaders and people to the *fusion* described [in a previous quotation]. This fusion can exist only if revolutionary action is really *human*, empathetic, loving, communicative, and humble, in order to be liberating. (Freire, 1970, p. 171, emphasis in original)

Thus, while Freire’s (1970) work was about large-scale liberation from oppression, he made direct ties to how people interact with one another on a personal level. In the context of the present study, I believe interpersonal relationships—meaningful dialogue between people in professional contexts—can shape schooling into a more respectful, loving, and equitable endeavour.

The focal point of the present study is the practices of educators who would be considered members of oppressor groups in Freire’s (1970) framework. Particularly if educators are of European heritage, we are members of a social group that has dispossessed Indigenous people from their lands and knowledge. Freire (1970) argued that oppression is dehumanizing to

both the oppressed and those who do the oppressing. From that perspective, EuroCanadian society needs healing and restoration. EuroCanadian educators need healing and restoration. This has been a powerful concept for me, one that a participant in my master's thesis (Moon, 2014) put into words that have stayed on my mind for years:

We as Canadians are Treaty people. We as Canadians are survivors of the Residential School. 'Cause you know – we are. People think, 'Oh, it's just the Aboriginal people.' Well no, it impacts all of us in Canada, and we all need to heal from it, right? (p. 60)

Critical pedagogues like Freire offer a theoretical foothold for thinking about my own role in Indigenous education. Through Freire's description of the dehumanization of oppressors as well as those they oppress, I am better able to see my own need for healing. The connections he made between interpersonal and societal dynamics reinforce the societal context for the interpersonal relationships that are the centre of the present study.

Ray and P. Cormier (2012), Anishnaabe scholars, presented the term "Kinoo'amaadawaad Megwaa Doodamawaad," translated "they are learning with each other while they are doing," situated within a discussion about the centrality of story, relationship-based learning, and connection to land within their research processes. They wrote about the dissonance they felt with the expectations of academic research and their experience as graduate students who sought to research and relate in ways that honoured their community. They shared about how opportunities and guidance came together in the development of the term and process. P. Cormier (2016) wrote about Kinoo-amaadawaad Megwaa Doodamawaad as "an Indigenous living peace methodology" (p. 122) in his dissertation with that title. Deep connections between research, land, story, Elders, family, a friend, a colleague, community, personal healing, peace and conflict were explored.

In the present study, I focus on relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators in urban schools; my context is different from that of P. Cormier (2016) in his First Nation community. Further, his deep focus on healing in Peace and Conflict Studies is meaningful and relevant to me, yet not the stated subject of the present study. Those caveats being presented, the phrase “They are learning with each other while they are doing” is compelling as I consider the intent of the present study and the way in which educators opened up to each other in their teaching and learning processes. P. Cormier’s (2014, 2016; Ray & P. Cormier, 2012) writing about personal, community, and national hurt, healing, peace, and conflict are deep ideas that offer an undergirding for what is going on in education.

In writing about the potential roles of non-Indigenous people in activism and in research, G. Smith (1992) and Davis (2010) pointed to relationships where Indigenous people were direct guides for non-Indigenous people. While noting that many education researchers have failed to honour Māori people in their work, G. Smith (1992) presented a “’tiaki’ (mentor model)” as one strategy that has led to appropriate, successful research in certain contexts. In this model, “authoritative Maori people guide and mediate the research enterprise” (p. 8). Davis (2010) explained how this form of relationship is particularly relevant when Indigenous self-determination is a focal point; Indigenous people direct the project and non-Indigenous people offer support. When non-Indigenous educators seek guidance from Indigenous educators, this implies a shift away from the view that Indigenous people and knowledge are inferior to Eurocentric people, cultures, and knowledge (see Battiste, 2013; Government of Canada, 2008, TRC, 2015), a shift that is desperately needed if school systems and the personnel within them are to be open to the perspectives, histories, and ways of teaching and learning held by Indigenous communities and their members.

Interpersonal learning relationships with family-like qualities are another way to conceptualize educators' connection and learning. G. Smith (1992) described an "adoption model" of respectful research where "researchers become 'adopted' by the community or whanau to the extent that they are considered as one of the whanau who happen to be doing research and therefore can be trusted to do it right" (p. 8). When Cruikshank (1990) described her long-term relationships with research participants and their families, she implied that long-term, sustained relationships were important and powerful in Indigenous-non-Indigenous work. Some related qualities, such as emotional support and connection, were evident in St. Denis's (2010) description of allies. In general, however, "family" as a form of relationship is rarely mentioned with respect to Indigenous-non-Indigenous relations in education. Yet Swamp (2010) and Gkisedtanamoogk (2010), when writing about Indigenous-non-Indigenous alliances, stated that recognizing each other as members of the global human family provides a foundation for mutual responsibility and mutual connectedness. Relating with a degree of long-term commitment, warmth, and accountability could be meaningful for some Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators.

In other academic writing, I have noted terms about Indigenous and non-Indigenous interactions that seem to have a more formal tone. Davis (2010) wrote about "partners walking side by side," (p. 5), Haig-Brown (2001) used the term "collaboration," and L. Smith (1999) referred to the term "partnership." What I understand from each description is the intent to engage with a specific purpose and to interact in a respectful and equitable manner. Davis (2010) related this type of interaction to the Two Row Wampum, which symbolically depicts the "ship of settler society and the canoe of Indigenous society each following its own path, with its own laws, customs, and culture, neither interfering in the business of the other" (p. 5). Haig-Brown

(2001), a non-Indigenous scholar, warned from her own experience in university-community collaborations that even when an Indigenous and a non-Indigenous organization (a university and a First Nation in that case) enter with equity and shared responsibility in mind, the non-Indigenous organization is at risk of “(re)coloniz[ing]” (p. 27). Similarly, in their edited collection about people of European descent who respected Indigenous people and sought increased justice in relations with them in what is now Canada, Haig-Brown and Nock (2006) pointed out that people with good intentions can still contribute to the colonial agenda. It is noteworthy that paternalism, oppression, and colonization have been and continue to be powerful forces and norms in Indigenous-non-Indigenous relationships (Davis, 2010).

Possible challenges for Indigenous-non-Indigenous relationships. So far in this section on relationship and story as key principles, I have attended to literature about connections between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. Shared history, treaties, and even the oppressive relations of colonization have been presented as part of the larger societal picture, and models like direct guidance, adoption, and partnership have been considered at the interpersonal level. I have presented relationship as a frame for considering non-Indigenous educators’ respectful engagement with Indigenous educators in publicly funded school settings. Here, I pause to acknowledge that not everyone would agree that non-Indigenous educators have a role in Indigenous education, nor on the nature of that role if it were to exist. The literature I review briefly at this juncture provides some thoughts on limits and challenges in this area, including my own commentary as I juxtapose various scholars’ work.

Some scholars emphasize Indigenous movements—including Indigenous education—resting wholly in the hands of Indigenous people. From this perspective, the respectful role for

non-Indigenous people is to stand back. Cole (2006) expressed this in his poetic book about outside researchers studying Indigenous people:

I know some white anthropologists and I emphasize *some* haltingly
 because the percentage is so small as to require a nikon macro lens
 who are of good heart spirit practice
 come on coyote there are quite a few goodhearted ones we've met
 over the centuries who have learned that there is a time to get out of the way
now for instance
 so that we can speak for ourselves write for ourselves act for ourselves
 be ourselves teach ourselves write for ourselves act for ourselves
 without their *wie waohie** re/ or inter/mediation re/in/ter/vention ethno/investigation
 I am talking about honouring human beings and other living things
 I am talking about not career-making through interrogating
 or other/wise invest/igating invading first peoples
 or practicing coercive unequal power relationships with/on us is on you
 (p. 82, emphasis and purposeful spacing in original)

*Cole earlier defined *wie* as “white indian experts” and *waohie* as “white and other
 hued indian experts” (p. 4, p. 80)

Cole's (2006) statement indicated in clear terms that he saw “goodhearted” and “getting out of the way” as closely linked. Cole's term “white indian expert” and the commentary he provided have been memorable as I find my own role in teaching and research settings.

Some scholarship on Indigenous education has also implied that non-Indigenous people have a minimal or non-existent role. For example, Hampton's (1995) “Indian education *sui generis*” referred to “a self-determined Indian education using models of education structured by Indian cultures” (p. 10). While Hampton indicated that inclusion rather than segregation is the guiding tradition and that Indigenous students would also learn what present schooling has to offer, this is an Indigenous project. Similarly, McPherson and Rabb (2011) advocated for education developed by Indigenous people based on Indigenous philosophies.

From other perspectives, Cole's (2006) words about honouring human beings and other living things and staying away from “coercive unequal power relationships” (p. 82) could also

leave room for respectful interactions. Along those lines, Gkisedtanamoogk (2010) made the case that if non-Indigenous people in North America “intend to stay here, you have the choice of being our friends or being our enemies, and being our enemies can simply mean *You do nothing with us*” (p. 52, emphasis in original). From this perspective, claiming to have no role could be claiming to have no relationship, which the author argued is impossible. Another case when “no role” was depicted negatively by an Indigenous scholar is G. Smith’s (1992) description of a non-Indigenous researcher who withdrew completely from education research with Māori following “strong challenge and complaint” (p. 7). The correct response, according to G. Smith (1992), would have been listening to the Māori community and asking, “How do we get it right? How do we do it better in terms that do satisfy Maori?” (p. 7, emphasis in original). H. Cardinal (1969), a Cree political thinker, made a point that has resonance with G. Smith’s (1992) words:

It is time for concerned whites to reassess their involvement in a deep and honest manner so that their interest may become more meaningful to the native people. They must learn to accept criticism and even resentment of their actions as an attempt by those they would help to assure maximum returns from their activities. (p. 92)

This points to the idea that involvement in another group’s cause requires careful listening and responsive action. The idea that criticism, conflict, or negotiation may be a meaningful part of relationship is worth considering.

H. Cardinal (1969) argued for the importance of Indigenous people designing and leading their own efforts. With a few exceptions, his position was that non-Indigenous involvement in efforts for social change in Indigenous communities was unwanted. However, he stated that non-Indigenous people have a role in their own communities:

There exists a great need for knowledge in the white society about Indians and similarly a need in Indian communities for more information about white society.... As interest and understanding grow, as Indian-educated non-Indians educate their own people, more intelligent assessments can be made, more intelligent help offered....A basis for mutual understanding can develop. (p. 95)

H. Cardinal's argument that non-Indigenous people are responsible for listening to Indigenous people and then helping their peers to understand that leadership could pertain to the present study. At an interpersonal level, it is possible that as individual non-Indigenous educators listen to, learn from, and work alongside Indigenous educators and community members, they may develop a broader sense of what Indigenous education means to Indigenous people.

Timing is an important consideration. Benjamin, Preston, and Léger (2010), for example, described the role of non-Indigenous non-governmental organizations in the *UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*. These non-Indigenous organizations were not actively involved in the creation of the *Declaration*, although some supported from a distance through functions like helping fund travel for meetings or interpretation. Near the end of the process, non-Indigenous organizations were invited to help gain states' support for the *Declaration*, but did not act as spokespeople for Indigenous people.

From a study drawing on the views of Elders, parents, community members, and members of local education authorities in a fly-in First Nation community, Agbo (2012) found that some—but certainly not all—believed that the realm of school and the realm of home and community held separate responsibilities. Some participants believed that the home and the community were places for students to learn language, traditions, and culture while the school was responsible for teaching about technology, mathematics, and reading and writing in English (Agbo, 2012). However, this view was not uniformly held; some people spoke of the importance of language and culture in band-operated schools. A common belief seemed to be that education must respond to a changing world. Berger (2008) provided another angle on this through his interviews with Inuit parents about their visions for schooling in their community. He found that while parents believed that school should prepare their children for further education and job

opportunities, they would like to see this happen within a context that honoured local culture and language. These two examples, drawn from schools in a First Nation and an Inuit community, are interesting to consider in light of the present study about non-Indigenous teachers of Indigenous students in publicly funded urban schools.

This section on limits and challenges may provide food for thought for educators who seek to relate respectfully. Getting out of the way (Cole, 2006) or being aware of timing and the possibility that roles may change over time (Davis, 2010) are important positions. Drawing on themes from other conceptual frames presented in previous subsections, our shared history, present realities, and complex relations as Indigenous and non-Indigenous people mean that listening, being willing to hold back, accepting guidance, and being aware of one's own intentions and goals are important for non-Indigenous educators to consider in relation to the Indigenous community members with whom they interact. While this research is about non-Indigenous participants who *did* hold roles of some kind in Indigenous education, being aware that dominance and superiority are positions to which White Canadians can be prone to default (Hampton, 1995; Hart, 2002; Swamp, 2010) may give a frame of reference for potential limitations and challenges.

Learning through relationship within Indigenous and Eurocentric traditions

“Learning relationship” or “learning through relationship” could mean many different things to different people. This may be of particular importance in the present study, where participants were distinguished along lines of identity—Indigenous and non-Indigenous. Such binaries are problematic for multiple reasons. One is the reality that many individuals in Canada have mixed heritage. Another is that Indigenous identity has been externally controlled by non-Indigenous governments, thereby complicating and colonizing an area that should belong to

Indigenous peoples themselves (Lawrence, 2003; Palmater, 2011). Still another is that various Indigenous and European traditions, practices, and values have coexisted in Canadian society for hundreds of years (Saul, 2008). Yet another is that people of all backgrounds are exposed to powerful culture-shaping forces like formal schooling and media that are dominated by American, Eurocentric, and neoliberal influences and agendas (Battiste, 2013; Giroux, 2011). Even so, I believe it is worthwhile to consider learning through relationships in the context of Indigenous traditions and Eurocentric traditions to give some conceptual background.

Learning through relationship within Indigenous traditions. I would like to note upfront that I am not an expert on Indigenous learning traditions. The information that I include here cites published academic literature, which Indigenous scholars have indicated is not the main venue for passing on this sort of knowledge. Rather, learning from Elders, stories, the land, and ceremony are most important (Simpson, 2014; Wilson, 2008), and should be situated within a specific tribal epistemology (Kovach, 2009). As a person raised in Eurocentric traditions, it is highly possible that my interpretation of what I have read will be inaccurate, and for that I apologize. I hope that presenting some highlights from the academic literature will, however, provide a reference point for how I have designed my work.

Much academic literature emphasizes the holistic (or wholistic) nature of Indigenous epistemologies, worldviews, and ways of teaching and learning (e.g., Castagno & Brayboy, 2008; Ermine, 1995; Little Bear, 2009). In a holistic approach, relationships are not peripheral to learning, but hold everything together. Relationship is also described as the purpose for learning. Individuals are to nurture the gifts the Creator gave them in order to contribute to community life (Anuik, Battiste, & George, 2010; Hampton, 1995). This holistic view moves beyond human to

human relationships and includes relating to the land, other living beings, and the spiritual world (Canadian Council on Learning, 2009).

Cajete (1994) described how individuals' unique strengths, interests, and pace of learning are developed through relationships within the community:

Indigenous teaching is always associated with organic development. Indigenous teaching is planted like a seed, then nurtured and cultivated through the relationship of teacher and student until it bears fruit. The nature and quality of the relationship and perseverance through time determine the outcome of a teaching process. Apprenticeship, and learning through ritual stages of learning-readiness, are predicated on the metaphor of planting seeds and nurturing the growing seedlings through time. (p. 224)

Learning through relationships in this sense is responsive to the timing and development of the learner. Relationships between learners and “nurturing guides” like Elders, teachers, parents, counselors and mentors continue to be conceptualized as part of lifelong learning that is part of a holistic picture (Canadian Council on Learning, 2007, p. 19). These relationships do not have to be dictated by formal arrangements, but traditionally rest on kinship and love (Simpson, 2014).

Story as relating, teaching and learning. Story is vital to Indigenous knowledge and intrinsically tied to relationship (Archibald, 2008; McLeod, 2007). P. Cormier (in press) wrote, “I have come to understand that constructing, deconstructing, and sharing stories is the basis upon which Aboriginal culture is learned” (p. 1, in press). Indigenous scholars have written about interactions between storyteller and listener, and the responsibilities of each (Archibald, 2008; Little Bear, 2009), which drew my attention to the relational nature of storytelling within those processes. In Whiteduck's (2013) article about recording her grandfather's stories, and the inherent responsibilities on personal levels as well as for decolonization and continuance, she wrote: “Apart from considering our kin and how those relationships drive our storytelling, we must actively engage our kin in our storytelling” (p. 77). Story and relationship are deeply connected.

Through Archibald's (2008) *Indigenous Storywork* book, I caught a glimpse of the depth of commitment—both of interpersonal integrity and of time—that went into connecting Elders' stories to school curricula and teachers. Building on existing relationships, Archibald met with Elders in a way that respected their timeframe, their leadership in choosing which stories to share, and their decision not to share on certain topics for certain age groups. The deeply relational and responsive approach that she described showed me the depth of what it might mean when relationship and story, Elders and educators, come together with school settings in mind. From examples of when teachers were unsuccessful in presenting Indigenous stories respectfully, I took in Archibald's (2008) emphasis on the importance of guidance.

Learning through relationship within Eurocentric traditions. Even as I am no expert in Indigenous learning traditions, I do not understand all Eurocentric relationship-based learning traditions and cannot summarize all of them in this small section. I will, however, draw on some scholars who compare Indigenous and Eurocentric or Western education traditions to provide some points of contrast. I will also briefly address the literature on mentorship, which is one type of learning through relationship that is taken up in teacher education settings (e.g., Grierson, Cantalini-Williams, Wideman-Johnston, & Tedesco, 2011; Langdon, Alexander, Ryde, & Baggetta, 2014).

While Indigenous traditions in education emphasize holism, scholars have pointed to a linear or compartmentalized approach as definitive of Eurocentric education (Ermine, 1995; Stairs, 1995). Particular norms and standards were of high importance and individuals' "success" was measured against them (Hampton, 1995). Individualism was also a central feature; students were judged based on what they achieved on their own, not what they contributed to the group (Hampton, 1995). Knowledge was often taught and assessed in distinct

or “fragmentized” sections (Ermine, 1995). In this approach, the roles of “teacher” and “student” were directly and officially defined; specifically trained and hired adults were responsible for teaching children of a specific age in a large group (Hampton, 1995). In this context, interpersonal relationships between a teacher and a student could be seen as inappropriate or indicative of favouritism (Stairs, 1995). Aspects of this standardized, compartmentalized approach have been critiqued for decades from within the Eurocentric tradition. Dewey (1938), for example, wrote about “progressivism” and the importance of teachers being attentive to their students and the context of the community around them in order to expose students to experiences that might lead to their growth and desire for further learning. Current researchers in education have also written about shifts in schooling that prioritize relationships between students and teachers, peers, the community, and the academic disciplines that are the subject of their learning (Friesen, 2007, p. 6; Hollingsworth, Dybdahl, & Turner Minarik, 1993). This may suggest that while linearity, compartmentalization, and individualism dominate Eurocentric teaching practices, they are subject to shifting and change. Kitchen (2009), for example, wrote about relational teacher development as an effective way to assist teachers by being “sensitive to individual needs and rigorous in identifying problems to resolve” based in “caring and helping” (p. 59). Kitchen noted that struggling teachers and new teachers can especially benefit from this form of relational learning, one that responds to individual teachers and encourages them to work through problems with the support of another educator.

Mentorship: A teacher development application of learning through relationship.

Mentorship is a form of learning through relationship that occurs in various fields, including education. Literature on mentoring seems to integrate the Eurocentric ideas outlined above: linear progression and individualism. While Indigenous scholarship on learning through

relationship tended to emphasize community as both the context of learning and the purpose of it, mentorship literature tended to hold individual linear advancement as a central purpose. For example, salary increases and climbing the corporate ladder were emphasized (Eby, Rhodes, & Allen, 2010). In addition to those “career functions,” some scholars also wrote about “psychosocial functions” (Blake-Beard, O’Neill, & McGowan, 2007). While the mentorship literature seemed to be rooted in business models that convey a fairly clear mandate to improve productivity or status within an organization (Ragins & Kram, 2007), some scholars have challenged these norms. Boyatzis (2007), for example, advocated for mentoring that has “deeper, more sustained changes of individuals’ behavior, their dreams and aspirations, their self-awareness or adaptability” at its heart (p. 448). Both informally and formally developed interpersonal relationships fall under the “mentoring” umbrella. Turban and Lee (2007) noted that protégés—or “mentees”—benefited most from informal mentorships, possibly because the natural connection allowed for social attraction.

Mentoring has entered the literature on formal teacher education in various forms. Teaching placements where a practicing teacher guides prospective teachers could be considered mentorships within the mentor-protégé framework, and also stand to provide both career advancement and psychological advancement qualities (Ragins & Kram, 2007). Awaya et al. (2003) provided a critique of rigid and proscribed relationships between teachers and student teachers. They presented the idea of equitable, trusting relationships where joint inquiries into specific issues in education can occur with both people learning reciprocally. The idea that mentorship relationships are best established when the protégé has a degree of choice regarding who will be the mentor is another insight highlighted by Awaya and colleagues.

While most of the literature I reviewed did not address cultural learning within mentorship, Neal Crutcher (2014) described the importance and effects of “cross-cultural mentorship” as a way of promoting inclusivity and citizens who are competent in diverse societies. In this process, mentoring for intellectual and personal development was the primary focus, but mentoring pairs were purposefully matched across differences such as ethnicity, religion, cultural background, or socioeconomic background. Shared values were a major premise, with the development of virtues and vision as desired outcomes (Neal Crutcher, 2014).

Induction programs for new teachers are another site of formal mentoring in schools. Here, a new teacher learns under the direct guidance of a practicing teacher assigned to him or her. Again, more experienced teachers are assigned to assist teachers who are new to the profession, thereby creating a formal framework for learning through relationships. In a review and critique of empirical studies on teacher induction, Ingersoll and Strong (2011) found that these programs generally had a positive impact on 1) new teachers’ commitment and retention; 2) their instruction practices; and 3) students’ achievement (p. 1). Another review conducted by Howe (2006) indicated that the most successful teacher induction programs allowed new teachers and experienced teachers to “learn together” (p. 287). Time is a key factor here; collaborating, reflecting, and gradual “acculturation into the profession” (p. 292) were made possible by the dedication of time to those ends. Further, experienced and specifically trained mentors, ongoing professional development, and the goal of assisting, rather than assessing new teachers were found to be definitive of successful induction programs. The reviews conducted by Ingersoll and Strong (2011) and Howe (2006) indicated that mentoring of new teachers in education systems was both well established and producing certain results.

Summary: Learning through relationship within Indigenous and Eurocentric traditions. In sum, learning through relationships is evident in both Indigenous and Eurocentric traditions. Indigenous traditions tend to emphasize community as both the context of learning and the purpose of it (Hampton, 1995). Eurocentric mentorship literature is premised more on linear progression and individualistic goals (Ragins & Kram, 2007). These forms of learning through relationships are drawn from the wider world-views and epistemologies in which they originate.

Story-based research in Indigenous education. There are multiple examples of studies in Indigenous education where stories are prominent (e.g., Bissell & Korteweg, 2016; Dion, 2009; Goulet, 2001; Goulet & Goulet, 2014; Strong-Wilson, 2007). Story can be engaged in multiple ways. Some examples are: research that is comprised of teachers' stories (Goulet, 2001; Goulet & Goulet, 2014), research where composing and sharing stories is a point of relational connection between Indigenous students and non-Indigenous educators (Bissell & Korteweg, 2016), research where Indigenous-authored stories are entrusted to non-Indigenous teachers for them to share with students (Dion, 2009), research where teachers examine and critique stories that are precious to them (Strong-Wilson, 2007), and in-depth research alongside an Indigenous parent who shared experiences and knowledge (Pushor, 2015). The diverse forms of engagement with story represented in this small set of examples illustrate the possibilities inherent in drawing on narratives within Indigenous education research: representing learning and growth, stimulating thoughtful connection, and introducing new perspectives.

Story within a narrative inquiry framework places value on the unique and contextual elements of experience including place, time, and inner and social states and dynamics (Clandinin & Connelly, 2006). This is a useful theoretical framework for the present study,

which was designed to explore the contexts, processes, and perceived outcomes of learning through relationship. Seeking out stories in a relational manner and presenting them in a storied form means that personal experience and relationships are at the forefront.

Summary: Story and relationship as key principles for the present study. In this section, I have presented a conceptual basis for relationship and story as key principles in the present study. The educator to educator relationships at the centre of the study are part of broader relationships and longer stories than may be immediately evident, including stories at a nation to nation level and histories of education in Canada (Battiste, 2013; Donald, 2012). Clandinin and Connelly (2000) reminded us that stories we see unfolding have a past and a future, giving context to the observable present. Many scholars have written about visions and practices for education that could shift the present school system toward more equitable relating and balanced learning at system and interpersonal levels, as described in the sections above. In the present study about learning relationships shared by non-Indigenous and Indigenous educators, it is important to note that relationship and story are embedded in larger worldviews and heritages. For that reason, I briefly addressed Indigenous and Eurocentric concepts of relationship and will address concepts of story in the methodology chapter.

At the core of this study is the idea that meaningful learning can occur as Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators interact through interpersonal relationships. The present research was designed to value the experiences of people who were in the *midst* (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) of learning through relationship. People who were interacting with a unique set of students in a particular school environment within the political climate of their province and the local realities of their city. People on their own personal journeys of family, community, and work life (see Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; P. Cormier, 2016). People learning and growing and wondering

and trying and asking. People in motion (Craig, 2011). The three-dimensional narrative inquiry space developed by Clandinin and Connelly (2000) is offered in Chapter Three as a theoretical framework through which to value and capture this learning, rooted in the understanding that the knowledge and experiences that “everyday” teachers hold is highly valuable (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996; Craig, 2011).

The Research Questions and their Contribution to the Literature

My research questions focus on interpersonal learning relationships shared by non-Indigenous educators and Indigenous educators or community members. While reference is made to Indigenous-non-Indigenous educator relationships in both empirical literature and conceptual pieces, I have not yet found a study centred on people’s stories about how these learning relationships unfold in public education settings. Studies conducted with practicing non-Indigenous educators who interacted with Indigenous community members and educators of their own accord (Dion, 2016; Goulet, 2001; Oskineegish & Berger, 2013; St. Denis, 2010) seem closest to the present study. While these studies do not include in-depth narratives about educators’ interpersonal learning, they indicate that such learning relationships exist and can be productive. Factors like dedicated time and administrative support for Indigenous-non-Indigenous learning are also brought to the forefront (Dion & D. Cormier, 2015; Tompkins, 1998). Thus, the present urban, interpersonal, narrative study is informed by several studies with related threads, but none with the same scope and focus. I took stock of several relevant conceptual frames, considering them through the lens of relationship and story as key principles.

The present study contributes to the literature by presenting unique stories shared by Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators who were engaged in learning with one another. The narrative approach allows for focus on the unique contexts, timelines, and personal and social

dynamics (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) of each story. Drawing on both Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholarship provided a backdrop for the stories.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Opening

Purpose of this study. As I described in Chapter One, the purpose of this research was to gather and consider stories about productive and meaningful learning relationships shared by Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators in publicly funded school settings. I know from my own experience and from academic literature (Blimkie, Vetter, & Haig-Brown, 2014; Oskineegish, 2015) that learning alongside Indigenous educators and community members can be a meaningful, formational experience for non-Indigenous teachers. The stories shared in this research provide eleven examples of relationship-based learning in various publicly funded elementary and high schools in Canada. The purpose of sharing these stories is to invite readers to listen in and to learn from others' experiences (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

Structure and tone of this chapter. This chapter is divided into two sections. In section one, I apply the key principles of relationship and story to the research methodology for the present study. First, I write about respectful research. Second, I write about Indigenous scholarship on story and relationship. Third, I explore a range of scholarship on story and relationship in narrative inquiry. Fourth, I present interview-based research and art within research as specific ways to express story and relationship in the present study. Fifth, I complete the chapter by identifying Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) three-dimensional narrative inquiry space as my chosen theoretical framework. In the second section, I explain the details of the research design. I try to be transparent about how I planned and carried out the present study, leaving my process open for readers' analysis (Savin-Baden & Howell Major, 2013). I write in a conversational tone, inspired by how Kovach (2009) described her research process and how

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) and other narrative inquirers (e.g., Elkford, 2017; Huang, 2017; Kitchen, Ciuffetelli Parker, & Pushor, 2011) shared their thinking and practice.

Eurocentric and Indigenous methodology sources. Here at the outset, I acknowledge the complexity of referring to both Indigenous and Eurocentric research frames as a White Canadian. I come from an English, Irish, and Scottish background, am based in a Eurocentric academic institution, and am not directly connected to an Indigenous tribal epistemology (see Kovach 2009). At the same time, Kovach's (2009; 2012) Indigenous methodologies approach resonated with me as a beginning graduate student. Acknowledging her influence and that of other Indigenous scholars is important to me. Further, being a non-Indigenous scholar learning from Indigenous scholars is congruent with the heart of this study: Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators coming together for the purpose of learning and growth.

Clandinin and Connelly (1996, p. 25) and narrative inquirers who followed them in focusing on teachers' personal practical knowledge (Craig, 2007) prepared an academic path for researchers like me to do the same. By valuing experiential knowledge as expressed through story and by placing relationship-based learning at the forefront (Ciuffetelli Parker, Murray-Orr, Mitton-Kukner, Griffin, & Pushor, 2017; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Hollingsworth, Dybdahl, & Turner Minarik, 1993), narrative inquiry offers a methodological approach that is aligned with the purpose and research questions of the present study.

I am not claiming that the fields of Indigenous methodologies and narrative inquiry rest on the same theoretical and philosophical bases, nor that they share the same principles or practices. Rather, I recognize the relevance of each to the present study in various ways, and include a discussion of differences. While I do write about Indigenous scholarship and narrative

inquiry as separate approaches, I recognize that they are not mutually exclusive (see T. Cardinal & Fenichel, 2017). Story, relationship, and experience are key ideas that I explore.

In light of story and relationship as key principles, I, as a non-Indigenous researcher, recognize that I am entering a story with a long and complex plotline. Non-Indigenous researchers and educators are part of an oppressive legacy as they relate to Indigenous communities and individuals (Hampton, 1995; Kovach, 2009; L. Smith, 2012). In her book *Indigenous Methodologies*, Kovach (2009) commented on the tension between sharing Indigenous cultural knowledges in publicly accessible work or choosing not to do so. Among other points, she acknowledged concerns about “misinterpretations, appropriations, and dismissals” of cultural knowledges while also valuing the “restoration and respectful *use*” (p. 12, emphasis in original) of Indigenous knowledge systems as part of a wider vision for cultural renaissance. While I run the risk of misunderstanding or inappropriately applying principles that Kovach and other Indigenous scholars have shared, I hope to engage respectfully, aided by the guidance provided by those around me and in the academic literature. Accordingly, I include the following section on respectful research.

Respectful Research

Research ethics is an area where there is clear guidance on how Indigenous and non-Indigenous parties might respectfully intersect. Respectful relationships are at the forefront of the chapter on research involving First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples in the Tri-Council Policy Statement Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, 2014). Respectful relationships are of particular importance given the backdrop of research that “has been defined and carried out primarily by

non-Aboriginal researchers” using approaches that have “not generally reflected Aboriginal world views, and . . . has not necessarily benefited Aboriginal peoples or communities” (p. 109). The authors gave practical examples, such as following “ethical guidance offered by Aboriginal peoples themselves” (p. 109), “collaboration and engagement between researchers and participants” (p. 109), and respecting communities’ customs.

Remembering that respectful relationships are central to respectful research is a principle that I sought to make the foundation for the present study. I wanted my intentions and plans to be openly presented to potential participants, and malleable to theirs. As I describe later in this chapter, a guidance seeking approach was important as I designed this research. In keeping with the TCPS2 chapter on research involving First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples, I sought and received Dr. Cynthia Wesley-Esquimaux’s support for my research ethics proposal. She was the Vice Provost, Aboriginal Initiatives at Lakehead University at the time when she wrote the letter of support and now holds the institution’s Chair of Truth and Reconciliation position. We spoke about my proposed research while I was in the design phase and interacted through a university initiative that she was leading.

Many Indigenous scholars have written about respectful research practices. I briefly introduce some of their points and reflect on how the present study approaches them. Menzies (2001) wrote about researchers’ work with Indigenous communities, emphasizing the importance of dialogue between researcher and community, refining the research plan in response, including community members in the research team, and remaining connected to the community during the processes of analyzing data, revising, and publishing the findings (p. 21). He argued that research should not give more power to those who already have it at the expense of those who have less power, remembering that Indigenous-Canadian relations have been defined by “forced

relocation, systemic discrimination, and expropriation of resources and territory” (p. 22). Thus, like the TCPS2 policy framework addressed above, respectful relationships were framed as highly important given the widespread disrespect and power imbalances that have prevailed. Menzies noted that First Nations’ right to a true voice in decision-making about the research forms “a direct challenge to researchers’ belief that they have an unfettered right to ask questions and to publish ‘their’ findings” (p. 23). Further, Menzies explained how this is part of a larger decolonizing agenda; researchers’ commitment also requires “a political commitment in support of Indigenous peoples” (p. 33). Thus, respectful research is a holistic commitment. It is not merely ticking off a few boxes, but an orientation to political and research relationships premised on personal commitment.

For me, this meant offering participants plenty of opportunity to shape the research at its various stages, a process that is described in the research activities and analysis sections. Interacting with Indigenous educators at school boards was a meaningful part of research recruitment. With respect to political and personal commitment, this research followed my own engagement through attending events and walks, writing letters to government, conversing about Indigenous-Canadian relations in school, church, and social settings, inviting Indigenous educators into elementary and university classes I have taught, and seeking to include relevant resources or perspectives in those classrooms.

Kovach (2009) wrote about being clear about one’s own purpose. Why, as a non-Indigenous researcher, am I seeking to conduct research with Indigenous people? The experiences and personal stances that I bring to this research are outlined in Chapter One, a story that lands me in the present situation of knowing that non-Indigenous educators have much to learn from Indigenous people, and that interpersonal learning within our places of work is one

way to approach this. In a way, then, my proposed research is *with* Indigenous people—as distinct from *by* or *for* Indigenous people (Hall, 2014; Menzies, 2001)—in that I invited Indigenous educators and community members to help me understand how my peers and I might develop. In a relational, on-the-ground manner, this could be seen as responding to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s (2015) call on Canada’s Council of Ministers of Education to commit to “sharing information and best practices on teaching curriculum related to residential schools and Aboriginal history” (p. 238) and responds to priorities set out by Indigenous leaders across Canada in *Indian Control of Indian Education* (NIB/AFN, 1972), which continues to be a watershed document in this field.

Regarding cross-cultural research, L. Smith (1999, 2012), a Maori scholar, stated: “Researchers must go further than simply recognizing personal beliefs and assumptions, and the effect they have when interacting with people” (1999, p. 173). She presented the following questions:

- Who defined the research problem?
- For whom is the study relevant? Who says so?
- What knowledge will the community gain from the study?
- What knowledge will the researcher gain from the study?
- What are some likely positive outcomes from the study?
- What are some possible negative outcomes?
- How can the negative outcomes be eliminated?
- To whom is the researcher accountable?
- What processes are in place to support the research, the researched, and the researcher?

(L. Smith, 1999, p. 173)

I address several of these questions indirectly throughout the dissertation within the contexts of the relevant chapter (introduction, methodology, conclusion) and directly in Appendix A.

Seeking guidance. One way in which I have sought to apply principles of respectful research to the present study is through connecting with multiple Indigenous educators, leaders,

parents, and colleagues during my PhD process. This often occurred through informal conversations with friends and colleagues where both of us were drawing on one another's views and experiences, although sometimes on differing topics. In other cases, I sought out someone in a formal consultation role, or who was willing to interact with me as part of their professional capacity. An example of this is meeting with Elder Gerry Martin, the Lakehead University Elder-in-Residence who I visited three times while I was developing research questions and funding proposals, and spoke with again during data collection and as I considered and wrote up findings. In early stages of the research, the process of bringing my idea or a written grant proposal to many Indigenous people who I know and trust brought assurance that my general research direction was relevant in their eyes. In the midst of the research, my main reference group was participants themselves as I sought their feedback on drafts of transcripts, early findings, their stories that I planned to publish, and then the full dissertation. In later stages, informal conversations with Indigenous educators, colleagues, and friends continued to be part of my thought process and a dynamic that I appreciated.

Seeking the input of Indigenous scholars has also shaped my research design process. Conversations with Sandra Wolf, Paul Cormier, Bruce Beardy, and Cynthia Wesley-Esquimaux at Lakehead University, as well as with colleagues and course instructors have been part of this. The *Canadian Society for Studies in Education* conference has been an excellent forum for speaking with Indigenous (and non-Indigenous) scholars whose work I respect, and for seeking direct feedback on my research process. In fact, Dr. Frank Deer's generous feedback a few years ago led to his current engagement as a committee member. His willingness to be an "external" member of the committee has been a blessing through allowing me to be accountable to and connected with an Indigenous scholar during the present study. Sharing and discussing at

conferences for teachers and graduate students has also helped shape my work and encourage me in the process, and the recent April-May 2018 *Canadian Symposium on Indigenous Teacher Education* was a highly meaningful time of listening, learning, sharing, and growing alongside Indigenous educators, community members, and scholars along with non-Indigenous colleagues.

While I emphasize the influence of Indigenous scholars and colleagues in this discussion around ethics, several non-Indigenous academics have influenced my work as well. Discussions with colleagues such as Melissa Oskineegish, Alex Bissell, Lisa Primavesi, Leigh Potvin, and Varainja Stock about how to conduct our research with respect, and the questions, experiences, and challenges that go along with it, have helped me to be thoughtful and transparent about my intentions and process. Further, Paul Berger, Leisa Desmoulins, and Darlene Ciuffetelli Parker model this sort of thoughtfulness in their approach to research, challenging me to strive for honest and relevant doctoral work. The work of respectful non-Indigenous academics in Indigenous education and related fields, many of whom are cited in the literature review section, also helped me to shape my own.

Giving back. Reciprocity is a focus in many Indigenous scholars' writing (e.g., Archibald, 2008; Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991; Kovach, 2009). On a personal level, sharing food, conversation, and time was a reciprocal activity in some way. Sharing participants' stories back to them was another way to show my gratefulness for their personal contributions and to put their words back into their hands. The set of snapshots (described later) was also a teacher-friendly way to share the research immediately. In one case, providing rides and agreeing to run an errand was a way to give back. At a school system level, providing summaries of the research in ways that fit the boards' goals is a way to give back. One school board has requested an oral presentation to the board of trustees, and others a written report. I have also offered to share with

teachers, and have begun to do so through conferences. In one case, I asked how I could say “thanks” to a school board person, and the response was volunteering at a large event. On a broader scale, I hope the present research gives back to Indigenous scholars and organizations, as well as to the field of public education by providing stories about learning relationships. The opportunity to reflect together seemed to be another form of reciprocity. Some participants commented that they do not often talk together about their relationship itself, or that they appreciated the opportunity to do so.

Story and Relationship in Indigenous Methodologies and related Scholarship

I greatly appreciate Kovach’s (2009) emphasis on story and relationship. Kovach, a *Néhiyaw* and Saulteaux scholar showed how people’s highly contextual stories are valuable; far from detracting from research findings, they are the foundation. Indigenous scholars like King (2003), Archibald (2008), and McLeod (2007) underscored the importance of story as well. Coming from an undergraduate degree in Geography and Biology where positivist research was often emphasized, it was a relief for me to encounter a researcher who wrote about the value of trusting, positive relationships in research. Kovach discussed the built-in responsibilities connected to asking people to share their stories in Indigenous circles: “A researcher assumes a responsibility that the story shared will be treated with the respect it deserves in acknowledgement of the relationship from which it emerges” (p. 97). She embedded this statement in reference to oral history and collective memory. As a researcher, my goal was to have a respectful heart as I engaged with people and their stories, recognizing the responsibility I had been given to share them well.

Kovach (2009) wrote, “We know what we know from where we stand. We need to be honest about that” (p. 7). In her own writing, Kovach’s (2009) practical, storied account of

research, identity, and relationship drew me in. The honesty and humour with which she portrayed her own thinking, changing, questioning, and anchoring showed me a kind of research text that was much different from those written to sound more neutral or objective. I noticed this trend in other Indigenous scholars' writing as well (e.g., P. Cormier, 2016; L. Smith, 2012; Wilson, 2008). Absolon, who is Anishinaabe, and Willett, who identified with Cree and Scottish/British ancestry (Absolon & Willett, 2005), wrote of the importance of "locating ourselves" and demonstrated it by sharing their own stories. Cree scholar Wilson (2008) wove his own experiences through his text on research, and L. Smith (2012), who is Māori, included personal accounts in her writing about research practices. These authors showed me the power, beauty, and clarity that can come when scholars are personal in their academic writing. As their reader, I felt connected through the relational, storied way in which they communicated.

Kovach (2009) wrote about the importance of identifying with specific tribal epistemologies within Indigenous methodologies—tracing one's philosophical position, assumptions, and ways of knowing to a specific place and people. I am not Indigenous to Canada and do not anchor my thinking and research to a specific Indigenous tribal epistemology. This is one reason that I consider Indigenous methodologies an influence rather than the foundation of my methodological approach. However, Indigenous scholars' examples of reflecting on and candidly sharing who they are and where they come from has led me to a research approach where I acknowledge my own experience, values, family history, and hopes for the future as foundational to the work I undertake.

The primacy of relationship in good research was underlined by Wilson (2008), who described relational accountability as a key concept. Wilson was writing to an Indigenous audience, referring to researchers' accountability to their own Indigenous communities. As a

non-Indigenous reader, the notion that researchers are not individuals operating on their own agendas, but responsible to communities outside of academia resonated with me. In my own research process, I recognize my accountability to Indigenous people, families, and communities who could be affected by my research, and to my own “home base” of people who act as guides and supports in my life (and acknowledge that those groups are not mutually exclusive). A degree of accountability to Indigenous people around me has included speaking formally and informally with Indigenous parents, teachers, administrators, Elders, and academics about my research, and by seeking formal support from Dr. Cynthia Wesley-Esquimaux, who is a member of the Chippewa of Georgina Island First Nation, in my application to Lakehead’s Research Ethics Board. Toward the end of this study, this accountability has included speaking with participants themselves. G. Smith (1992), whose work I cited in the literature review, spoke specifically about relationships between non-Indigenous researchers and Māori communities, indicating many possible modes of being connected and accountable through relationship.

Simpson (2014) drew concepts of story and relationship together in the concept of “visiting” and its interpersonal and societal-level meaning to Nishnaabeg. Here is an excerpt:

Visiting within Nishnaabeg intelligence means sharing oneself through story, through principled and respectful consensual reciprocity with another living being. Visiting is lateral sharing in the absence of coercion and hierarchy, and in the presence of compassion. Visiting is fun, enjoyable, nurturing of intimate connections and relationship building. (p. 18)

Even without having the full Nishnaabeg context that Simpson describes, these principles are resonant for me. “Sharing oneself through story” is exactly what the participants in this dissertation research generously did. “Principled and respectful consensual reciprocity” was my aim as I interacted with them in the research process, and “the absence of coercion and hierarchy” was my hope, even though the nature of PhD research included differing roles and

responsibilities (see Hollingsworth, Dybdahl, and Turner Minarik, 1993). The laughter, friendly and kind interactions, and the relationship building that occurred during this process made the research meaningful. These ideas reappear in the stories themselves and in the interpretation section. I mention them here because I think Simpson's statement is beautiful and pertinent as a research approach.

Learning from Elders and knowledge holders is another relational approach that I have come to value highly through interacting with Indigenous community members and organizations and reading Indigenous work (e.g., Archibald, 2008; Ellerby, 2001; Little Bear, 2009). I have been inspired to seek guidance from people who hold Elder-like roles in my own life. In addition to consulting with Indigenous Elders with whom I have become connected through research or the university and local community, I have reconnected with people who have been leaders, role models, and respected community members over decades of my life, talking with them about aspects of the present research and taking in the stories and insights they have generously shared. Seeking guidance on spiritual, relational, and conceptual issues could be seen as an extrapolation of relational accountability (Wilson, 2008) and an answer to L. Smith's (1999) question about who cross-cultural researchers are accountable to.

Story and relationship are highly valued in Indigenous axiology (Donald, 2012; Wilson, 2008) and are also ethical imperatives. The discussion of respectful relationships between non-Indigenous researchers and Indigenous communities and research participants is responsive to Indigenous philosophies. This is particularly poignant given the shameful record of exploitation and oppression that have characterized research interactions (Kovach, 2009; L. Smith, 2012). Ethics protocols designed in response to those oppressive trends are the subject of the earlier section on respectful research.

Story and Relationship in Narrative Inquiry

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) wrote that “relationship is at the heart of thinking narratively” and “key” to what narrative inquirers do (p. 189). This statement is particularly relevant for the present study given that Clandinin and Connelly focused extensively on teachers and school life. This chapter culminates in Clandinin and Connelly’s (2000) three-dimensional narrative inquiry space as the theoretical framework for the present study. Here, I present a variety of literature from the field of narrative inquiry, beginning with general observations and moving toward the field of education as a site of narrative inquiry approaches.

Narrative inquirers have expressed that story is an age-old way for humans to make and share meaning, and that the recent development in the field of narrative inquiry draw on this established way of sharing knowledge (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007). As Pinnegar and Daynes (2007) stated, narrative researchers “usually embrace the assumption that the story is one if not the fundamental unit that accounts for human experience. But what counts as stories, the kinds of stories they choose to study, or the methods they use for study vary” (p. 4). Some varying views on story and research are presented here.

Hendry (2010) asserted that narrative defines all inquiry. In making this assertion, she sought to disrupt binaries between “scientific” and “non-scientific,” “qualitative” and “quantitative” research and the attending assumption that scientific research is more legitimate. Instead, she framed “the sacred,” “the symbolic,” and “the scientific” as narratives that are explored by scholars (p. 73).

While Hendry (2010) moved away from narrative as story in order to use “narrative inquiry” in a more all-encompassing sense, other methodologists emphasized story. Johnson and Christensen (2014) stated that the foundational question in narrative inquiry is: “What

understandings can we gain from people's storied experiences?" (p. 425). They noted that people make sense through story, and that narrative inquiry takes this up in a research setting. They also noted that narrative inquiry is "co-compositional," meaning that "both the stories of researchers and participants are under study" (p. 426). Their portrayal of narrative inquiry, then, settled on story and experience and highlighted the relational nature of this form of research.

Clandinin and Rosiek (2007) stated that "narrative inquirers study experience," framing this statement in Dewey's (1983) pragmatic philosophy. In their detailed account of the meaning of experience, they explained that inquiry does not end in "identification of an unchanging transcendent reality," but is "an act within a stream of experience that generates new relations that then become a part of future experience" (p. 41). The authors stated that "narrative inquiries explore the stories people live and tell," stories that are "the result of a confluence of social influences on a person's inner life, social influences on their environment, and their unique personal history" (p. 41). Through Dewey, Clandinin and Rosiek emphasized the value of people's ordinary or everyday experiences. In other words, narrative inquiry "treats lived experience as both the beginning and ending points of inquiry" (p. 55). Clandinin and Rosiek, then linked story to valuing people's everyday experience as a source of knowledge.

Creswell (2012), whose text gave synopses of multiple research approaches relevant to education, emphasized a different feature of narrative research. He noted that narrative research operates at the level of an individual. This differs from research about groups or about a large sample of individuals. According to Creswell, studying an individual's experience in a detailed way sets this form of research apart from other available methodological approaches. By inference, research about individuals would likely be relational since researcher and individual interact in a one-on-one capacity.

In a definitive chapter in the *Handbook of Narrative Inquiry*, Pinnegar and Daynes (2007) outlined “four turns” in the “movement toward narrative inquiry” (p. 3). While recognizing many ways of studying the world, they wrote:

We become narrative inquirers only when we recognize and embrace the interactive quality of the researcher-researched relationship, primarily use stories as data and analysis, and understand the way in which what we know is embedded in a particular context, and finally that narrative knowing is essential to our inquiry. (p. 7)

Thus, on many levels, relationship and story wind together in narrative inquiry. This is lived out in many ways by narrative inquirers. As Craig (2011) detailed in her article on developments within narrative inquiry focused on teacher learning and springing from Clandinin and Connelly’s work and mentorship, there is growing scholarship on educators’ learning and narrative inquiry.

Hollingsworth, Dybdahl, and Turner Minarik (1993) wrote about “relational knowing” as a means of teacher growth and learning. Describing beginning teachers with whom she shared conversations, classroom observations, and other forms of data collection over several years, Hollingsworth wrote: “When they found the disciplinary knowledge from their teacher education program important but insufficient for reaching the urban children they were charged to teach, Mary and Leslie reached out for relational support and knowing” (p. 31). These educators learned through relating with one another, their students, and Hollingsworth as their teacher educator. Through conversation excerpts and interpretation, Hollingsworth (1993) provided a sense of “our learning through the support of rich, challenging, and sustained conversation, a passionate and political belief in ourselves and urban children as knowledge creators and evaluators” (p. 30). Students were at the centre of their teachers’ work; the teachers’ words show their deep care, big questions, self-reflection, and constantly evolving literacy lesson design, aimed at providing students with the best education. Hollingsworth wrote, “As a result of their

continuous searching, Mary and Leslie came to firmly believe that they could design programs where children's sense of selves would be preserved and where children could see themselves as capable of literacy" (p. 27). In defining relational knowing, Hollingsworth, Dybdahl, & Turner Minarik explained that "relational knowing occurs as much in energy or intuitive perception as in either concrete or languaged form" and, "relational knowing does not rest in contemplation but becomes clarified in action" (p. 10). Hollingsworth's long term relational engagement with the beginning teachers in her study and her emphasis on their growth through relational knowing animated the principles of story and relationship as both a research approach and a teacher learning approach. In the present study, relational interactions in the research process as well as in teachers' development are also crucial.

Craig (1995a,b; 2004) and Olson and Craig (2001) wrote about knowledge communities as an interpersonal form of learning for teachers. Building on Clandinin and Connelly's (1995; 1996) metaphor of teachers' professional knowledge landscapes, she wrote about "safe places" (Craig, 1995a, p. 138) for teachers to share "self-initiated conversations.... where knowledge, experiences, and activities can be shared and genuinely responded to by others" (Craig, 2004, p. 420). Knowledge communities allowed educators to "narrate the rawness of their experiences" and "negotiate meaning for such experiences" (Olson & Craig, 2001, p. 670) and could help beginning teachers to form their knowledge through interacting with certain people around them (Craig, 1995).

Not all conversations amongst groups of teachers were defined as knowledge communities; Craig (2004) wrote about relational dynamics that could hinder this sort of engagement, and also cited "time constraints, perpetual activity, and lack of opportunities for reflection" as other constraints (p. 420). Knowledge communities could involve talking about

political and personal concerns, including differing experiences, pain, and broader policies and social dynamics (Craig, 2004, pp. 419, 420), requiring “something other than fleeting conversation” (p. 420). Relationship and story were centrepieces in Craig’s work. Her engagement with difficult realities as part of those relationships links to the present study where colonization and difficult historical and social realities were topics educators addressed.

Another angle on story and relationship within narrative inquiry involved establishing the difference between stories told from within a setting and stories told from the outside. Clandinin and Connelly (1996) wrote about the difference between school stories and stories of schools, and similarly, teacher stories and stories of teachers. Through examples, they showed how the daily experience of a person or place can be quite different than stories that are told in the media, or by school board personnel, or by onlookers. The idea of paired stories has been carried into other settings, such as stories of reform and reform stories, community stories and stories of community, and stories of poverty and poverty stories (Ciuffetelli Parker & Craig, 2017). In Ciuffetelli Parker and Craig’s (2017) study in a school that was part of the “large story” of poverty, they sought out and presented “small stories” from that particular context across time, showing how hope resided in that school community. Their approach and the stories they shared resonated with my hopes for the present study. The beautiful, contextual, “small stories” shared by educators contribute to the literature on teacher development in Indigenous education by showing how growth and connection reside within larger statistics and institutional realities.

Xu and Connelly (2010) wrote about school-based narrative inquiry research with an emphasis on the practical. From their experience, the authors wrote:

School practitioners are, for the most part, unconcerned about [theoretical] boundaries of any sort. Their concern is with their ongoing professional and public lives, trying to make the best of things and trying to improve things. Narrative inquiry for school-based inquiry is, likewise, mostly unconcerned with abstract boundaries. A researcher’s task is

how best to become part of the life space of those studied and how best to enter into their daily work. (p. 351)

Placing a focus on making the best of things and trying to improve things rings true to my experiences as a teacher and relating with teachers. Further, making the best and making things better is at the heart of the present study. As a non-Indigenous educator in Indigenous education, I need all the wisdom and guidance I can get. Learning through relationship and through the experiences people share as stories (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Wilson, 2008) is vital here.

As narrative inquirers, Xu and Connelly (2010) explained that researchers come to their studies with their own stories, and that these are quite often tied to the content of the studies they conduct. Instead of claiming objectivity, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) emphasized that narrative inquirers write as “I” (p. 9). This “I” has biases, particular experiences, and is in relationship with others.

The concepts of personal stories and learning through relating are evident in Ciuffetelli Parker’s work with teachers (2017) and teacher candidates (2014), guided by her 3R framework of narrative reveal, narrative revelation, and narrative reform. Through the 3R framework and what Ciuffetelli Parker (2014) termed literacy narratives, teacher candidates wrote to one another about personal experiences that come to bear on educational settings. Story and relationship were central as students “excavate unconscious assumptions that surface in their writing correspondences,” “show, once a revelation has surfaced, how they can interrogate further their own experiences to gain perspective of the ‘hardened’ story,” and “begin to reform their teacher knowledge through an awakened new story” (p. 245) within an environment that Ciuffetelli Parker sought to premise on trust, respect, integrity, and care (Ontario College of Teachers, 2019). In this approach, teacher education was personal, relational, and focused on change.

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) wrote about the relational nature of narrative inquiry. They stated, “Participants are in relation, and we as researchers are in relation to participants” (p. 189). They described research based on long-term relationships, showing great attention to the dynamics of establishing mutually beneficial, respectful, and flexible connections with participants throughout their studies. In Clandinin and Connelly’s work (1996; 2000; 2006) and in the work of narrative inquirers cited above, relationship and story are foundational principles.

Story and Relationship as Methodological Approaches in the Present Study

In choosing a story-based, relational approach for the present study, I drew on scholarship authored by Indigenous methodologists and narrative inquirers. Some key ideas included engaging in research that is relationship-based (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Wilson, 2008), being open about one’s own stance and experiences as the researcher (Kovach, 2009; Xu & Connelly, 2010), valuing people’s experiences as a source of knowledge (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996; Kovach, 2009) and engaging with story as a way of expressing knowledge (Archibald, 2008; Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007). Intricacies of relationship-based learning such as a desire for a non-hierarchical environment were discussed by Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars with respect to processes termed conversation (Hollingsworth & Dybdahl, 2007) and visiting (Simpson, 2014) within their specific contexts. Similarly, scholars in both fields took up ethical considerations that went beyond formalized procedures and reached to what it means to relate respectfully and meaningfully as personal stories are shared (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Josselson, 2007; Kovach, 2009). Each of these considerations is meaningful in the present study where relationship and story are at the centre. I appreciate that narrative inquirers have written about tensions and uncertainties within their research processes (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Craig, 2011), which is something I have noticed in the work of some Indigenous scholars as well

(e.g., Ray & P. Cormier, 2012; Kovach, 2009). Whether it be tension regarding research decisions as they unfold, or tensions about underlying belief systems and cultural interactions, I appreciate that narrative inquirers and Indigenous methodologists have opened the door to discuss the process.

While I have found inspiration and direction in Indigenous and Eurocentric writing on story and relationship, it is worth noting cultural diversity in the meaning of those terms. Kovach (2009) noted that while “story as both form and method crosses cultural divides,” “the way that a culture employs story differs” (p. 96). I am reminded of this in Wilson’s (2008) description of different types of stories, their purposes, and the guidelines around them; sacred stories surrounded by specific protocols are of a different nature than stories of personal experience, the latter being my focal point in the present study. Relationship, too, is a word with embedded meanings that reflect worldview and wider cultural understandings. Donald (2012), Kovach (2009), Rice (2005), and Wilson (2008) framed interpersonal relationships as part of a larger spiritual framework and the interconnectedness of all beings. Indigenous scholarship often references the Creator (e.g., P. Cormier, 2016; Kovach, 2009) as an intrinsic aspect of life and therefore research. In Western writing in general, I do not often find references to our Creator or to the spiritual world as part of framing research and teaching relationships.

On a personal note, Indigenous scholars’ references to the Creator have been a blessing to me. While complex layers regarding colonization, religion, and ethnicity must be acknowledged (see P. Cormier, 2014), the opportunity to voice spiritual life as it relates to research has been meaningful to me.

In conclusion, story and relationship are key principles in the present study. I drew on Indigenous scholarship and the work of narrative inquirers to explore the meaning and

importance of story and relationship as methodological approaches. I recognize that as an English, Scottish, and Irish Canadian researcher, it is likely that I missed some of the nuance that comes with a deeper understanding of Indigenous worldviews, a risk I took with the intention of acknowledging the work of Indigenous scholars and narrative inquirers that connects to the present study.

Specific forms of Story and Relationship in the Design of the Present Study

Narrative inquiry based on conversational interviews. Connelly and Clandinin (2006) distinguished between “living” and “telling” inquiries, the former describing being physically present in the research location over time, and the latter describing interview-based research where researchers depend on participants’ words as their source of information. The present study is a “telling inquiry” with a supplement of classroom observation in one of the storylines. In an instructive example of the telling approach to narrative inquiry, Connelly and Clandinin (2006, p. 484) recommended thinking of oneself as an insider, finding parallels between the experiences described by participants and one’s own experience, conducting interviews in such a way that a reciprocal conversation takes place where both researcher and participant share experiences from their own lives, asking the participant to bring in artifacts to help describe their experiences, and taking time to make sure that the constructed story resonates with the participant. This ties into other work by Clandinin and Connelly where situating oneself and writing oneself into the research is underscored and where participants play an important role in verifying or questioning the texts that describe their lives (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Xu & Connelly, 2010).

A “telling” inquiry allowed me to invite a variety of people to participate in the study in a fairly short and bounded way if that was their preference. Speaking with many educators in

relatively brief encounters led to a fairly long process of reflection where I considered the conversation and time that was shared with me by a variety of participants in a variety of contexts. While in most cases I was in participants' physical space quite briefly, I have been immersed in their stories through representing them in various forms, communicating with participants about them, and speaking to those around me about my process.

“Conversational interview” as described in Hollingsworth and Dybdahl's (2007) chapter on “the critical role of conversation in narrative inquiry” (p. 146) examined the role of conversation in narrative inquiry. By describing certain studies as part of their wider review, they referred to authors' conversational interviews. This term is meaningful in the present study that was comprised of interpersonal conversations, with the formal element that they were being recorded and based on specific research questions (see research design section).

Art in the research process. While I had not studied theory around arts in research before the present study began, some retrospective discussing and reading indicates that this is a developing area in the field of narrative inquiry. Riessman's book (2008) on narrative methods has chapters on narrative analysis that include thematic analysis, structural analysis, dialogic/performance analysis, and then visual analysis. Describing images as a form in which humans communicate meaning, she said some researchers “tell a story with images” and others “tell a story about images that themselves tell a story” (p. 141). In the present study, I tell each of eleven stories with an image, part of an analysis process that is described below.

The *Handbook of the Arts in Qualitative Research*, edited by Knowles and Cole (2008), offered many relevant angles on art in research. In Sullivan's chapter on “painting as research,” he stated: “Painting, like all forms of visual art, involves giving form to thought in a purposeful way” (p. 240). This particular method of “giving form to thought” was a meaningful part of

collecting my own impressions and understandings, sharing them with others, and presenting the stories in a way that marked off each as separate and unique (one painting per story) and part of a set (same medium and similar style for each painting). In Weber's chapter on "visual images in research," she stated that "*images can be used to capture the ineffable, the hard-to-put-into-words,*" and in other words, "some things just need to be shown, not merely stated" (p. 44). In this study, images were a way for me to represent the experience of conversational interviews in a succinct form for myself, research participants, and a wider academic and teacher audience. In writing about "arts-informed research," Knowles and Cole (2008) placed value on multiple ways of knowing and representing, as well as "making scholarship more accessible" (p. 59), which were also important in the present study. In practical terms, painting the essence of each story also helped me stay on track in a research stage that could have felt overwhelming due to the volume of text.

Lavallée (2009), an Algonquin, Cree, and French Métis scholar, wrote about Anishnaabe symbol-based reflection as an Indigenous research method, one which was named by the participants in the research she described. The participants initiated a research circle to share pieces they had made over several weeks to represent how they felt about a particular program and its effect on themselves, their families, and/or their community (p. 30). The author wrote about beliefs regarding the spiritual process of creating, for example, a painting, jewelry, a medicine wheel, or a dream catcher (p. 30). While my research process differed from that of Lavallée, it is important to note how symbolic expressions have been developed in Indigenous contexts.

In this subsection, I have touched on a few elements of the arts relating to narrative and qualitative research and referred to Anishnaabe symbol-based reflection. While there is much

more theoretical depth in these fields, I now turn to Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) three-dimensional narrative inquiry space as the primary framework for data analysis in the present study.

Theoretical Framework: Clandinin and Connelly's Three-Dimensional Narrative Inquiry Space

In previous subsections, I wrote about story and relationship as principles in narrative inquiry, and explored the work of some specific narrative inquirers. I now turn to Clandinin and Connelly and their three-dimensional narrative inquiry space (2000; 2006) as my theoretical framework for data analysis. I offer some brief background on their work and then outline their theoretical framework with respect to the present study.

In earlier work, Clandinin and Connelly (1996) wrote about the importance of "teachers' personal practical knowledge" (p. 29). They distinguished between stories that teachers and schools tell about themselves and live out through their practice, and stories that are told about teachers and schools (teacher stories and school stories vs. stories of teachers and stories of schools). Clandinin and Connelly (1996) expressed their strong belief in the value of the knowledge teachers hold, while acknowledging the school, school board, and community forces that affect teachers' professional lives. I use Clandinin and Connelly's book (2000) as a touchstone in defining narrative inquiry because their work is specifically focused on school-based learning and on teacher development, offering practical insight into all stages of the research process. Before outlining the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space itself, I engage with some theoretical underpinnings for the framework.

Experience as central. As Clandinin and Connelly (2000) noted, the general trend—"grand narrative", as they called it (p. xxv)—in education research over the past century has been

quantitative. Test scores in particular have been highly valued as modes of collecting and conveying information and therefore for making decisions about children's schooling. Clandinin and Connelly's focus on experience, the origins of which they credited to John Dewey (p. xxiii), departed from a reliance on numbers. It drew attention to occurrences and feelings: outward and inward experiences (p. xiv). Studying "experience" was relevant for my research since I was interested in knowing more about how Indigenous and non-Indigenous people experienced the relationships they shared.

As demonstrated in the literature review, multiple scholars have indicated that non-Indigenous educators often grow more effective in their roles as teachers of Indigenous students when they are learning through relating to Indigenous community members (e.g., Goulet, 2001; Oskineegish & Berger, 2013). In my understanding of Indigenous traditions in education, relationships are seen as central to all life, including learning (e.g., Anuik, Battiste, & George, 2010; Hampton, 1995). What I had difficulty finding in the literature was a body of stories about Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators who had engaged with one another in meaningful learning relationships over time in publicly funded schools. Stories of how this affected non-Indigenous educators and their students. Stories of what the relationship meant to each party. What they gained, what they gave, what time, energy, sacrifice, flexibility, change, openness, and trade-offs were involved. The aim of this research was to study people's *experiences* within such relationships.

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) highlighted "experience" as the main tenet of narrative inquiry (p. 189). They offered a "three dimensional inquiry space" comprised of temporality, place, and sociality (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 50; Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 479). This definition maintains that any experience is born of past experiences and points to future

experiences, that the place or context of the experience is significant to its meaning, and that people's inner experiences interact with their interpersonal and environmental experiences.

At this juncture, I give some brief examples of how context, temporality, and balance between personal and social experience have direct application to the present study. My understanding of the "settings" of participants' stories informs how I understand the relationships they describe. For example, an Indigenous educator who is hired to support teachers in implementing Indigenous perspectives in curriculum will operate within certain assumptions, pre-established social relations, and resources. These may differ from someone whose role does not formally include teacher support. If two educators have related for a decade, their stories are likely to differ from a pair who have been learning alongside one another for a week. If the relationship is entirely school-based, this context is likely to give rise to different stories than a relationship that spans school life, family life, community life, and personal friendship. In each case, participants' interactions with one another, and with students, families, communities, school officials, and peers will lead to social experiences that shape the process. At the same time, personal thoughts, fears, questions, goals, past experiences, joys, and accomplishments will also influence the learning experience (see Clandinin and Connelly, 2000). Clandinin and Connelly (2000) credited Dewey's influence on their work: "Our terms for thinking about narrative inquiry are closely associated with Dewey's theory of experience, specifically with his notions of situation, continuity, and interaction" (p. 50).

Three-dimensional narrative inquiry space in the present study. As noted in Chapters One and Two, I have employed the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Connelly & Clandinin, 2006) as the theoretical framework in the present study. In Chapter Four, I present a brief summary of each storyline in terms of

temporality, place, and sociality, which follows the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space framework (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). In Chapter Five, I consider themes drawn from the story set as a whole with temporality, place, and sociality as organizing concepts for interpretation. At times, I use the term “temporality” interchangeably with time; and “context” with place; as well as describing sociality as “inner and interpersonal”—or “personal and social”—dynamics (see Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Connelly & Clandinin, 2006).

As Clandinin and Connelly (2000) wrote, the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space “allows our inquiries to travel” in the “directions” of “*inward, outward, backward, forward, and situated within place*” (p. 49, emphasis in original). In describing the three dimensions, the authors stated: “By inward, we mean toward the internal conditions, such as feelings, hopes, aesthetic reactions, and moral dispositions. By outward, we mean toward the existential conditions, that is the environment” (p. 50), which could include “surrounding factors and forces, people and otherwise, that form the individual’s context” (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 480). In terms of the dimension of temporality, the authors explained, “By backward and forward, we refer to temporality—past, present, and future...looking not only to the event but to its past and to its future” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 50). They wrote that “events under study are in temporal transition” (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 479). They explained that the dimension of place “attends to the specific concrete physical and topological boundaries of inquiry landscapes” (2000, p. 50) and that this dimension could mean a series of places (2006). In an instructive example, Connelly and Clandinin advised, “describe the classroom and its context in detail, thinking through the impact of this particular place on the happening” (p. 481). The authors wrote about the importance of considering all three dimensions or “commonplaces”

(2006, p. 481), including how the researcher is included in these as a person relating with people in place at a particular time.

In the present study, I interpreted temporality, place, and sociality through participants' words—this was largely a telling inquiry³ (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006). I described the dimension of physical place in less depth than it was described to me (or less depth than I observed it) due to anonymity commitments that I made with participants, their school boards, and the university Research Ethics Board. I described the classroom and its context (Clandinin & Connelly, 2006) in terms of some general features and in terms of participants' expressed experiences of those contexts. I also applied the dimension of place to include the broader contexts in which participants met and interacted, which overlaps with the dimension of sociality (see Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Connelly & Clandinin, 2006). Thus, I acknowledge that my use of Connelly's and Clandinin's (2006) term "place" departs from their definition, stated as "the specific concrete, physical, and topological boundaries of place where the inquiry and events take place" (p. 481). Many participants spoke about their relationships in the context of time (temporality), including both personal and social influences inside and outside of the school contexts, and some spoke about future intentions or hopes. The inner and social dimension (sociality) was a major focus for many of the themes in Chapter Five, again interrelated with temporality and place.

Methodology theory into practice. In the following section, I outline how I carried out the present study. Story and relationship were vital principles in the practical steps of the research as well as in its conceptual base. Respectfully seeking out people's stories and doing

³ Observations were included for one story, and some conversational interviews occurred in schools. Most data were collected outside of participants' school settings.

my very best to handle them with care was my main concern in the research process. Quite often, this involved sharing my own story as I explained my background and reasons for wanting to carry out this research, or as I responded to participants in their conversational interviews. In research stages described below, establishing working relationships and conducting research within them was the main focus. Interactions with school board personnel, potential participants, and then participants were an important and time-intensive part of the research process. The length, depth, and type of relationship varied from participant to participant, as did the depth to which I shared my story and participants shared theirs.

Research Design

In short, this research consists of eleven stories about productive learning relationships shared by Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators. The stories originated in conversational interviews, and in one case, also in classroom observations. Participants and I sat together to talk about their experiences—most often in pairs of participants, a few times with individuals, once in a trio—and then I wrote up the stories and shared them with participants in multiple forms at multiple points. In this research design section, I begin by describing the kinds of participants I was seeking, and then outline the details of the study from school board permissions to participant recruitment to data collection, participant feedback, and analysis.

Participants. The following subsections relate to the participants in this study, beginning with criteria and recruitment.

Criteria for participating in the study. I recruited participants in two urban areas who were, wanted to be, or had been involved in productive learning relationships shared by non-Indigenous educators and Indigenous educators or community members within publicly funded school boards. I sought participants who were willing to share stories about how these

relationships were initiated and sustained, and how they affected non-Indigenous educators' practices with respect to Indigenous students. I was looking to speak with non-Indigenous teachers or administrators who had experience working with Indigenous students. I hoped that Indigenous participants would include teachers, administrators, students' family members, Elders, and people within Indigenous organizations who were somehow connected with publicly funded schools. In the end, all of the Indigenous participants were or had been working in publicly funded schools themselves, although some were also parents and held community roles outside of school. I was also looking for participants who wanted to provide alternative views, such as experience in school-based Indigenous-non-Indigenous relationships that did not feel successful, and those with experience in First Nation community schools. While I recognize that many people identify as both Indigenous to North America and with non-Indigenous heritages (a person who is Cree, Scottish, and German, for example), I was looking for participants who self-identified as "Indigenous" or "non-Indigenous."

Research activities. In this section, I outline each of the research activities that were part of my on-the-ground methods. I describe how I made records of each activity, shown in Figure 1 as field texts (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). In this section on research activities, I also pause to explain my rationale for decisions, which are presented in context as part of my research story. Many of the research activities outlined in Figure 1 overlap. For example, I was recruiting participants from November 2016-June 2017, and was in periodic contact with officials from two of the school boards over much of that time. At the same time, I was holding conversational interviews with participants from February 2017-June 2017 and typing these up as I went. On a given week, I might have been having conversational interviews with some people, typing up transcripts for others, and working on early analysis.

Research activity	Description	Field text
School board recruitment conversations (September 2016-June 2017)	-applying to conduct research in 3 boards -identifying potential participants	-written applications to conduct research (3 boards) -notes from meetings, phone calls, emails with school board officials
Participant connections and recruitment (November 2016-June 2017)	-contacting potential participants to discuss this research	-contact chart tracking date, potential participant, response, other notes -notes from meetings, phone calls, emails
Conversational interviews (February 2017-June 2017)	-based on conversational interview guide -recorded after informal chat at beginning -after typing transcripts, I highlighted areas to ask about (e.g., clarity, anonymity)	-handwritten notes on participants' words and my descriptions and thoughts -recordings of conversational interviews -my written reflection after each conversational interview -typed transcripts (word counts ranged from approximately 7300-23400) -modified drafts based on participants' feedback
Classroom observation (2017)	-only in 1 instance -I attended class 3 times with participants	-handwritten notes
Analysis: Snapshots (May 2017-August 2017)	-initial summary of each conversational interview -sent to originating participant(s) before co-theorizing session	-2 page document for each story including title, painting, caption, key quotations -modified snapshot based on participants' feedback
Analysis: Co-theorizing session (August 2017)	-all participants invited to discuss all snapshots -notes sent to the two participants who attended	-hand written notes on participants' discussion about snapshots and the research -no written response from participants
Analysis: Full stories (September 2017-February 2018)	-final summary of each conversational interview -sent to participants before included in dissertation	-11 polished full stories including title, painting, art statement, context, story, summary -initial notes on connections across stories -modified drafts based on participants' feedback
Analysis: Interpretation (2017-2018)	-reflecting on the set of 11 stories -participants' words highlighted in full draft for each	-discussion chapter of dissertation -modified drafts based on participants' feedback

Reflective notes (2017-2018)	-handwritten throughout research process	-100 pages of questions, notes, and prayers as situations arose -notes from conversations with supervisor and others
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Figure 1. Summary of research activities

School board recruitment conversations. I approached three school boards for permission to engage their staff in this dissertation research, and received their approval to do so. While I had experience or preexisting relationships in each school board, the formal permission process brought me into connection with new departments and people. Each required me to complete an application process specific to their school board in addition to receiving approval from Lakehead University's Research Ethics Board. All three school boards were publicly funded. They were situated in two different cities, which were located in different provinces. All three had established programs related to Indigenous education and have staff members whose positions were dedicated to supporting students and teachers in Indigenous education (although it should be noted that participants' involvement in those programs was not a criterion for this study). To respect the school boards' requirements to remain anonymous in this research, I have not provided detailed information about their Indigenous education policies or staffing upfront, but participants did refer to certain details that they believed were relevant. While I have removed some of these details to preserve anonymity, many remain in the "storyline" accounts shared in the findings section.

The recruitment process occurred differently in each school board. In one school board, the person who was overseeing my research met with me to discuss my plans, helping me to identify potential participants. The first people I approached were Indigenous educators who I knew to be leaders in the field of Indigenous education. I wanted to show respect for their roles in the board by contacting them first, inviting them to participate or to suggest participants, being

open to their feedback, and at the very least letting them know who I was and what I was hoping to do. I then began to contact other potential participants, beginning with Indigenous educators who might be interested in participating and who could recommend non-Indigenous potential participants. I was in fairly close contact with the supervising school board official throughout the recruitment and conversational interview period, which included asking permission to make some changes like being open to small groups instead of just pairs and making initial contact by phone or in person, not just by email. An Indigenous educator at this school board also met with me to recommend participants and to provide guidance. We met one-on-one as well as with the school board official who oversaw my research. In research methods terms, these recruitment processes could be identified as purposeful sampling (Savin-Baden & Howell Major, 2013) and snowball sampling (Creswell, 2015).

In another school board context, I received formal permission to recruit and then approached educators with whom I was already familiar. One of those participants drew in an educator who I did not yet know for a paired conversational interview while the other conversational interviews were with people I already knew.

In the other school board, the person overseeing my research called a meeting with potential participants so that I could explain the purpose of the study in person and open the opportunity to meet individually with people who were interested. In addition, I met with another Indigenous educator who helped me to make further connections, encouraged by the school board official who called the earlier meeting. This school board provided substitute teachers to cover the classes of staff who attended meetings or participated in conversational interviews with me during school hours. I contacted the school board person overseeing the research with specific questions about permissions and logistics during the research.

Along with recruiting participants from the three school boards, I also approached some people who did not work for a school board. Some had previously worked for school boards and one was a parent and community member. Of the nineteen participants in this study, there were seven from one school board, five from another, and six from a third, plus an educator who had some involvement with a school board but was recruited through other connections we shared.

Throughout the process of contacting school boards, I made notes about phone calls, in person meetings, and emails. This included conversations with administrators and Indigenous education leaders at the school and school board level who helped facilitate the research from the outside, as well as some who later joined the research as participants. I knew some of these already, and met others through my research process. In some cases, I think that these prior relationships may have been part of the reason school board officials said “yes” to my research proposal. While field texts recording these conversations and tracking the recruitment process helped me to keep organized, they were not quoted as data in this research. In the final writing stage, these notes, in addition to the notes from contacting individual potential participants, reminded me of the complexities and interpersonal nature of the research method and the questions, conversations, and adaptations that were part of the process. As Clandinin and Connelly (2006) wrote in their description of sociality, we as researchers “cannot subtract ourselves from relationship” (p. 480)—the research process is a relational one.

Participant connections and recruitment. Throughout the interpersonal process of seeking out participants for this study, I made my pitch in multiple places over many months; to school boards in fall 2016 and winter 2017, and to school board leaders, school-based administrators, Indigenous education specialists, teachers, community members, a parent, and Elders, November 2016 to June 2017. My intent was to begin with Indigenous educators and to

follow up with non-Indigenous educators who they recommended. This happened quite easily in one school board where Indigenous educators I knew invited non-Indigenous educators to paired interviews. In the school board that gathered interested educators for a meeting, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators heard about the research at the same time, so some non-Indigenous educators were the ones who asked specific Indigenous educators if they would like to be a pair in the study. An Indigenous educator also helped me to recruit. In the other school board, all the non-Indigenous educators who participated were recommended by an Indigenous educator. Here, though, recruitment happened in waves and in one case the non-Indigenous educator was the first to agree to the study, naming educators who had been recently influential.

Recruitment sometimes involved a one-on-one conversation in person or on the phone with an administrator or educator who referred me to other potential participants or became a participant. Sometimes it was the opportunity to speak for ten minutes during a school's staff meeting, leaving individual staff members with the decision if they would like to participate or not. Sometimes it was leaving a series of phone messages back and forth and eventually discussing the study with a person who might be interested, or who had been recommended by another participant as part of their learning partnership or small group. Sometimes it was sending an email—at first a scripted version and later more informal when I was aided in seeing that sending walls of highly formal text by email can be intimidating. There were times when my email was follow-up information to an invitation already received from another educator. In some of those cases, one potential participant wanted to participate and identified someone who could be a suitable partner or group member in the conversational interview.

In cases where one potential participant invited another, sometimes the “other” said yes and sometimes that person declined. Some participants heard about this research opportunity

through their school administrator, the school board person who oversaw this research, me, colleagues, and a combination of the above. My recruitment was to some degree a self-selection process while also containing an element of nomination where learning partners pointed to one another as people whose participation in learning relationships had been productive. There was an added layer of nomination when, in some instances, school board personnel and other educators suggested potential participants, indicating learning relationships they viewed as productive.

Of the nineteen participants in this study, five were people with whom I had interacted quite closely in past contexts, four were acquaintances, and I met ten through this research. From another angle, of the eleven stories represented here, I knew at least one of the participants before research began in eight of those stories. Kovach (2009) wrote of the importance of trust and preexisting relationships, which I believe provided a good basis in this study. On the other hand, by recruiting research participants amongst people I knew, I needed to be careful to honour preexisting relationships such that people could say “no” to the study without feeling that they were somehow letting me down.

Throughout the process of seeking out potential participants, I kept detailed logs of when I called, emailed, texted, or visited people. This became important in making sure that I was contacting people in an order that respected formal hierarchies in schools and school boards, that my recruiting fit my own research goals, and that I gave people time in between my emails, phone calls, or visits in cases when I contacted them several times before I heard whether or not they were interested in participating. Of the approximately sixty-five people I contacted during the school board and individual contact process, nineteen became participants in the study.

Practicalities of sample size. There were some practical reasons that I chose to study multiple participants in multiple schools instead of a few in one school for a prolonged period. One was that I was looking for excellent examples of strong learning relationships. This meant looking in multiple locations instead of assuming that a school would have several—or even a few—teachers or administrators who were actively engaged in Indigenous-non-Indigenous learning relationships. From another angle, I was concerned about asking for long time commitments from people who I expected would be quite busy and committed in a variety of areas. I noticed Indigenous educators around me who were involved in multiple settings or organizations, sought out by many groups and individuals. Similarly, I expected that non-Indigenous educators who were keen to learn about Indigenous education might also have other commitments and interests within education. Thus, designing research where participants' time commitment could be as small as one conversational interview—or much larger, as discussed below—was a way to respect what I assumed their preferred time commitment would be while also providing me with the opportunity to contact multiple participants. In a holistic sense, conversational interviews with these nineteen people allowed me to draw out eleven stories through which to consider the research questions, optimizing the opportunity to learn through a set of stories.

Pairs, individuals, and a trio. In the recruitment stage, I primarily sought pairs of participants: a non-Indigenous educator and an Indigenous educator or community member in each pair as well as individuals who had broad knowledge or perspectives on the research questions that they would like to share. As the research unfolded, there were seven pairs, one trio, and three individuals who contributed their stories. One of the Indigenous educators was part of two pairs; as an Indigenous educator, she supported two different non-Indigenous

colleagues in their separate classes. For the seven pairs, each of which included a non-Indigenous educator and an Indigenous educator, conversational interviews were held with the three of us together. In the trio, the non-Indigenous participant and I met for a recorded conversational interview, and then the two Indigenous educators joined us for another conversational interview a week later. Each of the pairs or trios was comprised of people who had already been working or relating together in some way.

One of the individual conversational interviews was with an Indigenous educator who told stories about learning in Indigenous and non-Indigenous contexts over a lifetime. Another was with an Indigenous educator who spoke about a variety of contexts and learning relationships. The third individual was a non-Indigenous teacher who wanted to speak about many learning relationships instead of just one.

Conversational interviews. Conversational interviews (Hollingsworth & Dybdhal, 2007) formed the methodological backbone of this study. I chose the term “conversational interviews” (Hollingsworth & Dybdhal, 2007) to describe my interactions with participants. This term highlights the purposeful engagement and formal elements that “interview” signifies (see Creswell, 2016) and the interactive, generative, interpersonal tone implied by “conversations,” or as Kovach (2009) described conversations, “a combination of reflection, story, and dialogue” (p. 51). Clandinin and Connelly (2000) showed how research conversations can involve “in-depth probing” in “a situation of mutual trust, listening, and caring for the experience described by the other” (p. 109). While I met several of the participants for the first time during our conversational interview, I hope that mutual trust developed over our time together; listening and caring about their experiences was certainly my intent. In practice, the tone and style varied from conversational interview to conversational interview, as I describe more fully below. Most

conversational interviews were single events. One took place in several parts over a day and another was comprised of a solo conversational interview followed later by a trio conversational interview.

My intention was to engage in conversational interviews characterized by “mutual looking into the matter” (Benjamin, 1974, p. 20). Benjamin’s practical guidance for developing this type of interaction included responding rather than leading, and doing so through careful listening where participants’ line of thinking is encouraged and reflected back to them in various ways. This does not mean that interviewers remove themselves from the conversation; they are genuine and present themselves as “human beings with failings” (p. 7). They keep in mind, however, that the purpose is to “enable him [or her] to explore his [or her] own life space because of our presence and not in spite of it” (p. 8). Benjamin’s approach is a good fit for narrative inquiry where the purpose is to seek out stories, not to apply an external theory (Conle, 1999).

Preparing for conversational interviews. Conversational interviews were the main mode of data collection in this research. As stated above, these recorded conversational interviews sometimes followed meetings, discussions, emails, or phone contact where participants and I became more familiar with one another and the study before committing to embarking on research together. Through email or in person, I gave participants the conversational interview guide and the research paperwork ahead of time, except for one participant, with whom I discussed the study in person and on the phone.

Opening conversational interviews. To begin each conversational interview, I offered each participant loose leaf tea or tobacco, depending on their preference. Indigenous colleagues and participants in prior research studies introduced me to the protocol of offering tobacco when

asking someone to share their wisdom or guidance, a practice which has a long history in some Indigenous communities (see Appendix B). For some Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants, another mode of thanks was preferred. As part of our opening time together, we also shared food. The beauty of sharing food and conversation as part of important events is something I have noticed at Indigenous events, reading Indigenous scholars, and through interacting with friends and colleagues in social and academic contexts. This was also a way of expressing my gratitude as the person hosting the conversational interview—a form of hospitality and gratitude. In some cases, participants brought food or tea as well. On some conversational interview days, I chopped up cheese and pepperoni and baked pita chips or muffins, and stacked a tray of tea cups, a kettle, and boxes of tea to bring to a school classroom, boardroom, or office. In another case, I picked up lunch for us on the way and brought some cookies I had baked. Other participants and I met at a restaurant of their choice, or a place we chose together and I “picked up the tab” for the meal. In another case, I offered a ride and we stopped to pick up food to add to the rhubarb crisp I had brought. When I found out that a participant liked rhubarb, I picked more from my garden and dropped it off another day. Paying for meals was something I needed to have approved with one school board whose research policies do not typically allow researchers to offer tokens for participation.

Conversational interview process and tone. In February-June 2017, conversational interviews took place in a variety of settings; teachers’ classrooms, an administrator’s office, a few different restaurants, my graduate student office at the university, a room at the school board office, a small office in a school, a space in a school dedicated to Indigenous education. Some conversational interviews were in quiet spaces, some had students or colleagues, or restaurant staff and patrons coming and going. In one case, a participant’s child was present, listening and

sharing from time to time. Some conversational interviews took place after participants had been working all day or in the middle of their work day.

While contexts differed, the pattern was quite similar in most conversational interviews—offering participants tobacco or loose leaf tea, sometimes with some discussion around this, sharing food and informal conversation, reviewing and signing consent forms, turning on the recorders for a focused period of time, and then turning them off again, often followed by further informal conversation. The relational context varied in each; sometimes I was catching up with people I knew or building on prior conversations, and sometimes I was meeting people for the first time. In several conversational interviews there was a mixture of new and old connections when I knew one participant better than the other. Participants also varied in their familiarity with one another; some were fairly new at working directly together, some were close friends, some in between. When I was holding a conversational interview with one participant instead of two or three, the tone and level of interaction sometimes changed; instead of being a listener while two colleagues shared, I was the conversation partner or the listener as the participant shared thoughts. Conversational interview timeframes varied. Informal conversation before and after the recorded portion ranged from a few minutes to a much longer period of catching up, eating together, and discussion. The recorded portions of the conversational interviews ranged from forty-two minutes to two hours. In one conversational interview, we spoke over the course of the day, recording four times with breaks in between. Informal conversations were an important part of the research process (see Clandinin & Connelly, 2006), but were not transcribed or directly quoted in this dissertation.

A few times, the informal and formal conversations blended together. For example, we started recording our conversation and then pulled out the formal interview guide partway into it.

Sometimes the right moment to turn on the recorder was not obvious because an informal conversation began to turn into a way to address the research questions. These dynamics gave the flavour of both “interview” and “conversation.” In other situations, there was a distinct beginning to the recorded conversational interview. In narrative inquiry methodologies, both interviews and informal interaction are valued parts of the research (Clandinin & Connelly, 2006).

During conversational interviews, I took notes on participants’ words and interactions. These notes became a back-up for the ideas contained in the recordings, a reminder of the tone of the conversational interview, and a record of what took place before and after the recorded portion of our time together. After conversational interviews, I paused to take field notes (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). These reflections were helpful in the analysis process alongside the transcripts of conversational interviews and the notes taken during sessions. These reflections varied each time, but included elements such as how I experienced the tone of the conversational interview, how I noticed people interacting with me and with each other, interesting conversation points, and thoughts on what participants shared.

Some participants seemed at ease with the process of paperwork, note-taking, and recording devices and others less so. By the end of the conversational interview, many (but not all) seemed at ease or stated this. One person said that the time felt like a conversation between friends, and several expressed that the time to reflect on their shared relationship was a meaningful experience for them.

Each participant gave me permission to make audio recordings of our conversational interviews. I used two recording devices each time. I typed these into transcripts that became the basis for the stories included in the findings section. Most participants had indicated that

they would like me to send drafts of the research as it progressed. For the 18/19 participants who were interested, I offered each pair, trio, or individual their transcript with the invitation to provide feedback. Before sending these, I marked areas that I thought might be too personal to include, that were specific enough that the region, school or school board might be identified, or that referred in specific ways to people who were not participants in the study. Six participants replied with: requests that I make further changes before I proceeded, responses to specifics I had pointed out, questions, or with general encouragement in the research process.

Participant leadership in conversational interviews. I explained the conversational interview guide (see Appendix C) as a document to help guide the conversation, but not something to which participants were bound. I pointed to the two general research questions as my main focus, and the point form prompts below these as optional, inviting participants to take the conversation in the direction of their choice. Some participants came with notes and worked their way through these to share stories, events, or other points. Some others expressed the importance of speaking in the moment without detailed preparation. I can remember one participant looking to me for direction, while many others got into telling their stories and sharing back and forth with their partner such that my interjections felt a bit like interruptions to me. At times, I felt my role was to ask more about participants' stories, and in other cases to let them unfold.

Classroom observation. For one pair in the study (Brittany and Michaela), I observed classroom interactions over a series of three sessions separate from the conversational interview that we shared. I began to observe them in the classroom together midway into a set of sessions Brittany was leading. This involved sitting at the back of the room, usually with Michaela, while Brittany taught the class about Indigenous history, Indigenous-Canadian interactions including

Residential Schools, and current outcomes. With the school administrator's permission, I sent a letter home with students (Appendix D) to state my role in the classroom. When I was observing Brittany and Michaela's class, I incorporated Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) example of using two-column journal entries to take notes. That format allowed me to separate what Brittany was saying and doing from how I saw Michaela responding, and to leave room for my own thoughts and feelings about being in their shared space. Like with conversational interviews, I made field notes as I reflected after the sessions.

Watching Brittany and Michaela in action, and speaking with them after their time with the students each day added depth and texture to my research. I was able to experience some of the conversations, activities, and tensions that they later described in the conversational interview, and also took in aspects of the lessons they did not explicitly mention on record. Through the observation process, I gained insight into the experiences and qualities of Brittany and Michaela's teaching and learning relationship through being with them in the moment, feeling the tone in the room, and seeing a "live" version of what was later discussed. I saw full lessons that Brittany developed and delivered, sometimes hearing background from her before or after. I learned new content and perspectives alongside Michaela and the students and felt the effect of Brittany's engaging teaching. While I wrote Brittany and Michaela's storyline based primarily on what they described in their conversational interview, I carried the observation experience with me as I thought about learning relationships. In addition, the process of spending time in a school was a useful part of data collection in that it reminded me of the many activities, interpersonal interactions, and expectations that classroom teachers face. Being there for the bells, the noise of people coming and going from breaks, the unexpected interruptions of

colleagues removing students for sports or meetings, and the general busyness of school gave a context for the research in which I was so immersed (see Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 77).

Data source summary. In the preceding sections, I outlined contexts involved in collecting data for this dissertation. In Figure 2, I summarize the details of formal data sources. This chart does not include conversations and interactions that came before or after recorded observations and conversational interviews. Talks, opportunities to review, and collaborative revisions were vital to the research process (see Clandinin & Connelly 2000; Connelly & Clandinin, 2006) and were not quoted in the dissertation document without specific permission. Co-theorizing, in which two participants took part, and direct feedback on drafts were directly incorporated into the dissertation⁴.

Participants	Formal data source(s)
Brittany & Christine Dan Greg & Bryn Hope & Chantal Olivia Max & Kate River & Agnes Simone & Sky	-One conversational interview
Brittany & Michaela	-One conversational interview -Three classroom observation sessions
Alise, Lydia, & Renee	-One-on-one conversational interview with Renee -One conversational interview with the trio
Tee-chaw	-A conversational interview in several parts over a day -Story of lifelong experiences

Figure 2. Data source summary for each full story

⁴ I have chosen not to identify which participants were involved in co-theorizing.

As noted in Figure 2, Tee-chaw's conversational interview had a different flavour than the others. In telling stories about teaching and learning across her lifetime, Tee-chaw offered stories and views that gave background to the research questions. In keeping with this, the way that I took up Tee-chaw's story in the discussion chapter of this dissertation also has unique features. Sometimes her stories are included with others' stories under a particular theme. In other places, features from her story frame a set of principles, as in the section on modes of learning.

In the research activities section of this methodology chapter, I have outlined my process of interacting with people as I sought out participants and then engaged with some of them in research. While I now turn to the analysis process, it is worth noting the time overlap between recruitment, data collection, and analysis; preliminary data analysis for some conversational interviews came before I had even met some other participants. More specifically, I sent out transcripts following conversational interviews, and completed the first set of snapshots in May 2017 and the second in August 2017, while continuing research recruitment and conversational interviews in May and June. This allowed me to transcribe each conversational interview while it was fresh in my mind, and to share the transcript with the participants as close to the conversational interview time as I could. Another approach would have been to hold all the conversational interviews, and then to transcribe and analyze after that. If I had waited and analyzed all the stories at the same time, I may have been able to step back to look at the data set as a whole. The story by story approach, however, allowed me to give close attention to each storyline relatively soon after the respective conversational interview, and to remember the feelings and tone of the time together as I began preliminary analysis.

Analysis. The analysis process unfolded as I took in the stories and prepared them to be shared with various audiences. As Clandinin and Connelly (2000) suggested, the participants were the first audience. Through the various steps, the people in each conversational interview had the first opportunity (aside from my supervisor) to see how I recorded or represented what they said. It should be noted, however, that participants' availability to review documents may have limited whether they saw them right away.

From field texts to research texts. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) wrote about moving from field texts to research texts. After transcribing each conversational interview and working with participants on any changes they requested, my goal was to make very short summaries of each story to show each participant, and later to share with the group of participants in the co-theorizing process (see Tuck, 2016). In order to distill meaningful conversational interviews into a page or two, I painted a watercolour painting for each and selected key quotations. In my thesis work (Moon, 2014) and in personal practice, I have found painting to be a heartfelt way to express myself, a form of expression that also runs in my family. As Weber (2008) noted, art can "capture" the "hard-to-put-into-words" (p. 44). In my case, creating art helped me to put into words the emotion, tone, and content that I took in through conversational interviews.

Using watercolour pencil crayons, warm water, and my hands, I represented each conversational interview on watercolour paper. From there, I chose quotations from the conversational interview that I believed represented main ideas shared by participants. I colour-coded these to match the names of the participants, which I used as the title of each document, and added a phrase with keywords as a tagline under the title, plus a brief caption about the story's background (see Appendix F). In many cases, I listened to the conversational interviews again as I made these "story snapshots," a form of being immersed in the data (Savin-Baden &

Howell Major, 2013). The snapshot creation phase was a meaningful stage in the analysis process because I could choose what I thought were main ideas without feeling the full pressure of a final decision; I knew that the snapshots could change over time, and while this was the version I was sharing at the co-theorizing session, there was much more analysis ahead of me.

In my initial planning, I thought I would need to have a co-theorizing session (see Tuck, 2016)—sometimes called “group discussion” in email invitations to participants—before the end of May 2017 because of research timing constraints for one of the school boards. At that point, I was in the midst of conversational interviews; several were complete and several yet to come. I invited the participants who I had already met for conversational interviews to participate in co-theorizing (see Tuck, 2016). Phone and online modes of connection were offered as well as a physical meeting place. While some were interested, no participants attended—an outcome which is alright in retrospect, since the full set of conversational interviews, and therefore snapshots, was not complete. When I had completed snapshots, and before I presented them, I sent each snapshot out to the person or people whose words were represented there. Nine participants responded to the opportunity to review their snapshot document, mostly affirming how they were represented, with a few wording changes: noting the word “like” was overused in one case, and preferring to reword a statement in another. This process of checking in with participants, which happened at several points through this study, is called member checking (Savin-Baden & Howell Major, 2013).

The last conversational interview occurred in June 2017, and I completed the last snapshots in August 2017. I invited participants from two school boards to another co-theorizing session at the end of August (the invitation was based on prior opportunities and response level). Two participants attended and another asked me to send the snapshots over email, which I did.

This was the first time I had shared the full set of snapshots with participants as a group. Up until then, I had shared snapshots one by one with the participants whose conversational interview I was representing. In the co-theorizing session, we shared snacks, took time to review the snapshots, and then had a conversation where the two participants discussed what they saw in individual stories and what they noted across the set. In addition to these insights, one participant recommended some specific academic reading to me and both recommended that I use the art pieces in the final dissertation. I handwrote notes and later typed and sent these to the two participants for their optional review. They did not respond over email, which meant the in-person co-theorizing comments were what formed the data for this phase. I integrated some of these participant comments into this dissertation in the methodology, findings, and discussion sections.

Research texts: Stories of learning in relationship. The next phase in my analysis was to write “full stories” from each transcript. Building on the snapshots, I kept the paintings and tagline phrases at the beginning of each story, and then added a more thorough “art statement.” I included a “context” paragraph, often by revising the brief background description from the snapshot document. This left me several pages in which to tell the participants’ story as it related to the research questions, which I concluded with a “summary in light of the research questions.” In this process, I listened to each conversational interview again so that I would increase my likelihood of capturing the emphasis, emotion, and focal points of the conversational interview in the “full story” document. In this full story writing process, I returned to each transcript and to my notes and reflections from each conversational interview session. Where relevant, I also reviewed notes from earlier interactions or meetings with the participants in that story. To focus on what I saw as main points to represent in the full stories, I made flash cards for each

conversational interview as reference points. This was helpful as I was sifting through the many details and stories within larger transcripts. In my summarizing and synthesizing process, I used strategies like lists, mind maps, and art to organize my thinking, and I prayed often for guidance in my work. As an early check-in, I sent a very rough draft of the stories to my supervisor Paul in October 2017. I completed the full stories in two sets; one set in November 2017 and one set in February 2018, which I also sent to him and to the respective participants.

The process of writing the snapshots and full stories (which I continue to describe below after this brief break to consider literature on data analysis) has resonance with some of the data analysis methods described by Savin-Baden and Howell Major (2013). Like content analysis, my process involved looking at the transcripts (and listening to their conversational interview recordings) “in its entirety” (p. 438) and “examin[ing] overt and latent emphases,” although I did not proceed to assign all aspects of conversational interviews into categories.

Savin-Baden and Howell Major’s (2013) description of narrative analysis also has some relevance in that I was attentive to “ways in which participants use stories to interpret the world” (p. 444), although I took those stories at face value more than Savin-Baden and Howell Major seem to portray in the narrative analysis process. Qualities of thematic analysis like “get[ting] a feel for the whole text by living with it prior to any cutting or coding,” and acknowledge[ing] that analysis happens at an intuitive level” (p. 440) applied to my process. The processes of being in conversational interviews, transcribing them, painting about them, making snapshot documents, receiving feedback on these, writing full stories, adapting these when participants responded, and forming a discussion chapter with reference to all of the stories allowed for “immersion in the data and considering connections and interconnections” (p. 440). I should note that “codes” were less important to me than they appear to be in Savin-Baden and Howell

Majors' (2013) text; while I listed out key concepts for the stories as an aid in writing them, this was not meant to constrain my analysis, but to serve as a memory aid and anchor point so that I could keep in mind my overall or intuitive understanding of each story as I waded into the details.

I wrote the full stories with the goal of representing the wisdom and experience contained in each conversational interview and with the research questions as the central focus. I wanted to represent the tone of the conversational interviews and to include participants' own words. In some full stories, large blocks of uninterrupted text are part of the full story. In others, the full story often has pieces that look like the script for a play where speakers are taking turns, back and forth. In other stories, there are shorter excerpts of participants' words with my own commentary linking them. There are several reasons for this variation. One is the number of people in the conversational interviews, the second is whether a back-and-forth conversation style was in use or whether people were sharing longer personal reflections. The third is the speaker's manner, and whether their spoken words easily translated to a written piece with flow. The fourth is the degree of personal information that was shared. When I encountered stories that included information that could be traced to a person, or was of a deeply personal nature, I tended to replace words or use my own phrasing in those areas. As Josselson (2007) explained, narrative research includes both explicit and implicit contracts; I did my best to honour the relationships that had been developed and to handle data with integrity.

I invited participants' feedback of any kind when I sent each individual, pair, or trio of participants the full story I had written. I sometimes asked participants specific questions, such as whether they would like me to include or remove a certain detail, or whether I represented a particular idea or anecdote accurately. Ten of nineteen participants sent feedback. Several of

these participants said that they appreciated the story or art, valued the experience of being in the research, or that I captured what they were trying to say. Excerpts from replies include, “I quite enjoyed reading the story you have written. It brought a smile to my face tonight. Thank you for capturing our relationship in the way that you have” (participant email, used with permission).

Another participant said:

It’s such a lovely story. You’ve done a great job, Martha!! You’ve captured us! It makes me feel really privileged to know [other participant], to reflect on our relationship. I feel lucky to have been able to share this with you. I like the way you threaded the vignettes together, especially the last part. (participant email, used with permission).

Some responded to my margin notes or specific questions, some asked for grammar changes or word choice, like changing “cuz” to “because” throughout. I was asked by one pair to increase anonymity in their story, which took a few back-and-forth emails between us. The process of forming and revising the full stories took several months. I was working on eleven separate stories with different communications involved for each.

When deciding what to include in each storyline, my goal was to focus on what I understood to be the main anecdotes and concepts that participants were sharing with me, related to the research questions. Quite often, this meant following the transcript in a point-by-point sequence. While I could not recount everything that was said, I tried to stop at the main markers. In other conversational interviews, participants returned to certain ideas or stories several times over our time together. I tried, then, to highlight these by providing various angles, examples, or anecdotes according to how participants developed those ideas.

For Brittany and Michaela, I had been present in their classroom for three sessions one month, and then met with them for the conversational interview the next month. In writing their full story, I referred to my observation notes, but did not write from them extensively, seeing them primarily as context for what was shared in the conversational interview. I can identify

with Connelly and Clandinin's (2006) statement about inquirers who collected field texts in the early stages of "living inquiries:" "They found themselves capturing different, more ephemeral, and often otherwise hidden elements of the living not available in interview" (p. 483). When I was writing the snapshot and full story for Alise, Lydia, and Renee's story, I included Renee's solo conversational interview and the trio's conversational interview together. I sequenced these in the order in which they occurred (solo and then trio), which followed earlier opportunities for the three participants to see relevant data from the two conversational interviews. My desired outcome was to create a narrative that invited readers to consider what it could be like to learn relationally in a particular setting, from the perspectives shared by the people in the stories (see Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

Following each storyline, I wrote a brief summary section that addressed the research questions implicitly and Clandinin and Connelly's three-dimensional narrative inquiry space (2000) explicitly, a process that took place over two draft stages. By analyzing each story separately, I could focus on specific narrative dimensions and key ideas in the storyline. In Chapter Five, many of those ideas resurfaced when I analyzed the eleven stories side by side as a set.

The end of the full story writing process was marked by an hour-long conference presentation where teachers were invited to look at the snapshots and then share their reflections. In anticipation of this, I returned to the snapshots to ensure they reflected changes that participants and I made to the full stories so that anonymity would be honoured. I invited participants to attend this February 2018 presentation and talks in March and April, 2018.

During the process of working with the individual stories, I started a document where I jotted down connections that I noted between them. Especially in the full story phase, I would

often spend time on two stories in one day, mostly to provide myself with a mental rest from the intense focus on details in each. This meant that the ideas from the stories and connections between them were fresh in my mind. The resulting point form document became a collection of observations that I made over many months of reviewing the data. After completing the full stories and sending them to their “owners” and to my supervisor, I printed off the point form connections document and cut up each point. Over several days, I made a giant mind map on a piece of Bristol board to organize the ideas as a springboard for writing the interpretation section.

Around that time, I also prepared for two more conference presentations, this time presenting preliminary findings at Lakehead University—in one case to graduate student colleagues, professors, and Bachelor of Education students, some of whom I had taught as a contract lecturer, and another in a graduate student competition setting where students, professors, and two of the participants from this study were present. Making the large mind map and preparing for conference presentations became an opportunity to step back and consider the data set as a whole. Conversations helped me to keep perspective on the work and encouraged me to keep going.

From there, I began to draft a discussion chapter where I wrote about the stories in relation to one another. I drew out connections that I was seeing, noted areas of difference, and generally considered the stories in light of one another. Quite different from approaches like grounded theory where a uniting model or theory is the end goal (Creswell, 2014), I valued the opportunity to represent the stories as separate entities worth considering in their uniqueness, and then stepped back to discuss the group of stories. As Clandinin and Connelly (2000) clearly stated, narrative inquiries with small groups of participants do not lend themselves to generalizability. Seeking to make generalizable themes can mean losing the “richness of the

narratives of experience” (p. 142). Thus, the discussion section of this dissertation is not meant to be a conclusive model about productive learning relationships, but rather my reflection on the stories, one which will differ from someone else’s, and which may change in a year’s time when I have new experiences and considerations through which to read the stories (see Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p 17). As Kovach (2009) stated, “At another time in my life, the interpretations might have been different. We know what we know from where we stand” (p. 7). My hope is that sharing my reflections may provide an opportunity for further discussion amongst educators.

After drafting my initial thoughts, I returned to my earlier writing on methodology, literature, and introduction as I considered the participants’ words in light of frameworks I had been using previous to conducting the research. I continued writing the discussion chapter with these in mind, and often returned to work on them or reference them. Amidst this process, I also presented at the Canadian Symposium on Indigenous Teacher Education in North Bay, Ontario (Moon, 2018). This provided an opportunity to share the snapshots (see Appendix F) and receive feedback in the company of educators, scholars, and others active in the field of Indigenous education across Canada. Learning from the keynote speaker as well as Elders and community educators from Nipissing First Nation was a formational experience, as briefly described in Chapter One and below.

When the full first draft of the dissertation was complete and updated based on supervisor comments, I sent it to the participants as well as to my supervisor, welcoming feedback on my interpretation. As the sole author of this dissertation, I recognize that my interpretation of the stories is one of many, and I value ongoing opportunities to discuss the stories with participants and others who bring their frames of reference, current experiences, beliefs, values, family life, and other factors to the table. In a way, sharing the stories *and* my current interpretation is an

invitation to ongoing discussion. At this point, the participants had already been sent their transcripts, snapshots, and full stories; when I sent the full dissertation document, I highlighted where I referred to their stories in the discussion chapter and other relevant areas. I welcomed feedback of any kind but did not require it. Two participants asked for changes; one in grammar and one in removing some details for anonymity. Some also provided words of encouragement.

My analyzing and interpreting process for the discussion section differed from that of the full stories because I was considering key ideas across the stories instead of the essence of each story. This may be a closer fit with thematic analysis (Riessman 2008; Savin-Baden & Howell Major, 2013). My primary goal in this research was to centre each full story as its own way of exploring the research questions—experiences and qualities of productive learning relationships shared by non-Indigenous educators and Indigenous educators or community members, including how these relationships came to be, were sustained, and were perceived to shape teachers' practices with respect to Indigenous students. At the same time, I knew I would be expected to write a chapter where I shared what I learned about the stories; a participant said she was looking forward to seeing what I saw in the stories, and my supervisor was clear that I had a responsibility to share the connections I saw and what could be learned from this about the research questions.

The discussion section was a follow-up to the primary analysis of each full story. I did not look at the whole data set as something to be coded or reorganized into various set categories, but rather as eleven stories to consider together. Thus, I skipped the thematic analysis step of “generat[ing] initial codes” (Savin-Baden & Howell Major, 2013, p. 440) because I had already generated full stories. I did, however, “search for themes,” “review themes,” “define and name themes,” and “produce the report” (p. 440), although even this was a process that came

second to studying each story on its own. As described above, the list of common threads that I saw between stories began as a side project of jot notes that I took in the process of studying each conversational interview in depth as I worked on the full stories.

In writing about commonalities, I also tried to be clear about differences and nuances. I want to be clear here that my first priority was to represent the stories as accurately—and fully and succinctly—as I could, with a separate and secondary discussion section referencing the full stories themselves. I did not want to break up stories or meld them into something new, but to refer to each intact, inviting readers to do the same.

Throughout the research process, I took notes on questions, concerns, ideas, and connections as they came up. Some of these related to recruitment, the conversational interview process, maintaining anonymity, and interpersonal dynamics. I later returned to these to remind myself of the complexities of the recruitment and conversational interview process, including mistakes or dilemmas that I faced along the way and how I worked through them in my own mind, with my supervisor's help, or in general conversation with other graduate students. I also took notes on meetings with Paul, my supervisor. These notes also serve as reminders of the questions I faced throughout the process.

Prayer and informal conversations were important for me in this research. There were many times when I asked for guidance and help from God in figuring out and carrying out the steps and interactions and in writing up the dissertation effectively. I have also asked others to pray for me and they have, which has been very meaningful. The friends, family, colleagues, and church community members around me have also supported me by checking in on me and my PhD process. While I spared them the confidential details, conversations with people in informal settings have been crucial to my thinking.

Trustworthiness. The trustworthiness of this research hinges on consistent openness to guidance. Along with the critique of committee members who are experienced in either narrative inquiry or research in the field of Indigenous education, I drew on the expertise of an Elder, colleagues, and friends who I described in the “seeking guidance section,” school board personnel, and participants themselves. By employing narrative elements such as describing context—part of the idea of “thick description” (Savin-Baden & Howell Major, 2013, p. 15)—within the bounds of preserving anonymity, and sharing my own story (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), readers have the opportunity to gauge the relevance and depth of the present research as it may relate to their own contexts. Furthermore, by describing my methods thoroughly and presenting full stories before my interpretations, readers are offered the opportunity to judge trustworthiness (Savin-Baden & Howell Major, 2013).

My purpose is not to lay out a universal blueprint for Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators’ learning relationships, but to offer stories that are situated within particular contexts. I hope that this research is trustworthy as a set of stories and a thoughtful reflection that educators, community members, school boards, and scholars might find meaningful as they consider teacher learning within their own circles and circumstances.

Bias. As part of being transparent, I will reiterate here that many of the participants in this study (9/19) are people who I knew before the research began. Thus, factors like their inclusion in this study, their degree of openness about their experiences, and the connections they helped me make with other participants may be linked to our prior connection. Further, my interpretation of their words and actions could be biased by my preconceived ideas about who they are as people, and who they are in relation to me based on our interactions in previous

contexts. Offering transcripts and findings to participants for thorough member checking was one form of guarding against bias.

Addressing delicate issues. At the outset of this study, I imagined that delicate issues might arise as I spoke with people about personal learning journeys, especially within the Canadian school context where racism (St. Denis, 2010) and misunderstanding are known issues. Stress associated with discussing difficult topics did not seem to be a problem, but perhaps this is because participants were speaking together, building on one another's ideas, and collaboratively telling me a story. Delicate issues did come up, and participants, it seemed, addressed them in mutually respectful ways. Participants were also aware from the outset that they would have the opportunity to review my work as it progressed, an option that some people did take to clarify their words.

Presenting the findings. This dissertation is outlined in a standard fashion as it begins with introduction, literature review, and methodology sections, followed by findings and a discussion. I think it is important to note, however, the prominence of the findings section. The “full stories” told by participants—and represented by me in the artwork and quotations I chose to include—combine to make the longest section of this dissertation. This is purposeful. While the literature that came before this study is important, and my interpretation of participants' words could be useful to some, the stories told by participants themselves are foundational in this work.

Archibald (2008) and Hampton (1995) indicated that a prime function of story is to leave the listener with something to consider, recognizing that since each person is on a life journey, the story will mean something different to each. Kovach (2009) stated: “For Indigenous researchers, there is a propensity to present findings in story form. Thus, the stories are

introduced, often condensed.... The stories stand, with the researcher reflecting upon the stories” (p. 131). She noted the importance of providing context for the story and presenting the story in the participant’s own voice (citing participant Laara Fitznor), ensuring that “a story [is] available for interpretive analysis by others” (p. 132). Archibald (2008), too, in her book *Indigenous Storywork*, stated, “in the oral tradition the listener/learner is challenged to make meaning and gain understanding from the storyteller/teacher’s words and stories, which is an empowering process” (p. 56). My hope is that through this format, educators, policymakers, academics, and community members will have the opportunity to consider Indigenous-non-Indigenous learning relationships through the experiences participants shared.

Conle (1999) emphasized that recognizing the context of narratives and their changing nature is a safeguard against “hardened stories” (p. 18). Hardened stories, she argued, can be used to prove a point, support an agenda, or serve as examples of the only right way to do things. If this is the case, the story loses its authenticity. Bearing that in mind, the purpose of my analysis is to present the stories in the most genuine, alive form that I can so that readers might engage with them in context. Theory, then, plays a supporting role where relevant (Conle, 1999); the goal of my analysis is not to conform the findings to a particular theory, but to explore people’s stories in depth in their own right.

Anonymity of school boards, schools, and participants. Since all three school boards involved in this research required anonymity, I maintained a certain level of generalization when I recounted stories. For some participants, remaining unidentified was very important. Thus, several details about participants’ personal lives, careers, or schools are removed, and the variation in Indigenous languages, traditional spiritual practices, histories of colonization, overall population dynamics, and school board politics are not described in depth.

As another consideration, some participants spoke about people who were not part of conversational interviews in this research. For example, a story was shared about someone's student teaching placement and a memorable interaction with a teacher there. Since I do not know that teacher and could not ask for a meeting or conversational interview, I referred to the story in a very general way instead of sharing it in full. In another case, a participant mentioned an organization that I do know and could contact. While the reference to the organization was both anonymous and positive, I wanted to offer the chance for feedback. I met with the organization's spokesperson to show the relevant "full story" segments, which resulted in an engaging conversation and the opportunity to share the relevant parts of the dissertation with this person.

Closing

In this section, I presented methodology theory and then a detailed description of how I undertook this research. I sought to honour the Indigenous thinkers who inspired my thinking about research, and to establish my reasons for approaching the research questions in a narrative manner. In the next chapter, I present eleven stories shared by Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators about the learning relationships they shared.

Chapter Four: Findings

Introduction

This findings chapter is comprised of eleven stories. Each was shared by an individual, pair, or trio of Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators who were describing the experiences and qualities of the learning relationships they shared. At the beginning of each story, the pseudonyms of the educators are in bold (Indigenous and then non-Indigenous educator), followed by a tagline emphasizing some of the poignant ideas in the conversational interviews we shared. A small painting is presented as a way of representing the tone and content of the conversational interview, followed by an art statement (see Chapter Three). The first section, context, gives brief background on the learning relationship, leaving most of the details to the second section, entitled storyline. In the storyline section, participants' words (see snapshots in Appendix F) are the framework for a retelling of some of the stories they told in the conversational interview, and for insights that they shared. For Brittany and Michaela, three classroom sessions were part of the data in addition to the conversational interview. In the third section, summary, each storyline is discussed with reference to Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) three-dimensional narrative inquiry space, drawing out experience and qualities of these productive learning relationships. Further discussion of the stories in relation to one another and to academic literature can be found in Chapter Five.

Editorial notes. In writing these full stories from the conversational interview transcripts, I used the following approaches and modes of notation:

1. Light editing: I smoothed some wording for flow. For example, I edited out words such as "like" and "um" and "right" to keep attention on the content of what people were saying. Some participants asked me to change wording to sound more formal, including

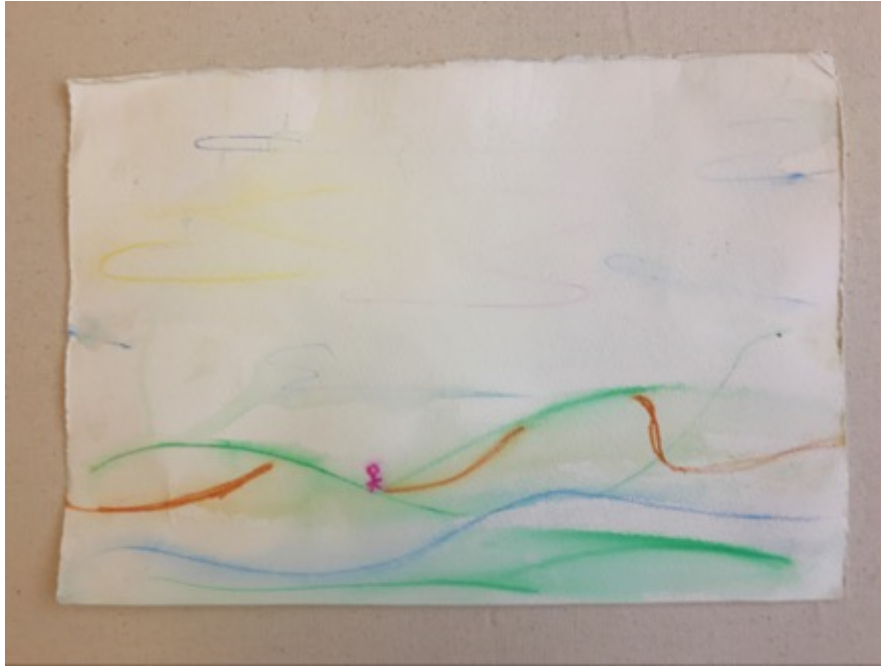
saying “because” instead of ‘cuz.” In some cases, I removed repeated words or words that were spoken over one another if meaning could be preserved.

2. Punctuation:

- a. Ellipses (...) represent omitted sections of a person’s speech.
 - b. Missing punctuation in the conversation signals an immediate shift from one speaker to the next. For example, a phrase has no period at the end when the next speaker adds on to what the first person was saying.
 - c. Square brackets [] signal a change I made from the original. Sometimes I replaced the name of a person, place, or other identifying factor with a more general term to keep anonymity. In other cases, I added in a word for clarity, wrote out the full term for an acronym, or replaced strong language (swear word). I also used square brackets to denote actions like a smile or laughter.
 - d. Italics are used to reflect emphasis. I transcribed using italics when people put weight on a certain word or phrase as they spoke.
3. Past tense: While participants shared stories about ongoing learning relationships, I use the past tense when I frame quotations. This signifies that the views and experiences represented here are from a specific point in time.
4. In each story’s title, I list the Indigenous educator’s name and then the non-Indigenous educator’s name. In the story with three participants, the first two are Indigenous and the third is non-Indigenous.

Stories of Learning through Relationship

Tee-chaw⁵ A journey in education



Art statement

The painting above depicts a person travelling on a path through various hills, with a wide sky above and a stream flowing nearby. This represents Tee-chaw's stories from decades of experience relating with Native⁶ and non-Native students, families, educators, and communities. Her path has taken her many places, and through the ups and downs of the hills she sees many wide-open possibilities.

Context

⁵ This participant chose the name "Tee-chaw" based on what some of her students called her. Tee-chaw was their word for "teacher."

⁶ Since Tee-chaw prefers the term "Native" to "Indigenous," this term is used throughout her story.

Tee-chaw shared stories about growing up in her First Nation community, a sanatorium for Tuberculosis, a residential school, and a local high school, as well as her experiences as a teacher candidate, a teacher in a Catholic publicly funded school board, a Junior teacher in her First Nation community, a teacher educator in a teacher education program for Native teachers, and a Bachelor of Education program at a university. She served a long time as a volunteer in a publicly funded school board, forty-three years to be exact.

Note: Tee-chaw's stories address educator to educator interactions as well as educator-to-student interactions and family interactions. Considering all of these in light of the research questions can be helpful in considering what non-Indigenous educators might learn about relating.

Storyline

Tee-chaw opened by speaking about her early learning experiences, connecting these to school-based learning. She talked about her role as the oldest child in her family of twelve children, one which involved an expectation of leadership. She said that her parents “pushed education on us because they did not foresee living a life on the reserve which could sustain us for a long time.” When she spoke about entering the teaching profession through teachers' college, she described a school system where “nothing was happening” in public schools or curriculum with respect to Native education. She said: “[I] wanted to make a difference in teaching Native children. I wanted Native children to have a better experience and to meet their individual needs and to make their learning events enjoyable for them.” She recognized that “I was being taught how to be a Public School teacher of children and not a teacher of Native children. That was okay; but I knew there was a difference somewhere.” As she shared the

following stories from a variety of education settings, some of these differences came out, as did her moves toward addressing them in ways that supported Native students—and all students.

Tee-chaw spoke about her learning experiences as a child when she was in a sanatorium for Tuberculosis for several years, which was followed by a residential school and a high school. As a young child in the sanatorium, there were several older women on her floor who spoke their First Nation language to her, which helped her to retain her community's language. The languages are similar. She described reading for enjoyment, and learning how to do so by "sight reading." Nurses, doctors, orderlies, and hospital staff and visitors would often stop to teach her a new word or answer her numerous questions. She enjoyed reading comic books and people would bring her some. In high school, she described succeeding in classes where she had good connections with the teachers, and the opposite experience as well. She remembered numerous teachers: a teacher who bored her, one whom she loved, some who enjoyed reading her stories, and one who liked her and whom she said "took me under her wing." She said:

I was the only Native child they could relate with some of the time and they didn't seem to be able to relate to me fully, to understand, to appreciate the education. They didn't want to talk about Indians. It's always Indians, as a general, that massacred those poor settlers and "stuff like that."

In this context, Tee-chaw "sat back and observed," and made friends with some students.

As the oldest child in her family, Tee-chaw's mother gave her the responsibility of caring for and entertaining her younger siblings. Tee-chaw described sitting them in a circle where she would tell them stories of "her five years of life experience." She described sharing stories on dark winter nights when there was only one coal-oil lamp lit in the kitchen and the children were sent to their darkened bedroom early:

Everybody loved hearing stories, and then when they got to know their own little stories, they'd ask, "Can I tell a story?" So, we'd say, "Go ahead." So they would tell their little

story and we'd remember those stories. Even today, we remember some of our favourite stories.

Tee-chaw talked about some of the ““spooky stories”” that they shared in those times, drawing on legends of the community told by their parents and Elders. “There was always a spooky person in those stories” and she gave some examples of this.

Tee-chaw explained how learning through stories at home and in the community is meaningful for children entering school:

When you look at people in the community... Who are your first storytellers that you run into? It's your Elders and your grandparents, who come to visit your Mom and Dad. Then your mother tells you stories if she's doing your hair at night, as we used to have long braids and she'd have to untangle them, and do the storytelling in the meantime. That's how we learned... storytelling. We remembered them. So, I recall storytelling is one way of learning. While they were talking you were allowed to listen. We were treated like “little adults.” We weren't told, “Don't listen, this is not for your little ears.” We were never told that. We can learn by listening. We did. We'd sit there in a quiet corner, and nobody would even know we're sitting there, listening. We're not running around making noise and all that. Anyone who came to do some work around the house or to visit, they'd tell stories. Especially if you were around watching them. Your friends of course told stories, and *then* school started. By the time you began school, you're full of stories. You had a lot of knowledge already.

Alongside storytelling as a form of learning, Tee-chaw talked about “learning by watching,” where children are given the opportunity to quietly observe. Again, “You're treated like little adults. You act like little adults. That's how we learn, learning by storytelling and by watching. So, we listen with our ears, and we use ‘our eyes.’” Tee-chaw weaved learning through listening and stories, and learning through watching throughout this conversational interview. Another example of the latter was when a young person would learn through accompanying a skilled person in his or her field of interest, such as a trapper.

Tee-chaw spoke about another type of teaching, one that involves learning about how to behave through consequences like curses:

You were taught everything in a Native community. What you should know. What you should do. What you do with the public. We're told in the old days, don't ever make fun of strange Indians, they might put a curse on you. They believed in curses.

She also shared what she was taught about doing good to others:

Mother taught me that, whatever you do positive which is always good, because it can come back to you. Share all you got, food, whatever, it will come back to you. However, if you do something negative, it may not come back to you immediately, but it could come back to your children, or grandchildren. Always understand that things that you do will not go unrewarded or unpunished.

Regarding these sorts of stories, Tee-chaw said, "This is part of our culture, and our stories, that we get from people, from all sorts of people."

As a classroom teacher, Tee-chaw taught in several contexts: a public school board with all non-Native students, in her home reserve community with all Native children, and also in the university setting. Before sharing her stories from her teacher education classes and placements and from teaching jobs with Native and non-Native students, Tee-chaw said:

I've had experience with both teaching non-Natives and Natives, and teaching with all kinds of teachers. There weren't any Native teachers. So, I had to work with them. Sometimes some of them had questions but most of the time they didn't. The teachers seemed to have an idea that they know what's needed and they don't need to be told.... They don't need to be reminded how to teach. Like in all professions, most people feel they know how to do their job. I said "Okay, fine, no problem."

At another point when she was discussing her various teaching experiences, Tee-chaw said that while some teachers sometimes have questions, "they have their own little views" and often made the assumption that Native people "don't know too much" or "don't learn enough." Tee-chaw said, "But we watch and we listen. That's how we learn." Others' perception that she knew less or learned less as a Native person was repeated in our conversational interview.

When Tee-chaw entered her teacher education program, there were few Native teachers and only two Native teacher candidates. She remembered a group project where she was asked to stand up and speak about her experience in Native education. Feeling "overwhelmed about

the whole thing,” in her teacher education program, Tee-chaw remembered feeling that some educators saw her as inferior: When paired with a non-Native teacher, “the teachers always chose the non-Native teacher as *the* teacher that’s good. I’m Tee-chaw, the Native, what do I know.” At the same time, she was part of some non-Native educators’ learning. She described positive interactions with a principal who appreciated her work as the first Native teacher he had ever met, and an associate teacher who had the opportunity to learn about students’ communication styles.

When Tee-chaw took her first teaching position, she applied to a school board where she taught all non-Native students. She was able to support students through challenging years of their schooling, and to share fun moments with them. The textbook, however, represented Indians as people who massacred the Jesuits, a limited perspective that Tee-chaw did not want to teach. In response, Tee-chaw “chucked the book out the window and said, ‘We’re going to learn about the contributions of Native people and what they do today,’” for a scheduled two weeks. She asked her mother to send her craftwork, and spoke with students about the seasonal work occurring in Native communities and how people help each other in a collective way; chopping wood, sending moose meat, fish, and carrying water for someone who needs it.

As a teacher, Tee-chaw focused on the strengths and needs of the students in each class:

I think of myself Tee-chaw “the teacher” and not Tee-chaw “the Native teacher.” Because you can get labelled that, and that’s all they expect from you.... You’re the Native teacher. Just *teacher*. Tee-chaw. No matter what colour the child, or what nationality, I look to them for their needs as a teacher. To meet their needs, to make their education experience pleasant.

This approach resurfaced in other contexts where Tee-chaw taught.

As a teacher in her home community, Tee-chaw continued to focus on students’ strengths, and to learn what motivated them—recognizing each child’s uniqueness and the

importance of family to students. She told stories about building on students' strong observation skills, and about teachers who engaged students and families through events like baking and inviting families in for coffee, tea, and bannock or running a yard sale where students learned math. With respect to interacting with families (not necessarily in the reserve community context), Tee-chaw also talked about how nervous she was in her first set of parent-teacher interviews, and how parents felt the same. She spoke about helping families feel comfortable while they wait by setting up an activity table with items like students' work and books at students' reading level.

Tee-chaw later became a teacher educator, preparing both Native and non-Native teachers for careers in education. She also joined with colleagues to create a group that would support the local public school board in Native education. One direction the committee took was to support teachers through modelling and through professional development:

We worked with the teachers and to change their ways of thinking. We *met* with the students to tell them storytelling about how Natives live today, bringing artifacts, showing them the things that Native people do today. We worked with the administrators, because they worked with the teachers and with the students. So, we did free lectures and workshops for the teachers. Once a year on a PD day.... We got a little spot on their agenda to do our "Native thing." They need to be told, is what we found out. They need to be told, and shown, how to meet the needs of our children. So, upon myself I took it to bring a resource box of goodies, and storytelling. I started at a public school, grade two.... I worked with associate teachers and principals knew me. I said, "I'd like to come in and do some storytelling for your students." They said, "Sure." So, I did several schools and each grade level.

Tee-chaw later found out about the impact these sessions had. As a teacher educator, Tee-chaw also supported teachers and professors who needed help navigating communication differences with Native teacher candidates. One example was valuing the strengths demonstrated by quiet teachers who were listening closely but showed their respect through not making direct eye contact. Another was interpreting laughter, and learning to share humorous stories. She also

spoke about communicating through sharing a series of little stories, and about Native students who refrain from volunteering an answer to a question so as not to put down a peer who may not know.

Tee-chaw also had the opportunity to help shape programs at the university and in public schools to give students and teachers the opportunity to access Native perspectives. Sometimes Tee-chaw directly approached a leader regarding this need, and sometimes people in leadership roles approached her to ask what could be done to support students at a system level.

Regarding various initiatives in education, Tee-chaw asked me to ensure I mentioned the importance of sharing food. She said, "Anytime you have food, they will come," in reference to gathering non-Native and Native educators, students, or families. In many cases, Tee-chaw was inviting people into learning opportunities or learning relationships that were new. She said: "People say, 'You can't do it.' Sure, there's *ways* to do it." This statement is reflective of the creativity and persistence seen in Tee-chaw's stories.

Summary

Temporality, place, and sociality create a three-dimensional narrative inquiry space (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) that can frame Tee-chaw's story about education and how she brought her life knowledge to publicly funded schools and university settings for the benefit of the people there. In terms of temporality, the stories Tee-chaw shared spanned from her early childhood to recent times. She took us to multiple places: her First Nation community, a sanatorium for tuberculosis, residential school, a publicly funded high school, her teacher education program, the schools where she taught, the university where she worked, and the schools where she volunteered and guided teacher candidates. A long timeframe and multiple settings meant Tee-chaw had experience and stories to share with her students and with

educators. Tee-chaw's explanation of children learning through watching and listening in the presence of parents, grandparents, siblings, and visitors in her First Nation community illustrated her point that children were "full of stories" before they entered school.

Tee-chaw's childhood experiences gave context for her story about teaching a social studies unit on First Nations people. When Tee-chaw refused to teach students from the biased textbook and instead asked her mother to send craftwork for the students to see, she taught them about community life and values in an interpersonal way. While the non-Native students in her teaching context may not have been familiar with bringing moose meat or water to someone in need, Tee-chaw could invite them, through the tangible experience of looking at her mother's craftwork and through stories, to a place different from their own. She did the same for me! Listening to Tee-chaw's story was an opportunity to consider bias in teaching materials and potential for community connections so that students can learn from Native people themselves. As a hearer of these stories, I now have an image in my mind of Tee-chaw's mother braiding her hair on a dark evening while sharing stories with her daughter, and of a child standing at the bottom of a ladder watching and learning as someone works on the house. The stories themselves inform my thinking as an educator.

Through maintaining long-term commitment to her local school systems and by drawing on her personal history and knowledge base, Tee-chaw could offer students and educators opportunities to consider new perspectives and communication norms. Sharing food, sharing stories, and responding to people's strengths and interests could be models for onlooking educators who shared her social contexts. While not everyone looked to her insight as a Native educator, Tee-chaw spoke about creative and ongoing work to offer learning opportunities to students and educators. In the art piece at the beginning of this subsection, Tee-chaw was

depicted in motion on a long journey up and down hills, under an open sky. The many places she travelled throughout her teaching and learning gave rise to stories and experiences that she continued to share generously along the way.

Dan

Relationship, story, acceptance, time



Art statement

This painting represents the learning space that Dan offered to non-Indigenous educators. At the centre is new knowledge introduced within a sense of safety and acceptance. With time, Dan encouraged colleagues to apply their learning about Indigenous perspectives within wider circles of school community. He accepted people's individual journeys and choices.

Context

In a context where non-Indigenous teachers and administrators were feeling pressure to learn quickly in Indigenous education, Dan described his work in supporting their learning over

time. As an Indigenous educator, Dan spoke from several years of supporting non-Indigenous colleagues at school board and school staff levels.

Storyline

Dan had been observing “changes in the atmosphere and the environment around Indigenous education,” where “it’s becoming more of an urgent matter, and more of a pressing matter.” He described his experience of the current climate:

I always think about our teachers, and how quick they are to try and get to a place where they can check this off and move on.... A lot of our teachers are going through [this] right now, a lot of administrators and a lot of systems, around that need to get that checkbox done. So, they’re racing. They really want to move fast.

When he was called into schools to work with administrators or teachers who want him to tell them “how to do reconciliation,” Dan recognized that “they’re eager to learn and I don’t want them to lose that.” At the same time, he said he needed to redirect the passion; to “tap the brakes” and “slow them down a bit.” For Dan, it was important to help educators to

realize that going directly to reconciliation, going directly to an Elder, going directly to bringing in a tipi and setting it up is not the right way. And that they need to have some foundational knowledge before they can arrive at that place.

For example, he referred to the idea that in Truth and Reconciliation, “the first part of that is truth, and we can’t get to reconciliation without truth.” Throughout the conversational interview, Dan returned to the idea of foundational knowledge, providing examples of background information and basic protocols that help prepare teachers for meaningful learning interactions with, for example, Indigenous Elders.

While teachers may have heard about residential schools, reconciliation, Treaties, or storytelling and “go to those safe places to ask,” he said:

But you’ve got to be willing to go to those uncomfortable places and ask those questions. And a *huge* part of my work is helping teachers, administrators, first of all slow things down so they don’t trip later on. But also to think about the *right* questions to ask and

what they *need* in order to be able to ask those questions. So instead of just coming in and talking about reconciliation, I ask teachers to tell me a little bit more about their experiences in Indigenous communities. I ask teachers to share with me some of *their* insights. And I share a lot of my own stories. I share a lot about who I am and how I've arrived at this place. I talk about my family, and their experiences in residential schools. And I literally open myself up to them as a process of making the environment safe, so they can see I'm willing to put myself out there, they should be willing to put themselves out there as well. And all of a sudden, we have this new type of relationship where teachers feel safe asking questions that they don't know how to articulate, or saying things that they were worried before might offend me. And for them to be able to have that space, creates a dialogue, it creates a relationship, it creates a process where learning becomes part of who we both are.

Dan noted that developing a basis from which to ask good questions, gain new knowledge, and interact respectfully takes time. In his work with teachers, this occurred through relational connection. The process involved personal openness, which could become mutual sharing and growing. Each time Dan shared his stories and experiences, he "reflect[ed] on something a little bit differently" and understood himself and his family "a little bit more," which he saw as part of his healing, "helping me on my own journey to reconciliation." Through this interpersonal connection, Dan invited educators to see from a different viewpoint.

One way that Dan invited teachers into considering new perspectives and deepening understanding is sharing stories about the land on which they worked, lived, and travelled.

Understanding the land for example, my experiences with this land are very different than theirs. And it's different because I have stories and knowledge and family who've experienced this land in a very different way. So, when I ask teachers to try and imagine this neighbourhood we're in right now without *anything*. And I share those stories.... All of a sudden that teacher's relationship with the place they're in changes. It shifts.... So, we share those stories, and we talk about those things, and then you begin to move into that truth side of Truth and Reconciliation. Talking about what really happened, how it happened, and that story... So, once I've established that it's safe to not know, things begin to change and the relationship begins to grow. And questions start to get asked, and answers, and aha moments, and oops moments, and all of these other things that happen as teachers *learn*. And it's very exciting to be walking in that journey, and going together down this trail of growth, really.

Through sharing stories and helping teachers develop their understanding over several sessions, Dan could help teachers understand how life was lived ahead of nation to nation processes like Treaties and difficult history like the Sixties Scoop and residential schools.

For Dan, agreeing to guide a teacher through his or her learning in Indigenous education meant that he was taking on a responsibility, and so was the person who was asking for guidance. He explained this in relation to the process of offering and accepting tobacco⁷ in his tradition:

When a teacher calls me and I pick up that phone, in a way that's me accepting that offering. So, as we go through the process of building a relationship and sharing and learning together, they now have a responsibility to take what I have given them and use it in a way that helps them. And how they choose to do that is up to them. And some people might embrace it and gather around it and pick it up and carry it with me, and others might still be a little bit shy or afraid of it, and choose to just kind of let me carry it a little bit more with them. And some people might say, "You know what? I don't want to have anything to do with this yet." And that's respecting their point, their entry point into the work. 'Cause everyone has a different entry point.

While teachers may not have been familiar with local cultural protocol and responsibilities involved in seeking out information, Dan believed that they would learn over time. He noted that while some teachers were comfortable learning through relating with an Indigenous educator like himself, others were more comfortable with attending a workshop, listening to someone speak in front of a classroom, reading, or learning online. Through his work with educators, he offered many such entry points.

Giving teachers the "generous gift of openness and patience" was important to their learning experience. This "creates an area or an arena where teachers can acknowledge that they don't know," addressing what they might call their own "ignorances," "blindspots,"

⁷ The process of offering tobacco is a tradition in many First Nation communities. Please see Appendix B for links to more information.

“stereotypes,” or “prejudices” “in a place where they won’t be called racist or they won’t be called ignorant.” This, Dan said, “is a very different environment.” In developing this type of environment, he noted, “I’m fortunate because I like to believe that I’m at a place where I can do that, where I can give that away,” also stating that “there are members in our community who aren’t. Who don’t quite know or don’t quite recognize that.” Dan later addressed how community members may feel with respect to reconciliation. He drew attention to the emotional elements of this learning.

Dan told the story of relating to a staff group in a way that led to the further development of learning relationships. In an initial session that he designed with colleagues, he invited teachers into new experiences like sharing a smudge⁸, learning some circle protocols, and listening to colleagues’ stories regarding Indigenous education. Dan was honoured by teachers’ openness to listening, sharing, and the unexpected form of engagement that took place. Following his description of setting up the room in a circle instead of the customary tables with laptops, Dan said, “It was a welcoming that they gathered around and they embraced, because they understood who was going to be supporting them in this journey.” Following that day of shared experience, educators continued to seek guidance from Dan, which he later built upon by inviting the staff together again to gift each person with a book. The book was “beautifully written” and “quite powerful,” addressing a particular topic that teachers had been asking about. He asked that once teachers had read the book, they gift it to the school so that a class of students could read it. He then asked that those students have the opportunity to discuss the book with a teacher of their choice. He said: “That idea of teachers and students learning together, I think was quite a beautiful image.” As we talked about this, he noted that this is “a very exciting way

⁸ Smudging is a traditional practice. Please see Appendix B for links to more information.

of doing it, and it brings in that Western model of novel studies” as well as “that Indigenous model of learning together and growing together and seeking out knowledge, and wanting to be involved in it.” Through offering experiences, new perspectives, and personal stories, Dan welcomed teachers into a relational learning environment and invited them to extend this to students.

Dan explained the value in this type of work:

I think when you invite somebody to come and learn with you, or invite somebody to come and be a part of your story, you’re doing something that’s very much an Indigenous way of being. When I seek advice from an Elder, I’m asking them to give part of themselves to me. And they’ll only share what they are allowed to share, or what they feel comfortable sharing, or what they feel I need to know to help me arrive at a place. And it could come across in many different ways.

He gave the examples of Elders teaching through “a walk in the woods,” “a story that’s told to you over and over and over again,” or a “sit-down and conversation.” He drew parallels between these and the variety of ways of sharing with the teachers: a smudge, stories, a PowerPoint presentation. In this process, Dan said, “we’re trying to make sure everyone’s entry points into this was taken care of in a way that was careful, and honest, and gentle for them.”

Dan reiterated the importance of not rushing into things—including rushing to an Elder—but rather establishing foundational knowledge “before we could continue, to understand why this was important.” Part of this was helping teachers to understand the “highly functional society” and caring community that existed before Indian Residential Schools and the “big statistics about jail, about suicide rates, about drugs and alcohol.” He explained that the “government,” “societies,” “roles and responsibilities,” “borders,” “territories,” and “protocols” in place at that time continue today. Dan said, “They might look different, they might sound different, they might taste different, but they’re all still there,” even though we might erroneously speak about them in past tense due to colonization.

Dan situated the process of developing foundational knowledge within the larger frame of Indigenous/Canadian relations. He said, “We’re at a place now where reconciliation is happening in kind of funny ways.” He described educators “trying to run with it” within a “non-Indigenous community who for the for the most part is ready to embrace, ready to gather around, ready to support, and want to run with this.” At the same time, “we’ve got the Indigenous community that’s being very patient and slow” as well as members within the Indigenous community who “aren’t ready to do that ‘run with,’ who aren’t ready to share, or to learn... who are still hurting or very angry, who are upset, who feel let down, who feel betrayed.” Given that understanding, Dan said, “We need to bring this to a place of ‘We’re doing this together,’ right? ‘Cause you can’t reconcile without us, we can’t reconcile without you. We need to do this together.” He continued, situating this idea for educators:

So, putting it that way for administrators and teachers causes them to take a breath and a step. And then the next step would be, “It’s OK to not, to not rush through this. It’s OK to take our time, it’s OK to learn, it’s OK to not be able to apply some of the things you’re learning to your classroom just yet.”

My understanding of Dan’s explanation is that by honouring the pace and feelings of all who are involved, we acknowledge what is happening in our wider communities and nations and apply this to how we proceed in schools.

As we spoke about the sense of urgency I felt to right the wrongs that I learned about through a course on Indigenous education, Dan provided this perspective:

You think about it, it’s been going on for two hundred years. As Aboriginal people, we’re patient. Two hundred years, we’re still here; in another two hundred years, we’ll be here. Another two hundred years after that, we’ll still be here, right? So, let’s—it’s OK to slow down. It’s OK to take our time. That seven generations is going to continue to be a part of that—and it’s not just Indigenous communities that need those seven generations, it’s the non-Indigenous communities as well.

The current learning, relating, and reconciling occurring in some school settings is part of a much larger story, one with a long timeline. We discussed how this is connected to approach:

If you do it *that* way, if I go in guns blazing, and telling schools, “*No*,” and saying, “*You’re* wrong,” all I’m doing is burning the bridges that I should be creating. All I’m doing is stopping those relationships before they can go and develop. So, that method has never worked. It didn’t work in residential schools, and it won’t work today.... Sometimes you need to have those forward conversations. But they don’t have to be “you,” “them,” “they” type conversations. They can be “I,” “we,” and “us” conversations.... It’s a very different way, right? If we look at it from that perspective, we’re definitely going to arrive at a place of reconciliation, a place of Truth and Reconciliation, a lot faster than “you” and “them” and “they.”

In being patient and in emphasizing “I,” “we,” and “us” conversations, Dan did not discount the problems that currently exist, but acknowledged these. He chose to take an interpersonal stance within those realities:

Misinformation is out there. And schools are still going to do things that are insensitive and inappropriate. People are still going to have conversations that *aren’t* informed. Politicians are still going to capitalize on people’s ignorance to get votes. It’s out there. It’s *happening*. I can’t change all of that. But I *can* change the teachers that I work with. I *can* change the people that I gather around. I *can* change those who are willing to sit and listen, right? And that’s where my biggest impact is, is people who want to have a relationship with me, I’ll have a relationship with them. People who are willing to learn from me, I’d be willing to teach them. And on the flip side of that, I’m willing to learn from them if they’re willing to teach me. ‘Cause I still have a lot to learn. I still have a lot of growing to do. I’m no expert, but I’m a learner just like everybody else.

As our discussion continued, Dan emphasized that people learn over time at different rates.

When I asked Dan about how he thought teachers’ learning and growth over time affect Indigenous students, he spoke about “more meaningful relationships that can develop” between teachers and students in public school settings. He explained how a “student’s world makes a lot more sense” to a teacher who understands the larger context of “the trauma that that child might have gone through, or that child’s parents or grandparents might have gone through in residential schools.” Meaningful relationships can also develop when a teacher has the background to ask a student about the powwow on the weekend, to understand the importance of gathering with

family and community on the reserve following a community member's passing, or to know that a student enjoys playing hockey and to start a conversation about that. Since "most of our kids just want to be treated like kids... however that looks," deepening understanding can mean moving away from thinking of Indigenous students as breakable "porcelain dolls" toward finding "an entry point for that teacher to build that relationship." Dan linked meaningful relationships with students' school engagement:

But I think our society, particularly our teachers are, again, scared, or hesitant, or not sure how to approach it, and they're worried that they're going to offend, they're worried they might say something. And knowing and learning and understanding can help break down some of those insecurities. Open up doors for other possibilities of a relationship with the child. So, does that have a direct impact on what that child is learning and being taught in school? Maybe. The more important part is the relationship that's developing. The child is feeling recognized, feeling supported, feeling cared for in a school, well that's going to translate to, "I'm going home and I'm talking about school, talking about the teacher, talking about what I've done today. And I'm wanting to go back and get more of that." It doesn't matter if it's a Grade 1, Grade 2, or a Grade 11, if they have a strong connection with an adult in the building, any student is going to want to be there, of course. But Aboriginal students who thrive on relationships, of course, are going to be even more successful.

Dan saw meaningful relationships with students as a main outcome of teachers' learning and growth.

Dan showed how school learning and connections could also develop through the way teachers engage with curriculum content. There is value when teachers are

willing to move away from that script and share experiences, or share story, or share something that *they* have. That means a lot more, I think, than if I'm sitting in a class, and the teacher's talking about my people from a textbook.

Dan shared school stories of when students "can come to be proud of who they are, proud of what their family represents," which he hoped would carry into their school experience moving forward. He saw a positive shift in how Indigenous people were portrayed or acknowledged in schools and referred to the "seven generations before we arrive in a place where it's going to be

so fluid that you don't even realize it's there." Dan's focus on relationships and learning over time connected public educators and students.

Summary

Temporality, place, and sociality frame a narrative inquiry space (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; 2006) with many facets and insights to explore in Dan's stories. Dan is Indigenous to the land where he was teaching and guiding teachers. Stories from his family's presence on that land were a source of knowledge and intergenerational experience that he chose to share with the non-Indigenous educators around him. By asking teachers to imagine the neighbourhood where they now worked through his family's stories, Dan offered an opportunity to talk "about what really happened, how it happened, and that story... So, once I've established that it's safe to not know, things begin to change and the relationship begins to grow." Dan linked personal reflection, learning through relating, and his own connection to the land. He helped teachers to connect and learn from their physical place, and to be part of a collegial environment where they could feel safe learning. That learning environment, however, was not static. The interpersonal learning that Dan sought to develop with educators, he also sought to see extended to students. He explained how he intended to offer such an opportunity through a specific form of novel study where teachers and students were involved with one another in learning and seeking out knowledge, a mode of learning that he described as Indigenous.

For Dan, time was intrinsically connected with quality relationships. He explained that the process of building a relational form of learning with teachers takes time. He placed a strong emphasis on slowing down, not rushing the process of learning. Dan prioritized a welcoming environment where people were encouraged to learn at their own pace without force. His view was that teachers' growing knowledge base would give them a footing for developing further

learning opportunities and relationships, whether it be with Elders, community members, or students. He linked sociality and temporality in various instances. For example, he recognized the emotional experiences of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in truth and reconciliation and believed “‘I,’ ‘we,’ and ‘us’ conversations” were the preferred way to “arrive at a place of reconciliation, a place of Truth and Reconciliation.” For Dan, teacher learning was situated within larger societal processes and with the goal of developing meaningful interpersonal relationships with students; to enrich their school experience.

River and Agnes
“The space to be awesome”



Art statement

This image depicts the spunk, intensity, and joy that River and Agnes shared and the space it created for others. They intentionally developed learning environments that promoted students’ intellectual and social development, achieved through highly stimulating professional environments for educators.

Context

River (Indigenous educator) and Agnes (non-Indigenous educator) had worked together for close to a decade. They collaborated on writing, teaching, and leading in multiple contexts, and were both administrators in public school settings. Informally, they bounced ideas off each other, challenged, and supported one another on a regular basis. They met when Agnes was a teacher and River was a school administrator.

Storyline

River and Agnes first met when Agnes joined the teaching staff at a school where River was administrator. It was a strategic move in Agnes's career; she was looking toward leadership roles in the school board and was pointed toward River's school and leadership as a context that would be professionally challenging. As Agnes stated, "You've got to move out there and grow and change." Agnes entered with what River described as a "learning stance."

Agnes entered a professional learning environment that River had actively shaped over several years. River described a school culture where she told staff,

"I'm going to challenge you, other teachers are going to challenge you, you're going to challenge us back. That's how we work".... So, we had really built this space of challenging each other, supporting each other, questioning each other, really interrogating student work. And each other's thinking. But it made us all much stronger.... So, when Agnes earlier was talking about just having that space for learning, and it's the same space for students as it is for teachers. And if you don't have that collaboration, and you don't have that safe space of challenging and interrogating and it's OK to be wrong, like that was a big thing. It's OK to be wrong because we learn from that.

River referred to "Agnes's entry into that space as a learner, but in my world, that was what we had built." Thus, Agnes and River's first meeting was not accidental or haphazard; Agnes entered a learning environment that River and her staff had been developing over time.

Agnes's decision to immerse herself in that learning process was not immediate. As she entered the new school and a highly professional staff team, one where staff had concerns about

her joining the team, River suggested that Agnes “lay low and watch and listen.” Agnes pointed to a pivotal moment a few months into her time at that school when she took the professional risk to participate fully.

Agnes: That’s when I finally look around and I’ve had enough experience with the staff and these [collaborative teacher learning sessions] and the administrator to go, “OK, I’m safe to [express my frustration].” And I’m safe to say, “I don’t think I know what I’m doing.” And that’s a huge space for anyone to do. And then I would tell the story later – and I’ve just told that story to my staff now I dumped *everything* I had learned in my first seven years of teaching and all my units, all of my binders, I dumped it all. And redid my entire practice in that year.

River: It was amazing.

Agnes: And it *was* amazing. I mean, kids [improved academically], I loved my job, it was the most rewarding thing ever, but I had to be in a space where people were learning like that, [and] could support me.

Under River’s leadership, Agnes had the opportunity to experience firsthand what it could mean to be open with colleagues, sharing teaching practice to promote students’ growth. Later, she tried to extend similar opportunities to the teachers on her own staff. She noted that “trying to recreate something like that...it’s tough.” She said, “I was ready to learn and willing to learn, because I knew I had some goals.” Still, she recognized that it took her a few months to realize that she could speak out without worrying about getting an unsatisfactory teaching evaluation or feeling like her colleagues might look down on her. In other words, becoming ready was a process.

River was highly aware of the social dynamics at play when an administrator asks staff to challenge their thinking and practice. Her thinking behind preparing to challenge staff is evident in the following quotation. In this instance, she was referring to a different staff than the one of which Agnes was a part, yet the underlying ideas show that as an administrator, she, too, had a

process of preparation leading up to asking staff to engage in highly synergistic and collaborative ways. River said:

So that was a pretty big conversation with them at the time, and it's always a risk. I mean it is a calculated risk, of when is that right moment to have that conversation? But you know I'd backed it up with action. So, people knew I was there, they knew I was committed, they already knew what I was about and meeting students and supporting them, so it was kind of a – for us, that was our turning point.

She explained the context of the challenging conversation; through watching and waiting for several months, she had developed a sense of the staff and school. In an opening circle that day, she had asked the teachers why they went into the profession. This helped River and the staff get to know one another, and in River's experience "settles people into a space of willing to work, because they remember why they chose this path in life." She was focused on highlighting staff and student strengths—an approach that she reiterated throughout the conversational interview:

"I operate from a central belief system that people are people, and people have strengths, and people generally want to learn, so we need to have that space for them to be able to learn."

When she provided a challenge to her staff that day, she did so through a closing circle where people had the opportunity to share their perspectives. For River, challenging her staff was situated within a form of leadership where strong support was in place, and where students were at the centre. As Agnes and River discussed throughout the conversational interview, this approach became part of Agnes's orientation as well.

For River and Agnes, high expectations for students and staff in public education, and the belief that "there's strength in everybody" stood in contrast to an approach where students—Indigenous students in particular—were not seen as academically able. Agnes warned against this by describing teachers' thinking within a school environment with a different dynamic, which was operating from a philosophy incompatible with her own. Agnes said:

Everybody loved everybody. Lots of hugging, lots of food. Lots of love. But *nothing else*. And it's another form of oppression or discrimination... When you expect nothing, that's another way of voicing that idea that you really can't do it anyway, so we'll just love you and make you feel good about yourself... We have *zero* expectations, and we don't give them any agency, no voice. And we just – and we steal it all from them because we don't believe. We just don't believe.

As they went back and forth on this topic, Agnes and River passionately explained how providing challenging academic environments for all students is pivotal to their beliefs about public education, and that this applies to Indigenous and non-Indigenous students in varying social and economic situations.

River and Agnes described how Indigenous community members' presence and leadership is part of excellent education for all students. Referring to a time when local Elders supported a group of students, River said:

And I guess for me, part of this project was it wasn't just First Nations kids that were involved in this. It was *all* the [specific gender] that were struggling with [specific academic area], regardless of their background. So, it created a different space *again* in the school of togetherness. And learning from each other. And actually, if you think of that reconciliation piece now, like where we are now as a society, it was really about honouring the knowledge that was there and learning from that to benefit everybody that was there... And there's a lot of flash out there now about all this stuff... but it doesn't require a lot of flash... It was really about working together with community, and knowing when to step back and not be the expert, and when to allow space for that community knowledge to come through.

In her response, Agnes demonstrated that she was actively learning through the process as well.

One aspect of this was learning to acknowledge that her Western way of communicating was not universal, and in fact could be inappropriate.

Agnes: And recognizing that there's an entire system of communication and community and reciprocal relationships and *business*...that has nothing to do with the rules that I learned or the way in which I—in a Western context it would have been remiss for me not to state upfront what was needed, what our thoughts were, and where our plan was.

River: And that's exactly what you did.

Agnes: And that's what we do!

River: And my brain's going, 'Oh my [goodness], she's telling them what to do! Shut up!' But I didn't want to kick her under the table because I didn't know her that well yet. Now I would kick her under the table. [smiles].

Agnes: ...Sometimes that's the best learning space. It's like immersion.... And you need to spend a moment in that time. Watching, listening, and learning. And deciding if there's an entry point for you at all, or if your *only* entry point is to sit and be an observer.

River: And sometimes it is.

Agnes: Sometimes that's all it is.

River: And it's OK.

Inviting Elders into the school to work with students was a move River made to benefit students. As it turned out, reflecting on the type of learning and communicating that took place had been a growing experience for Agnes as well.

For River, reflecting on that circle that she shared with Agnes, Elders, and Indigenous colleagues had also become a learning experience for her. Referring to the same meeting Agnes was describing above, River remembered Agnes talking about the academic challenges and what she thought the group needed to do: "Agnes just kept talking, talking, talking. And I'm in my brain going, '[Shoot], I haven't even poured the tea yet.'" That poignant moment is something they carried into the present. River said:

Had I not had this kind of conversation, relationship with Agnes that developed through this, I wouldn't really have thought much about that, except she was a yappy White person. And it was just one more example in my life of when that's happened. But because we've been able to dialogue about it and talk about our thinking through that, and what I thought about it at the time and her thinking and how it's helped her grow and learn as an educator and a person, it's come to one of those significant moments for me and learning through that.

Years after that circle where Agnes recognized a system of relating and communicating outside of her own, River and Agnes continued to tell the story to groups of people. Since their

relationship “grew over time,” their stories became examples to share with others who were seeking to relate together.

Throughout the conversational interview, Agnes and River spoke about the reciprocal learning relationship that they now shared. From my observation, the way that they built on each other’s stories, finished each other’s sentences, and contributed examples and anecdotes to add emphasis to each other’s points was evidence of this. River and Agnes laughed, saying, “Everything you say is something I would say.” While they shared similar thought processes, they were not afraid to challenge one another, and providing different perspectives was an important part of the relationship they developed.

Reflecting on their similar views, Agnes noted that their “central belief system” about education is something that often needs to be “developed and worked on,” eventually making “some pretty impressive teachers.” Agnes believed—and River agreed—that a high value on public education and a “sense of social justice” were orientations Agnes brought. The elements of “open learning and collaborative stance and working with people and mentoring them through both challenging conversations and those question points as well as those support points” took some learning. It seems, then, that learning alongside River had developed in Agnes certain orientations that became essential to how she viewed herself as an educator and how she shaped school culture as an administrator. In response, River shared about learning with and from a student and a staff member, concluding that “you always need to be humble enough to open yourself up in that space of learning.” Constant learning and capacity building were prized by River and Agnes; both for themselves and to be extended to others.

River and Agnes reiterated the importance of constantly learning, and of developing “spaces” where staff and students felt free and open to do the same. In the middle of a story

about developing the space for teacher leadership, River said: “To me it’s that synergy and mobilization of people. And if you give people the space to be awesome, typically they will be awesome.” River’s philosophy, as stated below, gives some background to that stance:

I work with a whole bunch of super brilliant people, which I love. You know, I think that’s part of the reason why we work well together, because I let them do what they do best. I just say, like Agnes said earlier, “What do you need? How can I help? What do you need from me?” And giving them that space.

River and Agnes gave as examples: school cultures where parents feel trust and equity and can have important conversations with administrators; classrooms where students can excel and can also identify when they are struggling and receive peer and teacher support; and teacher leadership resulting in excellent work that is recognized outside the school. When Agnes referred to success and letting staff “experience that moment, and that learning, and that growth, and step up,” River talked about celebrating *them* and said, “I would say if you go to those Grandfather Teachings, humility has to be the place you lead from.” She continued to say, “It’s not about ‘me,’ ‘I.’ I don’t use that language ‘I,’ ‘you.’ You hardly ever find that coming out of my mouth, unless it’s me doing something specifically. But typically, it’s ‘we.’” For River and Agnes, this view of leadership and opening “the space to be awesome” were linked.

Nearing the end of the conversational interview, River and Agnes spoke about a recent conversation regarding how their cultural backgrounds influenced their career goals and decision-making. They identified shared belief systems—which are emphasized above—as well as differences in how they viewed success within their own careers. They saw these differences as beneficial in their learning relationship. Agnes talked about having a different lens that she could use to reflect. She said that through River’s wisdom, she had “learned to pause and think and listen.” River suspected that bringing different views contributed to their working relationship and synergy; “We do some pretty awesome things together... And we probably do

more together than we do apart.” They spoke about how differences could be complimentary, and bring harmony through strengths being used to their “fullest potential.” As they described a sports allegory where teammates “become greater than they could have been individually,” they framed many of the ideas contained in this conversational interview.

Summary

For River and Agnes, qualities and experiences of productive learning included a keen desire to learn over time, a passion for public education that benefited all students and includes Indigenous presence and teaching, an interpersonal dynamic that leads to constant learning and growth, and synergy allowing educators to accomplish together what they might not alone. A learning relationship that was initiated as a career development move on Agnes’s part was sustained through ongoing learning and deeply valuing one another’s perspectives. While Agnes and River rarely said “Indigenous education,” their vision for excellent public education included Indigenous community members’ presence in schools, Indigenous principles like the Seven Grandfather teachings, and practices like opening and closing circles, as well as a focus on learning through watching and listening, and a collective stance regarding well-being and learning. In other words, River’s worldview had shaped Agnes’s concept—and practice—of excellent leadership.

Sociality, or the interplay between inner and social dynamics (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) was articulated by both River and Agnes as they spoke about their own motivations and thought processes and how interacting with one another contributed to personal processes. In one example, they told the story of Agnes learning about communication protocols through immersion in a meeting where she was the only non-Indigenous educator. Hearing River’s take as an Indigenous educator was enlightening for me. She explained how her initial experience

with Agnes and the Indigenous Elders and educators left one impression, but through ongoing relationship with Agnes, River came to further understand her colleague's thinking and growing. This became meaningful learning for River as well as Agnes. Relating over time fostered inner learning and more deeply rooted social interaction and learning.

Inner and social dynamics also affected students. Agnes and River discussed some difficult topics in a direct manner, one of which was how holding low academic expectations for Indigenous students was a form of oppression. Agnes said, "We have *zero* expectations, and we don't give them any agency, no voice. And we just – and we steal it all from them because we don't believe. We just don't believe." If educators "just don't believe," they are holding an inner view. Yet this inner belief has a social effect on students by stealing opportunity from them, according to Agnes and River's explanation. They did not leave this as an unresolved problem. Rather, the crux of their conversational interview was that educators and students need the "space to be awesome"—challenging, supportive spaces fueled by a belief that people have strengths to contribute and can work in highly effective, collaborative ways. They spoke about how school leaders can foster those spaces by reflecting on their own processes, challenges, personal, and interpersonal learning in that pursuit. Temporality and place (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000) were intrinsic to the process. It took time for River and Agnes to develop their interpersonal relationship, to connect in a good way with local community partners, and to create the "space to be awesome" in school communities.

Greg and Bryn

Growing trust, laughter, collaboration, and friendship

**Art statement**

This image depicts a rooted plant with blossoms that become progressively fuller as the plant grows. Greg and Bryn told stories of when they met and began to learn from and encourage one another, and how this grew over the years to a place where trust was well-established, laughter came easily, and collaboration was the norm. They talked about what became a friendship, and how it was rooted in a common commitment to caring deeply about students.

Context

Greg, an Indigenous educator, and Bryn, a non-Indigenous educator, shared stories from their work together, which spanned about five years. They interacted in various capacities, mostly through projects at school board and provincial levels.

Storyline

When they introduced their learning relationship to me, Bryn told the story of their first meeting, with Greg filling in some details and then talking about the way their relationship has developed since then. Bryn described meeting Greg when they were both part of a provincial level project with an Indigenous education focus. She had entered the project midway through the process and felt uncomfortable. Interacting with Greg helped set her at ease: “Greg was sort of like a guide to me. I knew something about Greg made me feel like it was OK. He was accepting of who I was and I felt that it wasn’t going to be too bad.” At the same time, Greg appreciated Bryn’s academic guidance. Bryn and Greg laughed as they recounted stories of time they spent shopping in a large city while they waited for their plane home. This added to Bryn’s sense that Greg was “easygoing and open, and he went with the flow.” Reflecting on that period of time together, Bryn said that her stance was “usually the stance of a learner.” While she had only known Greg for a few days and couldn’t yet ask big questions, she felt comfortable. She believed they identified their shared focus early:

I think Greg realized that the kids are always my bottom line. It’s always about the kids for me, *always*. And so, I always want to make the school experience a positive one for kids so that they can achieve, and they can succeed, and they can feel that in themselves.

Later in the conversational interview, Bryn said: “I think that the more that we were able to work together, the more I could ask him. The more we could do. And the more he could teach me, too.” About a year after they met through their work on the provincial level project, Greg and Bryn were again working and learning together, this time in their home school board.

Greg spoke about the learning relationship he has shared with Bryn and how it had developed over time. Regarding their first meeting, Greg said he didn't think much of it; "no big deal."

I thought it was great how somebody's taking an interest in the [Indigenous curriculum] part, the children. 'Cause again, that was one of the things that probably draws us together, is my big thing is the kids. I don't care about anything else. I just want the best for the kids. And to be honest, the [First Nation] kids, *that's* my focus.

Moving from that first meeting, Greg said,

We went from there to being co-workers, and over time I feel like that relationship has molded, not just a coworker relationship, a friendship.... I feel like Bryn is a friend of mine that I can go to that I trust, if I need help. If I need advice. If I need to vent. Any of those things. We've done lots of venting. And that relationship means a *lot* to me.

From the start, Greg knew that he could trust Bryn and could ask for help when needed. When Greg was engaged in professional writing, Bryn had a significant impact:

Bryn was very influential on my writing, coming up with ideas, how to express myself, keeping me on track on what I wanted to do, versus what I thought I had to do. So, just that relationship has been great.

He concluded by saying that while he and Bryn no longer see each other at work on a daily basis, "there's not that feeling of distance" and again emphasized trust.

The writing that Greg referenced above also had a great impact on Bryn. She described collaborating with Greg and eagerly waiting to see how he would depict his ideas. This often led to her further learning as Greg drew on Indigenous symbols and teachings. Through Greg's work, Bryn saw students' experiences in a new way, which she described as highly compelling.

Greg: I *was* these kids growing up....

Bryn: When Greg talked to me about the kids, I *heard* the kids. And the work that he could then send to the [organization] was then really the voices of the kids. And that was extremely powerful.

Bryn emphasized how important that collaborative work was. In other settings as well, learning alongside Greg was highly meaningful in her professional life.

Bryn spoke about Greg's openness to sharing his stories and teachings. She said, "Greg was always open to me and to my questions and to allowing me in to seeing a little bit of that. It made me aware of a different worldview." Together they recounted how one of Greg's stories, which was drawn from his teaching experience, made Bryn aware of an Indigenous cultural teaching that schools were unknowingly disregarding. When Greg shared the teaching—and how he learned it—Bryn was able to share the information with other colleagues. For Bryn, saying, "Let's consider this" to thirty other educators was raising an opportunity to "show respect in some way that maybe you weren't aware of in the past." This reflected one of Greg's earlier comments; when he first became aware of this specific teaching, his response was, "step back and rethink the idea of connection. And respect." He explained it this way:

As teachers, we have to understand that a kid's going to see you doing something with that rock and say, 'Hey, you didn't do that properly. You don't take it as serious as you should. You don't take *me* as serious, then, as you should.... That's *my* culture right there, and it's not a joke to be painted.'

By sharing his stories and teachings, Greg supported Bryn in her own professional learning and in guiding others. Bryn recognized the value of this.

Greg: All these teachings and these things like that, these are all things that have been given to me and I [have] always been told that these are not your teachings to hold onto, these are your teachings to share. And—or else why have them? All these things here, I just try to take the voices that have been given to me and keep them going. I don't know, I'm not an expert by any means, but if I know something, if I feel something, I will share. I don't even question.

Bryn: Yeah, and so I have directly benefited all the time from that.

Greg: But it's a two-way street. She's the person I can go to when I need it the most. I mean during that period of time

Bryn: Yeah

Greg: And that was important to me. Still is. But it's just a different context. Now we joke around a little more and laugh a little more. Ask other questions.

In this context, Greg was emphasizing that he too had been learning. He shared, "This isn't part of how I grew up," but spoke about a journey "that has changed me a lot in [several] years. I'm not the same person I was [previously]." Greg's own learning became part of Bryn's.

In another story, Greg and Bryn recounted an experience of when Indigenous students' family experiences *were* respected through educators' practices. In this instance, Greg felt that some of the students "got it. They knew it." Being part of these positive experiences alongside Greg was another form of learning for Bryn. Greg's childhood stories were also profoundly meaningful in shaping Bryn's awareness of teachers' impact and practical steps that can be taken to promote social justice. In one case, Greg's story led Bryn to consider exclusion, unequal access, and literacy on a gut level as she took in the story and shared it with other educators.

As Bryn spoke about learning from Greg and passing on this learning to help shape educators' practices for the benefit of students, Greg emphasized relationships. Within "the relationship part," Greg could tell how Bryn related with children in the school system.

Greg: I know that Bryn has kids' best interests and always has. You can sense that, that those relationships with those kids mean the *world* to Bryn, and that the kid is supported and feels *loved*. If not by anybody, then at least by you, right?

Bryn: Yeah. For sure.

Greg: 'Cause a lot of kids don't have that. And as teachers we *should* be that person. And that's why I got into teaching, was to do that.

At another point in the conversational interview, Greg described Bryn's orientation toward children this way:

[She has] that mothering comfort level, like I could see a student gravitating toward Bryn because she has that sense of care. Love. Not going to turn you away. Not going to judge you. Is going to try to make students feel like you belong.

Greg emphasized the importance of students' stories. Giving a specific example he said, "The kid has a story. So, instead of harping on the kid... why don't you listen to the *story*, find out what the *story* is." Greg pointed out, "That background, that important piece we don't always have, those are important to Bryn." He says, "It's important that we respect that, value that *story*, and to not judge based on what you think is right there... sometimes those stories get lost."

Greg further explained why it matters to take in stories:

It's an important part, I feel, of being Indigenous, is somebody's got to hear our *story*. There's a story you hear on TV, the story you hear in the books, but that's not the truth. Our story, that's a capture, a moment, a piece of it, that's not my story today.

It seems to me that honouring personal stories was a form of reciprocity. Bryn highly valued Greg's willingness to share his own stories to help her to further understand the experiences of Indigenous students, and Bryn's care for these stories honoured Greg.

Along with learning through stories that Greg shared, Bryn also learned through subtle ways that he taught and interacted. She described an instance where he was aware of strong emotions in a group and addressed this through the song he chose to play on the drum.

Bryn: Even though it was done without people knowing explicitly what was happening, Greg was healing the room. For the people who were open to it—and *that* was powerful, to know that that could be done. That openness to share that, to provide that healing, that was just powerful to me, that was just a wonderful thing.

Greg: To do what I thought was right.

Contrasting this with the possibility of leaving the group on a negative note, Bryn said, "Greg fixed all of that before we left the room" and that it was "pretty cool to be part of that." Bryn reflected on that experience:

Our relationship is complicated because there's the overt stuff that I can talk about... sometimes it's a direct teaching that I can then take to the teachers, like the rock story. And sometimes it's a gradual, or subtle, or unconscious way that I've learned to be, that I

can then use indirectly with people. Which is really powerful too. So, it's another way in to making a space for our worldview to be bigger.

While becoming more aware of certain cultural practices and teachings, Bryn was also learning about a way of being.

Greg articulates Bryn's effect on how he values his own voice:

Bryn has made me realize it's OK to have a voice. And I do have a voice that I can use that voice. To help. People. Kids in particular. And I started to always want to think, "Who am I to do this," or things like that...I think I value my opinion more when it comes to sharing it... Bryn has been able to say—and other people—but Bryn for the most part, saying, "No, your voice has to be heard."

Greg described a change in confidence through Bryn's influence. Bryn responded by saying, "So, I think we've both been able to grow in who we are and what we do." They both gave further examples, with Greg talking about having the confidence to assert the importance of seeing students' daily experiences, "to get a true understanding of what these kids *need* to be successful in school and in life in general." Bryn underscored this in terms of being "more aware of where the child is coming from." For Greg, it was important to "make people question," a quality that Bryn appreciated.

Bryn and Greg shared heartfelt thanks and humour as they concluded by telling each other what relating together has meant—including how they became better teachers through one another's influence—and what they have learned. As part of this, Bryn expressed feeling "really lucky that I've had the opportunity to work with you, and to know you, because I think that you brought things to me that I wouldn't have learned any other way." After she shared more about this learning, Greg said that he had "learned a lot from Bryn as well." This included trust, "knowing that there are teachers out there who just want what's best for the kids, doesn't matter where they're from, their background, colour of their skin, anything like that, just a kid's a kid. To value that." Following their closing expressions of gratitude, Greg said, "It's a journey,

right? It doesn't stop. Just because we stopped working together doesn't mean it necessarily stops."

Summary

Greg and Bryn's learning relationship spanned several years of shared work, good conversations, and mutual support and teaching. Much of what they described was about how the other interacted and made people feel; trust, comfort, and belonging are words drawn out of their experiences. Their deep trust and respect for each other was grounded in a shared depth of care for students. They brought each other very different forms of strength and support: Greg openly shared insight from his own life experience and Indigenous teachings, and Bryn shared academic facility and strong confidence in Greg and what he had to say. They saw benefits for students through their own direct learning and growth, and through how they could support educators in their thinking about Indigenous students' school experiences.

The dimensions of temporality, sociality, and place (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000) are evident here. It took time for trust to build between Greg and Bryn, and time for them to share with one another on a deepening level. Greg explained how, over time, their relationship changed from being colleagues to being friends. Bryn felt she had much to learn from Greg, and time was important in that learning process; she explained how she could not ask all her questions at first, but could eventually ask bigger questions. Over time, she learned from Greg's stories, through which he shared his experiential knowledge as an Indigenous educator and student.

In terms of sociality, both Greg and Bryn referred to personal questions and areas for growth. They were able to support each other in those areas in a complimentary way. Thus, their inner experiences of growth and learning were tied to their social experiences interacting

with one another. Greg and Bryn identified students' well-being as central to their goals, and central to what they trusted in one another or gained from one another. Greg commented on how Bryn interacted with students, conveying a sense of love and belonging to those of all backgrounds. Empathy is the first word that comes to mind when I consider Bryn's stories of learning from Greg. She said that when Greg spoke, she "could hear the kids." She sought to better understand students' and families' perspectives in order to guide other educators in supporting them. Thus, in a reciprocal manner, Greg and Bryn felt enriched as educators through relating with one another, with students as the focal point.

Greg and Bryn's stories were situated in a variety of places or social contexts. They interacted with teacher groups, students, on large education projects, and in school board settings. They spoke about experiences shared and lessons learned in particular settings, with the implication of future application in new settings.

Simone and Sky
Passion, practice, and change



Art Statement

This image of a school with students bursting out represents what I heard from Simone and Sky in two ways. On a literal level, it illustrates the school-based focus of their work—students spilling out the doors with new knowledge to apply and share. This image is also a metaphor for educators' inner work that spills into action. Sky described how her own learning and understanding, which developed with Simone's support, affected her thinking, relating, teaching, and leadership.

Context

Simone, an Indigenous educator, and Sky, a non-Indigenous educator, had related together for more than five years. For most of that time, Simone was an Indigenous educator at the school board level who was invited to actively support students, families, teachers, and administrators at a school where Sky was a teacher and then an administrator.

Storyline

Sky began by describing how her thinking and teaching practice had been shaped through relating with Simone. Regarding teaching in a diverse context that included Indigenous students, Sky framed her learning this way:

I had an understanding of how important it was... to talk about culture, make kids feel empowered.... And Simone supported me with that, and I started to learn a lot from her... I knew I was passionate about kids and learning and culture and how that helps identity. But then our work *really* went to another level when I started to really understand the bigger picture of what was going on with the education system and our Indigenous kids.

Sky talked about moving from a teacher role to an administrator role, which is when “*we really* started to work closely together” with the full school scope in mind. Sky continued:

I'm constantly making mistakes and trying to understand even that diversity *within* the community, and even how families work.... 'Cause you're in your Whiteness and your privilege, you're not conscious, you mess up all the time, right? You're insensitive. I lean on her a lot to help me work through some of those things.... Together we planned a

spring concert that was hip-hop dancing, but they learned about residential schools, they learned about identity. The whole thing was an amazing production that we put on. And we worked really closely together to do that, and we also consulted with [Elder]. So, we've just done amazing work, and I want to continue that.

Sky was open with anecdotes about her own learning, including what she saw as mistakes and the emotional element of feeling “fired up” when the “true history” of Canada was not given to learners—just as it was not for her in school. To conclude her opening statements about relating to Simone, Sky said, “I would not and *will* not continue on *anything* without her guidance, ‘cause I’d never ever want to think I know what I’m doing, ‘cause I really don’t. The more I learn, the more I realize I really don’t know.” This need for expertise, guidance and support—and Simone’s openness and willingness to provide these—was voiced throughout the conversational interview.

Simone shared her perspectives on relating with Sky:

One thing I have to say [our school board]... has done well is allowing some opportunity for Indigenous and non-Indigenous teachers to work together.... You come to *learn* about each other *personally*, which that relationship piece is key, and it’s key to Indigenous people. Not only in building relationship, but in being able to work together. Because then there’s a trust. Especially when you’re dealing with heavy things.

Drawing parallels with teacher-parent relationships within school settings, she said:

[If] you don’t have a relationship... they’re not going to feel comfortable sharing. ‘Cause they don’t know you. So, there’s a risk, right, in opening yourself up to be open and honest.

This trust built over time has been foundational for Sky and Simone. They first met when Simone was asked to provide specific support at Sky’s school, and had since worked together extensively and developed a friendship.

Simone valued school boards “striving to create those opportunities to *learn*.” She shared her views and teachings in response to Sky’s earlier comments about making mistakes:

How I was taught, Sky, it's *never* mistakes. You're not making mistakes, they're all learning opportunities.... What have you learned? What is Creator trying to teach you? What do you need to do now? And it becomes a mistake if you keep repeating the same mistake over and over again. I think it's—a lot of Elders will say, when you have motivation and intent, it's that pureness of heart and spirit of what you're doing.

Within making mistakes, Simone said “it's the intent [and] spirit of what you're trying to do to create change for the betterment of *all* people, but especially Indigenous people.” Simone anchors to the idea of “personal growth.” She said, “If we go back to that understanding of our roles in life are about developing mentally, emotionally, physically, spiritually; that wholeness and well-being, and that constant striving to work to be your best self” each day. Reflecting on this, Simone asked, “Could our educators look at it this way?” Referring to non-Indigenous educators who “take up the fight with us to create and make change at various levels,” Simone said that “we can't do it alone.” Non-Indigenous educators could be part of “reciprocated learning” and “modelling for people you're working with of what's possible.” Non-Indigenous teachers can model “that you *can* learn if you're open and willing” and that “learning is for all.” Simone expressed how “Indigenous education” includes not only “supporting our Indigenous students,” but education and knowledge in a wider sense.

Simone spoke about the importance of building relationships with teachers as well as with administrators. “Teacher-to-teacher” interactions can mean “doing something in *one* classroom with a set of students and seeing if that might grow with the other teachers.” Simone explained how relating with administrators is another important piece; she identified that “true change is going to come from those administrators” given that “there's a lot of power that [school-based administrators] have in creating the direction of change in their building.” While not everyone was open to focusing on Indigenous connections and teaching, Simone said: “You work with the people who are *willing*, and you try and you start here, and you try and expand it

and grow it out.” In Simone’s work with Sky, the openness of administration “created an opportunity” where they were asking, “What else can we do?” Over time, school initiatives grew in scope and depth. Simone was first asked to support specific members of the school community, then over time developed collaborations with the full staff and wider school community through professional development, large school-wide projects, and her ongoing availability to support administrators and teachers in implementing Indigenous perspectives.

Simone described relating with the administration in a way that was open and meaningful for her:

It’s that truly *collaborative*, working together, alongside. Not above. Even though, from a hierarchical perspective, Sky, as an [administrator], was higher than me as a [teacher supporting other educators]. But yet we came together, it wasn’t about our positions. It was about the work.... How I feel, from my end, [is] that she valued and honoured, that it wasn’t that I didn’t have the same position as her, but she valued that I had knowledge to share, and a willingness to learn from that knowledge. But then to take that knowledge, and put it into practice within the school.... But if you’re not willing to share it, what use is that knowledge?

Simone connected her interactions with Sky to Indigenous forms of learning: “Traditionally, learning from an Indigenous perspective, it was who had the knowledge. Not who had what position.” Going back in the centuries, she gave the example of a highly skilled hunter who would be recognized as such and placed in a leadership role by and for the community:

They elevated you for that amount of time to support, and then you went back and did whatever it is you did. It was about seeing the skill and knowledge, and allowing opportunity for that then to be shared for the betterment of a community.

Instead of focusing on titles Simone said, “It’s about the learning of how we can grow together, and what that looks like,” an idea that these two emphasized.

Simone distinguished between “meaningful,” “authentic” learning practices and gaining knowledge for the sake of power or as a “stepping stone to *further*” or to profit. Another way of framing this was considering whether what we are teaching is “surface level” or “genuine.”

Within this, Simone explained the importance of referencing where “your knowledge come[s] from” and “what nation [you are] connected to.” Referring to a discussion with students about media coverage regarding the controversy around Joseph Boyden’s identity,⁹ Simone spoke about “blood and belonging” as “two pieces” on a “continuum” where “both have traditional elements of understanding.” She modeled referencing where she gained knowledge by saying, “This is what I’ve come to understand,” acknowledging the Elders of a particular First Nation group or knowledge keepers with whom she had come into contact and saying, “This what I’ve been taught.” Simone expressed that “when people aren’t referencing, then that’s like plagiarism.” Simone explained that “we only have a right to tell our own stories, unless you’ve been *gifted* the right.” When someone says, “I’ve been gifted the right by *this* person to share *this* story or *this* teaching’... [it] creates that whole dynamic of understanding and coming together.” Simone highlighted meaningful, informed interpersonal dynamics as central to sharing knowledge.

Responding to Simone, Sky said, “It really comes down to that relationship and that trust, I think.” Sky spoke about the importance of being “open” and “aware” of her own “privilege and power and Whiteness and all that stuff” in order to grow a relationship into a friendship. She said, “Educators need that humility in order to become allies.... In order to build that relationship.” She also emphasized “that action piece,” which for her meant asking for help in response to the school board’s expectation that administrators improve in Indigenous education. She recalled taking this approach: “Well I’m definitely not going to pretend like *I* know what *I*’m doing. I’m going to talk to Simone [and]... some other people that I’ve come to know.”

⁹ Simone referred to media coverage that questions author Joseph Boyden’s Indigenous identity. As an example, see Globe and Mail (<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/joseph-boyden-where-are-you-from/article33441604/>)

Referring to Simone's explanation about referencing knowledge, Sky said, "That European perspective of people stealing stories is still colonization.... I think that's a missing piece that I've now learned today to do," referring to how she will cite Simone as a "well-respected Indigenous educator" when she shares what she has learned with others.

Simone spoke of the value of "learning and growing" through experience over time. Regarding many years of learning as an adult, she said, "It has been a journey of *myself* learning... constantly learning from the Elders and taking all of that in, that it shaped my knowledge." Simone called for balance between the university-based learning that is valued in Eurocentric institutions and "seeking that knowledge of *experience*" that she values as an Indigenous person. Gradual interpersonal learning is something Simone applied when working with educators. When Sky and others "started questioning and asking," Simone's response was "Ah. Time." She then provided resources, one by one:

Slowly, right? You're ready for one part. Let's read, let's take in. Okay, now you're ready for the next. And it's the learning that you uncover and unpack so that when *you're* ready, and when *you're* ready, you're able to extend that in your *own* experiences.

Regarding "lived experiences" versus learning only from books or formal education, Simone spoke of "that value of *doing* connected to action to create change." When a non-Indigenous teacher says, "'Okay, I haven't lived it [Indigenous ways], but this is what I've come to experience from the things I've been able to learn,'" Simone said that "in that referencing, you're showing how you can *walk* in both worlds of education from an Indigenous perspective and education from a Eurocentric perspective." She gave examples of how both worlds can come into play in the classroom.

Sky, Simone, and colleagues collaboratively offered students the opportunity to gain knowledge through experience. This wide array included land-based learning with an Elder,

traditional games, feasting with an Elder where community members came and cooked, a dance collaboration with a studio and Indigenous educators, simulations, an interactive teleconference with an Indigenous woman in political office, a social-emotional learning program, and a book study. Sky emphasized learning through experience; instead of being “sat in a desk and spoke[n] at with a wrong perspective, they were *given experiences*, right? Again, it’s all about *experiences*. And direct experiences with Indigenous people. That’s what breaks it down!” In the midst of speaking about the various activities—and the teacher and administrator learning opportunities that were co-occurring—Simone said, “It wasn’t just, again, hearing, it was *doing*. It was learning. It was that all-encompassing.” In other words, “It wasn’t just talking, but it was living it.” Through the learning opportunities that the school collaboratively offered with Simone, Elders, community members, and other groups, Sky said with confidence: “At least I know that those [number of] kids at [school] were exposed to the truth.” The “intense,” “multi-faceted,” and “consistent” experiential learning that took place at the school over about six months was preceded by Simone’s support of teachers and administrators in a variety of ways.

Both Sky and Simone referred to a point in their relating and working when things became more “serious” or “major,” tracing this to personal recognition of the importance of this learning and a need for guidance. While Simone and Sky’s working relationship-turned friendship was growing, so was Sky’s own understanding of “power” and “privilege” and “the miseducation of Canadians” within public school systems. Speaking from experience as a White teacher, she said:

The whole Canadian education system is taught predominantly by White people who have been miseducated and carry their power and privilege around and don’t even recognize it.... *Nothing* is going to change until individual teachers are given the space, the education, direct experience with Indigenous people, so they can unpack the fact that they’re carrying around a lot of bias—and maybe unconscious bias—that they don’t even know. They were socialized to call them “Indians” and “cowboy.” It’s not like an angry

thing, but until they're given that space, and confronted, and go through some transformational stuff spiritually, *nothing's* going to change.... Until teachers realize that the decisions they are making are affecting their Indigenous kids negatively, they're not going to see any reason to change.

Sky believed that teachers need to understand “racism,” residential schools,” and “intergenerational trauma” and yet that won't occur until

they figure out for themselves that they gotta do some unpacking, and some changes. And that can happen through direct relationship *so easily*. We don't need to be throwing them *books*. We need to have Elders in our schools. We need Simones in our schools. They need to be able to build the relationships. 'Cause that's where it starts. When you hear someone's *story*, how can you not be affected? It's their *story*.

Sky believed this “will jump-start the process of decolonization.” She explained, “You can't decolonize until you understand what it is. And understand *your role*. I still have a role in it.... They have to understand their own self, their own contribution to continuing this colonization that's still going on in our schools.” Sky explained how deep-seated this learning is for her: “Once you change, you've changed. You can't go back. I can't go back to a school that is not an anti-oppression type of environment, and is not going to be looking at specifically how we build our relationships with our Indigenous kids and families.” As Sky spoke and shared her own stories, I saw the learning she had undertaken alongside Simone as personal, interpersonal, and societal-level.

Simone also spoke about the need to “speak out, to create change” for Indigenous students and “for all.” She shared the concern that “teachers who don't know [are] sharing misperceptions, misconceptions, elements that still enhance that privilege by not just what they're teaching but *how* they're teaching. It's inherent. And that's all the way along that there's never changes.” Simone and Sky returned to the importance of experience in learning as they discuss potential course-based learning opportunities for current teachers. Reflecting on what she learned in university and then in her teaching practice, Simone said that while pre-

service teachers could learn more before entering the field, course-based learning while teaching would be effective “because they need some experience to make connections, and then to think and reflect and then come back.” Sky, who was in agreement, said, “Cause it’s a journey.” Sky underscored the urgency and weight of this learning journey given that “this is the future, it’s our kids. Nothing’s going to change if we don’t do it right. And the *power* that we have as educators is *incredible*.”

Simone spoke about “the power of *story*” to interrupt persistent discrimination and to transform educators and students alike:

Story isn’t just an Indigenous piece, story is about opportunity for all. Opportunity to teach, but opportunity to listen and learn, and opportunity to be transformed. And then to use that knowledge to add to *your* story, or another person’s story, as you move along in your journey.... So, each of us, as educators, are writing, are helping to write, not only our own continued stories, but the stories of the kids we’re teaching. Because of the experience we are giving them. The experiences we are exposing them to. Those opportunities. That if we miss those learning opportunities, that’s when then we create, we continue to, I guess, reaffirm those stereotypes. We reaffirm the racism and the discrimination or the prejudices. We reaffirm elements of privilege of “this is right, this is wrong.” Versus, it’s a story. This is my story. It may not be yours, but its mine and it has value, and it needs to be honoured. So how do we honour those stories?

Simone closely tied story and experience. She framed all school learning with a framework of story as a way for teachers to engage while meeting assessment and curriculum expectations.

Recognizing the exhausting expectations on elementary teachers, Simone posited presenting literacy, inquiry, or scientific discovers’ work as story. Later, she shared an anecdote that illustrated “interact[ing] in a story-like fashion” as central in “taking the time” to build school-based relationships.

Simone and Sky shared stories about school interactions with Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators, highlighting the value of truly listening to students and families and being “willing to open,” as Simone phrased it. After sharing perspectives on knowledge, identity,

learning, and developing respectful social interactions, Simone refers to certain non-Indigenous individuals who “have that spirit. And intent, right? They are Indigenous in spirit. Not by blood, but by spirit. That sense of belonging.” Referring to her earlier mention of “blood and belonging,” she continued, “But by that sense of belonging, and the places they situate themselves, and the teachings that are true to who they are. And it’s not just about the bloodline of Indigenous, right? But it’s a bit of a balance or continuum on those two realms.”

As the conversation continued, Simone pointed out that “there is so much to know.” She said, “Even as Indigenous people, we don’t know everything. Even those of us that have *some* knowledge, we only have a little bit of *our* knowledge.” Thus, while non-Indigenous teachers “*can’t* know everything,” Simone advocated for providing them with the “tools” they need. She believed that when the gap of “knowledge and understanding and support” for teachers is lessened, “the other gap with actual students will start to slowly dissipate.” She saw teachers’ process of taking in this knowledge, understanding, and support as ongoing. Simone said,

It’s not just a one-shot deal and you’re done. It’s that continual journey.... but how do we move forward in the journey when we don’t have knowledgeable people to support? Non-Indigenous people open and willing to learn?... And the *time*.... [and] institutional support.

When Simone said the word “journey” at the beginning of this quotation, Sky joined her in unison. This relational, ongoing journey, one that took time and awareness and openness, was a focal point for Simone and Sky.

Summary

Qualities and experiences of Simone and Sky’s learning relationship included: passion for big picture goals in student and teacher learning, interpersonal connection and mutual valuing, and drawing in a wide array of people to engage in active learning such as Elders, community members, and colleagues. Simone and Sky were passionate about Indigenous

students having the best school experience possible, and about all students coming to understand Indigenous perspectives and the historic relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. Simone's school board position brought the two educators into contact, an opportunity to learn and support that they fully embraced. Friendship continued to sustain their interactions and learning. Sky highly valued being able to lean on Simone's guidance, and Simone happily shared her experiences, feeling honoured that Sky was willing to translate knowledge into action in support of students.

The dimension of sociality (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006) is fascinating to trace through Simone and Sky's conversational interview. One example is the priority they placed on collaboration and relating to one another in a non-hierarchical manner. Simone appreciated that Sky "valued that I had knowledge to share," and that she displayed "a willingness to learn from that knowledge" and then to "take that knowledge, and put it into practice within the school." Simone underscored the value of a genuine stance in learning and showed the importance of crediting those who are the source of one's knowledge. She said that process "creates that whole dynamic of understanding and coming together," which is different from an approach where knowledge is for personal gain. In this example, a personal attitude toward knowledge interacted with interpersonal collaboration and non-hierarchical approaches to relating. At another point, Simone shared her traditional Indigenous teachings about community leadership that draws on people's strengths to benefit all, situating her views on leadership and collaboration within historically anchored teachings.

The dimension of temporality (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006) played a part in how Simone and Sky described their learning and relating. Sky spoke about her personal journey as a non-Indigenous educator who cared about Indigenous education, sharing anecdotes and thoughts

about past and present learning while looking ahead to the future. When Sky described past mistakes and said that she needed Simone's ongoing guidance, Simone reframed mistakes in terms of personal growth, "developing mentally, emotionally, physically, spiritually." Simone valued Sky's intentions, seeing a desire for ongoing learning and positive changemaking, not a collection of mistakes. Simone, too, drew on her own learning journey as she shared teachings and experiences. Thus, while Simone and Sky shared a span of time as collaborating educators, their insights and stories were drawn from a longer timeline of personal and professional experiences.

In terms of place (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), Simone and Sky's stories were grounded in one school community. They spoke about the flow of people into that school community, including how Simone became involved and those she brought to meet and teach the students and staff, and the learning opportunities that resulted. Simone and Sky offered students a base of knowledge and experience to bring with them as they went forward from that place.

Brittany and Christine
Fueling the growth



Art statement

This painting is meant to represent the many roots of learning that Christine had been developing. The blue water coming in is Brittany's influence in Christine's growth. By the time Christine met Brittany, she was at a point in her own growth and learning where she wanted to know more about Indigenous perspectives. Brittany's presence and firsthand experience were eagerly welcomed, helping Christine and her students to grow in their learning and to respond in action.

Context

Brittany and Christine built on years of working in the same school board and on multiple encounters in the school where Christine was a non-Indigenous classroom teacher. Brittany, an Indigenous teacher, held roles where she would visit schools to support students and teachers. More recently, Brittany and Christine shared their first sustained classroom experience together when Christine was one of the first to respond to Brittany's email, which invited all teachers of her grade level to host Brittany for a multi-day set of lessons on Indigenous perspectives and residential schools.

Storyline

Christine gave personal background to why she was excited and "jumped right on" when given the opportunity to host Brittany in her classroom. Through following the Tragically Hip that summer, she and her family had listened to Chanie Wenjack's story, and her child had even asked to walk the tracks when the family travelled past a location mentioned in the *Secret Path*¹⁰ production—a resource that Brittany used with her students as well. She mentioned this family

¹⁰ For more on the *Secret Path* film or book, please see: <http://secretpath.ca>

experience at the beginning and end of the conversational interview; her personal connection to this content was strong. She had also been reading on her own, seeking to understand more about Indigenous perspectives and the Indigenous-non-Indigenous dynamics she observed around her.

In addition to this connection through Canadian pop culture and her new personal learning, Christine had a longstanding desire to learn more as a teacher and to more effectively educate all students. She described growing up in a “very multicultural” setting where racism was evident, but where she did not remember interacting with or having conversations about First Nations people. She said:

It’s a topic, in general, that is not *comfortable* for me.... I’m not from [this city], I’m from [city in another part of the province]. OK, so my upbringing, and even in school, very different. I don’t even, to be honest with you, I don’t even remember having an Indigenous student in my school. I felt the education there wasn’t present. Just not having enough background and history and teaching, I feel there’s a gap in *my* learning. And having you [Brittany] come in is amazing for the students, but it’s also wonderful for me. It helps me feel more confident when teaching and talking about it. Because I do have to teach it, right, and I don’t want to misrepresent anything. And I *want* to understand it, and I *want* to appreciate it, and I *want* to represent it properly. So, I feel like having you there is comforting for me.

Christine said that she was taking notes while Brittany was presenting, and the two discuss how the sessions were like “working professional development” for teachers. Christine believed that “more people need that,” and mentioned how her partner even wanted to come in for Brittany’s sessions! Christine was firm in her pursuit of learning more, and is clear that Brittany’s presence was a very important piece of this, both on a personal level and as she lives out her responsibilities as a teacher.

Brittany pointed out that Christine’s way of interacting with her has a meaningful effect on how students learn.

Brittany: Really, it's the teacher engagement though that really determines the depth of the learning. I think that that's super important, and if you don't have classroom teacher interest or engagement, if they don't value that learning, then the kids won't value it as much....

Christine: If they feel the teacher's invested and it's meaningful to the teacher and it's being presented that way, you're right. You can grab them and pull them in.

Brittany: And well your kids even went further with it.

For Brittany, Christine's engagement was a determining factor in the success of the sessions.

Brittany found this engagement particularly meaningful as it was the time of year when teachers were preparing for provincial standardized testing. Christine responded that, "This is life. This is more important in our mind... [standardized testing] is a snapshot." Christine valued the significance of the content Brittany taught, and found her way of sharing it to be compelling.

Christine: It was so good for me, and I think that's why I just jumped at it. Because I feel I need that comfort and that confidence. The only way *I'm* going to get it is if—it's one thing to read about things in a book, but it's another to have somebody who lives it. This is her life, and this is her history. I felt good about it, and I feel more confident going forward. I wish I had it sooner, to be honest with you. Not that—it's never too late, but I do wish that was sooner for me, 'cause I've had to teach some Indigenous curriculum through Social Studies... and I mean I teach a little bit from the book, and I can't talk off of really a lot. Which is not—I like to be able to talk from experience, and talking to others, and now I can bring that in.

Brittany: And telling stories. It's storytelling, right?... A lot of my teaching is telling stories.

For Christine, Brittany's presence brought knowledge through a personal element that she had not otherwise accessed.

As the two continued to talk about the value of learning from Brittany's stories, Brittany explained that she teaches differently in each class, based on the students in that room.

Brittany: Every classroom is so different, and then I leave and I'm thinking "Oh I should have talked about this," and then I have to believe that I taught what I was meant to teach for that group of kids, that they sort of drove the learning that was going to happen, and I could only just give them in the time that we have... I don't want to overwhelm them either.

Brittany went on to say that although students wanted to talk about the topics she brought in, understanding their age and development was important. The conversation continued,

Christine: Absolutely. It's heavy for them

Brittany: It's heavy for them and you need to make sure you wrap things up for them and don't leave it hanging. That's been a real big part of my work, is making sure there's closure to it. And not closure in a sense that

Christine: I'm done talking about it

Brittany: It's done. It's what are we going to do next? What is the change-making, what is the ReconciliAction. And I really like, Christine kept that word. So, what is the *action* part.

Christine: What is the action part? And we had talked about that kind of when you were here. Thought, no, we can't just leave it. I don't want it to be just a three-day lesson and that's it and we're done. We know we have problems here. What can we do as a group to act now? We talked, Brittany talked about ReconciliAction. To talk about it is one thing, but that's not the point of ReconciliAction. The point of it is to get out and act. So

Brittany: To learn more about it

Christine: To learn more about it, yeah.

Thus, Brittany's sessions were responsive to the students—what she already knew about them, and how they responded to what she was sharing—as well as to Christine's passion. Their next steps were also designed in a responsive manner.

Christine and her class chose a specific issue through which to deepen their learning. This involved watching a short documentary, doing research, having class discussions, and thinking through the political stances already taken by the government. Students expressed their learning and concerns to the government through a medium of their choice. For both Christine and Brittany, supporting students in taking action on a local, relevant issue was an important part of their work together. Brittany emphasized that taking a change-making direction with Christine's class was a response to those individuals and that group, to where the class wanted to

go with their learning. She gave examples of different discussions and processes that she had undertaken in classes where students were in different circumstances.

Christine and Brittany discussed difficult conversations that could arise when talking about social issues in their city. They shared the belief that it is important to have these “uncomfortable conversation[s]” within a “safe space” and “structured environment.” For Christine, these conversations were purposeful “because we want [students], as they get older, to *not* have preconceived notions, to *not* be racist, to be human and humble and understanding.” Brittany talked about teaching students about terms, considering our knowledge base. She noted that people could identify with the ideas of language and “living off the land,” which were topics that were safe and comfortable to talk about across grade levels.

These conversations contributed to Christine’s learning as well. She reiterated the impact of moving to the city where she witnessed racism against Indigenous people and social issues that she did not understand.

Christine: Having these raw conversations, even having you come in, it’s good. I need that. Because I want to know why, I want to know what I can do. So that—I don’t want to partake in any sort of racist views or fall into some sort of trap that other people so commonly—I hate to say it, but it’s honest, it is very, it’s there in this city. And I don’t want anything to do with it. I want to be a part of the good side, the pro side, the—I want to be the act

Brittany: The right side of history!

Christine: Right!

Brittany: Here we go, we’re going to be on the right side of history [laughs].

It seemed that working alongside Brittany gave Christine tangible means to learn and to act.

For Christine, part of putting learning into action was recognizing that individual students may need specific support. Brittany noticed the way that Christine interacted with Indigenous students, and linked this to her openness to learning.

Brittany: They've got this though. [Colleague] and Christine get that piece.... I never worry about kids in their class.... Because I know that their needs are looked after. Like they're going to have clothing, they're going to have—whatever, right?

Christine: Food

Brittany: Yeah, food.

Christine: Just comfort and kindness, yeah.

Brittany: And if you can't get it yourself, you will find a way to get it, right?

Christine: Yeah, absolutely.

Brittany made a link between teachers who were attentive to Indigenous students in this way and those who were open to working *with* her. This showed the important role of teachers.

Brittany: You can't force a teacher to say, 'I'm going to have Brittany come into my classroom.'

Christine: And how do you change that mindset?

Brittany: Yeah, so how do you change that mindset, and that's where leadership comes in. 'Cause you can do that kind of [professional development] at, you know, staff meetings, or you can have little snapshots.... But it's just getting that engagement from teachers.

Christine: Yeah, and that's again why it's so important to develop it young, because as people get older, it is hard to change mindsets.

Through Christine and Brittany's stories, the point was made that students' well-being at school was related to school climate as well as to individual teachers' and administrators' stances and actions. In other words, connecting and taking action occurred at both curricular and personal levels.

For Brittany, "go[ing] in kid-focused" was prominent as she designed lessons and interacted in the school environment. As seen above, students' well-being was her main concern. She said "teachers are a great part of it, but it's really about kids." Thus, Christine's learning occurred in an environment where Brittany was focused on student learning. The

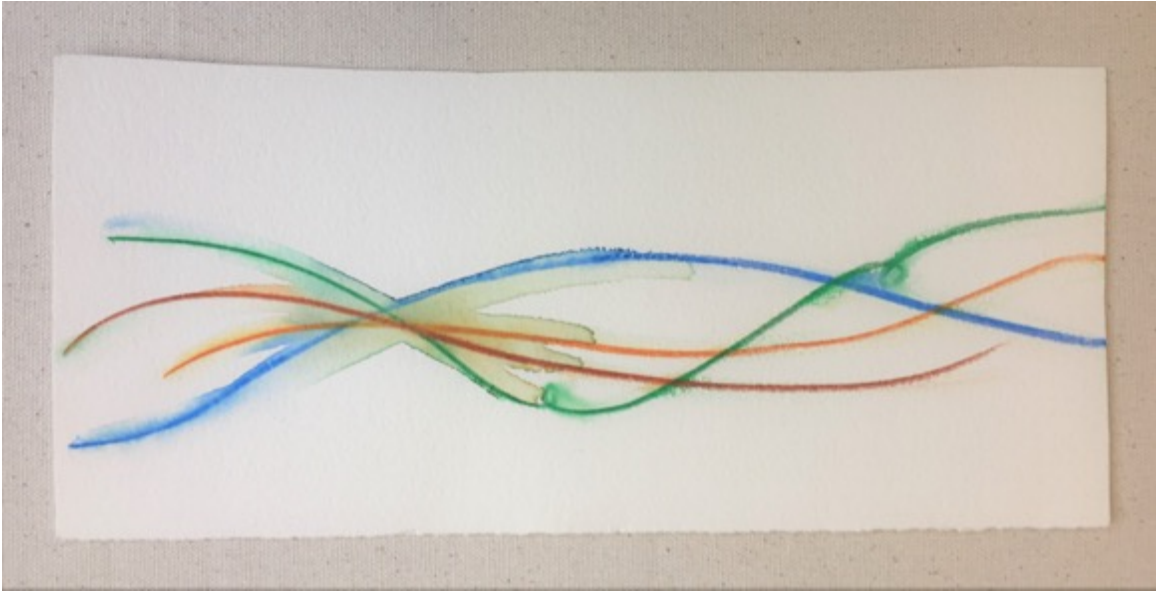
learning relationship that Brittany and Christine were developing seemed to further promote that outcome.

Summary

Temporality, place, and sociality (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006) were integrated in this storyline. Brittany and Christine described a productive learning relationship forming as Christine was seeking out new knowledge that she could apply to her teaching, and Brittany was offering this to teachers of Christine's grade level. On both a personal and professional level, Christine wanted to contribute to learning and positive relationships, not racism and stereotypes, within the city where she taught. Brittany's willingness to share her own stories and to connect Christine's class with new content and an opportunity to take action were timely and greatly appreciated.

Christine spoke about gaining comfort and confidence and Brittany valued Christine's engagement in learning. Thus, Christine's personal motivation and knowledge seeking converged with Brittany's timely offer to support teachers, creating a social learning opportunity for educators and students to share. As a further consideration regarding the dimension of temporality (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), Brittany and Christine's opportunity to learn together for a set of sessions followed several years of interacting within the school where Christine taught and where Brittany had supported students and staff. Their shared physical location over time was part of their storyline, as were personal, family, or professional experiences in other settings. Their stories indicated that students benefited through new learning—theirs and their teachers'—and through these educators' tangible support.

Brittany and Michaela
Ongoing learning in support of students



Art statement

This art piece represents the many strands of Brittany and Michaela's relationship. These strands had been developing over time and included hallway conversations, student support, collaboration on projects, and Michaela hearing about Brittany's work with her colleague Christine's class. These strands of familiarity and connection converged when Brittany taught a series of lessons to Michaela's class.

Context

Michaela, a non-Indigenous classroom teacher, met Brittany, an Indigenous educator, about five years before they spoke with me in this research. Brittany, who held an Indigenous education role with the school board, was often in Michaela's school to support students and staff. Brittany had recently sent an email to all teachers of Michaela's grade, offering to teach a set of lessons to their classes. While Michaela wasn't sure at first, Brittany extended the invitation again when she saw her at the school, and Michaela accepted the offer.

Note: This story is drawn from the conversational interview that Brittany, Michaela, and I shared in addition to three sessions where I observed them in class together.

Storyline

Brittany opened the conversational interview by talking about her multiple-year involvement in Michaela's school. Among other things, this had involved "supporting teachers through understanding where kids are coming from" and assisting in integrating Indigenous content into curriculum areas. She expressed her appreciation for the social environment created by teachers who actively reached out to her for strategies and approaches.

Brittany: They're very open-minded. It's one of my favourite schools to be at, because everybody is just like, "Yeah, let's do this." Anything I pitch, right?

Michaela: Yeah!

Brittany: Like, "Let's do it." Yeah there's been zero hesitance or resistance here, which is really great. And it's everybody... I could walk down the hall and have a conversation with *every* teacher.

Brittany's school board role was focused on building teachers' capacity. Many were saying, "Just give me something to work with" or asking, "What *can* I do and what resources *should* I use?" In Brittany's work with teachers who took up her offer to teach in their classes, Brittany delivered lessons where she shared her own stories and family history, situating these within Canadian-Indigenous politics, history, and current events. She gave plenty of opportunity for students to make connections to their own lives and traditions.

Learning alongside her students during Brittany's lessons had been highly meaningful for Michaela. She spoke about why this sort of learning mattered to her,

Michaela: I think myself, as a non-Indigenous person, there's always that fear that when you talk about these things, that you might not teach the things appropriately, you might not say the right things. There might be questions that are asked of you that you don't

know how to answer.... We kind of glossed over the whole residential school [topic] because as a teacher, I was uncomfortable. I fully admit I did not know enough. And so, it's nice to be able to have somebody be able to come in, not just to have them sort of take over, but I was madly doing notes because if I'm approached with a question, I would like to be able to answer it. I would like to have some background knowledge. And I think the way in which you did it was not only—it was entertaining for the kids as well. Doing the whole *Secret Path*¹¹, and they were able to sort of see things from a different perspective.... Being able to sort of reach out and get some assistance with it teaches us a lot too. I mean I learned a lot that I didn't know.

Brittany: It's stuff that we're not taught.

Michaela: Exactly, because a lot of times we don't want to talk about it. It's uncomfortable.

Brittany: It's uncomfortable and it's painful stuff to talk about. How do you talk about it in an age appropriate way with kids.

Michaela and Brittany discussed some of the thinking behind the teaching and learning they shared. Brittany talked about the dual goals of “making sure that [students] know about it” and introducing various topics at the appropriate or ideal age. When Brittany described her intent as “modelling the teaching” and “informing the teacher,” Michaela concurred that “that’s what we need.” Michaela identifies that she didn’t “feel so strong” in Indigenous education compared to topics like literacy or math; as a result, her orientation was, “I’m open to whatever, you know? Come in, show me, teach me, guide me.” I noticed this as she took notes and listened intently as Brittany taught, once in awhile offering her own personal connections to students.

Michaela shared examples of how her own thinking had been shifting as she learned from Brittany,

Michaela: There were lots of things that you said [that] kind of resonated with me, even in their simplicity. Like you took a really difficult topic that has so many facets, and you kind of talked...I don't know how to say that in words, but it was really just sort of like, “Oh, okay.”

¹¹ For more on the *Secret Path* film or book, please see: <http://secretpath.ca>

Brittany: “Yeah, this is it. This is the way it is. This is just the way it is.”

Michaela: Yeah like even something, you were talking [about how] kids had been in residential schools, and you talked about the process of, you know, so they were taken away from their Mommies and Daddies. So, how do you know how to be a Mommy and a Daddy if you never were raised by a Mommy and a Daddy? And then that cycle continues. And you just kind of explained something that is such a difficult topic and for us here at this school; we deal with the students, we don't deal with the parents a lot. So, we have these bleeding hearts for these kids, and a lot of times, you know, speaking quite frankly, we have frustration towards the older generations, because we're like, “Oh these little kids, they're suffering,” and we take on all of that. And then it was like—when you kind of laid it bare like that, it was like, “okay”.... And it gave me a new perspective. In a very simple, “Oh, yeah, that kind of makes sense,” right?

When Brittany was teaching the students, Michaela was a learner herself. This learning applied to how she viewed and interacted with the students and families in the school.

Brittany explained how she tailored her teaching to the specific students in the class.

These were students she had known through years of working in their school. Referring to a specific part of her lesson, Brittany said certain students and their circumstances “were driving me.” Michaela noted that “it might have been a positive message” toward a particular student. Brittany said “maybe one of [the student's] peers will have caught onto that and be more of an advocate or empathetic” to kids who are in that circumstance. Gaining historical perspectives involved not only teaching about Indian Residential Schools, but “bringing [these] into context” for students,

Brittany: Making sure that kids understand that there was a thriving society here. That was huge, right. Because it's not just like it miraculously appeared. It wasn't just something one day showed up, you know, residential schools. It was *systematic*, it was the government intention. And kids have to realize that. I think that that's the root of so much racism. It's based on frustration and the underlying tones are racism. It's like with us being frustrated with parents, like “Just look after your kids,” or “Just get your kids to school.” Or the lunches, “You can afford to buy a cell phone, or do this, but you can't afford lunches.” Like all of those the undertones are racism, right? It's discriminating against poverty, because we care so much about the children, right? And it's discriminating. I go to that place too. But it's just that whole cycle of poverty.

Michaela commented on how Brittany's teaching gave her the opportunity to think through these things, including considering for whom she had empathy. She described imagining herself or her parents in that situation and how that might shape her. At another point, Brittany and Michaela discussed some of the diversity of Indigenous students' school and family experiences.

Following Brittany's sessions, students also raised conversations with Michaela. The learning experience that Brittany shared with Michaela and the students was both personal and interpersonal.

As Michaela recounted a conversation with a student who was reflecting on Brittany's personal stories, she said it "was interesting because I wasn't quite sure how to respond to that." With respect to the student's perspectives, Brittany recognized "deeper thinking," "character development," and understanding of "deep social justice cause and effect." She later discussed ideal age ranges for teaching certain topics, responding to students' developmental thinking.

Regarding her own life story, Brittany explained the strong positive effect of teachers in her life who were "grounding, and they were reassuring me that education was the way to go." As a student who did not enjoy school, Brittany said, "That's why I became a teacher. To make school better for kids like me." She went on to say,

The traditional way of learning, or Western way of learning and being in a school doesn't work for the majority of our kids, especially those kids who are disconnected or disengaged. So, how can I go back and create support, creating that space, that welcoming or engaging space.

For Brittany, there was significant personal weight to her work in schools, and to the type of learning environments that she was seeking to create.

Regarding her work with teachers to shape learning environments for the benefit of students, Brittany pointed to certain constraints that were in place. Her first example was curriculum,

Brittany: So, we're expecting teachers to teach about the history of Canada without providing the professional development, or building teacher capacity to be able to teach from a First Nations lens.

Michaela: Yeah. And I think from a teacher's standpoint, the curriculum is so *heavy*. . . . Sometimes it's like, "Okay, now there's another thing." So how do you do that, right?

The two talked about "getting off track" or "authentic learning" that also occurs when teachers follow students' interests as they engage in specific topics. Michaela gave the example of a class project on First Nation inventions that she hadn't intended to embark upon. Brittany said this is her style of teaching too, commending the value of when "you just go with it... that's responsive teaching, right?"

On the other hand, when teachers were so highly structured that an opportunity to learn from someone like Brittany felt like it "interferes with [their] plans," Brittany found "that is how the Aboriginal perspectives piece doesn't fit as easily into schools." Brittany acknowledged that Michaela and her colleague could have said, "Well I talk about First Nations people in the fall," "Oh we covered that already," "We're on this unit now." In response, Michaela said that, in fact, she was thinking, "We kind of already covered that unit, and I've got to do this and I've got to do that." For Michaela, it was talking with her colleague Christine about how well Brittany's sessions had gone in her class that changed her mind; when Brittany saw Michaela and extended the invitation again, Michaela accepted. Brittany acknowledged that she was asking for a large time commitment from teachers in addition to asking them "to let go of some of that sort of control over that classroom space." She, too, needed to be flexible, which involved changing her presentation to fit the time slots that teachers made available to her.

Even considering the significant commitment required of teachers if Brittany led their class for a series of sessions, Michaela said "it was definitely worthwhile." The opportunity "broadened *my* knowledge," "stemmed good conversations," and engaged students. In the

future, Michaela said she would like to “teach that in tandem *with* that specific unit” on Indigenous and Canadian history for the sake of flow, a vision that Brittany shared. Brittany’s ideal was when teachers were open “to integrate it seamlessly throughout and be okay with it just happening,” which was something she appreciated about Michaela’s colleagues. Michaela appreciated that Brittany, too, was open and approachable. She noted how Brittany had supported teachers in integrating Indigenous language or perspectives in various areas when they asked for her help so that “we *can* try to bring everything in.” In the example she gave, student engagement and a memorable experience were the result.

Reflecting on what made Brittany’s lessons so meaningful in her class, Michaela talked about tangible connections through “touch and smell” and how “we sing songs.” Brittany referred to her “presents” that she brought in, an example being a beaver fur. Michaela reflected on her own childhood, speaking about a community member from a nearby reserve who would come to her school and bake bannock with students or take them out on wooden snowshoes, meanwhile talking with them, teaching them, and telling them stories. Michaela said, “I would just hang on [the person’s] every word,” and drew parallels between those highly engaging learning experiences and how Brittany taught. Michaela reflected on how much she appreciated learning about how “the culture is so symbolic” and “everything means something” since “it’s all interconnected,” and told Brittany, “I love how *you* do that too.” For Michaela, the depth of learning depended not only on the content Brittany shared, but on the way she shared it. Brittany talked about teaching the content “*so* differently in *every* single” class, depending on factors like “the flow of the kids,” how they reacted, the questions they asked, and “what that energy is like in that classroom.” Brittany affirmed teachers’ part in this: “When you have teacher

engagement, that really determines my engagement, too, with the teaching.” As they shared stories, Michaela also underlined teachers’ role to “model engagement” for students.

Brittany and Michaela discussed their interpersonal dynamic. Brittany pitched that their similar teaching styles—including humour and teaching flexibly within an “overall theme” and “underlying goals”—were “probably why we connect so well in the class.” Michaela felt at ease with Brittany right away. Even before she knew Brittany well, Michaela felt free to ask for her guidance, support and information.

Michaela: I really felt comfortable with you because... you had a sense of humour, you came in, and you know it wasn't just... “Do this! You should be doing this, you're not doing this.”

Brittany: Yeah. There were no judgments. And that's the thing, right? There's no judgements. And going into a classroom, and you walk out and think, “Well that was interesting.” But I can't – it can't be deficit driven. It's all about, okay, where is the potential relationship here, or the growth.

Brittany explained that “it wouldn't work” if she were to focus on what she thought teachers were not doing well; even thinking this way would be sensed. Michaela noticed and appreciated Brittany's purposefully positive orientation toward teachers.

In response to my closing question about how Michaela teaches Indigenous students as a result of being around Brittany, Michaela spoke about Brittany's influence in “the sensitivity aspect” of her teaching practice. For example, when a student never completed assigned homework, Michaela said, “I think a little bit more about where are they coming from, what's happening at home. And I'm a little bit more sensitive to that.” This affected how she designed her teaching within time blocks at school. Another example was making purposeful connections with quieter students to build positive relationships over time. She spoke about the positive interpersonal effects of deciding to “make a moment every day” with a particular student.

Summary

Brittany and Michaela interacted in a way that was playful and fun, interpersonal, and focused on growth, yet they did not shy away from discussing significant challenges. The individual students in the class were a focal point for them; Brittany taught to their particular circumstances and Michaela focused on how her teaching practice had been shaped in ways that were sensitive to their experiences. Michaela looked to Brittany as an expert who could guide her in understanding Indigenous perspectives and histories. Michaela appreciated not only the content and way of teaching that Brittany shared, but her presence. Without this guidance, Michaela felt hesitant to teach certain topics, fearing she did not know enough to teach the topics well. Brittany's approach was collegial, recognizing the time and curriculum pressures felt by teachers and identifying with their struggles. For example, when she said, "I go to that place too" regarding thinking about poverty, Brittany related in a way that centred connection rather than judgment or impatience. Michaela's openness in sharing her thinking indicated that a strong, respectful, safe, and trusting learning relationship was in place. Regarding Clandinin and Connelly's dimension of sociality (2000), Brittany and Michaela's stories and interactions evidenced the importance of social dynamics like non-judgement and humour and reveal how inner experiences informed these.

The dimension of sociality linked closely to the dimensions of temporality and place. While these two educators were speaking about a recent shared experience in Michaela's classroom, they also referred to initial impressions of one another that helped establish a base for trust. Further, Brittany's presence in Michaela's school meant that Brittany had in-person opportunity to follow up on her earlier email offer to come to Michaela's class. Since both educators had an intimate knowledge of that school community, they could shape their discussion in the conversational interview around daily dynamics pertaining to the students they

were teaching, and Brittany could share how she designed her lessons specifically for that particular class.

Both educators shared stories or experiences that reached further back in time, talking about their own experiences as students in school. Michaela spoke about an Indigenous community member who offered experiences and stories that enthralled her, to which she compared Brittany's recent teaching in her own class. Brittany spoke about teachers who made a difference in her life, informing her decision to choose teaching as a career, and giving context for the type of learning she wanted to offer to students who were not thriving in Western school settings.

Hope and Chantal
Journey, invitation, love



Art statement

This river image is meant to represent the journey Hope and Chantal have been on together, including some tumultuous times, and now the chance for others to be part of it too.

Hope and Chantal worked together through stresses, joys, losses, and successes, and through changing political and social climates within their education settings. At the time of their conversational interview, they were actively welcoming others to join in their learning environment, represented by the people on the right who are dipping their feet into the river.

Context

Hope, an Indigenous educator, and Chantal, a non-Indigenous educator, worked together for several years. While their roles and positions changed over that time, Chantal was in a learning role with respect to Hope, and often under her formal leadership. More recently, Chantal had been taking on leadership positions herself.

Storyline

Chantal was at the beginning of her teaching career when she met Hope. She recounted some of the first times they interacted and how that affected her. Chantal noticed that the “vibe” changed when Hope was on staff at the school. She experienced Hope’s presence as:

open-door, welcome to everybody, even your stupid questions, and was very good at bringing in themes and helping, especially for beginning teachers who were very new at learning about Indigenous ways of knowing and being, so she was *very* supportive in helping people.

As Hope took on leadership roles, Chantal recalled that Hope “made such a great effort to demonstrate love and kindness” in the school environment.

For Chantal, part of Hope’s support and caring was how she “provided leadership opportunities,” which she credited with being where she is now. “She lets people take risks and learn and build their capacity.” This was particularly significant in a setting where Chantal “immediately fell in love with the [local Indigenous] culture.” Through Hope’s support, she was able to develop and share this more broadly.

In Hope's view, the leadership that Chantal grew into, including sharing cultural teachings and traditions with students, was not a regular occurrence. Rather, her learning, and the relationships in which it was embedded, were an example of something special. Hope said:

I think in my opinion, this might be *exception*, because Chantal's *exceptional*. 100%. If you asked any school leader, 'Who's one of the *best* teachers you've ever met?', they would think of Chantal... Her work ethic, her passion for kids and learning and excitement and joy for life transmit into the work. It's easy for her in whatever she does, to really embrace it and wholeheartedly approach it, and the learning experiences. We've been fortunate that we saw it in the classroom in her work with kids. Over time, we've seen her love and learn about the culture. She's built that relationship with not only students and parents and staff, but the community at large where she's accepted as someone who can do the things that she listed. That doesn't happen easily or frequently, I would say, in the Indigenous community, that trust being earned over time.

Hope linked this to her own collaborative leadership style: "I don't feel like I have to know and do everything.... I have less ego, where I can say, 'I don't know.' I honestly feel that we work better when we work together." Hope explained, using stories from outside of school life, that she operated by building on strengths. She applied this to the school environment:

I do the same with staff. What are their strengths and then how can we make continuous improvement in what we do over time based on who we are as people, based on what our strengths are, based on what our love, our passions are?

In another context, when I was asking about some of the innovative work at the school, Hope stated her collaborative stance this way: "Us. Us as a group, not just me. It's never just me, and I rarely *ever* will say 'I,' it's 'us.' *We* do the work together." Thus, in work life that was "exciting and inspiring" and also included "heavy-hearted and foggy-thought days," taking on the responsibility with dedicated colleagues was central to both of these educators.

For Chantal, Hope was exceptional in how she treated staff. She described Hope's approach this way:

'Meh, you know it's a learning curve, and they'll learn,' and she just helps them grow. She's that kind. Whereas some of us are like, 'Mrgh!' [laughs]. Not everyone can do that and have the patience and the heart. And she thinks of people as people outside of

the work before she thinks of them as employees. So that's a rare gift, I think, in a leadership role.

Reflecting on her current role, Hope said, "It's a privilege to be able to help work with people, alongside them... you need that collective effort." Chantal later shared her appreciation for how Hope helped the staff to celebrate successes, and how she was a "safe person" in that "everyone can share their vulnerabilities with you.... You've opened not just your office door but the door to your heart, and the door to your life." Hope and Chantal's work was highly interpersonal. In the learning environment they were building, Chantal, as a non-Indigenous educator, was both a learner and a contributor.

The wider group of people focused on strengths and continuous improvement for the benefit of students went beyond Chantal, Hope, and school staff. Hope opened the school doors to Elders, knowledge holders, and experts in various fields who led and taught students and educators. Chantal described her interactions with one such person,

a kind-hearted person who is very traditional in [her/his] beliefs and knowledge, but very modern and very engaging and supportive of people's learning curve too. So, it's helpful to find those key people to build relationships with too, to help my capacity.

This ongoing learning was highly valued by both Chantal and Hope, who shared stories about what they had learned and the climate that had been created by Indigenous community members' and knowledge holders' presence and teaching. Hope said, "I think many of us here are embraced to the spirit, in a way that we wouldn't be if we didn't have those experiences in our work." Prayer, acknowledging ancestors, and reflecting on one's own life were part of school life, which Hope and Chantal noted as important in their personal development and in the environment they shared.

While Chantal and Hope had been dedicated to their work over years, they referenced changes at national, local, and school board levels that meant educators felt the immediate need

to learn in Indigenous education. Thus, knowledge that Hope, Chantal, and their colleagues had built over time through school-based learning and engagement with current research was now sought out by other educators. As an example, Chantal was asked to help lead a workshop within her curriculum area, “weav[ing] in Indigenous perspectives and pedagogy.” She would be “acknowledg[ing] the land and demonstrating why that is important,” leading colleagues in a sharing circle to help them “understand how to do that, while infusing Indigenous language with greetings that honour the traditional territory.” Hope said that “Chantal, because of her commitment and dedication, knows more than many Indigenous people. She does. And they’ll tell her that too, right?” saying that knowledge keepers and cultural resource people noticed. Chantal said that one of these people recently said, “You’re really good at this,” and asked her, “Do you ever get any pushback for being non-Indigenous?” Chantal’s response was that she “used to, in a way, but now as long as I share my intentions are good and they see that I’m following protocol in honouring the traditional ways of doing everything, then people accept me more.” Hope emphasized Chantal’s long-term dedication and highly valued her contributions to the learning and development shared in their setting.

Hope said that she had seen Chantal grow in holistic confidence over time, moving from being an excellent teacher to someone who learned, shared and modelled best practices with others. Hope valued that Chantal was “still genuine, humble, and cares so much about the kids, the families, the work.” She said that “everybody loves being around Chantal. It’s fun, and it brings life to you.”

When I asked Chantal about how Hope had influenced her teaching practice and her interactions with students, she shared the following insights:

She reminds you about the holistic approach of the child. Thinking of the child as a whole, thinking of the family as a whole. Like just her modelling and her words of

wisdom... she helps you see your “job” in a new perspective, one that puts holistic wellbeing at the forefront for the “work.” In other ways, she gives you opportunities to almost discomfort yourself in a way, to try something new and challenge yourself, which helps you grow.

As an example, Chantal spoke about a time when Hope asked her to lead a large group of students and important guests in a smudge and sharing circle. Reflecting on this, she said:

I was terrified. But she calms you down and supports you. She makes it seem like she doesn't even have a hesitation about it. She's like, “You'll do great.” So [I] feel like, “I need to do great, because I love her, trust her words, and have more faith in myself because of her support. So, I need to do great and I can't let her down.” [laughs]

Hope shaped the way Chantal thought about education and guided her on a day-by-day basis through the way she conducted herself in her own professional practice, and the words she shared. This guidance extended into an interpersonal realm where Chantal *felt* Hope's support. Hope talked about having high expectations for staff and trusting them.

Listening to the two of them interact, it was clear to me that Hope's belief in, and support of, Chantal were wholehearted and ongoing. They shared values regarding the purpose of their work, and the interpersonal stance that they believed was needed to do it well. An example shared by Hope:

I'm attracted to working with genuine people who *really* remember the purpose of why we're here, and it's for the kids and their learning. Not always just academic learning, although that's very important, but the holistic parts of self.

In response to this, Chantal said:

But *you* work hard, and she'll even pick up a broom and clean it rather than tell someone to clean it. So, we want to do the same thing, right?... You model the high expectations that we want to meet.... If I work hard it's because you do first.

Later, Hope commented on how Chantal and another colleague interacted with families at the school: “[Colleague] and Chantal *don't* judge. They instinctively know what to do to support our families, and our families then trust them, right?” Genuine dedication to students' learning, and

genuine respect for families, demonstrated through instinctive and thoughtful support, were qualities that Hope drew out. At a few points, Chantal pointed to Hope as a model. Through the way they interacted and the anecdotes they shared, it was evident that while they worked hard with members of their school community to co-develop an excellent learning environment, this process was full of joy, fun, and emotion. Chantal spoke about the importance of humour and the two demonstrated it back and forth. Similarly, they both spoke about humility, and in my view, this was evident in how they described their work and interactions.

While the connections and learning were deep in their school environment, these went beyond their work life, as Hope described:

While Chantal and I are really connected in the work, I think that we would still be friends, and have that same fun in life outside of work too. That's important. We love to have fun, embrace life. We can help people feel comfortable. We just enjoy the ride, and enjoy it together.

At another point, Hope said, "We still approach [our work] like it's our first day.... We've continually strived to do the very best we can." This striving, paired with enjoyment and friendship, was not bounded by the school building; Chantal emphasized that learning, and trying to apply the learning, is meant to be shared with others as well.

Nearing the end of the conversational interview, Chantal and Hope encapsulated some of the qualities of their shared work.

Hope: It's that frame of mind, personality, perseverance, dedication, optimism, right? Even when it's hard, we still *love* it! We love the work, the culture, the kids, the learning, the families, the community. Love it all. Chantal loves it like she was born into it. What are some of the names they call you?

Chantal: I'm not sharing those. OK, "Adopted cousin."

Hope: But endearing. In an endearing way, right? Not insulting. When she's singing—oh she's got an amazing singing voice. For the drumming and singing. And dancing.

After they discussed a recent story about dancing, the conversation continued:

Chantal: I'm excited to do this work, but I want to do it right. So, I'm trying to take my time. Before—like even with the drumming

Hope: As much as you can.

Chantal: Even with drumming, we're trying to honour the different perspectives here. Like some women touch the drum, some don't. So, we're trying to get the different family beliefs and values that honour their cultural identities before we move forward in some of our programming. So, it feels like we're moving slower, but it's with good intentions to make sure our families' voices are significant.

Chantal and Hope were in an ongoing process of learning, and applying their learning in ways that honoured and collaborated with the students, families, communities, and school systems that they were seeking to support. Their interpersonal connection coexisted with hard work and vision over time.

Summary

For Chantal and Hope, experiences and qualities of a productive learning relationship included love, friendship, and humour, as well as sustained commitment and excellence over time. Hope noticed Chantal's excellence as a classroom teacher and her joyful engagement with students, families, and the Indigenous cultures of the school. As a young non-Indigenous teacher with lots to learn, Chantal felt immediately welcomed by Hope, a feeling that continued over time, along with strong support for her development as an educator of Indigenous students. Their engagement as colleagues and people led to sustained work together in developing learning environments to benefit students and to share with other educators and leaders with similar goals. Through learning alongside Elders and knowledge holders, families and community members, colleagues, and students, Hope and Chantal were developing and shaping their practice over time. In terms of Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) three-dimensional narrative inquiry space,

Hope and Chantal's storyline is situated within shared settings over time, with interpersonal connection developing through personal commitment and a focus on students' holistic wellbeing.

Max and Kate
Always Open



Art statement

In this painting, Max and Kate are having a friendly conversation. Max's door is wide open, which is something Kate emphasized in the conversational interview. Relaxed stances and warm colours depict an ease of collaboration and learning. This sense of welcome was extended to students and to community members.

Context

Max, an Indigenous staff member, and Kate, a non-Indigenous teacher, were working in the same school for about five years. They attended the same high school years ago, but didn't

know each other well until they became colleagues and Kate drew on Max's assistance inviting people from the First Nations community to share their knowledge in her classes.

Storyline

Kate opened the conversational interview by explaining the role Max had played in helping her introduce Indigenous perspectives in the classes she taught:

Well I know for myself, I've always been a little nervous about teaching Indigenous issues because I'm non-Indigenous. So, Max has provided that—helped me get that confidence about kind of tackling some of this stuff because he's always approachable, his door's always open for me to talk to him about any of those things.

This began when Kate was actively trying to expand the Indigenous component of a World Religions course she was teaching. She was looking for help in doing so, and Max was happy to make connections with First Nations community members who could come and speak in Kate's class.

Kate also pointed out that “Max is a counsellor,” and mentioned at various times throughout the interview that “his door is always open.” He was willing to listen to and support students and teachers alike, sharing his own insight from similar situations to help Kate through a family health issue and Indigenous students in their experience of high school. Kate said, “There's so much value for having Max in our school as a resource. Like I can't – he's just amazing. He's amazing with the kids. He's amazing with *us* as teachers.” Kate highly valued Max's support.

Max spoke about Kate's approach as a teacher and how it shaped their collaboration:

And I think Kate is just—she's an extremely kind, kind person. One of the kindest teachers I've come across in my career in the schools.... It is really refreshing to have people seeking out this sort of information—looking to do things properly. Kate was very careful of wanting to do it properly. And you know I think that made it very easy for me to open up and to work with her. And to just connect with her on that professional level. You know of course there's a lot of uncertainties, there's not a lot of education out there right now; obviously it's coming, I mean with the study we're doing right now,

there's a lot more of it happening, which is fantastic. And doing it properly. So, I really got that sense off Kate. It was just—I sensed the genuineness from her, and I think that was really important.

Max emphasized the genuine nature with which Kate approached her work as a teacher, contrasting this with “going through the motions” or feeling “I have to do this.”

Both Max and Kate believed in the value of offering students firsthand learning experience with local First Nation leaders and community members. Max voiced appreciation for Kate's approach to this:

It's not just, ‘OK, what's coming from the books you've read and what can I put on the blackboard and teach here?’ A lot of our working together involves excursions. Going out into the community and going to physical locations and learning from the various teachers of the area, you know traditional, whether it be [specific First Nation group], [specific First Nation group], teachers who we've offered tobacco to, done things properly, and were able to attain these teachings.

When I asked about some of the places they had been, Max and Kate spoke about going to sweat lodges—several over the years, which offered different perspectives—and to a Fall Harvest event. Max reiterated that this meant “getting not just textbook stuff, [but] the actual learning from the teachers in the physical element.” For Kate, it was important that Indigenous points of view were being shared by “people who are living it,” emphasizing that “it can't be my reading of it.” She described this as a “shift that needs to happen” in classrooms, referring to recent coverage of appropriation in the media. They talked about a specific community leader who had made a great impact on Kate, and whose presence she saw as very valuable to Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. Max agreed about the “importance of the relationships with the community partners and the knowledge keepers of our area.” He remarked that it was “just something else” and “amazing” that they were comfortable coming in and sharing what was highly important to them.

Kate was grateful for the guidance Max provided as she related to her students. Sometimes he referred her to a documentary that helped her understand the bigger picture behind some of her students' experiences. Max was available to help Kate address stereotypes, misconceptions, or questions as they came up, sharing his "wealth of knowledge about those topics." Sometimes they discussed how to effectively approach a specific student or family member in a given circumstance. An example of how Max influenced Kate's interactions with students was teaching her how a student who was moving from a small remote community may appreciate time to observe before being expected to "dive right in." As Max said, "Let them be a fly on the wall for a bit, let them find *their* comfort." Kate talked about having quiet one-on-one conversations with a student or offering the opportunity to do a presentation for the teacher instead of the whole class if this would support the student's learning process. For Kate, Max's perspectives provided an opportunity to obtain

a greater understanding for what may possibly be the experience of some of those kids in the classroom.... I have to make sure those kids feel welcome, I need to make sure that they are looked after and that they feel comfortable, and that they have avenues to be successful in my class.

Regarding Kate's desire to learn ways that she could support students' school success, Max responded, "I think Kate's empathy on the matter is awesome and is what I'd hope for most teachers to have."

Max and Kate also discussed the diversity of students' experiences. Max stated that diversity amongst First Nations communities involved respecting the unique "people, backgrounds, traditions, [and] cultures" across Canada, and within their own school. This could mean valuing the distinct teachings and traditions that students bring from their First Nation communities, and not assuming "what their teachings are or what their exposure has been." Max and Kate also discussed the different places students were from, their unique personalities, and

their varying social experiences at school. Responding to each person individually was valued. As they shared examples of relating to different students, there was a tone of affection and joy.

Kate explained that as she engaged in her own learning process, the history and teachings that she was learning could be new to her, and thus “there is a huge level of ignorance on my part.” Max was “so open to—I’m just here and helping me get further.” He was “not dismissive at all, because I may not know that and I should know that.” In response, Max emphasized his own learning process.

Max: And to be fair, in a lot of cases I’m in the same boat. It was a big choice of mine. Coming out of high school, out of this high school in fact, I definitely wanted to help my people, and then I just knew that I had to get educated on some of these facts, but at the same time, formal education doesn’t really cover all the avenues. You know there are so many teachings, so many things that you just can’t get unless you’re doing this sort of thing, you know sitting down and discussing or at least being taught directly. And then of course our Indigenous way of learning is kind of through experience. It’s through experience. Being able to experience a lot of this stuff and be on the journey with students and teachers alike is a cool, cool thing. And there are some great support people here.... We all kind of come together as a team and trust each other and work well with each other

Kate: Yeah we are really, really lucky....

Max: And [Indigenous colleague] and I will be the first to tell you as well, we’re still learning ourselves and trying to do things properly, and there’s—it’s just a never-ending path of learning, right? I mean that is life, right.

Thus, for Kate and Max, learning was situated within a wider web of relationships, one defined by active, respectful, and collaborative learning.

Max saw this active learning as relationship based, connected to wider movements in school systems, and linked to personal stance,

I think it goes back to, and I’m hearing a lot of this lately, and it just makes so much sense is, how important relationships are. Again, it’s not just, “Here’s the material,” present it, straight-faced, no really connection, anything like that. Especially with—being on this horizon of new learning and bringing Indigenous teachings into schools and into education, we’re, you know, you gotta have the relationships, whether it’s community people, or with teachers, and just an understanding that we’re here for best

outcomes for our youth, and ultimately ourselves too, and our community. So yeah, just kind of fostering those relationships in a proper way. And you know and looking in the mirror and knowing that we don't know it all. So, it's important that we have people to go to and to be open with.

Kate: Yeah the humility, eh?

Max: Yes. Yes, humility yeah.

Regarding “this horizon of new learning and bringing Indigenous teachings into schools and into education,” Max believed, “we’re just getting to a point where, ‘Wow, Indigenous people contribute a lot to this country.... if we do things in that manner, could improve on a lot of things.’” He hoped that we can see the benefits of that new openness soon, as people see the importance, “especially with what’s going on in the world these days.” We talked about some examples of this, and Max spoke about “looking out for everybody.... It’s not just a rat race where number one wins, we’ve got to look out for our brothers and sisters, whoever they may be, wherever they may be from.” For Max, Kate’s open and respectful approach to teaching the Indigenous material in her curriculum areas “means a lot,” and was part of a wider societal shift toward valuing Indigenous ways.

Summary

The dimensions of temporality, place, and sociality (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) closely interact in Max and Kate’s stories. Kate, as a non-Indigenous classroom teacher, and Max, as staff member who supported teachers and students, both sought to honour Indigenous students, and to connect all students with Indigenous community members and their firsthand knowledge. Kate often spoke about Max’s open door and willingness to help guide her learning, as well as his supportive nature. Max appreciated Kate’s empathy and genuine desire to learn from community members through proper process. They often took excursions so that students could learn through experience, or invited guests to the school so students could learn firsthand. A

core of colleagues who shared and learned together provided another layer of support and relationship. A sense of humility, kindness, and mutual appreciation permeated the conversational interview. In addition to “actual learning from the teachers in the physical element” in the community where the school was situated, Max helped Kate to understand the potential experiences of students who were coming from other places through recognizing the diversity amongst those First Nation communities and how Kate might assist in easing those students’ transition to her classes. Thus, social dynamics were situated in place, and inner learning was embedded.

Attention to the dimensions of temporality and place (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) recalls the detail that Kate and Max knew of each other from high school; the high school they attended was the same high school where they collaborated as adults. Their work as educators was built on previous experience in that school as students. Change over time on a societal scale is another aspect to consider. Both Max and Kate situated themselves within larger societal processes. Max observed “a lot of uncertainties” and “not a lot of education out there right now,” yet he felt that it was coming, including “doing it properly.” He spoke about a shift toward acknowledging the valuable contributions of Indigenous ways and taking these up in society. Kate spoke about appropriation in the media and the importance of Indigenous knowledge coming from people who lived that experience. She described a “shift that needs to happen;” looking to community knowledge holders as teachers was an expression of this. Thus, Kate and Max’s community-based, interpersonal learning was situated amidst larger social processes, and focused very specifically on students in their school. Inner and interpersonal qualities like Max’s open door and Kate’s genuine desire to learn were central.

Alise, Lydia, and Renee
Building confidence & connections through experience



Art statement

The three strands in this painting represent Alise, Lydia, and Renee, who worked in separate roles, but came together to teach high school students a set of lessons. Their student-centred collaboration also brought the opportunity for them to connect as colleagues and as people. They referred to the possibility of future work together, represented by the strands continuing downward in this image.

Context

Renee, a non-Indigenous classroom teacher, invited Indigenous colleagues Alise and Lydia to teach in her class during a unit on local food. As an Indigenous educator at the school board level, Lydia was also able to help Renee connect with a local Elder who shared stories and

experiences with students. While Renee, Lydia, and Alise were familiar with one another from various contexts, this was their first time teaching together.

Storyline

Renee, the non-Indigenous teacher in this group, told me about growing up in a culturally diverse city where she remembered relating with people of many cultures, but very rarely First Nations people. In her family, she learned values like being “open-minded,” “liberal,” and “keen to learn.” She learned “that you don’t judge people by how they look or where they come from, but by what kind of person they are. And you have to get to *know* them if you’re going to know that.” In the city where she worked at the time of the conversational interview as a teacher, many of her students were Indigenous, which involved “getting to know another new culture.”

Renee held this view:

Every kid is different, so you need to get to know every kid for who *they* are and where they come from. And they *all* have history and they all have background, and they all have baggage, and everybody has that.

As a non-Indigenous classroom teacher, she purposefully provided opportunities for students to build community and to get to know one another. This showed students that they were important to her, and could mean they felt important to one another. Drawing on volunteer experience with a youth program, Renee led name games in the first week of class. She noticed that this built a sense of connection where students felt more comfortable. While Renee ran these activities with any group so that students learned names and had opportunity to share some of their story, learning about Indigenous cultures made her aware that community and storytelling were important there.

Over several years, Renee had been relating with Indigenous students and learning alongside her class as Indigenous knowledge holders taught and shared. More recently, she had

also been learning through enrolling in courses that provided Indigenous points of view. She continued to seek out guidance and felt tentative in some ways:

I still feel a bit uncomfortable. Because I'm *obviously* not Indigenous.... So, I don't want to come across as misappropriating the culture or being disrespectful. And so that's why I really rely on people like Lydia for guidance, and I'm just upfront and say, "Look. I don't know how I'm supposed to proceed here. What do you suggest?".... And I think that is probably the case with most non-Indigenous educators. That we don't know how to proceed. We don't know how—we want to be respectful, but we don't know how to be. And it seems ridiculous for *me* to be preaching this stuff when I'm from the oppressors. You know? So, I'm really trying to make it clear that I don't know and that I want to learn.... and I tell that to the kids, too.

When Renee first contacted Lydia, an Indigenous educator, she wanted to teach about local First Nation food traditions in a way that was respectful and to "do this properly." She was familiar with protocols but did not have access to an Elder she could ask to come visit, or specific knowledge on how to make a tobacco tie, which Lydia said would be important to offer to the Elder. Lydia made the connection and accompanied the Elder, which both Renee and Lydia described as highly engaging for students. Renee asked students to teach her how to make tobacco ties, recounting a lively and engaging learning process there. Lydia and Renee also decided that Lydia would lead Renee and the class in making traditional food storage containers.

Lydia, Renee, and Alise converged through teaching students how to make bannock. Drawing on connections with others in the school and activities that were already taking place, Renee invited Alise to do a demonstration for a full class. As we shared stories about bannock and baking in the conversational interview, Alise spoke about practice, learning through experience over time in a family and community setting. In the following quotation, Alise was referring to the excellent bannock made by her grandmothers and mother.

Alise: Everything was by what they learned through observation, I guess, through experience. So that's kind of how I learned bannock. And then the mixture, and the stirring, it's all done by experience and observation. That's how I see it now. And then when we were younger, we were also given our own bowls, our own flour. Even my

grandfather fileting fish, he could do it in 30 seconds, maybe less, that's how—'cause he was a commercial fisherman, right? He was a guide. And that's what he did. And then he would give my sisters and I our own little—to try it, right?

Renee: To practice on, yeah.

Alise: To practice on. So, we always done things in a family setting. And the relationship. We were always laughing and having fun and joking around...

For Alise, who is Indigenous, teaching and learning through observation and experience was a way of life she had known for years, embedded in fun and interconnection with family, friends, and visitors. She recently had the opportunity to extend this to Renee and the class. As she taught, she also shared stories, which Renee emphasized as key learning opportunities.

Borrowing Lydia's words, a relational environment was established as students were actively "figuring something out" together, which contrasted settings where students were "sitting behind desks" separately.

While Renee and Alise cleaned up after class, they shared a long conversation. For Renee, this was an opportunity to connect with Alise interpersonally, as well as to become more familiar with her role in the school. Renee learned more as Alise shared "some experience from my childhood with my grandparents and the community we came from. And how teachings were passed on that way." Renee was offered a window into Alise's learning passed from generation to generation.

Alise spoke about how she decided to accept Renee's invitation to teach the class. This was a decision rooted in her own development and contributing to her home First Nation and the youth with whom she worked at the school:

I guess it's the kids that motivate me... and then it's going back to if I can do it, anybody can do it, right? So—and—I wasn't sure if I *could* do it for awhile, but then I thought about it and I was like, "Yeah, I can do it." So, then I went in and demonstrated two classes, and I felt like a *teacher* after.... So, if I can do it, then I'm hoping to teach the

kids I work with, teach my community members, teach my own children, that they can do it too. Even though I'm really shy. So, it was optional. It was up to me.

Teaching a class was new to Alise, a challenge that she came to see as a chance “to test myself,” since she had been thinking about going to university to become a teacher. In thinking about the opportunity to role model for students, Alise considered:

It'll bring some confidence into the students too. That they see me from back home, and I'm trying to role model and send the message to the kids, education is now the way to go, to have a good life, have a good future, get jobs, and learn to read, learn to write, and take care of yourself, take care of your family.

Thus, Alise's bannock teaching provided an opportunity for Renee and the students to learn, and for Alise to take a step toward her own goals as well.

When Lydia described her perspective on engaging with Renee and the class, she talked about Renee's orientation as a learner:

There's always this shift when teachers are exploring something that's Indigenous. Because there is a fear attached to that. Because it's something new, and it's something—especially when you're thinking about the climate in [this city] where there is a lot of misunderstanding in the general public, you don't want to inadvertently incite something in your classroom.... I was coming in... and you were telling me that you had already brought in all this wild rice, and you were planning on bringing in all these other people, so I thought that was fantastic.... Just like jump right into the proverbial canoe and you're on your way.... And even when you were learning, it's the attentiveness and just the respect. And asking questions because there's that—you were engaging with the content too, right? So, that's what I saw.

Lydia later reiterated the importance of teachers being “engaged in their own learning.”

Teachers who were actively learning alongside their students positively affected Lydia's experience interacting with that group.

Lydia and Renee also had an exchange about authentic learning; as someone who has “zero Indigenous blood in me at all,” Renee said that she thought “it's far more authentic for me to ask people who know something about it to come and teach it to my students than for me to be pretending to know.” Lydia's response was, “Yes but what if you learned a whole lot about it,

would you feel comfortable to do it on your own then?” Renee responded that she likely would. Lydia said that was good. Even so, Renee said, “I’d still rather you come and do it.” Lydia and Renee talked about how guests can make things interesting for students. Lydia referred back to the Elder’s visit, reflecting how she appreciated that the tone became “more conversational” and “didn’t seem so formal” once teacher and students were interacting with the Elder about what was shared. It seemed that Lydia highly valued relational learning opportunities for students, staff, and guests, and also emphasized the value of teachers’ active learning.

Renee talked about the process of building community in the classroom in relation to hosting guests in class. Her purpose was that students would develop a foundation of feeling comfortable in relating with one another. She wondered if this might mean they were more open and welcoming when a guest came to class. Alise thought so. Regarding relationship building, Alise said:

Renee was one of the first teachers that had instant connection to feeling that welcomeness. And right from there I said, “Well, you know, it makes a difference.” I mean if I’m feeling this as a new employee coming to a bigger population of employees, just imagine how the students feel.... but once you build, you connect with a new relationship, you feel more confidence in yourself, you feel more welcome, you feel trust, you feel. So that’s how she made me feel. And then I said, “Well, okay,” it just gave me more confidence to teach a class, you know!

Thus, while Alise’s own experiences and goals set the stage for teaching a class, she could also feel relational connection with Renee in a way that had a tangible effect.

Similarly, Renee grew in confidence through relating with Alise and Lydia. She spoke about a course she took in Indigenous education that prompted her to try things out, and not to be afraid to ask for help. Having Lydia and Alise “here as great hands-on role models” made that process easier for Renee.

As they discussed future possibilities in a specific curricular area, Lydia said, “There are many ways that you can bring [Indigenous perspectives]” into the subject area, “but sometimes the curriculum is the challenge.” Renee responded, “Exactly. It’s very restrictive.” Lydia went on to speak about how in that academic area, Indigenous perspectives and the Western philosophies underlying the curriculum “butt heads.” Renee said,

You’re right, it’s the curriculum [that] kind of binds you and you really have to be thinking outside the box to think, “Okay, how am I going to alter the perspective here? How can I look at this from a different angle in order to fit *any* other perspectives in?” But you could do. You could.

Time was also a factor; Renee noted that as a teacher, “lead time” affected her process of getting to know a particular curriculum document and considering how to engage Indigenous topics within the course. Amidst those challenges, Renee considered that together, teachers could collaboratively design and share ways of incorporating local Indigenous perspectives in the provincial curriculum.

Summary

The stories shared by Alise, Lydia, and Renee can be considered within the dimensions of temporality, place, and sociality (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) to highlight multiple contexts and forms of learning over time. The three educators drew on their past experiences and current goals to create an opportunity for Indigenous and non-Indigenous students to learn about local Indigenous food in a welcoming environment. Alise, who taught students how to make bannock, drew on her childhood experience of observing her mother and grandmothers over years and being given her own bowl and flour to practice. Not only did she share bannock-making skill with Renee and her students, but she brought ideas like the importance of practice and learning through relating in a fun, friendly learning environment, which she experienced with her family in her First Nation community. Renee, too, spoke about early experiences in her family

environment. Genuine interest in getting to know people, including those with different backgrounds and experiences, led her to engage with and learn from Indigenous knowledge holders and students when she moved to her current city. Drawing on experience working with teachers in various classrooms, Lydia explained how she valued Renee’s approach to learning alongside her students in an engaged and respectful way. A sense of mutual welcome and learning seemed to pervade in the learning space that Lydia, Renee, and Alise developed with students. Alise, Lydia, and Renee reached backward (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) to values and experiences drawn from family, community, and school-based contexts in developing a present day learning space for students.

Olivia

“It’s just all learning all the time”



Art statement

In this image, the outside layer of the circle shows the many influences, relationships, and learning opportunities that informed Olivia’s work with students. The inner circles are Olivia

and her students. They are at the centre to show that the students in her classroom were her focus; her learning was for them. I depicted Olivia as the blue circle with arms wide open to help create the circle for the children. She valued and related to them as unique people with specific life circumstances, personalities, and interests.

Context

For close to a decade, Olivia, a non-Indigenous teacher, had been learning about Indigenous education from many people across several contexts. This included a multi-year project at the board of education and provincial levels, relationships and initiatives within her own school building, and ongoing connections with friends and colleagues who she met along the way. She was eager to apply and extend this learning in a way that honoured the specific students and families with whom she interacted as a teacher each year.

Storyline

Olivia began by talking about the significance of moving to the city and school where she was working at the time of the conversational interview. She described growing up in a small city where she did not have experience, knowledge, or relationships with Indigenous people that she could remember,

Olivia: I didn't know a single Indigenous person at all. I feel like I couldn't have even identified an Indigenous person at my school. And maybe there wasn't any. Or maybe there were and I just didn't know. But it certainly wasn't anything anybody was aware of.

Martha: Yeah, at the forefront, yeah.

Olivia: Right? It just wasn't in our textbooks and it wasn't anything we talked about. And [there] wasn't anybody that identified as Indigenous.... It was pretty White.... When I first moved to [this city] in [year]... I felt like it was the first time I ever had any interactions with any Indigenous people. Coming in like *super* blind to any history, just any teachings, or just relationships, or any conflict—just not knowing. And then my first jobs were very not-so-diverse schools. But I've been at [this school, with many

Indigenous students], this will be my [close to tenth] year here.... So *big learning curve* in that.

For Olivia, the city where she now lived, and the school in which she had worked for close to a decade, had become the setting and the impetus for her learning in Indigenous education.

In Olivia's "big learning curve," many people had meaningful influence on her development. Over the course of the conversational interview, she named several of these people and described the impact they had. She began with a group of educators with whom she had interacted for several years, focused on a specific curriculum area through an Indigenous education project at the school board and provincial levels. Olivia said that learning with this team was "where the big learning started for me in better understanding of Indigenous issues and relationships and history" and related topics. She described a group learning process composed of many relationships where "there were some of us who were Indigenous and some of us who were non-Indigenous" who were "learning from each other." She gave the example of one friend who was very focused on the "land relationship" others on "the more sacred teachings, or the Seven Grandfathers," and another colleague on residential schools through involvement in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. She said, "everybody kind of had different bits to share," coming from different perspectives:

It's just neat to pull from different people's understanding. And not—maybe not everybody being 100% on the same page, right? Because [this province] is pretty big.... It's just an ongoing learning. I can't pinpoint one person. I *can't* do that.

Here and throughout the conversational interview, Olivia talked about the importance of learning from many different people and relationships, and the multiple opportunities that she had had to do so over time.

The group learning process involved change and growth in thinking and in practice. The learning became deeper as Olivia's group interacted with many people, including teams from

other regions of the province who were part of the same initiative. She felt the process of incorporating Indigenous content becoming more authentic over time. In their work, the team drew on a guide published by the school board and attended local and provincial workshops and guest speakers. Over several years as part of the Indigenous education group mentioned above, Olivia said, “We had so many people come and share, and so many people we could learn from, it made a huge difference in the way that I teach.”

Olivia talked about attending different workshops and experiences with her colleagues. An example was learning through experience how mathematics is embedded in traditional activities like beadwork. Another was a speaker who showed how Indigenous culture was stolen, not lost. Memorable cultural awareness training was facilitated by a person who introduced cultural teachings, the history of Canada, residential schools, and then a positive outlook about work with community members today. Olivia realized that teachings like the bundle, the drum, and the Seven Grandfather Teachings were new to some educators from other regions of the province. She said, “I have been so lucky to experience that many times in many different settings here” at her school. “To smell a smudge around here is not unusual, right?”

Olivia described the history she learned at that workshop as “the *whole*, the real history, stuff that still, you don’t get to hear. Or you haven’t heard, or that we should have heard.” That presenter made a strong impression and helped Olivia to understand the ripple effects of residential schools, including how families might experience school today. Learning from this group facilitator guided Olivia in relating with her own students and their families, paired with reading authors like Pamela Toulouse, from whom Olivia drew ideas like “talking time, laughter, relationship, and getting to know the kids.” Learning alongside colleagues from guests who

could share new perspectives, paired with making connections to other resources, had been shaping Olivia's practice.

When Olivia talked about engaging with Indigenous perspectives and culture in classroom teaching, she mentioned fear: "A lot of the times, non-Indigenous people, and myself included, you're afraid. You don't want to do it wrong." For her, this fear was quelled by Indigenous people with whom she had contact who emphasized "doing it with the right heart."

At the same time, Olivia felt clear on her own role:

So just knowing that I'm not teaching culture, because that's not my role as a non-Indigenous person, not to teach culture, but to incorporate their culture, which is so varied, in our learning and in our everyday, and making it authentic. Which is *hard*.

She later expressed that certain things were "not mine to teach," such as traditional activities that she had experienced and learned about in connection with curriculum.

On the other hand, experiences with her students in partnership with community leaders like Elders had been highly meaningful for Olivia as a teacher. In another part of the conversational interview, she spoke about being out with her students and an Elder harvesting a specific natural material in preparation for a project, which included learning some of the language and laying tobacco. Olivia highly valued opportunities for she and her students to interact with Indigenous Elders, educators, and community members, and at the same time saw a specific role for herself within that learning.

Within her school building, Olivia could "go over and ask" staff members of an Indigenous program who were regularly available to support students and teachers in integrating Indigenous perspectives into lessons and assignments. They also came in to share teachings in each classroom—teachings about regalia and eagle feathers are two examples Olivia gave. She felt that the school was "really good at including Indigenous teachings on a regular basis." This

included the school's close connection with an Elder who often led the welcoming or a prayer at school events, and who was a "go-to contact person" for the school. An Indigenous friend and colleague was also nearby, someone who Olivia could text to ask, "What should I do?" or "Who do you recommend?" or "Do you want to come in?" or "What resource should I use?", knowing that she would get a quick response. Olivia emphasized, "It's just all learning. It's just all learning all the time."

Along with learning within her own school environment and through the multi-year group in which she had taken part, Olivia felt that her school board was "on it." She referenced resources they had sent to teachers, like locally-made videos and residential school survivor videos along with professional development and a resource guide that she had found meaningful. On her own time, she enrolled in a course where the non-Indigenous instructor "taught through experience" and introduced many Indigenous community members with different knowledge bases from different walks of life.

For Olivia, applying what she had learned took multiple forms. She gave the example of teaching Social Studies curriculum starting with First Nations people before talking about explorers, and then about the impact of Europeans in a way that involved "the limited positive, and the negative, and we're not shying away from that." Olivia used stories when she addressed residential schools; reading books or inviting someone to "come in and share their story." She sought "to do that in the right way," recognizing that some students had family members who were survivors.

At a school level, hosting open houses where students could informally share their school learning with their families, as well as having a community meal and sometimes drumming or a performance was a way for teachers, students, and families to connect, something that had been

growing over time. In seeking connections with families, Olivia had also used an online program so that students could post what they had done at school and families could comment. As she gave another example of integrating a video from an Indigenous organization into health class, and then posting the video for families to discuss with students, she said, “I don’t have the answers, I [am] just working on it and we’re also still trying to tick off everything in the curriculum.” She went on to talk about how needs like food and clothing were also addressed at school, linking this to students’ ability to learn and to a supportive school staff.

In Olivia’s ongoing learning, she had current questions. Regarding sharing Indigenous legends in school—legend being part of the curriculum—she wondered about how to do so appropriately, raising many questions. Regarding Indigenous guidance on this, she said:

And I think that’s sometimes hard to know—you want to do this lesson, and who do I call so that I *can* do this lesson? I know that that’s what people are saying. Right? Because you want to do it right.

She had just referred to Joseph Boyden¹² being “outed” and the fear that can be associated with that.

Opportunities for learning and connection arose organically as well. Olivia spoke about coming back from a workshop with a large Treaty map of the province. Some of the students unrolled it and pointed out where they were from, all before the school day had formally begun. Olivia then posted the map so students could mark their home communities with sticky notes for others to see. This could show that even when Olivia does not feel like she’s doing enough, being open can lead to unexpected opportunities for students to learn and express themselves:

¹² Olivia referred to media coverage that questioned author Joseph Boyden’s Indigenous identity. As an example, see Globe and Mail (<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/joseph-boyden-where-are-you-from/article33441604/>)

But then sometimes I feel like I'm not doing enough, and then it falls off and I'm too busy thinking about [standardized testing] to think about any Indigenous teaching and—but then sometimes it just happens, too.

Olivia told the story of how a student spontaneously included Medicine Wheel¹³ teachings in a recent poetry assignment, which included going to ask the Indigenous program person for guidance in that process. This was an example of “just being open to honouring the culture in *whatever* we're doing.” More than once in the conversational interview, Olivia returned to the idea of being open to honouring students' culture throughout school activities. She also emphasized that this involved “continual learning” on her part.

Summary

For Olivia, productive learning relationships were many, and came together for an overall effect. Through connecting with Indigenous and non-Indigenous colleagues within a multi-year project focused on Indigenous education within a specific curriculum area, through an Elder's involvement in her school, through Indigenous program staff who were consistently available to assist teachers and students, through the assistance of an Indigenous colleague, and through workshops and experiential learning, she gained many new perspectives and developed a knowledge base in the company of colleagues and her broader school community. She applied this learning in her daily interactions with the students in her class. This took shape over time at curricular, interpersonal, and family levels.

Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) dimensions of temporality, place, and sociality are evident in the experiences Olivia shared. She contrasted growing up in a setting where she was not aware of Indigenous people or Indigenous-Canadian relations with her recent teaching context where she worked directly with Indigenous students and their families. This physical

¹³ See Appendix B for more information about the Medicine Wheel

move to a new place seemed to set a whole new trajectory of learning and relating into motion. “It’s all learning all the time” was a theme for her. She spoke about many people with whom she actively engaged, who contributed to her knowledge base and teaching practice through one on one interaction, long-term group learning, and meaningful events. Further animating the dimension of sociality (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), Olivia’s school-based learning was connected to her growing knowledge of Indigenous-Canadian relations. Inner and social dynamics were closely linked as this teacher sought ongoing learning and application of that learning.

Closing this chapter

This chapter included eleven research stories formed from conversational interviews—and observations, in one case—with Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators. These stories are the heart of the present study; they explore intricacies, challenges, gains, questions, and experiences that these educators expressed. Through the eleven stories shared here, readers are invited to listen in on retellings of participants’ experiences and to consider possibilities in their own contexts (see Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 189). The diversity of experiences of productive learning relationships is noteworthy, including how each began, was sustained, and was believed to affect teachers’ practices with respect to students. In the following chapter, I consider some of these intricacies by looking at the stories alongside one another.

Chapter Five: Discussion

Organization and Rationale for this Chapter

In the previous chapter, the eleven stories and a short summary of each was presented. In this chapter, I share what I have learned from the eleven stories as a set. The points drawn out here are not meant to be conclusive or to frame every story, but rather to note common threads and the diversity and questions that arise when considering the stories side by side and with reference to academic literature.

As I interacted with participants in this study and later listened to, read, and re-read their words, I sometimes felt like I was being mentored. One example is Dan's description of teachers who felt the urgency of learning in Indigenous education, and his balancing practice of offering them the opportunity to develop a relationship and to consider their own standpoints. As he spoke, I felt that Dan was offering me the opportunity to consider a common phenomenon in public education and to search my own views and actions. In many other conversational interviews, participants shared insights and stories that shaped how I see my role as a teacher. While this dissertation offers a text-based version of the stories, I hope that the generosity, passion, and wisdom that participants extended to me can be felt as people read.

While subheadings are used to organize this chapter, the themes are in reality intertwined. Not every subheading applies to every story, and if it does, the meaning may differ between stories. For example, in the "being open" theme, one participant spoke about an educator who was open to further learning alongside students, and another spoke about a colleague who had an open door for educator to educator conversations. Thus, this chapter is a gathering together of storylines for the purpose of discussing themes across them (Savin-Baden & Howell Major, 2013), but reading the stories in Chapter Four provides deeper meaning and

original context. I reiterate the importance of the stories themselves because this was underscored for me in a conversation with an Anishinaabe scholar. We had just come out of a session where we were learning from an Elder, and she reminded me that in my story-based research, it is important to have the stories available for people to read, offering my interpretation but giving readers the opportunity to interpret them as well (Vicki Kelly, personal communication, May 1, 2018).

I have included themes that are relevant to multiple stories and some that are relevant to only a few. I try to be clear about this when I reference participants' stories with respect to each theme. The reason that I include themes that apply to only a few stories is to honour the experiences that participants shared, valuing individual experiences as sources of knowledge (see Clandinin & Connelly, 1996).

Research questions. I framed this discussion chapter on the research questions. They were:

1. How do non-Indigenous educators and Indigenous educators and community members describe experiences and qualities of the productive learning relationships they share?
2. How are these relationships initiated and sustained, and how do participants believe they affect non-Indigenous educators' practices with respect to Indigenous students?

Settings through which Participants Initiated their Learning Relationships

The learning relationships in this study began in a variety of ways. Employing Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) three-dimensional narrative inquiry space as a theoretical framework, I consider participants' first meetings in terms of place and sociality—the physical and social contexts that set the stage for Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators to meet one another. I

consider the places in which participants found themselves as precursors to the relationships that they developed together.

Indigenous educators in formal teacher support roles. In some cases, the Indigenous educator held a specific role to support teachers and administrators in connecting with Indigenous content, community members, or pedagogies. This was the case for Sky and Simone, for Dan in some stories he shared, for some of Olivia's Indigenous educator colleagues, Elders, and facilitators, for Brittany as she related with Michaela and Christine, for Lydia as she supported Renee's class, and for Tee-chaw when she was volunteering to support teachers in schools and working with Indigenous teacher candidates and the teachers who were hosting them.

In-school connections. In other stories, learning relationships developed between Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators apart from formal roles focused on Indigenous education. Alise and Max, for example, were Indigenous staff in schools where non-Indigenous teachers Renee and Kate worked. In these cases, non-Indigenous educators sought out the Indigenous educator and found forms of guidance, support, knowledge, and community connections. Similarly, Dan was supporting teacher colleagues, not always in a formal school board position designated for this role. In some parts of her career, Tee-chaw, too, interacted with non-Indigenous educators as colleagues in schools, but found that she was not always sought out for her guidance as an Indigenous educator.

Indigenous administrators. For River and Agnes and for Hope and Chantal, the guidance the Indigenous educator provided occurred in yet another context: a school-based administrator leading a teacher in a school staff setting. River's leadership style, academic focal points, and ways of bringing in and interacting with Indigenous community members were part

of Agnes's overall experience as a teacher in her school. Similarly, Chantal experienced daily school life in Hope's presence. While she expressed appreciation for Hope's interpersonal, kind way of interacting, this was largely within a context where she was under Hope's formal leadership.

Group projects in Indigenous education. Group projects or group settings were another mode of initiating learning relationships. Greg and Bryn met when they were both assigned to a large Indigenous education project. Work and informal travel time allowed them to establish shared priorities and mutual connection. Olivia also described a group project as a relational base for her learning. She was working with several Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators over a period of years, and participated in multiple learning opportunities with this group as well as in other settings.

Teaching placements, volunteering. Tee-Chaw described multiple settings where she, as an Indigenous educator, interacted with non-Indigenous teachers. Several of these were initiated through formal teacher education placements where she was either a teacher candidate or a university instructor supporting non-Indigenous teachers who had Indigenous teacher candidates in their classrooms. Her volunteer work in public schools with a committee of Indigenous educators was another setting.

Diverse processes in initiating learning relationships. In the descriptions above, I addressed specific work roles or contexts that participants described as the settings in which they first met. This could leave the impression that there are cut-and-dried roles or positions that give rise to Indigenous-non-Indigenous learning relationships in publicly funded school settings. However, the diversity in stories and in the character of each relationship was really quite

remarkable. For example, Indigenous educators at the school board level had a variety of approaches to initiating contact with non-Indigenous teachers in publicly funded schools.

Brittany sent an email inviting all teachers of a particular grade to host her for a multi-day presentation. Christine eagerly took up the offer and Michaela, also a non-Indigenous teacher, took up the offer after she heard about the experience from Christine. Simone, another Indigenous educator at the school board level, responded to an initial request from an individual at Sky's school, and later supported many educators through being recommended by colleagues or administrators. That process eventually led to full school engagement. As another example of diversity within what could appear to be similar circumstances, both Chantal and Agnes were non-Indigenous educators who learned from Indigenous administrators, but Agnes purposefully moved to River's school while for Chantal, the process seemed to happen over time. Thus, the Indigenous educators' influence on these non-Indigenous teachers came to be in different ways.

Summary and literature connections: initiating learning relationships. As described above, the learning relationships in the present study arose through a variety of means and in a variety of settings. I considered these settings as a form of "place" (see Clandinin and Connelly (2000)). In the coming subsections, I consider Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) dimensions of sociality and temporality.

The academic literature mentions some of these forms of initiating learning relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators. In the studies by St. Denis (2010) and St. Denis, Bouvier, and Battiste (1998), it seems that informal, colleague-to-colleague learning was the main focus. Teacher learning in Dion's (2014, 2015, 2016a) reports on First Nation, Métis, and Inuit-focused collaborative inquiries involved relating with community members outside of school board roles as well as educators within school boards. While many school boards in

Canada now have formal roles where Indigenous educators support teachers and administrators in professional learning, academic studies were hard to find—see the “institutional contexts” subsection for more on this. I did not come across a body of literature on the experience of non-Indigenous teachers who were influenced by working under Indigenous administrators in their schools. This experience, which River and Agnes, Hope and Chantal described, would be interesting to know more about in a variety of contexts.

Experiences and Qualities of Productive Learning Relationships

The experiences and qualities of productive learning relationships shared by non-Indigenous educators and Indigenous educators or community members are diverse. Each story draws out different personal and interpersonal dynamics, values, circumstances, effects, feelings, and journeys. In this section, I point to connecting themes with the understanding that these qualities are best understood within the context of each story.

Clandinin and Connelly’s (2000) dimension of sociality, which includes personal and social processes, is the subject of this section. I begin with themes related to personal qualities, such as being open and being genuine. I gradually proceed to relational qualities, such as Indigenous educators focusing on non-Indigenous educators’ growth, and mutual benefit. I appreciate how Clandinin and Connelly conceptualized the “inward” and “outward” (pp. 49, 89) as part of one dimension. I acknowledge that personal stances may be socially influenced and vice versa. For example, a person may be open with a colleague because she experiences a sense of trust and respect in the relationship they share. After discussing personal and interpersonal qualities, I take up some of the emotional dynamics that participants described as part of their learning relationships. This could be considered a second aspect of Clandinin and Connelly’s

(2000) dimension of sociality. Emotional dynamics included fear, comfort, confidence; fun, laughter, enjoyment; painful and uncomfortable conversations; kindness; from the heart.

Being open. The term “open” was used by many participants, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous. I noticed an open stance in how many interacted with one another. Two non-Indigenous educators spoke about the “open door” of their Indigenous colleagues. In Kate’s words, “I’ve always been a little nervous about teaching Indigenous issues because I’m non-Indigenous,” yet Max helped her gain confidence because “he’s always approachable, his door’s always open.” This openness to Kate, staff, and students was noticeable; Kate appreciated Max’s friendship as well as guidance on Indigenous connections to curriculum. Max said that it was “very easy” to “open up and to work with” Kate because he saw that she was a very kind teacher who was seeking out Indigenous perspectives, “looking to do things properly” in a way that he sensed was genuine. Max’s open door was appreciated by Kate, and Max appreciated Kate’s kindness and genuine desire to learn in support of students.

Using very similar words to Kate, Chantal, also a non-Indigenous educator, said she knew early on that her Indigenous colleague Hope was “open-door, welcome to everybody, even your stupid questions.” She later spoke about Hope’s open heart as well as her open door; she felt Hope was a “safe person” with whom people could “share their vulnerabilities.” At more than one point, Hope emphasized how Chantal loved, cared about, or related with students, the culture, families, community, and the work they shared. This could be seen as valuing Chantal’s openness to learning, engaging, and relating; valuing an open heart.

Dan, another Indigenous educator, spoke about opening himself up to non-Indigenous educators as part of creating a space, dialogue, relationship, and process where “learning becomes part of who we both are.” Giving openness and patience to educators was vital to the

type of learning environment he sought to establish, one where educators, too, open themselves to sharing, relating, and learning. He also spoke about opening up possibilities for teachers to relate to students. Teachers' own learning and understanding of Indigenous histories and perspectives could help them be less worried about offending or not knowing and in a better position to relate meaningfully with Indigenous students. Dan was open to teachers and highly supportive of their learning processes, and saw this lived out in teacher-student relationships when teachers were better positioned to welcome and honour students through their increased knowledge base.

Dan's connection between teachers' growing knowledge and their relationships with students reminds me of Greg and Bryn's conversational interview. Greg greatly valued how Bryn cared about students, loved them, and did not judge them, supporting them through education. Bryn saw early on that Greg was "accepting of who I was" and "easygoing and open" and as their story unfolded, she continued to value that he was "open to me and to my questions," to sharing his teachings, and to guiding teachers. As I thought about how Greg and Bryn so highly value interpersonal openness and even love, I saw a shared pattern, or a form of reciprocity; Bryn was open to loving and supporting students, benefiting from Greg's open sharing to do so, and Greg valued this and was pleased to be part of it.

Simone, an Indigenous educator, talked about non-Indigenous educators who are "willing to open." She said that non-Indigenous educators who learn alongside Indigenous educators model "that you *can* learn if you're open and willing," and that "learning is for all." Sky, who was learning alongside Simone over a period of years, said that an important factor was being "open" and "aware" of aspects like "privilege and power and Whiteness" in her own life. Openness about power relations in society, and her personal position within that, and humility

were tied to her openness to developing a friendship with Simone. Trust was also emphasized within this, which is the topic of a coming subsection.

Brittany, an Indigenous educator, appreciated the “open-minded” school staff of which Michaela was a part. Olivia, a non-Indigenous educator, took the stance of “just being open to honouring the culture in *whatever* we’re doing.” Several of the Indigenous educators in this study spoke about their own openness to learning. River and Agnes extensively discussed the process of developing spaces where staff and students could challenge one another, collaborate, and where it was OK to be wrong and to learn from that. They stepped into that space themselves. River told a story about how she related with and learned from a student and staff member, saying: “You always need to be humble enough to open yourself up in that space of learning.” Max, too, talked about how he was still learning, an interchange that is highlighted in the coming subsection on Indigenous educators’ focus on growth.

Openness was not an isolated theme; Kate and Max, and River and Agnes connected openness and humility, and Sky also wove humility into her discussion. Being welcoming and being open were also paired, as seen above. As detailed in this subsection, the term “open” was prominent in several different stories, used in different contexts and with different meanings. I present “being open” as the first subsection in this discussion because I believe mutual openness is a major finding of the present study. “Open” is an oft-used term and a theme that seems to be lived out. Future subsections reiterate this concept from different perspectives.

The interpersonal openness that is described by participants in this study took many forms, some of which appear in the academic literature. Seasoned educators in Oskineegish’s (2015) study described the importance of openness and flexibility in lesson planning, in taking up students’ suggestions, and openness was implied in teachers’ learning from the First Nation

community and the colleagues around them. Taylor (1995) also wrote about the importance of teachers being open to learning from the First Nations communities where they work and Tompkins (1998) referred to teachers' attitudes as a central factor. St. Denis (2010), who shared Aboriginal educators' words about public education, highlighted non-Indigenous people who come to decision-making processes "open and flexible in their thinking," and who do "not have an agenda" in contrast with people who believe "they know best" and "really don't have anything to learn from you, they will just tell you how to do it" (p. 49). She quoted another participant who spoke positively about non-Indigenous educators who are "open-minded and good listeners" (p. 51) and a participant who said allies have an "open attitude toward change" (p. 53). The Indigenous educators in St. Denis's (2010) study also spoke about mutually shared friendship and support, which appeared in several stories in the present research. They seemed happy to share their perspectives with non-Indigenous colleagues who were genuinely interested in learning, which could be similar to the "open door" that Kate and Chantal described. Two-way openness was very important in this study. As outlined above, non-Indigenous educators spoke about the openness of their Indigenous colleagues as important to their own choice to engage, and Indigenous educators valued when their non-Indigenous colleagues were open, engaged in their own learning, or welcoming.

Being genuine. Being "genuine" or "authentic" was valued by participants describing a person and in terms of presenting content to students. As Hope, an Indigenous educator, described Chantal, a non-Indigenous educator's growth, she also said that Chantal was "still genuine, humble, and cares so much about the kids, the families, the work.... everybody loves being around Chantal. It's fun, and it brings life to you." At another point, Hope explained how she values working with "genuine people" who are focused on students' holistic learning as the

purpose for being there. Chantal's response indicated that she saw Hope as genuine as well, explaining how Hope is a model for her staff.

As mentioned above, Max "sensed the genuineness" in Kate's approach as she sought to learn from Indigenous perspectives, and valued that she wanted to "do things properly," a value shared by Greg, another Indigenous educator, in his conversational interview. This genuine approach was highly valued by Simone, another Indigenous educator. She and Sky discussed the difference between sharing knowledge in a genuine way and including Indigenous perspectives in a surface manner or for personal gain. Simone underscored referencing "where your knowledge come[s] from," including acknowledging the Elders or knowledge keepers of the specific First Nation who were teaching you, through whom you come to understand something.

Discussion about non-Indigenous educators' role around Indigenous knowledge came up for Lydia and Renee and for Olivia with authenticity as a core concern of the non-Indigenous educators. Olivia spoke about a process of incorporating Indigenous content in an increasingly authentic way over time. Regarding "culture," Olivia expressed that she was "not teaching culture, because that's not my role as a non-Indigenous person," but rather saw her role as "to incorporate their culture, which is so varied, in our learning and in our everyday, and making it authentic." This was not something she found easy or took lightly; questions and examples she shared indicated her ongoing learning in this area.

Hope and Chantal spoke about Chantal's role in participating in and sharing Indigenous culture. Hope spoke about "trust being earned over time" by Chantal within the Indigenous community, something that "doesn't happen easily or frequently." Later, Chantal recounted a conversation where she was asked if she "get[s] any pushback for being non-Indigenous," responding that she used to, "but now as long as I share my intentions are good and they see that

I'm following protocol in honouring the traditional ways of doing everything, then people accept me more."

In the literature, I found several references to ideas of being genuine or authentic as personal traits, but did not find the same attention to ideas of protocol and "doing things properly," particularly for non-Indigenous educators. The Indigenous educators in the report by St. Denis (2010) also valued non-Indigenous colleagues who were genuine, honest, and had integrity. In remote First Nations contexts, Oskineegish and Berger (2013) wrote that teachers' intentions in working in (remote) First Nation communities are clear to students—and by implication, the community. It mattered whether teachers were seeking to gain money and job experience or whether their honest desire was with the First Nation communities in which they were guests (Oskineegish & Berger, 2013). Sincerity, authenticity, and "*who the teacher is*" (p. 119) as a person were factors they explored. In Dion's collaborative inquiry (2016a) study, teachers' "genuine commitment" (p. 5) to learning was valued. Being genuine and open to learning was mentioned directly by several participants and demonstrated by many others.

Trust. As detailed below, many of the educators in this study spoke about trust. Simone highlighted trust with respect to Indigenous and non-Indigenous teachers taking the opportunity to work together:

You come to *learn* about each other *personally*, which that relationship piece is key, and it's key to Indigenous people. Not only in building relationship, but in being able to work together. Because then there's a trust. Especially when you're dealing with heavy things.

Simone further explained, "There's a risk, right, in opening yourself up to be open and honest." The connection that Simone and Sky developed was personal while it was situated in the work environment, and trust was foundational. The importance of trust was later reiterated by Sky, the non-Indigenous educator who learned alongside Simone. Several other participants also spoke

about engaging with heavy things. Trust is an important concept to keep in mind as a backdrop for this.

Alise, an Indigenous participant, referred to trust as an important factor in how she related with Renee. In their large school staff setting, Renee introduced herself early, and although they did not work directly together, Alise said that “Renee was one of the first teachers that had instant connection to feeling that welcomeness.” It made a difference for Alise: “once you build, you connect with a new relationship, you feel more confidence in yourself, you feel more welcome, you feel trust.” Alise said that the way Renee made her feel “gave me more confidence to teach a class.” A sense of welcome and trust were foundational to the interpersonal learning that occurred; since Alise felt welcome and had increased confidence, she agreed to teach a class, which became a setting for Renee’s learning.

Hope, an Indigenous educator, pointed to families’ and communities’ trust in Chantal as vital. Again, this is trust “earned over time,” trust based on how Chantal interacted with people, notably through non-judgment and “instinctively” knowing “what to do to support our families.” Chantal trusted Hope too. In the context of a story she was telling, Chantal said, “I love her, trust her words, and have more faith in myself because of her support.” This links to Hope’s philosophy, which she explained as having high expectations for the staff who work for her, trusting them, and drawing on their collective strengths, and working together.

River, an Indigenous administrator, expressed a similar philosophy to Hope’s when she talked about “synergy and mobilization of people,” giving people “the space to be awesome.” This involved asking staff, “What do you need? How can I help? What do you need from me?” as an administrator. While River did not use the word “trust” here, I draw on Hope’s words to see this philosophy as one that has trust in teachers embedded in it. As taken up in a future

subsection, River was trusting in people's ability to learn, engage, and develop their strengths. From another angle, River earned the trust of her staff over time. Again, she did not use the word trust in her description, but I see the concept when she spoke about challenging her staff; asking them to try something new and potentially risky in their teaching practice was situated within a context where "people knew I was there, they knew I was committed, they knew what I was about." Before expecting change of others, River had established her own trustworthiness. River told these stories alongside Agnes's stories, sharing similar underlying philosophies and practices.

Trust was an important part of the "two-way street" relating that Greg and Bryn experienced. Greg explained that their initial co-worker relationship became a friendship over time: "I feel like Bryn is a friend of mine that I can go to that I trust, if I need help. If I need advice. If I need to vent." The idea of trust came up several times in their story. Max, too spoke about the wider collegial context in which he and Kate worked where people "come together as a team and trust each other and work well with each other." Max linked relationships, openness, trust, and ongoing learning. I see the concept of trust as foundational to this study, evidenced by the examples above and in other stories where open, genuine learning and sharing became the platform for deep learning. Trust winds its way through other subsections in discussion about topics like focusing on growth, and development over time.

Trust was addressed by a participant in Oskeyeegish and Berger's (2013) study who emphasized that it matters who a teacher is as a person: "trust will happen, and if who you are is a kind, honest, caring person in that classroom, then you can make mistakes and learn from them" (p. 119). Perhaps trust is particularly pertinent given the history of unequal relations and colonial practices that have characterized the school experience for many Indigenous families

(Goulet, 2001). Tanaka (2016) shared the words of a pre-service teacher who had been learning alongside an Indigenous wisdom keeper in an experiential education earth fibres course: “I just felt that you had so much faith that I could do it that I just had to keep going and do it because you believed in me” (p. 78). This quotation reminds me of non-Indigenous educator Chantal’s words about feeling Hope’s support.

From another perspective, “trustworthiness” is one of the qualities that St. Denis (2010) found when she asked Aboriginal teachers about non-Aboriginal colleagues that they considered allies (p. 61). Trust is referenced quite often with respect to teachers building trust with Indigenous students, families, and community members (Dion, 2015; Dion, 2016a) but I have not found references to non-Indigenous educators’ developing trust in Indigenous educators or mentors. In the broader field of mentoring for teachers, Awaya et al. (2003) found trust to be a key characteristic in relationships between mentors and student teachers (p. 45). Trust is emphasized in the collegial relationships in the present study and is evident from various angles in the academic literature.

Indigenous educators focusing on growth. A prominent idea shared by Indigenous educators is being on a journey of learning or growth with teachers. Hope, an Indigenous educator, called it “a privilege to be able to help work with people, alongside them.” This followed Chantal, her non-Indigenous colleague, saying how Hope believes that people are on a learning curve and helps them grow, that she has “the patience and the heart” to do that.

In describing the process of helping teachers “move into the truth side of Truth and Reconciliation” through providing a safe and engaging relational learning environment, Dan said, “It’s very exciting to be walking in that journey, and going together down this trail of growth.” When Brittany, an Indigenous educator, worked with teachers, she asked herself,

“Where is the potential relationship here, or the growth” instead of taking a deficit view. River, an Indigenous administrator, shared her orientation to leadership: “I operate from a central belief system that people are people, and people have strengths, and people generally want to learn, so we need to have that space for them to be able to learn.” Agnes, a non-Indigenous administrator who learned from River talked about how she had taken this view up herself. They discussed how this applied to interacting with students as well as staff; they were determined to see people in a positive light, connecting on points of strength. Tee-chaw, who expressed that some teachers seemed to feel that they did not need guidance, took this stance as well through being creative in how she could offer support to students, teachers, and administrators.

I picked up a sense of understanding and togetherness in how Indigenous educators related with their non-Indigenous colleagues. For example, Lydia expressed understanding about teachers’ fear (as further described in a coming subsection). Brittany used the term “we” in her critique of how teachers view families in poverty: “Like all of those the undertones are racism, right? It’s discriminating against poverty, because we care so much about the children, right? And it’s discriminating. I go to that place too.” Brittany was calling out a significant problem in how educators interact, but did so in a way that drew herself into the problem as well. By saying “I go to that place too,” I saw Brittany bringing educators together to deal with a real problem. There was kindness and yet firmness in her approach.

Several non-Indigenous educators talked about how they experienced this positive, collaborative, growth-oriented stance that Indigenous educators offered them. Kate said that while “there is a huge level of ignorance on my part,” her Indigenous colleague Max was open to where she was and “helping me get further.” In the interchange that followed, Max was quick to say that he is often “in the same boat,” sharing his story about embarking on this learning and

how it continued: “We’re still learning ourselves and trying to do things properly, it’s just a never-ending path of learning. I mean that is life, right.” Several of the Indigenous educators in this study also spoke about actively learning themselves. Greg talked about being on a learning journey that had changed who he was as a person over several years. Simone described her ongoing learning from Elders and how that shaped her knowledge. Dan, another Indigenous educator, also positioned himself as a learner.

Thus, while all of the non-Indigenous educators in this study positioned themselves as learners, so did many of the Indigenous educators. Whether Indigenous educators saw themselves as learning alongside non-Indigenous educators or extending support to non-Indigenous educators in their learning—or both—there was a collaborative, growth-oriented sense to their work together. A mutual form of focusing on growth and stretching one another can be seen in a participant’s quotation in St. Denis’s (2010) study, where non-Indigenous allies in Indigenous education were described as colleagues who “challenge themselves and challenge you as well” (p. 52). They “are not threatened by the expectation that there is more to learn: ‘Allies are very trusting and they have resolve. They want to see change happen and so they’re not intimidated by the fact that they don’t know much’” (p. 52). As I reflected on these statements from St. Denis’s (2010) study with Indigenous educators, I considered what I have heard and sensed from the participants in the present study: some of that trust and willingness to keep learning, even when there is so much more to learn for non-Indigenous educators, links to the character of the Indigenous educators themselves. By making non-Indigenous teachers feel welcome, by focusing on their strengths instead of their blind spots or what they do not know, Indigenous educators were inviting trust and healthy relational learning and commitment. This was a gift.

The idea of continual learning over time is resonant with the “Holistic Lifelong Learning Models” published by the Canadian Council on Learning (CCL) (2007, 2009). In these, learning was shown as “a lifelong process,” “a communal activity, involving family, community and Elders,” and “experiential in nature” among other key attributes (CCL, 2007, p. 5). The belief that we are all in a process of ongoing learning fits closely here, as does the idea that we are learning together. While I was wondering if it was appropriate to take up these models in relation to the present study, I read the statement in the CCL (2007) document that said, “The Holistic Lifelong Learning Models themselves provide First Nations, Inuit and Métis people with an opportunity to articulate and explore—and for non-Aboriginal Canadians to appreciate—the value of Aboriginal holistic lifelong learning as an essential human endeavour that can benefit us all” (p. 3). Wow! This opportunity for non-Indigenous people to learn from—and to gain from—this view of education is generous, characteristic of the Indigenous educators in the present study.

Lifelong learning, and the sacred nature of that process, is expressed by Indigenous scholars. Rice (2005), a scholar who identifies as Mohawk and Finnish, wrote about the journey of life, including teachings about the “four hills of life” and “the four paths within the circle of life” (p. 82), referring to communication with Dumont (1997). Cree scholar Hart (2002) wrote about the Cree idea of *Mino-pimatisiwin*, or “the good life” (p. 44), and the personal, family, and community growth involved. P. Cormier (2014) wrote, “peace in Aboriginal contexts is nested in the paradigm of holism.... It is a neverending life long process that embraces good relationships... with all of creation” (p. 174). These brief mentions of various Indigenous conceptions of lifelong learning and relating give some context for the strong theme of ongoing learning that participants in the present study expressed.

In her study where pre-service teachers worked alongside local Indigenous wisdom keepers, Tanaka (2009) wrote, “Preservice teachers are not deficit learners.” She described how wisdom keepers who worked with the preservice teachers in her study over time “trusted and had patience that the preservice teachers could find their own learning direction” and “assumed that the preservice teachers would contribute in meaningful ways to the community” (p. 230). This mattered to preservice teachers. I have not found other studies where Indigenous educators or community members reflected in-depth on non-Indigenous educators’ learning, although a short quotation in Dion’s (2016a) report indicated that an Indigenous community member saw “a shift with some teachers” who thought “oh, this is pretty cool,” moving from being afraid to beginning to develop knowledge and wanting to know more (p. 36). At one point, Dion (2016a) described teachers’ shift from being “knowers” to “learners” as part of a collaborative inquiry that “in some instances contributes to creating professional learning environments where there is trust, where they are not being judged and where there is shared collective commitment to learning” (p. 21). This implies a learning environment that mirrors some comments found in the present study: non-judgement, trust, and collective commitment to learning. In the present study, Indigenous educators’ growth-oriented stance toward the non-Indigenous educators with whom they worked was remarkable. I believe this characterized every conversational interview and is a hallmark of this research.

We. Linked with the section above on Indigenous educators’ focus on growth, several participants saw themselves as connected with their colleagues, using the term or the idea of “we.” River said, “I work with a whole bunch of super brilliant people, which I love.” At another point, River explained that she said “we” instead of “I”, believing in leading from humility. Hope, also an Indigenous administrator, thought about staff this way: “What are their

strengths and then how can we make continuous improvement in what we do over time based on who we are as people, based on what our strengths are, based on what our love, our passions are?” Like River, she expressed this belief using the word “we”: “Us. Us as a group, not just me. It’s never just me, and I rarely *ever* will say ‘I,’ it’s ‘us.’ *We* do the work together.”

This “we” way of experiencing and thinking about learning was also evident in Olivia’s story. In the group of Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators who learned together over several years, Olivia valued being able to “pull from different people’s understanding.” She found it positive that “maybe not everybody [was] 100% on the same page,” which she saw as reflecting the Indigenous diversity of the province. Dan said that even when “forward conversations” needed to be had, “they don’t have to be ‘you,’ ‘them,’ ‘they’ type conversations. They can be ‘I,’ ‘we,’ and ‘us’ conversations.” Describing this as a “very different way,” Dan said, “If we look at it from that perspective, we’re definitely going to arrive at a place of reconciliation, a place of Truth and Reconciliation, a lot faster than ‘you’ and ‘them’ and ‘they.’”

In another instance—which was stated more eloquently than I will attempt to replicate here—Dan explained how reconciliation will need to happen with Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities *together*; at both an interpersonal level and a societal level. Dan centred a “we” approach. While not all educators explicitly talked about a “we” stance, I saw the idea in their collaborative approach to providing students with good learning experiences, as was the case for Brittany working with Michaela and with Christine, for Simone working with Sky and her staff and school community, for Max and Kate collaborating on connecting students with guest speakers and experiential learning opportunities, and for Lydia, Renee, and Alise in their shared class.

This sense of “we” and togetherness extended to students, communities, and Canadian society in some of the stories shared in this research. River described how an initiative where Indigenous and non-Indigenous students in Agnes’s class—and Agnes herself, when you listen to Agnes’s point of view on it!—were learning from Elders and community members. River said this created a space of “togetherness” in the school. She placed the idea of “learning from each other” within the societal context of reconciliation: “It was really about honouring the knowledge that was there and learning from that to benefit everybody that was there.” River saw staff as “we,” and community and family connections also had a “we” sense in her stories.

A “we” approach was foundational in my master’s study (Moon, 2014; Moon & Berger, 2016) and seemed to be an underpinning idea in Dion’s reports on First Nation, Métis, and Inuit-focused collaborative inquiry where Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators and students were engaged in learning with Indigenous community members (Dion 2014, 2015, 2016a). As noted in Chapter Two of this dissertation, there are several studies where pre-service teachers learned through relating with or listening to Indigenous community members in ways that they found highly valuable (e.g., Blimkie et al., 2014; Nardozi et al., 2014). Even there, the term “we” was not explicitly used, and the concept is not widely found in literature about non-Indigenous educators’ learning. In the present study, the “we” idea was stated very explicitly by certain Indigenous educators, as quoted above. Further, I see a “we” stance as foundational to how many of the Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators spoke about working, learning, and sharing side by side.

Mutual benefit. For many participants, there was mutual benefit in the “we” approach they took. In the first few examples shared below, mutual benefit and connection ran deep, developed over many years of working closely together and through sharing a high degree of

trust. River said of Agnes, “We probably do more together than we do apart,” and the two passionately engaged in conversation showing how they stretched and supported each other by bringing their cultural perspectives and personal and professional experiences, embedded in a sense of deep connection and commitment, to one another and to their shared goals. Greg, an Indigenous educator, said, “It’s a two-way street” when Bryn expressed gratitude for how he shared generously. In their conversational interview, he gave several examples of this two-way sharing. It seemed that Greg felt deeply supported as an educator, and so did Bryn. Simone and Sky, Hope and Chantal also spoke of personal friendships developed over time in their work environments.

In the “being open,” “being genuine,” “trust,” and “we” subsections above, mutual benefit, or the idea of reciprocity, came up again and again. Using openness as an example, Brittany, an Indigenous educator who worked in multiple schools, stated she sensed the open-mindedness of the school staff where Michaela worked, and Michaela, a non-Indigenous teacher there, spoke of sensing non-judgment from Brittany. While I may be inferring from participants’ words here, it seems that trust, too, developed over time in a reciprocal manner, and that people could sense genuine support, as in the case of Max knowing Kate genuinely wanted to learn, and Kate feeling his genuine support of her learning and that of students. The “we” stance itself is one where unity was implied; as educators worked toward shared goals, they all benefited. Simone valued “that truly *collaborative*, working together, alongside. Not above” way of relating with Sky. To me, that statement implied mutual benefit; they were collaborating in areas that were meaningful to both of them. This idea is further unpacked in the following subsections. In the literature, St. Denis (2010) presented Indigenous educators’ views about non-Indigenous teacher allies, which included mutual sharing and reciprocity regarding resources like

curriculum-connected materials, knowledge, support, or expertise. Mutual benefit and collaborative person to person learning reminds me of the “relational knowing” dynamics that Hollingsworth and colleagues (1993) described as she shared ongoing conversations with educators about the ins and outs of their professional practice. Practices were examined and understanding was formed through those group interactions. All involved educators contributed and all benefited, which was reflected in the words of River and Agnes, Greg and Bryn above.

Putting it into practice. As I considered participants’ stories in light of Greg’s “two-way street,” phrase or “reciprocity,” a term often used in the literature (Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991; Kovach, 2009; St. Denis, 2010), I was thinking about how passing on knowledge, or being part of that flow, can be a form of reciprocity. For example, Simone said, “But then to take that knowledge, and put it into practice within the school.... But if you’re not willing to share it, what use is that knowledge?” This quotation, taken from its context about collaboration, valuing and honouring sharing knowledge regardless of formal position, showed the purpose of learning and sharing: personal learning and putting knowledge to work in the school context. In contrast would be gaining knowledge for the purpose of personal advancement.

In a similar vein, Greg spoke about teachings that had been given to him with the understanding that “these are not your teachings to hold onto, these are your teachings to share. And—or else why have them?... I just try to take the voices that have been given to me and keep them going.” Bryn spoke about sharing specific things she had learned from Greg with groups of teachers, seeking to respect students’ and families’ beliefs and practices. Tee-chaw, too, spoke about sharing with teachers with the purpose of supporting students: “They need to be told, is what we found out. They need to be told, and shown, how to meet the needs of our children.” She said this in the context of describing in-school presentations with students and

educators, working with administrators, and offering free professional development as part of a vision for supporting Indigenous students and families in public school systems.

I may be over-extending what participants were saying, but it is my impression that when non-Indigenous educators took up what Indigenous educators were teaching them and applied it in some meaningful way as they interacted in their school settings, Indigenous educators were pleased. Even as I consider that statement, I think about Dan's words about teachers' learning, and the idea that developing a relationship with a student might be the key outcome, even if what the student is being taught in school does not immediately change. As stated in his full story, "It's OK to not be able to apply some of the things you're learning to your classroom just yet." This provides a balancing perspective, one that warns against rushing.

Participants expressed nuanced and varying views on sharing Indigenous knowledge. Renee and Lydia shared an interesting interchange on being authentic in sharing knowledge. When Renee said that she believed it was "far more authentic for me to ask people who know something about it to come and teach it to my students than for me to be pretending to know," Lydia asked, "Yes but what if you learned a whole lot about it, would you feel comfortable to do it on your own then?" I think the discussion of what it means for non-Indigenous educators to put into practice what they are learning from Indigenous colleagues, Elders, or community members would be worth considering in future research. Or perhaps this is a personal, contextual, and relational question embedded in the day to day realities and interactions where we find ourselves.

Putting knowledge into practice, or sharing in an appropriate and timely way reminds me of Simpson's (2014) words:

Although individuals have the responsibility to self-actualize within this system, intelligence in this context is not an individual's property to own; once an individual has

carried a particular teaching around to the point where they can easily embody that teaching, they, then, also become responsible for sharing it according to the ethics and protocols of the system. This is primarily done by modeling the teaching, or, as Elder Edna Manitowabi says, “wearing your teachings.” (p. 11)

Simpson’s (2014) explanation was part of a larger, highly articulate argument about meaning making within an Nishnaabeg worldview. I see a link to the approaches of Indigenous educators Greg and Simone because there seemed to be the idea of sharing teachings or perspectives with the understanding that the person with whom they were shared would also take up and live out those understandings for the benefit of students.

Within the context of the present study where non-Indigenous educators were learning from Indigenous educators and community members, I think it is also important to note that there were different kinds of knowledge, and that Indigenous scholars have explained that some information should only be passed on to particular people through particular rites of transfer (Little Bear, 2009). In the present study, some educators were being entrusted with practices and knowledge that were associated with certain protocols, as Chantal described, while others consciously steered away from certain topics that they felt were “not mine to teach,” as Olivia explained. I do not want to lump all the participating educators’ experiences into one, but do want to point to the consideration that living out knowledge or sharing what has been taught was voiced by some educators in this study. This could be considered in light of “wisdom-in-action,” which Aikenehead and Elliott (2010) described as an Indigenous way of knowing (p. 324).

Student centred. As I reflected on the traits of being “open” and “genuine” that appeared prominently in the set of stories, students’ well-being and learning were often the focus of this genuine openness to learning. The “collective effort” that Hope named and that Indigenous administrators Hope and River both described in their collaborative approaches was centred on students. Putting into practice what was learned, as addressed in the previous

subsection, could also be ultimately seen as working for students' positive school experiences. Thus, an underlying idea in several of the subsections above is a shared focus on students' learning and well-being in school. This quite often referred to Indigenous students in particular, although the learning of all students was expressly emphasized by certain participants and implied by others.

Indigenous educators knew and valued when non-Indigenous educators were centred on students. Greg said: "I know that Bryn has kids' best interests and always has. You can sense that, that those relationships with those kids mean the *world* to Bryn," resulting in the student feeling supported and loved. This was significant given Greg's earlier words, "I don't care about anything else. I just want the best for the kids"—and Indigenous kids in particular. Bryn had explained that "the kids are always my bottom line.... I always want to make the school experience a positive one for kids so that they can achieve, and they can succeed, and they can feel that in themselves." When Bryn learned alongside Greg, a significant part of this was hearing stories that helped her to better understand Indigenous students' perspectives. Greg and Bryn had synchronized purposes. Hope, too, pointed to the "purpose of why we're here, and it's for the kids and their learning," valuing working with people who shared that aim. At another point in the conversational interview, she spoke of Chantal's ongoing dedication to students and families. Max appreciated Kate eagerly learning to better appreciate what students may be experiencing. Because Max's door was always open, Kate could ask about specific circumstances and be pointed to resources to help her better understand the larger picture. Their interactions helped her to recognize the diversity of Indigenous students' backgrounds and experiences and to be responsive as a classroom teacher. At a different point, Max had said, "I definitely wanted to help my people," reflecting on learning he consciously embarked upon after

finishing high school. He tied this to being “on the journey with students and teachers alike.” It seems that there was a natural fit between his support of and collaboration with Indigenous and non-Indigenous colleagues and his own goal of helping his people.

In addition to the examples above where Indigenous educators expressed how they valued Indigenous colleagues’ support of students, more stated that students are the central motivation for the work they do in schools. Tee-chaw said, “[I] wanted to make a difference in teaching Native children. I wanted Native children to have a better experience and to meet their individual needs and to make their learning events enjoyable for them.” Alise, also an Indigenous educator, said, “It’s the kids that motivate me,” as part of a larger explanation seen in the subsection about her personal journey. Brittany, another Indigenous educator said that “go[ing] in kid-focused” was prominent as she designed lessons and interacted in the school environment. She said “teachers are a great part of it, but it’s really about kids.” In my interpretation, being focused on students was a shared endeavour for many of the educators in this study. For certain Indigenous educators, collaborating with non-Indigenous colleagues could be a fruitful and productive part of their larger reason for being in the school system: to benefit students.

Sky, a non-Indigenous teacher and administrator in a school with both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students, felt satisfied that the students “were exposed to the truth” through learning alongside Simone and other community members. *How* the students learned was also important to Sky; her focus on experiential and interpersonal learning opportunities is emphasized in a coming subsection. When Sky spoke about the importance of teachers’ process of “decolonization,” she linked this to students’ well-being in school: “Until teachers realize that the decisions they are making are affecting their Indigenous kids negatively, they’re not going to

see any reason to change.” Sky and Simone elaborated on these ideas, including how teaching misconceptions can be built in when teachers “don’t know,” and the implications this has. They spoke about teacher learning and student learning in what I see as an intertwined manner, emphasizing time, story, and an ongoing learning journey. They valued interpersonal learning for students and teachers, and placed this within larger social relations.

Michaela, too, placed students at the forefront of many of her statements about her learning opportunities alongside Brittany, her Indigenous colleague. Her own knowledge increased through Brittany’s teaching and so did students’ opportunity to learn about Indigenous history and Canadian events like Indian Residential Schools and their effects. Further, this learning helped her with “that sensitivity aspect” as she interacted with Indigenous students.

Christine and Brittany discussed student learning, including the importance of “uncomfortable conversation” within a carefully designed and supported learning environment. Christine expressed her hope for students: “As they get older, to *not* have preconceived notions, to *not* be racist, to be human and humble and understanding.” The opportunity to discuss difficult social issues was valued by these two, for student learning and Christine’s own learning, informed by their city’s context. Students’ well-being was addressed from another angle at a different point in the conversational interview when Brittany and Christine talked about being aware of some students’ need for clothing, food, and in Christine’s words, “comfort and kindness.” Brittany said that she never worried about students in Christine’s class “because I know that their needs are looked after.... And if you can’t get it yourself, you will find a way to get it.” Brittany made a connection between teachers’ attentiveness to these concerns and to their openness to working *with* her.

River and Agnes spoke passionately about creating space for students to be challenged and to learn, mirroring the type of learning environments they sought to develop for their school staff. High expectations, opportunity for agency and voice, and believing students can achieve were pivotal to them. They told stories about how community organizations linked in to this and how professional development was designed with academic excellence in mind.

Olivia gave many examples of how individual students' experiences were at the forefront of her teaching. She told the story of students finding their home communities on a Treaty map, and how she then responded by posting the map in class and inviting students to mark their communities with sticky notes for others to see. Another example was when a student wanted to integrate Medicine Wheel teachings into a school assignment and Olivia supported the student's idea to go talk to an Indigenous program person in the school who could help with that. She spoke about individual students and their learning, and I had the overall impression that her professional learning was for the purpose of facilitating good school experiences for her students.

Tee-chaw, too, spoke about supporting students in multiple ways; helping non-Indigenous teachers to better understand Indigenous teacher candidates' ways of communicating and showing respect, responding to Indigenous and non-Indigenous students' learning needs and making their learning enjoyable, and going in to teach students about Indigenous stories and ways of life, thereby modeling for teachers at the same time.

The connection between teachers' learning and students' learning was mentioned in multiple places in this chapter. Still, I believe it is important to note here that focusing on students' success and well-being was a central aspect of what brought Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators together. This happened in a diversity of ways.

Participants in this study spoke about students' school success and well-being in multiple ways; excellent learning opportunities, literacy achievement, emotional well-being, food and clothing, and enjoyable learning represent some of the diversity through which this was expressed. Emotional, spiritual, intellectual, and physical dimensions of self were expressed within in-depth Indigenous teachings shared by Hampton (1995), and holism is underscored by Little Bear (2009) among others. Holding high expectations for students was mentioned in recent work by Indigenous scholars (St. Denis, 2010; Toulouse, 2013) and in the foundational study about teachers by Goulet (2001).

For Oskineegish (2014), connecting with colleagues was a way to improve her own practice with respect to Indigenous students since she was a teacher coming from southern Ontario to a small Indigenous community in Ontario's far north and did not feel that she was teaching effectively at first. She wrote about how the "support and guidance of my colleagues, who were First Nations educators and non-Native teachers with extensive experience teaching in First Nations schools" (p. 51) helped her to build on students' strengths and good relationships with them. She wrote that she "began to shift my teaching practices by bringing in the knowledge and expertise that existed in the community" (p. 510). Thus, professional learning was linked to seeking to provide a quality education for students. Indigenous educator participants in the study by St. Denis (2010) spoke about non-Indigenous allies who listened to Indigenous students, who loved students and therefore sought to learn from Indigenous colleagues, who were always "prepared and willing to work with the students," (p. 52) and who spoke about them positively. Connections between teachers and students were emphasized.

Emotional dynamics in personal and interpersonal learning

In the preceding sections, qualities—personal and interpersonal—of meaningful and productive learning relationships were discussed. In the following subsections, I discuss educators’ emotional experiences within those learning relationships.

Fear, comfort, confidence. Fear or feeling uncomfortable was mentioned fairly often as part of non-Indigenous educators’ experience or process. This was highlighted for me in the co-theorizing session when the two educators who attended pointed out fear and discussed it. One noted that the educators in the present study did not let fear stop them, and the other paused to note that even still, it was part of their journey.

One of the fears that was mentioned was being afraid of misrepresenting Indigenous points of view, or not being knowledgeable enough to address them accurately. For example, Michaela said, “We kind of glossed over the whole residential school [topic] because as a teacher, I was uncomfortable. I fully admit I did not know enough.” This was found in the context of a fuller quotation, presented in Chapter Four, which gave context for this feeling. As Brittany taught, Michaela was “madly doing notes because if I’m approached with a question, I would like to be able to answer it. I would like to have some background knowledge.” Michaela noted in this quotation and elsewhere that *how* Brittany taught was meaningful for her and for the students.

Dan spoke quite a bit about the emotions involved in teachers’ learning. He stated that teachers need “to be willing to go to those uncomfortable places and ask those questions,” and found that his work as an Indigenous educator supporting non-Indigenous colleagues was to help educators to “slow things down so they don’t trip later on” and to “think about the *right* questions to ask and what they *need* in order to be able to ask those questions.” Dan described a highly relational process where teachers could come to a place where they “feel safe asking

questions that they don't know how to articulate, or saying things they were worried before might offend me." He spoke about "space," "dialogue," "relationship," and "a process where learning becomes part of who we both are." Fear of the unknown or of causing offense was addressed through relationship. Learning over time, through dialogue and a process, were key to Dan. According to Dan, for teachers who are "scared," "hesitant," or unsure how to approach Indigenous topics, the process of learning and developing some understanding and knowledge can facilitate the opportunity to relate with students. This, then, could mean that the student feels "recognized," "supported," and "cared for" in school. Thus, fear could be a barrier, but learning could be an invitation for teacher, student, and even family engagement.

Olivia, Kate, Christine, and Renee, all non-Indigenous educators, also spoke about fear, feeling nervous, or being concerned about teaching Indigenous perspectives or issues. For each, their fear was addressed in some way. Olivia said, "A lot of the times, non-Indigenous people, and myself included, you're afraid. You don't want to do it wrong." While she had nuanced questions and stances about what she could and should be teaching, she was influenced by the words of Indigenous people who spoke about "doing it with the right heart." Max helped Kate "get that confidence" about teaching Indigenous issues "because he's always approachable," with an open door "to talk to him about any of those things." Christine used the words "comfort" and "confidence" to describe the effects of having Brittany in her classroom; Brittany's presence and the firsthand knowledge she shared helped shape Christine's teaching practice.

Renee, another non-Indigenous educator said, "I don't want to come across as misappropriating the culture or being disrespectful. And so that's why I really rely on people

like Lydia for guidance.” At a separate time, Lydia, one of the Indigenous educators with whom Renee worked, said:

There’s always this shift when teachers are exploring something that’s Indigenous. Because there is a fear attached to that. Because it’s something new, and it’s something—especially when you’re thinking about the climate in [this city] where there is a lot of misunderstanding in the general public, you don’t want to inadvertently incite something in your classroom.

Lydia showed understanding for the fear teachers experienced, situating this within local social issues. At the same time, she appreciated that Renee actively engaged with Indigenous traditions and people in a respectful way, and showed “attentiveness” and “respect” when she was learning from Indigenous guest speakers alongside her students.

It is noteworthy that the fear or concern that non-Indigenous educators expressed did not disappear. I sensed that several of these educators continued to be careful, tentative, or in a continual learning process. Perhaps this showed respect, although the willingness to “jump right into the proverbial canoe” was also valued by Indigenous educators like Lydia. There is likely a context and balance to this. As discussed in future subsections, time is also important. Ongoing learning through committing the time to relationship and personal development affected teachers’ knowledge bases and confidence.

The fear and discomfort experienced by non-Indigenous educators venturing into learning about and including Indigenous perspectives in education was addressed by Dion (2016a, 2016b). As part of a larger explanation about teachers becoming more comfortable in the position of learner, Dion wrote: “They recognize the seriousness of their work, they have come to be comfortable with their fear and lack of knowledge, and recognize the emotional work of learning including how guilt, fear and pity can impose limits” (Dion, 2016a, p. 21). In another publication, Dion (2016b) elaborated on teachers confronting fear and ignorance. She

differentiated between “fear of saying or doing the wrong thing, of being accused of appropriation, of getting it wrong” and fear of “disrupting dominant narratives including the national narrative of Canada the good and the personal narrative of meritocracy” (p. 470). She wrote, “The fear of confronting the ways in which one’s wealth and privilege are implicated in the oppression of Indigenous people is powerful and difficult to interrogate” (p. 470). In the conclusion of her article, Dion (2016b) wrote, “It is the responsibility of educators to get Canadians to a place where we might be ready to talk reconciliation” (p. 472). Thus, it appears that fear is not new to public educators engaging with Indigenous people and content, and that it matters.

In some cases, Indigenous educators, too, gained confidence through relating with non-Indigenous colleagues. Greg said:

Bryn has made me realize it’s OK to have a voice. And I do have a voice that I can use that voice. To help. People. Kids in particular. And I started to always want to think, “Who am I to do this,” or things like that...I think I value my opinion more when it comes to sharing it... Bryn has been able to say—and other people—but Bryn for the most part, saying, “No, your voice has to be heard.”

Bryn and Greg recognized within each other a mutual focus on students’ wellbeing, and Greg openly shared stories, ideas, and teachings with Bryn. When Bryn valued these and urged Greg to share his voice, Greg valued his own voice differently.

Alise, an Indigenous participant who aspired to be a teacher, described her experience of feeling “like a *teacher*” after leading a demonstration in Renee’s class. She had carefully considered Renee’s invitation to teach in her class. She described herself as a shy person, and as someone who was thinking through her own path as an educator, a community member, and a role model. Taking the opportunity brought her new confidence. While building confidence was only mentioned by a few Indigenous educators, I think there is a certain reciprocity when the

stories are considered as a set. While many non-Indigenous educators received the guidance or confidence of Indigenous educators whose presence and knowledge supported them in their journey, at least two Indigenous educators also received a form of comfort or confidence through their non-Indigenous colleagues—and in quite unique ways, as I see in Greg and Alise’s stories. As I considered the literature, I did not find many studies that focused on Indigenous educators gaining confidence through relating with non-Indigenous colleagues. Some mentions included when participants in the report by St. Denis (2010) spoke about forms of support they received from non-Indigenous allies, and St. Denis, Bouvier, and Battiste (1998) spoke about the strength and motivation they received, in part, from “supportive administrators and teachers” (p. ix).

Another angle on the ideas of fear, comfort, and confidence comes from non-Indigenous educators who valued how their Indigenous colleagues *discomforted* or challenged them. I heard this in the stories shared by Hope and Chantal and River and Agnes. In both stories, non-Indigenous teachers were learning from Indigenous administrators. Chantal said that Hope “gives you opportunities to almost discomfort yourself in a way, to try something new and challenge yourself, which helps you grow.” As noted in the “trust” subsection, Hope provided highly meaningful support to accompany the challenge. Agnes, also a non-Indigenous educator, felt the combination of challenge and support within the staff context that River, her Indigenous administrator, had developed. In a particular curricular area, Agnes “redid my entire practice in that year” based on being “in a space where people were learning like that, [and] could support me.” Through a staff environment oriented around challenge and growth, one that River had cultivated over time, Agnes was challenged professionally in a way that benefited Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. Indigenous educators challenging or discomforting non-Indigenous educators for the sake of their growth is not something I found in the literature. I

would be interested to know more about the role of Indigenous administrators in non-Indigenous teachers' development.

Fun, laughter, humour, enjoyment. Joking around, sharing memories, and enjoying one another's company were elements that I observed as some of the participants interacted, and also heard about in their stories. While these dynamics were not the same for each, they are worth mentioning. Michaela cited Brittany's humour as a factor that made her feel comfortable early on, and Brittany noted that humour and flexibility were teaching traits she and Michaela shared. Hope described having fun, embracing life, and enjoying the ride together with Chantal. She listed "perseverance, dedication, optimism" side by side, saying, "Even when it's hard, we still *love* it! We love the work, the culture, the kids, the learning, the families, the community. Love it all. Chantal loves it like she was born into it." Hope and Chantal described and modelled dedication couched in warmth, fun, and caring that they experienced together and shared with those around them. Greg spoke about joking and laughter as part of he and Bryn's evolving relationship. Laughter was common enough in the conversational interviews to be marked off as a transcription feature ("[laughter]"). Tee-chaw, Olivia, and Alise all spoke about laughter, fun, or joking in the context of learning relationships, drawing on personal experiences or readings to express the importance of this.

Toulouse (2011, 2013) emphasized humour as an important aspect of Indigenous education and also showed how laughter and fun can and should be part of learning in school. She wrote that "humour is an effective teaching strategy and a necessary component of a classroom that supports Aboriginal culture," (Toulouse, 2011, p. 53), citing her earlier work (see Toulouse, 2008). She explained that "some Aboriginal groups say that humour was given to First Peoples as a gift from the Creator. This gift was necessary to assist First Peoples during

hard times” (Toulouse, 2011, p. 15). While she did not directly write about humour in the context of Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators relating with one another, Toulouse stated that “teasing is part of being a cultural insider or a way of letting an outsider know that he or she is trusted” (p. 53). Applying Toulouse’s (2011) views to the present study, perhaps fun, laughter, and humour are related to trust, a stance that could be supported through looking at laughter and humour within the context of the individual stories. This nuanced consideration of the place of humour might indicate how heavy topics, deep personal learning, love, and connection are integrated. Indigenous writers like King (2012) and Cole (2006) used humour to engage their audiences and make poignant points, demonstrating to me the impact of pairing laughter and learning. Humour in education, particularly as Indigenous and non-Indigenous people engage, could be a fruitful topic to explore further!

Painful and uncomfortable conversations. For some educators, part of learning in Indigenous education meant engaging in painful and uncomfortable conversations. As Simone, an Indigenous educator, explained, building a trusting relationship is particularly important “when you’re dealing with heavy things.” Throughout the conversational interviews in this study, heavy topics such as Indian Residential Schools, the larger system of colonization, culture being stolen, racism, poverty and how it affects families, difficult situations students face, trauma, and even difficult interpersonal dynamics were discussed. Brittany and Michaela’s interchange is instructive.

Michaela: Being able to sort of reach out and get some assistance with it teaches us a lot too. I mean I learned a lot that I didn’t know.

Brittany: It’s stuff that we’re not taught.

Michaela: Exactly, because a lot of times we don’t want to talk about it. It’s uncomfortable.

Brittany: It's uncomfortable and it's painful stuff to talk about. How do you talk about it in an age-appropriate way with kids.

For Brittany, part of engaging in these uncomfortable and painful conversations was insisting that her sessions on Indian Residential Schools were concluded with opportunities for students to engage in "ReconciliAction," an opportunity for students to respond to their learning through "change-making." Listening to Michaela and Brittany, it seemed to me that the difficult conversation was opened through Brittany's presence; Michaela described glossing over Indian Residential Schools earlier, but delved in with Brittany's leadership. Perhaps other educators also participated in difficult conversations with this type of support.

Brittany's point that "it's stuff we're not taught"—a point echoed by Christine, Sky, and Olivia who spoke about their lack of exposure to Indigenous perspectives or balanced history in their own education experiences—is also important given the context in Canada where many teachers grew up in school systems where curricula did not include much information about colonization and its impacts, or government policies like forced removal of Indigenous children from their home communities (see Godlewska, Moore, & Bednasek, 2010). Thus, teachers may be learning about this "difficult knowledge" (Britzman, 2000; Dion, 2009) for the first time themselves. Perhaps the situation will change as the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action (2015) are integrated into teacher education and school curricula so that teachers will have more exposure to difficult historical content before they engage students in it.

Olivia, who had been learning about colonization and Indian Residential Schools through a variety of means over time, and often in the company of colleagues, was aware of students' and families' potential experiences with Indian Residential Schools. Recognizing that this learning was both historical and personal for students whose family members were survivors, she sought to teach students about Indian Residential Schools in the "right way." I have not yet found

literature on the topic of guidance for non-Indigenous educators who are teaching about traumatic Indigenous-non-Indigenous social relations when students are close to those experiences. I think this would be a timely body of literature to see developed.

For some of the Indigenous educators in this study, painful conversations were also personal. For example, Greg shared a childhood story that connected to some of the issues Indigenous students may continue to face in school and Dan spoke about his family's history as part of teaching and engaging non-Indigenous educators. I wonder if this personal connection to painful histories and current circumstances is part of what helped non-Indigenous educators to open their hearts to learning. Following Dan's thinking, this may be so.

Kindness. When I sat with the two participants in the co-theorizing session to look over the story snapshots (Appendix F), one pointed to kindness as something that permeated the story set. In the stories, Chantal used the words "love and kindness" to describe Hope's atmosphere, which was reflected back to her in terms of loving students and the wider community. Describing how Bryn interacted with students, Greg said that Bryn "has that sense of care. Love. Not going to turn you away. Not going to judge you. Is going to try to make students feel like you belong." The participant who pointed to kindness in the co-theorizing session was also pointing to an overall tone. The way people spoke to each other reflected kindness. This could be seen in the persistence that Tee-chaw expressed in making herself available to support students, educators, administrators, teacher candidates, and university staff. Similarly, Brittany extended her offer to teach in classes, and even when she was not immediately invited in, continued to make herself available and to interact wholeheartedly when the opportunity arose. Kindness can be seen in the tone of how Max and Kate interacted with one another, a kindness which Max pointed out early in their conversational interview.

Another way to look at this orientation is generosity. Indigenous educators were generous with their time, their stories, their knowledge, and their understanding, supporting non-Indigenous colleagues in their development. Perhaps there is reciprocity in this, as non-Indigenous educators opened themselves to learning, and trusted the leadership of their Indigenous colleagues. It would be dangerous to make these learning relationships seem one-way or like they all follow one pattern. As described in the subsections above and in the stories themselves, these are dynamic, unique relationships shared by unique individuals.

I did not find kindness to be an explicit focal point in the literature on non-Indigenous teachers' learning within Indigenous education. However, Goulet (2001) described how a Dene teacher developed love in the context of her classroom, and Simpson (2014) wrote about Nishnaabeg knowledge, including love and kindness. Within her larger description of what this knowledge means, Simpson (2014) wrote about the requirement for "long-term, stable, balanced warm relationships within the family, extended family, the community and all living aspects of creation. Intelligence flows through relationships between living entities" (p. 10). This "long-term, stable, balanced, warm" type of relationship is something that I saw in some of the learning relationships within this study, especially where years of intense collaboration in work life became friendships outside of work as well.

One participant in this study pointed me to "pedagogical love" (Määttä & Uusiautti, 2011), which the authors said "consists of trust in pupils' learning capacities and the desire to help pupils improve their abilities and talents" (p. 29). Those ideas have resonance with participants' points. hooks (1994) also wrote about love and care in the classroom. Kindness, as an atmosphere for Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators relating with one another and with Indigenous and non-Indigenous students, was common in this study.

From the heart. “Heart” was the word I wrote at the centre of the big piece of Bristol board where I had glued many connecting ideas from this research in the analysis phase. I saw learning and teaching “from the heart” as central to what many participants were expressing. Olivia talked about “doing it with the right heart,” Hope said Chantal “wholeheartedly” approached whatever she did. Simone shared the following teaching about learning, mistakes, and heart:

How I was taught, Sky, it’s *never* mistakes. You’re not making mistakes, they’re all learning opportunities.... What have you learned? What is Creator trying to teach you? What do you need to do now? And it becomes a mistake if you keep repeating the same mistake over and over again. I think it’s—a lot of Elders will say, when you have motivation and intent, it’s that pureness of heart and spirit of what you’re doing.

Simone’s phrase, “that pureness of heart and spirit of what you’re doing” could apply to being open and genuine, developing trust, navigating painful and uncomfortable conversation, seeing growth in others and operating in a collaborative way. Without drawing on participants’ phrases or spoken words, there was a lot of heart expressed in the present study. While I have not found literature framed directly around “the heart” of non-Indigenous teachers learning in Indigenous education, Oskineegish and Berger’s (2013) point, “it is the ‘who you are’ that counts” (p. 117) might be a pretty close fit. Self-reflection practices (Oskineegish, 2018) in teacher education for Indigenous education may be relevant in developing this sense.

The emotional dynamics of fear, comfort, confidence; fun, laughter, humour, enjoyment; painful and comfortable conversations; kindness; and relating from the heart resonate with Craig’s conceptualization of knowledge communities (1995a; 1995b; Olson & Craig, 2001; 2004). Craig described knowledge communities as safe places for discussions (1995) that can contain tensions and difficult elements (1995; 2004). Genuine interpersonal connection, which generally underlies the productive emotional dynamics that participants in the present study

spoke about, seem to be characteristic in Craig's knowledge communities as well. That is not to say that all Indigenous-non-Indigenous educator interactions display those characteristics; participants in the present study referred to situations that were otherwise, as did Craig (2004).

Summary: Experiences and qualities of learning relationships. In this section, I described inner and social experiences and qualities that were part of educators' productive learning relationships. While the eleven stories were diverse, some elements were common throughout multiple stories. These were: being open, being genuine, trust, focusing on growth, a "we" approach, mutual benefit, putting learning into practice, and putting students at the centre. Considering Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) sociality dimension, I noted that these were ordered beginning with personal qualities, transitioning to interpersonal and social qualities. I then wrote about emotional dynamics that were described by participants: fear, comfort, confidence; fun, laughter, humour, enjoyment; painful and uncomfortable conversations; kindness; and relating from the heart. The emotional dynamics can also be considered within the dimension of sociality; personal feelings interacted with shared conversations and teaching moments in formational ways.

Sustaining Learning Relationships: "A Coming Together and then Growing Together"

When Simone spoke about her relationship with Sky, she said it was "a coming together, and then growing together." Various "coming together" scenarios were addressed in a previous subsection and I now turn to the idea of "growing together." Again, the diverse stories in this research cannot be summarized here, but I have drawn out common threads to consider. These are choice, personal learning, and time as sustainers of productive learning relationships for Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators and community members. Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) dimensions of sociality and temporality are focal points as I discuss how personal and

social contexts interact and inform one another, and how time is a central feature in a variety of ways.

Personal choice within professional settings. In the stories within the present study, relating together over time was a choice. While people may have come in contact through working in the same school, leading or being led in a professional development session, or being assigned to the same project, choosing to stay in contact in a purposeful way or to deepen the relationship was up to them. While I cannot speak to every interpersonal relationship that participants mentioned in their conversational interviews, the pairs and trio who shared their stories together certainly fit that pattern. Learning relationships were voluntary. I did not get the impression that the relationships described by the pairs and trio in this study were forced by school boards or administrators or through a sense of obligation.

The words “genuine” and “open” were often used in this research—qualities that I explored in earlier subsections. Indigenous educators like Lydia and Max pointed out that their non-Indigenous colleagues (Renee and Kate respectively) truly wanted to learn, were engaged in their own learning, and were learning alongside their students. This stands in contrast with calling in an Indigenous educator out of obligation or teaching the necessary content from a book without personal connection. I heard the same openness to engaging in learning relationships expressed by Indigenous educators; Max, Dan, Greg, Simone, and Hope spoke about working alongside, learning together, or being on a journey with non-Indigenous educators.

While I cannot speak for each person in this study, I get an overall sense that there was a keenness to learn together. At the same time, it would be inaccurate to generalize; Michaela had initially expressed hesitation about making the time commitment to have Brittany in her class because of curriculum constraints and pressures, Tee-chaw noted that many teachers did not

seem to be looking for guidance in teaching Indigenous students, and Dan spoke about teachers with varying responses to the opportunity to learn alongside him in the area of Indigenous education.

Choosing to learn from one another could occur independent of formal titles and roles. Simone, in fact, stated the danger of overemphasizing formal positions within the school system, and explained the historical and present-day importance of identifying when someone has knowledge to share and being open to receiving that knowledge. She pointed to traditional Indigenous forms of leadership where individuals were elevated to leadership positions to support the community for periods of time based on their skill—a skilled hunter becoming a hunting captain, for example. She and Sky both expressed how important it was that Sky chose to learn from her, even when Sky held a formally higher title within the school board.

In the present study, I did not ask participants to share the specifics of their formal job descriptions, but my understanding is that plenty of learning occurred based on interpersonal connection and valuing an Indigenous colleague's experiences, knowledge, and willingness to share and support separate from formal structures of knowledge and power that were built into titles or positions. For example, Dan spoke about being a teacher supporting other teachers. Agnes and Sky, both non-Indigenous teachers who became administrators, continued to be in close contact with River and Simone, important Indigenous educators in their lives. Interestingly, Agnes and Sky's formal role changes meant that they had increasing scopes of influence; through continuing to learn alongside Indigenous educators, they could share their learning in wider circles. Similarly, Olivia learned from many Indigenous and non-Indigenous colleagues and community members, people who held a variety of positions. When I consider formal roles versus valuing learning from one another despite formal hierarchies, I return to the

idea of choice. Even when a non-Indigenous educator worked under an Indigenous educator (like Chantal and Agnes who were non-Indigenous teachers under the leadership of Hope and River, who were Indigenous administrators), they made the choice to learn and engage at a deeper level.

Tee-chaw's words provided framing for the idea of non-Indigenous educators choosing to seek out learning with Indigenous colleagues. She said that when teachers—like other professionals who felt they already knew how to do their jobs—did not reach out for her guidance as an Indigenous colleague, her response was, “Okay, fine, no problem.” To me, this places a strong emphasis on personal choice and personal development. Dan, too, honoured colleagues’ “entry point[s] into the work” and their freedom to decide if, how, and when to engage. “Patience” is a word he used quite often. Dan also recognized that members of the Indigenous community are at different places with respect to reconciliation. In several ways throughout his conversational interview, Dan reiterated taking time and not rushing, which I think is tied to the relational nature of the process. As one more example of participants underscoring the importance of personal choice and readiness in teacher learning in Indigenous education, Simone said: “You work with the people who are *willing*, and you try and you start here, and you try and expand it and grow it out.” The stories she and Sky told are examples of learning and collaboration that grew from the willingness of a smaller core of people.

I see non-Indigenous teachers’ personal choice to engage with Indigenous colleagues as an important feature of the present study. While I have not found literature that directly discusses how non-Indigenous educators choosing to engage might differ from settings where teachers are obligated by their employers to engage, Dion and D. Cormier (2015) spoke about teachers’ choice to engage as an important element of collaborative inquiry. In addition, I think

there are broader links to literature on Indigenous education. Hampton (1995) wrote that “Indian education occurs in a cultural atmosphere that is permeated by both strong group bonds and great individual freedom” (p. 15). While I am taking this quotation out of its original context to apply to non-Indigenous educators learning from Indigenous educators, perhaps the idea of individual freedom coinciding with strong group bonds is important here; non-Indigenous educators had the individual freedom to engage or not engage in deep interpersonal ways with the Indigenous educators who were extending their teaching, mentoring, leadership, or collegial connection. Strong group or one-on-one bonds seemed to be definitive of the relationships once they formed—although I also recognize that “productive learning relationships” were at the centre of this study; those who had fraught or discontinued relationships are unlikely to have engaged in the study. The idea of individual freedom may also be seen as connected to the principle of avoiding interference in others’ life paths (see Brant, 1990; Simpson, 2014).

Overlapping personal and interpersonal learning. Where does eager and wholehearted engagement come from? While there are interpersonal factors that promote this, several participants also spoke about their personal journeys, experiences, backgrounds, questions, and motivations for engaging in learning and teaching each other. Some of these are presented here to give personal context to the topic of interpersonal learning.

As a non-Indigenous educator, Sky pointed out that collaborating with her Indigenous colleague Simone became “major” in tandem with personal realizations. She talked about her passion in anti-oppression education and coming to understand more about systemic issues in Indigenous education. Sky was more open to engaging with Simone in a big way than she might have been if her own personal learning was not also occurring. Renee, another non-Indigenous educator, described her upbringing that led her toward being “open-minded,” “liberal,” and

“keen to learn,” and valuing getting to know people of various cultures. When she moved to a city where she taught many Indigenous students, she saw this as an opportunity for further learning. In addition to learning alongside students through field trips and Indigenous guest teachers, Renee was taking courses with Indigenous content or focal points. In fact, she expressed how one of these courses emphasized the importance of teachers making attempts and asking for help. Her learning was not accidental, but ongoing and purposeful. Olivia, too, spoke about the significance of moving to a city with a larger Indigenous population than where she grew up, and to a school with many Indigenous students. She eagerly learned alongside her students through Elders and Indigenous educators and community members, and alongside her colleagues through a learning group. In addition, she referred to a course she took on her own. In her words, “It’s just all learning all the time.” She took personal initiative for this learning.

Christine, too, spoke about personal learning alongside professional learning. She welcomed the opportunity to learn from Brittany since she had been trying to understand the racism in her community, and in addition, spoke about family discussions and experiences in response to the *Secret Path*¹⁴ film. Agnes, another non-Indigenous educator, described career goals as a reason for moving schools to be on River’s staff. While a particular subject area was an initial area of growth, she soon began learning from Elders, Indigenous educators and community members, and from River’s Indigenous approaches in public education. Other non-Indigenous participants in this study also referred to personal experiences or their thinking regarding what was happening in the media. For many, personal and professional learning were coinciding through the learning relationships they were developing with Indigenous colleagues or community members.

¹⁴ For more on the *Secret Path* film or book, please see: <http://secretpath.ca>

Personal motivation mattered. Several participants referenced their colleagues' attitudes or approaches. Max, an Indigenous educator, expressed this when he noted that Kate genuinely wanted to learn. Indigenous educator Simone spoke of the importance of learning in order to share and implement new knowledge, contrasting this with learning about Indigenous perspectives as "a stepping stone to further." When Michaela said that Brittany's approach involved humour and that Brittany did *not* say, "'You should be doing this, you're not doing this,'" I interpret this as another comment on motivation. I believe Michaela saw Brittany's involvement as collegial and positive. Some of these factors are echoed in other parts of this chapter, but I mention them here to say that participants' personal journeys and motivations mattered in the learning relationships in which they participated.

Several Indigenous educators spoke about their own personal journeys and motivations. Alise was clear that she was seeking to support her community members and the Indigenous youth in the school; accepting Renee's invitation to teach in class was an opportunity to role model for students, and to develop her own path in teaching. Brittany and Greg both spoke about educators in their lives who made a difference. Greg wanted "to be that person" to support and love students. Brittany spoke of teachers who were grounding and reassuring; she became a teacher "to make school better for kids like me," seeking to create welcoming and engaging space for students. Tee-chaw shared stories about her personal learning experiences embedded in family, community, and institutions as a prelude to her stories as an educator. Her personal story came to bear on the professional learning opportunities that she could offer educators, which included story and valuing learning through watching and listening. As described in the "student-centred" subsection, several Indigenous educators made clear statements about their

motivation for engaging in education systems the way they do; very often this is with students at the forefront.

Personal learning was encouraged through strategies like self-reflective practices, emphasized by Aboriginal Education instructors in Oskineegish's (2018) study. St. Denis (2010) quoted an Indigenous educator who said that "the most caring people I've ever met had taken Aboriginal courses." To explain the change, the educator used the analogy, "It's almost like their eyes had been opened" (p. 51). In other studies where Indigenous educators expressed their philosophies of education and motivations and journeys to becoming teachers (St. Denis, 2010; St. Denis, Bouvier, and Battiste, 1998), there was some connection with those expressed by Indigenous educators in the present study. While not every participant in this study discussed their personal journey in depth, it is noteworthy that many did, particularly because the research questions were framed around interpersonal learning. Personal learning that informs, is influenced by, or jumpstarts relational learning is important to consider because it may be central to a person's decision to engage in a learning relationship.

Time. In the preceding sections, I wrote about different ways that Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators met, and about the voluntary nature of their continued relationships, often explained with reference to personal learning journeys. An idea implied within those sections was the importance of time—time and circumstances to meet and connect, time to develop a sense of one another, to develop trust and connection; time for personal and interpersonal learning. In coming sections, time continues to be an inherent factor; time to collaborate on projects, time to connect with community members; time that school boards, administrators, or educators dedicate to this learning. In the following subsections, I focus on some of these

perspectives on time. Temporality is one of the three dimensions of Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) three-dimensional narrative inquiry space.

Time within the day. On a time-within-the-day level, non-Indigenous educators' learning was dependent on having the time and opportunity to connect with Indigenous Elders, educators, and community members. For example, River and Agnes described the immersion experience when Agnes stopped speaking and was watching and listening as Indigenous educators, Elders, and community members interacted in her school setting. Without River's presence, it is unlikely that she would have met the Elder or had the time to sit and learn, and even the time to learn experientially that her Western approach to communicating was not appropriate to the setting. Dan, the Indigenous educator who had the opportunity to co-lead a session for colleagues had the dedicated time to do so. Simone, an Indigenous educator, provided what I see as a summary statement for her stories and comments on Indigenous-non-Indigenous learning relationships in school settings:

It's not just a one-shot deal and you're done. It's that continual journey.... but how do we move forward in the journey when we don't have knowledgeable people to support? Non-Indigenous people open and willing to learn?... And the *time*.... [and] institutional support.

She emphasized time as a vital element in learning through relationships. Without referring to each of the stories here, I note that schools, school boards, and individual educators can, and do, make time for relating and learning. Purposefully setting apart time for Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators to meet, collaborate, or learn together was described by Tompkins (1998) and Dion (2016a).

Development over time. Considering time on another scale, the learning relationships described in this study often spanned a number of years. When one-on-one learning relationships were described as the centrepiece of the "full story," years of knowing one another,

or at least sharing work environments was a feature. In Greg and Bryn's story, this growth stood out to me so much that I painted their relationship as a plant with small buds progressing to full flowers. While they spoke about feeling comfortable around one another early and recognizing their shared focus on students' well-being and success in school, their relationship grew in trust and depth over years, eventually to where Bryn felt she could ask more and Greg felt he could go to Bryn when he "need[ed] it the most."

Hope and Chantal stated the importance of knowing one another over time. Hope spoke about seeing Chantal in action as a classroom teacher, valuing Chantal's "work ethic," "passion for kids" and "joy for life" among other qualities. "Over time," Hope could see Chantal "love and learn about the culture" and build relationship with students, parents, staff, and the community. Trust and acceptance came over time, and over time, Hope could see these unfold. At the same time, Chantal described the "vibe" that Hope brought to the school; they had time to connect and time to recognize one another's character.

I laugh when I hear River tell her side of the story about Agnes's social learning. She said, "I didn't want to kick her under the table because I didn't know her that well yet. Now I would kick her under the table." The way the two interacted in the conversational interview, the conversations they could have and the guidance River could share was much different than how they described their earlier days together. The close interpersonal relationship they shared where "Everything you say is something I would say" was developed over time.

Simone and Sky described "intense," "multi-faceted," and "consistent" work together for about six months. This followed a slower build-up period where Simone was available to support educators in what seemed like a case by case basis. Thus, development over time had different phases to it and the most intense phase was not immediate. For Olivia, the multi-year

duration of the Indigenous education project of which she was a part contributed to the impact of collaborating with a group of Indigenous and non-Indigenous colleagues on a consistent basis.

Even in stories where Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators had recently begun teaching together in the classroom, they talked about knowing each other for a longer period of time. Both Christine and Michaela knew Brittany for a period of years before they spent dedicated classroom time together. While Michaela felt uncomfortable teaching Indigenous content, knowing one another over time meant she knew that Brittany had a sense of humour and did not come in to tell her what she was doing wrong. While Michaela felt the time pressure to complete curriculum outcomes, knowing Brittany in other capacities and hearing about her earlier work with Christine affected her decision to take up Brittany's offer to teach. Alise, Lydia, and Renee, who spoke of very recent collaboration with Renee, a non-Indigenous educator, also referred to preexisting familiarity. Renee and Alise were acquainted from working in the same school, and had interacted in such a way that Alise felt a sense of welcome. Lydia and Renee had also crossed paths and Renee was familiar with who she was and what her role entailed. Time was important.

In an overall sense, time was a distinguishing feature in this study. This included time to interact within a day as well as time for relationships to develop over longer periods, often years. The idea that strong relationships, trust, and collaborations on projects develop over time is evident in the literature. Archibald (2008) wrote about the careful respect and time it took to engage with Elders in developing curriculum based on Sto:lo stories. Without being explicit about time as a factor, Moore (2016) wrote about a salmon project shared by community members and the school that built on preexisting working relationships. Dion (2016a) also wrote about educators' and community members' engagement over time, noting differences between

those formally engaged in learning groups for one year versus two or three years. Toulouse (2013) wrote about time with respect to engaging Indigenous communities. She used this equation: “Overall principles for engagement = trust + time + respect” (p. 13) and then elaborated on these. This is a good reminder that trust, time, and respect work in concert. As a doctoral colleague once explained with respect to her own research findings, “If you want to make change, you need to make time” (Justine Jecker, personal communication, October 12, 2018).

For Clandinin and Connelly (2000), temporality is a framing concept: the idea that relationships and circumstances change over time, and that what we experience today is part of a larger trajectory. In the present research, several participants were careful to explicitly point out the changes they saw in their learning relationships over time. They also noted changes in their work contexts over time; political, school board, or social dynamics that had shifted, often over years. Changes and shifts over time were also described with respect to participants’ inner processes; they identified how their own learning, realizations, teaching practices, and experiences had developed.

The two participants who were present in the co-theorizing session provided further insight regarding time. One noted that time is important for relationships, but that time is also important for individuals to think things through, noting that participants’ ideas changed over time. Another point was that time and space are connected from the traditional Indigenous perspective that one of the participants brought. They spoke about the value of patience and persistence, indicating that making positive efforts over time is valued. From our conversation, I drew the idea that giving people time, and even giving yourself time, is important.

Summary: Sustaining learning relationships. In this section, I considered the ideas of personal choice within professional settings, personal and interpersonal learning, and time as factors that contribute to sustaining Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators' learning relationships. These are not presented as a formula; rather they are concepts that stood out to me in the data set as a whole. Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) dimensions of temporality and sociality were woven through the discussion; personal experiences and choices coexisted with social contexts in ways that gave deeper meaning to educators' learning engagements with one another. Time was a major consideration on a day-to-day level and when considering the development of the relationships over their full span. I now turn to modes of learning, where I consider ways in which teachers were learning and welcoming students to learn.

Contexts for Educator to Educator Learning

Place (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) was mentioned earlier with respect to the various contexts in which learning relationships were initiated. Having explored various angles on temporality and sociality (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), I now return to the dimension of place regarding the broader contexts within which Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators' learning relationships were situated.

Collegial contexts for teacher learning. Several educators in this study spoke about colleagues who were very important to their story of learning together. Besides the person who was sitting with them in the conversational interview, participants spoke about administrators, teachers, and community members who had been meaningful in their learning journeys. While one-on-one learning relationships were my main focus in this study, the colleagues interviewed here were often part of wider webs. Dion (2016a) also referred to collegial contexts for learning.

Institutional learning contexts. In this subsection I consider the institutional learning contexts that participants described from a few angles.

School-based administrators. Agnes and River, Simone and Sky, and Brittany all referred to the roles of school-based administrators in setting the direction of a school. The whole school was affected when administrators prioritized learning from Indigenous community members, connecting with Indigenous families, hosting professional development on Indigenous education, or setting the tone for challenging, collaborative learning environments for students and staff. This pertained to the influence of Indigenous educators and to the impact of non-Indigenous educators who were learning from Indigenous educators, described above with respect to Agnes and Sky who took on leadership roles themselves. Tee-chaw noted how her opportunity to share stories and a “resource box of goodies” with teachers and students was connected to preexisting connections with school administrators who welcomed her when she offered to come in. The support of school administrators was also emphasized by Dion (2016a) and Tompkins (1998) in urban school boards and small Inuit communities respectively, and by Tolbert (2015), who wrote about mentorship for secondary teachers of Māori students.

Expectations on educators in the area of Indigenous education. Some participants spoke about the expectations that teachers learn and teach about topics like residential schools or reconciliation. Dan raised the concern that this urgency can lead to a rushed approach. This concern was echoed by Dion (2016a), who wrote about teachers early in their learning “aware of the increasing attention to Indigenous issues” and wanting “quick and uncomplicated answers” (p. 18). I found it very interesting that language about checking off and moving on from the challenge was used by both Dion (2016a) and Dan. Dion seemed to contrast this approach with “genuine expressions of commitment” from teachers who understand their own opportunity to

learn in order to support students (p. 18). This takes me back to the present study where the concepts of being “genuine” and “open” were underscored. As the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s calls for actions continue to be implemented in various education contexts in Canada, it could be interesting to see if more studies address how teachers respond to the requirement of learning and teaching Indigenous perspectives. Commentary on the topic is already being expressed in public forums (CBC, 2018).

While expectations on educators were a force or context mentioned by some participants in this study, institution level support was also mentioned. As examples, provincial education authorities or school boards sponsored some of the learning projects where non-Indigenous and Indigenous educators met and worked together and funded positions for Indigenous educators to guide educators who wanted to learn.

Presence of Indigenous educators in leadership roles. While informal support and leadership was important in this study, so was formal leadership. This happened through funding positions for Indigenous educators to support colleagues, and when Indigenous educators were school administrators. While both are addressed earlier in this dissertation, I pause to consider them here.

Indigenous educators in teacher guidance roles. A school board action that affected participants in the present study was hiring Indigenous educators to support teachers and administrators in their learning and teaching. As mentioned in the “initiating learning relationships” subsection, connections between several Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants in this study came through formal school board positions where all educators could ask for assistance from Indigenous educators who held formal support roles. I have not found extensive literature comparing these initiatives in school boards across Canada, nor the impetus,

funding sources, and student, family, staff, and board experiences involved. Yet, as indicated in Chapter Two of this dissertation, there is plenty of evidence that non-Indigenous educators sought out or valued learning from Indigenous educators (Dion, 2016a; Korteweg et al., 2010; St. Denis, 2010).

Indigenous school-based administrators. The stories shared by River and Agnes and by Hope and Chantal indicated the importance of Indigenous educators who are school-based administrators. I am assuming that school boards hired Indigenous educators who later became school-based administrators, and formally or informally became mentors or guides for non-Indigenous teachers. This underscores the importance of Indigenous educators within publicly funded school systems.

Provincial curricula, standardized testing. Curriculum and standardized assessment are another contextual factor worth considering. Renee and Lydia discussed how Indigenous perspectives and Western philosophies, which are embodied in school curricula, “butt heads” in a certain curriculum area such that it could be difficult to include Indigenous perspectives. Renee believed it would be possible to do so with time and careful planning and could be facilitated through teacher collaboration, but would not be easy. Classroom teachers Olivia and Christine referred to the pressures of standardized testing, and Michaela and Olivia to the obligation to complete curriculum outcomes. I mention these here as institution-based pressures that teachers experienced as they sought to learn through relating with Indigenous educators or community members, or even to engage with Indigenous perspectives and to facilitate opportunities for their students to do the same. While I have read few studies about bulky curriculum and standardized testing expectations as a barrier to non-Indigenous educators learning from Indigenous community members and colleagues, Donald (2012) showed how

Eurocentric curricula teach a divide between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people and Godlewska, Moore, and Bednasek (2010) critiqued social studies curricula that make Indigenous perspectives optional in many cases.

While institutional policies, curricula, and environments were not the focus of this study, they came to the surface when people shared their stories and experiences about learning through interpersonal relationships. The presence of supportive administrators, expectations to teach and learn about reconciliation and residential schools, formalized opportunity to be supported or led by Indigenous educators and administrators, and curriculum and standardized testing pressure were among these factors. While these had different effects in different stories, their presence bears mentioning.

Societal learning contexts. As mentioned in the “we” and “time” subsections of this chapter, some participants placed interpersonal learning within the wider context of Canadian society. Dan and River both referred to the process of reconciliation in Canada. Hope and Chantal spoke about developments within the education system of which they were a part. Several non-Indigenous educators spoke about growing up in one city and then moving to another city where they met more Indigenous people, taught more Indigenous students, or encountered racism against Indigenous people. It is informative to note how this became a context for those teachers’ learning. From another angle, Max, an Indigenous educator, spoke about the importance of relationships in “this horizon of new learning and bringing Indigenous teachings into schools and into education.” He spoke about shifting views and possibility for enrichment at a large scale.

These societal level considerations also link to the idea of time; shifts in attitude, policy, or teaching practice, and links to ideas such as those found in the Truth and Reconciliation take

place over time. The link between interpersonal learning and what is going on in the larger society was made by Dion (2016b), and is clear in the writing of Battiste (2013), who wrote about schooling and its connection to colonization and decolonization. As modeled in the field of international diplomacy, multiple sectors, levels of leadership, and nested issues, relationships, and systems must be considered (Diamond & McDonald, 1996; Lederach, 1997). This larger contextual thinking applies to Indigenous-Canadian relations and education where multiple jurisdictions and interactions are in play.

Negative contexts. Some of the Indigenous educators in this study described living with others' view that they are inferior because they are Indigenous people. Tee-chaw shared multiple negative perceptions that she encountered, including that Native people "don't know too much," or "don't learn enough." She also chose to teach the unit on Native people from her community and family experience instead of using the textbook; the default would have been to teach from a one-sided textbook that she did not appreciate. Bryn, Simone, and Sky also spoke about systemic issues and the need for expanding worldviews in schooling.

While racism was not discussed extensively by most participants, comments about positive change in school systems and appreciation for teachers' desire to learn could be read to imply that there were also negative norms. Indigenous educators' experiences with racism were exposed by St. Denis (2010), and Battiste (2013) wrote about the effects of ongoing racism at a societal level, even though Canada may think of itself as a "fair and just society" (p. 135). Thus, while the focus of the present study is positive and learning-oriented, it is worth noting that stereotypes, assumptions, and racism are part of many Canadian education settings and were addressed by some participants and may have been alluded to by others.

Becoming a context for others' learning. Just as learning relationships were situated

within larger systems like a school staff, a school board, a province, or the Canadian social context, these relationships also affected people around them. For example, Simone, an Indigenous educator, explained that non-Indigenous teachers' learning with Indigenous educators is "modelling... what's possible." Michaela's story is evidence of the impact of this modelling; Brittany and Christine's successful collaboration informed Michaela's decision to engage with Brittany as well. In an earlier subsection, the idea of "watching and learning" was emphasized; perhaps this applies to people who are watching Indigenous-non-Indigenous learning relationships unfold around them. The idea of teachers seeing others learning collaboratively in Indigenous education was also voiced by a participant in Dion's (2016a) report.

Modes of Learning: Place, Temporality, and Sociality

In this subsection, I explore several modes of learning that were described by participants. The various places, inner and social contexts, and timelines (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) of each story give meaning to these forms of learning.

Learning alongside students. As noted earlier in this chapter, students were at the centre of many participants' learning. In many of the stories in this research, students were also alongside non-Indigenous educators as they learned. Dan purposefully set up this type of learning in the book study he assigned to teachers and students. Renee learned alongside students when Alise and the invited Elder shared stories in class. Michaela and Christine were each immersed in learning alongside their students when Brittany led their classes. Kate learned with her students when Max helped to arrange guest speakers and trips into the local community. Olivia harvested natural materials with her students, guided by an Elder. Teachers learning alongside students can be implied in Dion's Collaborative Inquiry studies (2014, 2015, 2016a),

although I did not find this to be a central feature in the general literature. In the present study, teachers' learning alongside students was very common.

Learning with Indigenous community members. Many educators in this study pointed to the importance of Indigenous community members in their own learning and in the school experiences offered to students. Max highly valued that Kate wanted students to learn firsthand from local teachers of the area. Simone and Sky described a variety of learning opportunities that students and staff experienced, including learning alongside Elders and interacting with community members. River and Agnes shared the story of introducing Elders into school-based learning, and the immersion experience that unfolded for Agnes as she became more aware of Indigenous ways of communicating and establishing relationship. While not all participants spoke about community contexts—and Dan even cautioned against inviting Elders in without first establishing foundational knowledge—there is a community context worth considering in this data. Chantal expressed the value of learning from knowledge holders with different areas of expertise, connections which I believe were developed through Hope's leadership and influence. Thus, it appears that non-Indigenous educators' opportunity to learn in a community context was often accessed through their working relationships with Indigenous colleagues.

Learning with, and relating with, local community is a theme in the Indigenous education literature. Among others, Moore (2016, 2017), Beatty and Blair (2015), Munroe et al. (2013), and Dion (2016a) all wrote about ties between schools and community members. Through these shared learning opportunities, students (both Indigenous and non-Indigenous in several cases) had the opportunity to learn from local Indigenous people who had knowledge to share. Educators themselves learned as they interacted with Indigenous community members, affecting

their own knowledge base and their opportunity to teach responsively (Dion, 2015; Oskineegish, 2014).

Not all of the aforementioned articles provided details about how learning relationships were initiated, so it is not always possible to tell if non-Indigenous educators were assisted by Indigenous educators in making connections with community members, as was the case in many stories in the present research. In Moore's (2017) case, ongoing relationships between researchers, educators, family members, and community members (some people holding more than one of those roles) within the school setting became the context for the particular project she was describing. Oskineegish (2014) wrote about her colleagues' role in helping her to shift her practice, which included "bringing in the knowledge and expertise that existed in the community" (p. 510). Thus, the literature includes many examples of educators and community members collaborating, although non-Indigenous educators' process of choosing to participate or making connections is not always at the forefront.

Learning through story. For many participants, learning through story was a stand-out point. Personal stories were a tremendous part of this. Bryn expressed how she learned through Greg's own childhood stories and through these began to better understand students. Sky said that teachers need Indigenous Elders and colleagues in their schools: "They need to be able to build the relationships. 'Cause that's where it starts. When you hear someone's *story*, how can you not be affected? It's their *story*." She linked this to educators' process of decolonization.

Dan made connections between the local land and his family's experiences there as a way to introduce teachers to the history of the place where they currently teach. He also explained how sharing his own stories was part of making a safe environment for them to "put themselves out there as well." Instead of merely entering their space as an expert on

reconciliation or residential schools, he asked teachers to share their experiences and insights. Brittany, too, emphasized how much of the teaching she shared was through story. Christine expressed the power of this: “It’s one thing to read about things in a book, but it’s another to have somebody who lives it. This is her life, and this is her history.” Renee, Alise, and Lydia, spoke about stories; Renee valued how Alise shared stories with the class as she taught, and she learned more through Alise’s childhood stories as the two cleaned up after class. In short, non-Indigenous educators highly valued learning from Indigenous colleagues’ stories, and some Indigenous educators also drew out non-Indigenous educators’ stories.

The high, high value that non-Indigenous educators placed on learning through their Indigenous colleagues’ stories is particularly pertinent when I think about Tee-chaw’s words about learning and teaching through stories over the course of her life. Sharing stories with and amongst family, community, and in education settings was a definitive part of her conversational interview, an emphasis that I think is pertinent to this study overall. Teaching through story was also emphasized by educators in Oskineegish’s (2018) recent research about mandatory Indigenous education courses for preservice teachers. When I think about this “story” emphasis, I am reminded of literature on Indigenous traditions in education that place story at the forefront (e.g., Archibald, 2008; Little Bear, 2009). Learning through personal stories is a significant finding in the present study, mentioned or described in the vast majority of conversational interviews.

Learning through experience. Several participants spoke about the value of learning through experience. Indigenous educators Alise and Tee-chaw explained how learning through experience was their family’s way, and Simone and Max spoke about experience as an Indigenous way of learning in a more general sense. Tee-chaw, for example, spoke about

learning through accompanying someone who is highly skilled in the area you would like to develop; following a trapper while that person works, for example.

I started to think about how Alise's emphasis on learning through ongoing practice, relationship, and trying it out reminded me of how non-Indigenous teachers might learn to respectfully integrate Indigenous perspectives in their work. Renee was doing her best to be respectful and as she attempted this, reached out for assistance, and took her own learning seriously. Lydia was happy to be there for this. Similarly, Indigenous educator Brittany noted that Christine and her class continued in their learning, even after she left. The experience continued and was extended.

Sky also emphasized learning through experience. Describing the array of activities and opportunities in which students were engaged, she said that "students were *given experiences*," contrasting this with being "sat in a desk and spoke[n] at with a wrong perspective." As a non-Indigenous educator, she was involved in those experiences herself, and believed in the importance of "direct experiences with Indigenous people." Simone pointed out the school's learning was *doing*, not just hearing. Bryn and Greg also described several shared experiences as part of their story, as did Chantal and Hope, Olivia, and others. Max appreciated that "a lot of our working together involves excursions. Going out into the community and going to physical locations and learning from the various teachers of the area" through respectful processes that honour community members and bring students out of the school building to learn. As he explained, "It's not just, 'OK, what's coming from the books you've read and what can I put on the blackboard and teach here?'" Experiential learning for teachers and students—quite often occurring through the same event—was mentioned multiple times in the present study.

Indigenous scholars such as Little Bear (2009) and Simpson (2014) wrote about learning through experience as part of larger systems of learning that included elements like ceremony, kinship, and environmental or land based learning. With reference to particular stories in her article, Simpson (2014) said, “If you want to learn about something, you need to take your body onto the land and do it. Get a practice” (pp. 17-18). This idea was emphasized in the article by Iseke and Desmoulins (2015) who, in Elders’ words, gave examples about how “direct experience with the natural world, as well as through cultural and spiritual knowledges” are integrated into what we call science knowledge (p. 43).

Dewey, an American education theorist referenced in Chapter Three, delved into what experience means in education. He critiqued some forms of experience and said, “Education based upon experience is to select the kind of present experiences that live fruitfully and creatively in subsequent experiences” (p. 28). Experience is a key finding in this study, mentioned directly or described through anecdotes and stories by many participants, and set within the research questions themselves. Participants spoke about the importance of experience for themselves, for students, and for groups of educators or school communities to engage in together. In many cases, non-Indigenous educators’ experiences were facilitated through relating with their Indigenous colleagues.

Learning through watching and listening. In Tee-chaw’s story, I saw the importance of learning through watching and listening. She told stories about how she grew up learning in a family and community context where children were welcome to learn from adult conversations and activities. She watched and listened as relatives, visitors, and people doing work around the house lived out their knowledge and shared stories. Through this kind of learning, children were “full of stories” and “had a lot of knowledge” before they entered school.

Non-Indigenous educator Bryn spoke about ways that she “learned to be” in addition to knowledge that she could pass onto others orally. This, I think, could only come from watching, listening, being nearby, employing intuition. Agnes learned by watching and listening—after initially talking too much, in retrospect—in the conversation with River, Elders, and Indigenous colleagues. When River and Agnes talked about their shared “central belief system,” it would seem that watching and listening was part of how Agnes learned some of these orientations from River. When Brittany led lessons in Christine, and then Michaela’s classes, they were watching and learning. Brittany spoke of her work in Michaela’s class as “modelling.” Michaela appreciated learning from Brittany’s modelling since she felt less strong in Indigenous education than in areas like literacy or math.

While non-Indigenous teachers learned ways to be, they also learned new content. Given that Canadian curriculum is largely Eurocentric (Battiste, 2013), albeit with some recent shifts and changes responding to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2015) that were beginning to develop during the time of this study, many non-Indigenous teachers learned new perspectives through relating with Indigenous colleagues and community members, and quite often in the company of their students. Watching, listening, and experiencing applied to multiple knowledge domains.

In the literature on teacher learning, watching, listening, and learning surfaced in Tanaka’s (2009) study about preservice teachers learning alongside Indigenous wisdom keepers, artists, and community members. Community members’ optimism and encouragement of preservice teachers was noteworthy. Students were responsive to the wisdom keepers and knew, for example, to put down their notebooks and to listen and engage in the experience. This is interesting to consider alongside the article by Iseke and Desmoulins (2015), where learning

through Elders was a focal point, and where experiential learning was explained as “learning by watching and doing,” highlighting “spiritual connections that emerge through direct experience” (pp. 46-47). The Elders in that context were referring to activities like smoking fish and canning fruit.

“Watching and listening” was not a phrase that was often repeated in the present study, however Tee-chaw explicitly explained the importance of this kind of learning in Indigenous communities, and several of the educators modelled it in their own processes. As a non-Indigenous educator, I think watching and listening are worth pointing out in clear terms here; in my schooling experience, talking and doing were the default expressions of learning.

Summary: Modes of learning. In this subsection, I outlined several modes of learning described by participants in the present study. Tee-chaw spoke from a lifetime of experience to describe learning through experience, learning through story, and learning through watching and listening. Several participants told stories about how they learned alongside their students in the company of an Indigenous colleague or community member. The importance of learning from community was explained by Tee-chaw through her childhood stories and reiterated by many participants in various contexts. At times, an approach like learning through watching and listening was developed through direct interpersonal learning experience, as evidenced by Agnes. Temporality, place, and sociality were animated in how these forms of learning were described.

Overview of Themes across the Eleven Stories

The educators in this study initiated their learning relationships through formal and informal means. Engaging was their choice, and personal learning often coincided with professional learning. Time was necessary here; time to interact within a day, but also time for

the relationship to develop, quite often over a period of years. While each story is unique, some qualities and experiences of productive learning relationships are seen in multiple instances. They include being open, being genuine, trust, non-Indigenous educators' focus on growth, a "we" perspective, mutual benefit, putting learning into practice, and being student-centred. Within this, some participants faced fear and painful and uncomfortable conversations. They also interacted with fun and humour, and the story set was characterized by kindness. Participating educators described various modes of learning including learning alongside students, learning in connection with community members, and through story, experience, watching and listening. Learning relationships were situated within the contexts of collegial learning, institutions, and greater societal processes, as well as negative contexts such as racism. These learning relationships were meaningful on an interpersonal level for the educators involved and were perceived to benefit students through means such as introducing them to richer learning opportunities, deepening their teachers' knowledge bases, and supporting their teachers' growth in social or academic realms. These relationships are evidence for the importance of Indigenous educators in administration and teacher leadership roles, and also indicate that informal everyday collegial interactions can be highly meaningful in educators' learning.

A Return to Principles of Relationship and Story in Academic Literature

In the preceding subsections, I drew out themes from the findings that gave insight into the research questions, framing them within Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) three-dimensional narrative inquiry space. I included references to academic literature on Indigenous education to situate the present findings within the body of existing studies. I now step back to consider the present study's findings within the principles of story and relationship.

The learning relationships in the present study were personalized to their contexts, responsive to the unique people involved and adapted to their way and pace of learning (see Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Kitchen, 2009). Indigenous educators did not deliver a standard package of guidance to non-Indigenous educators or interact in a formulaic way. Rather, dynamics like love, trust, joking around, and challenging each other were specific to the pair, trio, or group involved. The Indigenous educator was adapting as he or she proceeded, and so was the non-Indigenous educator. The relationships were in motion (Craig, 2011); they were human, fun, and considerate, responding to constellations of factors in the school and classroom environments. P. Cormier's (2016) dissertation title, *Kinoo 'amaadawaad Megwaa Doodamawaad – They Are Learning With Each Other While They Are Doing* is a phrase that resonates with the person to person learning that I observed in the present study. P. Cormier wrote about research and relationships within his First Nation community in the field of peace and conflict studies, which makes for a different context. However, his words are highly relevant to the present study:

First, change is constant within the lives of the Anishinabeg people. In fact, this is a fundamental truth of an Aboriginal worldview. It is not the consistency of change that is of critical importance but the rate, direction, and processes of change/learning employed. Second, the internal dynamic of change always has an impact on the external, and vice versa. (p. 218)

In the present study, teachers' development was a form of change. From that view, "processes of change/learning" were the focal point as educators described how they interacted with one another in ways they found meaningful and productive. Internal questions, personal histories, and individuals' learning interacted with external relationships—collegial relationships, interactions with students, and educators' understanding of their place within wider social relations. They were learning with each other while they were doing.

I referred to Dwayne Donald's (2012) concept of ethical relationality in Chapter Two and return here to some of the insight he raised. I am not attempting to map Donald's philosophical stance directly onto this study as I think there are also significant areas of difference, but would like to draw on points of resonance. Donald opened his explanation of ethical relationality with these words:

If colonialism is indeed a shared condition, then decolonizing needs to be a shared endeavour. The process of decolonizing in Canada, on a broad scale and especially in educational contexts, can only occur when Aboriginal peoples and Canadians face each other across deeply learned divides, revisit and deconstruct their shared past, and engage carefully with the realization that their present and future is similarly tied together. (Donald, 2012, p. 102)

At a societal scale, some participants in this study were coming to the realization of our shared past, and at an interpersonal level were seeking deeper understanding because they wanted to meaningfully participate in a shared present.

At the level of collegial interpersonal relationships, a "shared endeavour" (Donald, 2012, p. 102) was at the centre of the present study. Examples of learning relationships that were based on shared projects and goals include Michaela and Christine learning alongside Brittany in their classrooms and then applying their learning in varying ways, and Agnes and River who became peers who challenged and stretched one another. Hope and Chantal worked as colleagues to support the students and families in their school and Lydia, Alise, and Renee came together at a specific time and place to collaborate for students' learning. Within his paper, which was largely theoretical in nature, Donald (2012) said,

The central challenge, then, is to pay closer attention to the multiple ways our human sense of living together is constructed through the minutiae of day-to-day events, through the stories and interactions which are always imbued with an organic principle of reciprocity, and hence ethical responsibility for a shared future. (p. 102)

The idea of small daily interactions is something that can be seen in this study since individual interpersonal relationships were the focal point. Donald said, “One way to achieve balance in this way is to make respectful use of all the gifts that we have been given and then give back in some way” (p. 104). I see this lived out in how River and Hope promoted working from strengths for the benefit of all and how Bryn and Greg recognized and valued the gifts that they shared with one another. In general, I sensed that Indigenous educators were working in collaboration with non-Indigenous educators who they expected would share their strengths and gifts as part of the shared outcome of offering students excellent learning opportunities.

In several of the stories in the present study, there is a base assumption that “Aboriginal issues, perspectives, and knowledge systems” are relevant to all students, not just Indigenous students (Donald, 2012, p. 102). While the wording of my research questions referred to teachers’ practices with respect to Indigenous students, most participants spoke about all students’ learning. Renee, Lydia, and Alise invited all students to learn about local First Nation food traditions. Through Brittany, students in Michaela’s class learned about Indigenous history and then Indian Residential Schools in their region. Students in River and Agnes’s school had the opportunity to learn from an Elder. Max and Kate brought students to local teachers to learn about spiritual traditions, just to name a few of these experiences. This sort of learning sounds familiar in light of Barnhardt and Kawagley (2005), Aikenhead and Elliott, (2010), and Iseke and Desmoulins (2015), all of whom wrote about Indigenous and non-Indigenous knowledge systems interacting with school systems and the enriching opportunity for students to consider both instead of learning in monocultural Western settings (see Aikenehead & Elliott, 2010).

This flows into the idea of naturalizing Indigenous Knowledge, which Battiste and Henderson (2009) and Little Bear (2009) advocated. They wrote about the enrichment that this

knowledge brings and Little Bear also argued how valuing Indigenous Knowledge can be part of addressing racism through challenging the idea of inferiority. While this argument may not have been made directly in the present study, perhaps the sharing of knowledge in relational settings promoted the idea that Indigenous educators and community members, and the knowledge systems they share, are of high value to all people. This study is based on the assumption that non-Indigenous educators have much to learn, and by extension, Eurocentric school systems do as well. While the research questions were framed around how these learning relationships might affect Indigenous students, many participants spoke about non-Indigenous students' learning as well as Indigenous students' school experiences. This could be seen as an implicit case for naturalizing Indigenous Knowledge.

Dion's concepts of the "perfect stranger" (Dion, 2007, p. 329) and "imperfect stranger" (Dion, 2018) are interesting to consider alongside non-Indigenous participants' stories; these refer to how teachers distance themselves, claim ignorance, or begin to learn or relate, and the possible motivations and effects of those stances. The participants in this study seemed to take a journey *toward* relating. When they expressed unfamiliarity with Indigenous people and Indigenous-Canadian relations, they did not seem to use this unfamiliarity as reason not to relate; rather, they saw their need for learning and were grateful for the relational opportunities to do so.

Some of the ways in which participants described their learning resonate with critical theory and critical pedagogy, fields in which scholars consider dynamics of politics, power, and inequity in society and in education (Freire, 1970; McLaren, 2009). Concepts like "Whiteness," "power," and "privilege" that Sky, and to a lesser degree, Simone, used have connections to this body of literature. Non-Indigenous educators Sky and Bryn spoke about the systemic issues in school systems; critiquing structures that benefit one group over another could also connect to

the critical theory field. When non-Indigenous educators like Kate spoke about their own “ignorance” on topics they felt they should know about, they were also referencing the knowledge they did and did not have. This, again, could be seen as a consideration or critique of the power structures in place in Canadian society. Renee referred to being part of the “oppressors,” and Olivia spoke about teaching colonial history and its effects to her students. Brittany, too, taught students—and their teachers, Michaela and Christine—about purposeful government policies that harmed Indigenous people and have continuing effects to this day. While she did not frame her conversational interview around “decolonization,” she was raising awareness of colonization and inviting students to see things differently.

Through offering this different point of view—history told through her own family stories in addition to film, personal narrative, and other means—Brittany could be seen as inviting students into a “polycentric view” (McPherson & Rabb, 2011). New points of view were offered to many students through educators in the present study. For example, stories shared by Elders and Indigenous educators offered students a window into seeing history, current events, the places they lived, food systems, and spiritual practices through a lens they may not otherwise have accessed.

Some of the interpersonal relational dynamics that participants described seem a close fit with models described in the literature. Direct guidance is a role that was established in the literature (see Davis, 2010; G. Smith, 1992) and rings true in certain stories in this study. While Greg and Bryn brought each other different forms of support and knowledge, Bryn said that Greg was “like a guide to me.” Interestingly, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, Bryn also provided support, and even guidance, for Greg in other ways. Sky also spoke about seeking direct guidance from Simone. Dan’s stories indicated that he provided this for teachers who were

asking. Olivia spoke of many guides in her learning, people who she could ask for class resources, people who presented perspectives that were new to her. At the same time, she was seeking more guidance or authority on certain topics. Michaela saw Brittany as a guide or expert, and Christine, too, drew on her guiding presence as she taught. Kate looked to Max as a guide in Indigenous education and community connections. Renee was clear that she did not know how to proceed and needed the guidance of people like Lydia. Tee-chaw was willing to be a guide to others and sometimes had that opportunity. I find it interesting that Indigenous educators' guidance was underscored, and mutually beneficial interactions were also mentioned in different ways by different pairs.

Relating in a family-like way is another consideration from the literature (G. Smith, 1992). In stories like Hope and Chantal's, the word "love" was used quite often, which gives a sense of family. While Chantal was clearly in a learning role with respect to Hope, they shared goals and the warmth and commitment that was part of pursuing them.

Close relationships were mentioned by others as well. River and Agnes spoke about likely doing "more together than we do apart" and quite often finished each other's sentences and built on each other's shared visions for education. This could resonate with a "partnership" or "collaboration" model, although their relationship did not seem to be built on power sharing, but rather the genuine enjoyment of working together. At earlier points in their learning relationship, Agnes would probably have been more under the direct guidance of River, even if River chose to guide through a strong school staff community where there was shared ownership and vision. Perhaps they became each other's allies as they both pursued challenging and meaningful work. Their cultural differences and ways of challenging each other as equals could be part of this.

I had imagined that certain non-Indigenous educators would be bridges between Indigenous community members and other non-Indigenous educators. I think the reverse is what I saw in many of these stories. Indigenous educators were willing to extend themselves to reach out to non-Indigenous educators. Brittany, for example, was very aware of the demands facing teachers, and understood the heaviness of topics like residential schools and their impacts. With understanding, she reached out to her colleagues, offering to share knowledge, time, and resources. From another angle, Indigenous educators Max, Simone, River, and Lydia served as bridge-builders between non-Indigenous educators and knowledgeable Indigenous community members. For example, Max was there when Kate had hard questions and when she was looking to make community connections that she could not easily make on her own. He valued that she wanted to “do things properly” and supported her in that. Dan invited colleagues into a form of learning and sharing that was new to them, and then remained available when some wanted to know how to proceed with their learning and teaching. Alise said yes to teaching Renee’s class how to make bannock, and shared her own stories in a very meaningful way. Lydia helped Renee connect with a local Elder, supporting her in the desire to make a respectful connection. Tee-chaw was available when education leaders had questions about how to implement meaningful policies and practices. This is not to say that non-Indigenous educators did not also build bridges. Renee, it seemed, extended a welcome to Alise that set future possibilities in motion and Olivia encouraged students to consult with the Indigenous program person in the school.

In some of these stories, there was two-way support at work. While Alise was sharing with Renee, she was also accepting an opportunity for personal growth in teaching. While Kate was seeking guidance from Max, she was giving him the opportunity to support students’

learning through the connections made in her class. This give-and-take in support in various and reciprocal forms reminds me of some of the statements made by Indigenous educators in the study by St. Denis (2010).

In conclusion, the findings of the present study resonate with several concepts in the academic literature. Ethical relationality (Donald, 2012) is particularly poignant as a conceptual frame because it situates present-day education within the larger story of Indigenous-non-Indigenous relating in the land we now call Canada. Donald's words, "teaching is a responsibility and an act of kindness viewed as movement towards connectivity and relationality" is inspiring in light of the stories participants shared. I believe that educators saw the responsibilities they held, and that kindness was a meaningful element in many of the learning relationships. Teaching as "a movement toward connectivity and relationality" places this research within a historical timeframe and a place of hope.

The central role of story. Ultimately, the heart of the present research is eleven stories formed from conversational interviews with nineteen educators, through which I earnestly and meticulously tried to reflect participants' ideas and anecdotes as they applied to the research questions. I found the process of relating with participants and listening to their stories profound. The trust that these educators invested by sharing about their lives, the time they gave that could have been spent with family or preparing for class, and the care that many put into the process was beautiful and humbling (and at times overwhelming because of the responsibility I held in return). Narrative inquirers and Indigenous scholars have written about the entwined nature of story and relationship (e.g., Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Kovach, 2009), a connection that I now sense in an almost physical way after spending time with people and their stories, and one which many participants described as part of their learning processes. Participants shared

their stories with me so that I could share them with you and with others. I hope that a sense of that openness and beauty and generosity is conveyed to you.

Closing this Discussion

In this discussion section, I have considered aspects of the research questions, including the experiences and qualities of productive learning relationships, different ways in which these were initiated, qualities that I believe led to their sustained nature, and how teachers' practices were shaped. While my focus was largely on non-Indigenous educators' development, many stories also highlighted Indigenous educators' learning and journeys.

As a participant pointed out in the co-theorizing session, the conversational interviews were highly reflective. The stories represent Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators considering—and often considering *together*—what their learning relationship has meant. For me as the researcher, learning from these stories has been a gift; participants shared what they have nurtured and developed over many years. In the spirit of Max's statement about “understanding that we're here for best outcomes for our youth, and ultimately ourselves too, and our community,” I hope that this research will be part of “fostering those relationships in a proper way,” recognizing that “we don't know it all” and so “it's important that we have people to go and to be open with.” My hope is that as you consider the wisdom and experiences that participants shared here, that your journey may be enriched.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

In this concluding chapter, I return to the research questions and respond to them. I outline implications for various groups and close with recommendations for further research.

The research questions for the present study were:

1. How do non-Indigenous educators and Indigenous educators and community members describe experiences and qualities of the productive learning relationships they share?
2. How are these relationships initiated and sustained, and how do participants believe they affect non-Indigenous educators' practices with respect to Indigenous students?

Each of the stories shared in the findings chapter is a response to the research questions—a contextual, personal, learning-in-relationship response. The fact that there is no one-size-fits-all answer to these questions is an important conclusion in itself: meaningful and productive learning relationships shared by Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators are unique.

Within this set of unique stories about productive and meaningful learning relationships, some themes appear. They answer the research questions in a more general sense.

Regarding the first research question: Being open, being genuine, trust, non-Indigenous educators' focus on growth, a “we” perspective, mutual benefit, putting learning into practice, and being student-centred are some of the inner and social (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) qualities that were reported in multiple learning relationships in the present study. Further, participants described experiences that included: fear, comfort, and confidence; fun, laughter, humour, and enjoyment; painful and uncomfortable conversations; kindness; and interacting from the heart.

With respect to the second research question, learning relationships were initiated in multiple ways, sometimes when an Indigenous educator in a formal guiding role reached out to

the non-Indigenous educator involved and sometimes when a non-Indigenous educator formally or informally sought out that guidance. In other cases, the educators worked together in the same building, one educator purposely moved schools to work under the other, or an administrator asked for an Indigenous educator's guidance. Some major factors in sustaining the learning relationships included: personal choice within professional settings, overlapping personal and interpersonal learning, and time. Some key modes of learning included learning alongside students, learning with Indigenous community members, learning through story, learning through experience, and learning through watching and listening. Participants expressed many ways in which they believed non-Indigenous educators' practices were shaped with respect to Indigenous students, relayed below under the value for students subheading.

Thus, while the eleven stories presented in the findings chapter of this dissertation were quite distinct in their contexts, outcomes, and storylines, each pointed to students' well-being in school, and involved educators relating with one another in meaningful and productive ways, very often in direct collaboration with students, other educators, and community members.

Implications

Joy, hope, and human connection. Amidst knowledge gaps in the Canadian population (Environics Institute, 2016), discouraging statistics about Indigenous students' school achievement (People for Education, 2016), racism (St. Denis, 2010), and the stress, fear, or despair that may come with these realities, the findings of this study showed that there are people who are actively learning together. Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators found meaning in the learning they experienced with one another and alongside students. Humour, kindness, friendship, and support were common in their stories.

In other words, learning through relationship, or learning in the context of school communities, was a powerful form of professional learning for non-Indigenous educators, one that impacted students. Yet relating together was more than that. Some participants—Indigenous and non-Indigenous—spoke about enriched school and work environments due to the relationships they shared, personal confidence that was cultivated, or precious interpersonal connections that extended beyond school interactions. While I wrote about Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators as though they were separate groups, participants often spoke about community, collaboration, or a “we” philosophy (see Moon, 2014) that indicated shared goals or genuine enjoyment of one another’s presence. There were exceptions to this, and negative contexts were also described, yet the implications of joy, hope, and human connection stand out in the present study.

Learning through story. Stories were central to teaching and learning in the present study. Taking in the stories shared by each pair, trio, or individual participant offers insight, the opportunity to reflect on one’s own setting, and fuel for discussing current realities and future possibilities (see Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Teaching and relating through story was important to many participants as they related with one another, and was said to be an important way of engaging with students. Valuing learning through story ties this study to approaches shared by Indigenous educators and researchers (e.g., Archibald, 2008; Kovach, 2009) and narrative inquirers (e.g., Ciuffetelli Parker, 2014; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), as described in the literature review and methodology chapters of this dissertation.

Value for Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators. The educators in this study spoke about important and often ongoing learning that developed as they related together. For many non-Indigenous educators, learning from an Indigenous colleague’s stories, teaching

example, or community connections made for a depth of learning that they may not have experienced otherwise. Feeling welcome to share their questions and their own stories contributed to this learning. Indigenous educators, too, expressed how they appreciated relating with non-Indigenous colleagues who were engaged in their own learning or had students' wellbeing in mind. Many educators were able to meet each other "where they were at," experiencing warmth and connection as well as challenging one another and sharing new knowledge. This meaningful form of learning is noteworthy in a Canadian context where many teachers enter the profession without a strong basis in Indigenous education (Godlewska, Moore, & Bednasek, 2010).

Value for students. Educators believed that their learning relationships affected students. Some of the ways that non-Indigenous educators practices were said to have been shaped to benefit students include: developing school environments with high academic standards and collaborating for excellence; connecting classes with community members to offer genuine learning from Indigenous perspectives; broadening teachers' content knowledge; opening conversations and curriculum areas that teachers felt they did not have the knowledge or confidence to address on their own (e.g., Indian Residential Schools); aiding non-Indigenous educators in better understanding the potential experiences of Indigenous students; educating teachers on current social issues; developing holistic learning environments for students; professional collaboration and personal learning that strengthened and challenged educators in their work; developing a sense of community; opportunities for students and staff to engage in experiential learning; addressing racism and discrimination; educating teachers on communication styles; and fostering enjoyable learning environments. In many participants'

stories, fruitful learning environments and experiences were offered to all students—Indigenous and non-Indigenous together, with an emphasis on the importance of all students' learning.

Implications for school boards. The experience of Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators working, learning, and growing together appeared to be spontaneous and informal in some stories and more structured in others. Whether formal or informal learning was occurring, school board climates, policies, and practices have an impact on educators' experiences. Key implications for school boards are related to time, formal positions, variety, values, and a consideration of readiness.

Time. Again and again, participants explained that their relationships developed over time. Thus, if a school board embarks on an initiative related to Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators working and learning together, a large time frame (a minimum of five to ten years) for the development of strong individual relationships should be built in. Further, educators need time to dedicate to forms of collaboration like conversations, planning lessons together, co-teaching, or modelling. Some participants were provided with this time through group professional development. Paid release time could be another way to recognize and promote the time educators spend on person to person learning.

Formal positions. If non-Indigenous educators and Indigenous educators are going to collaborate and relate, they need the opportunity to meet, and perhaps a formal structure to assist. For some Indigenous educators in the present study, formal opportunity to work with non-Indigenous educators during paid work hours was foundational. As described in the discussion section, school boards promote relationship-based learning when they fund positions for Indigenous educators to support teachers and administrators in their curricular planning, resource seeking, student support, school-based events, family interactions, and Indigenous community

connections. For non-Indigenous educators, a person in a formal position might be a first point of contact, someone who could collaborate with them and their class or introduce them to community members who could become guest speakers or collaborators.

Administration is another consideration. When Indigenous administrators were guiding schools, non-Indigenous educators had the opportunity to learn from their practices, knowledge bases, and values. When any administrator was open to—or active in seeking—collaboration with Indigenous educators or community members, the climate for teachers was affected.

Variety. For some non-Indigenous educators, learning more about Indigenous perspectives was a varied, multifaceted process. Taking online courses, watching videos provided by the school board, participating in school-based activities with Elders and Indigenous program staff, being part of larger projects, participating in formal professional development sessions on Indigenous education, and interacting with a variety of Indigenous colleagues occurred as well as person to person learning. I recommend valuing and funding opportunities for person to person learning in Indigenous education and to offer professional development of many forms at the same time and over time.

Values. Does the school board value educator-led professional learning? Are individual teachers encouraged in their learning paths, such as connecting with Elders, working with mentor colleagues, or joining learning groups? Does the school board value the time and personal energy that educators pour into learning relationships, and the relational effects that result? When a teacher takes time to get to know a student's grandmother or auntie, or to arrange a visit with someone at the nearby First Nation, is that time and relational effort esteemed? What if personal and interpersonal learning takes a long time for an educator? Are relationships valued?

Readiness. The educators who shared their stories in this research volunteered to do so. In a given school on a given day, not every non-Indigenous educator chooses to engage in this kind of learning relationship, nor does every Indigenous educator. The educators in this study were ready to create or accept certain opportunities to grow, relate, ask, and co-teach with certain people around them. The voluntary nature of engaging in learning relationships may be part of what makes them effective (see Moon, 2014).

Implications for teacher education. Since relationships are nested within subsystems and systems (Lederach, 1997), change can occur at multiple levels. Teacher education is one influence on teacher culture and norms of the profession. If non-Indigenous educators are members of Bachelor of Education classroom communities where Elders and local Indigenous community members are valued and seamlessly integrated into teaching in various curriculum areas, this could shift their understanding of local leadership (see Moon, 2014) and their role as teachers. If teacher candidates experience well-established, active relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators, perhaps this modeling could indicate what is possible.

Implications for provincial ministries of education. Vision, support, and resourcing can establish larger projects focused on teacher learning in Indigenous education, undergird school board initiatives, and help facilitate opportunities for Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators and community members to meet and collaborate. Stories in the present research indicate the value of Ministry of Education initiatives and funding.

Implications for fields outside of education. Meaningful person to person learning and relating that was described in the present study has implications for people in other fields, and for our communities at large. In education, Eurocentric philosophies and practices are currently dominating (Battiste, 2013), which increases the need for non-Indigenous educators to learn. I

suspect that this may be the case in other fields as well (e.g., Hart, 2002). Where in-context relationship-based learning is already occurring, it would be interesting to hear about the mechanisms and support systems that are in place. For example, what can we learn from the experiences of non-Indigenous government employees, engineers, nurses, or early childhood educators who are actively learning from Indigenous colleagues and leaders in their fields? How are those relationships being supported by their professions and organizations, or how might this begin to occur?

Recommendations for Further Research

This study yielded many ideas, stories, and experiences that could become fuel for further research. I have selected a few to highlight here.

Spiritual learning in schools. Further research on the conversations, learning, personal and interpersonal questions, changes, challenges, and interactions between people regarding worldviews, belief systems, and spiritual practices and teachings in schools would interest me and add to our collective understanding (see Deer, 2018). In the findings of the present study, practices like visiting a sweat lodge, offering tobacco to an Elder, and smudging were mentioned by various participants. I would be interested to hear insights and stories about spiritual practices in school shared by students, their families, community members, educators, and others involved in education systems, including people with various spiritual or religious beliefs and people who do not believe in a spiritual realm.

Students' and families' experiences. I would be interested to hear students' views and experiences as their non-Indigenous teachers learn, as Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators collaborate, as community members engage with schools, as conversations occur about painful historical and present-day realities, as they learn about or engage with spiritual practices and

beliefs, and as they encounter resources such as books, films, and guest speakers that may present new perspectives. I wonder how individual students experience this and how family discussions, beliefs, orientations, and experiences connect to those experiences.

Community members' perspectives on teacher learning and engagement. I would be interested in the observations that Indigenous Elders, leaders, and community members might share as they see schools engaging with Indigenous communities in new ways. Hearing from community members who have been directly involved in schools and in teachers' learning (see Dion, 2016) should shape our next steps as educators and school systems.

Navigating painful conversations. As detailed in the discussion section, talking about colonization and racism in Canada, including historical events and present circumstances, can be uncomfortable and challenging for educators. Both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians "are in need of healing" (Reverend Stan McKay, Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015, p. 9). I would be interested to learn about how educators, students, and members of school communities navigate these conversations and what support is in place as they do so.

Opportunities and resources across Canada. Different school boards have different programs in place that allow formal opportunities for educators to learn from Indigenous community members, Elders, and educators. Particular education settings give rise to informal learning between colleagues, community members, and public educators. Further, some boards have developed online or print guides, resource lists, libraries, or materials that educators can access. It would be informative to find out more about these experiences across the country.

Closing this Dissertation

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Appendices

Appendix A: Answers to Smith's (1999) questions about cross-cultural research

Appendix B: Resources for background information on practices mentioned in this dissertation

Appendix C: Conversational interview guides

Appendix D: Letter home

Appendix E: Consent forms

Appendix F: Snapshots

Appendix A: Answers to Smith's (1999) Questions about Cross-cultural Research

The following questions are quoted directly from Smith (1999, p. 173), a Maori researcher whose book included a section on cross-cultural research. I have italicized her questions and added my response in regular font below each one.

Who defined the research problem?

The research question came from my own experience and questions, not from a First Nation community that approached me. However, as mentioned in the introduction chapter, I believe that the research questions are relevant to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2015) calls for action and the direction set by *Indian Control of Indian Education* (NIB/ AFN, 1972). I also believe this research is relevant in light of St. Denis's (2010) study with Indigenous educators across Canada. With respect to allies, St. Denis's educator participants spoke about non-Indigenous teachers who were not only respectful, open and supportive as they related to their Indigenous educator colleagues, but who also sought to connect with the local Indigenous community. For me, this leaves room for exploring non-Indigenous teacher-learners' experiences alongside the perspectives of Indigenous educators.

For whom is the study relevant? Who says so?

As the non-Indigenous author of this dissertation, I believe the study is relevant to non-Indigenous educators who seek to learn respectfully alongside Indigenous educators and community members. The study is relevant for the survivors of Indian Residential Schools whose words informed the TRC (2015) calls for action and to non-Indigenous teachers who have a gap in their understanding about Indigenous perspectives. On a larger scale, this is relevant to all of Canadian society because we are all affected by colonization and oppression and by public education practices. It is relevant to Indigenous students in publicly funded school systems if their teachers are informed and responsive.

What knowledge will the community gain from the study?

The public education and academic communities, both of which are comprised of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, gain access to knowledge about the experience and perceived effects of interpersonal learning relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators. Specific school communities and even the communities where the research was conducted may benefit if I report relevant findings directly to them or in public forums like the newspaper or online. This study offers cross-cultural perspectives because Indigenous people have the opportunity to hear non-Indigenous participants' views and vice versa.

What knowledge will the researcher gain from the study?

As the researcher, I gained knowledge about Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators' views and experiences regarding their learning relationships in publicly funded schools. I gained the experience of relating with educators in very meaningful ways through the research process. I have been entrusted with people's stories, a responsibility which I have tried my best to live out with integrity and gratitude.

What are some likely positive outcomes from the study?

I believe that the conversations and knowledge sharing that defined this study could lead to new and strengthened relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators and community members, and within those groups. Through focused discussions on learning relationships, there is potential for lively academic, professional, and personal conversations and connections to continue.

What are some possible negative outcomes?

Some possible negative outcomes are misinterpreting participants' words or the ideas behind the stories and views they shared, or breaking the trust that they placed in me.

How can the negative outcomes be eliminated?

As noted in the section on seeking guidance, by placing myself in a learning position alongside Indigenous colleagues, Elders, community members, academics, educators, and friends, I was hoping that my research would be shaped in a way that was respectful and where negative outcomes could be foreseen and addressed. Checking in with participants as drafts were completed was a way to offer my willingness to change the written research. Meeting with my supervisor when I had questions about navigating the research helped me to voice my thoughts and seek advice where needed.

To whom is the researcher accountable?

I am accountable to the participants themselves, to the education communities of which they are a part (represented by the school board representatives who approved my research and sometimes discussed my progress with me), to Indigenous community members and leaders (see "seeking guidance" section), to Lakehead University, and to my supervisor and committee. My committee is comprised of those with experience in Indigenous education or narrative inquiry, including the tensions and tough situations that can arise. As mentioned in Chapter One, my beliefs about my own role are anchored in my belief that God is present, powerful, loving, and guiding. In my research proposal, I committed to be prayerful while I conducted this study, which became pivotal as I asked for God's wisdom in navigating the intricacies of the research and writing.

What processes are in place to support the research, the researched, and the researcher?

The research: Research Ethics Board reviews at Lakehead University and research approval processes in the three school boards; an Elder in Residence at Lakehead University; a university community with many people who care about Indigenous education and are willing to share; funding from the university and government.

The researched: Formal ethics review boards and contact people; a research design that was meant to actively welcome their views and concerns throughout the research process; colleagues who care about teacher development in Indigenous education.

The researcher: University colleagues focused on this topic; Elder-in-residence at Lakehead University; Indigenous community members and leaders who provided guidance; an actively engaged supervisor; committee members who made time to discuss; colleagues, friends, family, and church community who challenged my thinking, provided a place to speak about my work, or were supportive as we "did life together" throughout the degree.

Appendix B: Resources for more information on practices mentioned in this dissertation

In this section, I have included references to a selection of teacher guides and resource lists plus a published children's book and a communications guide. These offer various angles on the story, meaning, and importance of some of the cultural and spiritual practices that are mentioned in this dissertation. My purpose is to point to some background information for those who would like more context. However, cultural and spiritual practices are specific to the First Nation tradition in which they originate; speaking with a local Elder or knowledge holder in a particular place would likely be the best approach to learning more. As Kovach (2009) stated, "Indigenous knowledges can never be standardized, for they are in relation to place and person" (p. 56).

Note: this list includes a broad swath of resources. I have not read each in depth and cannot guarantee the quality of the content.

Alberta Teachers' Association (2018). *Indigenous education and walking together*. Website with multiple resources:

<https://www.teachers.ab.ca/For%20Members/Professional%20Development/IndigenousEducationandWalkingTogether/Pages/Walking%20Together.aspx>

Bear, C. & Huff, T. (2016). *The honour drum: Sharing the beauty of Canada's indigenous people with children, families and classroom*. Lagoon City, ON: Castle Quay Books.

City of Saskatoon, in partnership with Saskatchewan Indigenous Cultural Centre and Office of the Treaty Commissioner (2018). *ayisīnowak: A communications guide*. Retrieved from <https://www.saskatoon.ca/community-culture-heritage/cultural-diversity/aboriginal-relations/ayisinowak-communications-guide>

District School Board Ontario North East (2014). *Aboriginal presence in our schools: A guide for staff*. Retrieved from https://www.dsb1.ca/school/indigenous/Resources/Documents/DSB1-Aboriginal_Presence_in_Our_Schools.pdf

Fenge, T., & Aldridge, J. (2015). *Keeping Promises: The Royal Proclamation of 1763, Aboriginal Rights, and Treaties in Canada*. McGill-Queen's Press-MQUP.

First Nations, Métis & Inuit Education Association of Ontario (2018). *Resources*. Website with multiple categories and links: <http://www.fnmieao.com/resources/>

Government of Alberta: Education (2008). *Walking together: First Nations, Métis, and Inuit perspectives in curriculum*. Retrieved from www.learnalberta.ca/content/aswt/

Government of British Columbia (2018). *Aboriginal education teaching tools and resources*. Website with several documents and links: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/k-12/teach/teaching-tools/aboriginal-education>

- Government of Manitoba: Education and Training (2018). *Indigenous Education*. Website with multiple documents: <http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/abedu/>
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- Office of Aboriginal Affairs, Nova Scotia (2011). *Links for teachers and students*. Website with multiple resource guides: <https://novascotia.ca/abor/education/other-resources/>.
- Ontario Teachers' Federation (2018). *Useful links for Aboriginal education*. Website with multiple resources: <https://www.otffeo.on.ca/en/resources/useful-links/aboriginal-education/>
- Regina Public Schools (2018). *Indigenous Education*. Website with many resources including "cultural handbook" document: <http://www.rbe.sk.ca/teachers-staff/instruction/first-nations-and-métis-education>
- Superior-Greenstone District School Board (2014). *Aboriginal peoples in the Superior-Greenstone region: An informational handbook for staff and parents*. Retrieved from <http://www.sgdsb.on.ca/upload/documents/aboriginal-handbook-final-rmj-nov-2014.pdf>
- Toronto District School Board (2014). *Aboriginal Education: Resources*. Website with multiple links: <http://www.tdsb.on.ca/Community/Aboriginal-Education/Resources>
- University of Toronto: Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (2018). *Deepening knowledge: Resources for and about Aboriginal Education*. Website with multiple documents: https://www.oise.utoronto.ca/deepeningknowledge/Teacher_Resources/Infusing_Aboriginal_Content_and_Perspectives_into_Your_Teaching/Addressing_the_Needs_of_Aboriginal_Students.html

Appendix C: Conversational interview guides

This appendix contains two conversational interview guides. The first guide was the one used in ten of the eleven stories. The second guide was used with the participants who I had previously observed teaching. The term “interview conversation” is used in these documents (termed “conversational interviews” in the body of this dissertation) to reflect terminology in the original documents.

**Interview Conversation Guide
for Part 1 participants**

[sent to participants before interview conversation]

NOTE: The “*general research topics*” guide the entire study. I hope that each interview conversation will touch on these. All other discussion topics and story starters are optional ways to get at the research questions.

General research topics:

1. The experiences and qualities of productive learning relationships shared by non-Indigenous educators and Indigenous educators or community members
2. Stories and experiences about how these relationships are initiated and sustained, and how they affect non-Indigenous educators’ practices with respect to Indigenous students

Examples of potential discussion topics or story starters:

- Stories about how the two of you relate
- The kind of learning that occurs as you work alongside one another
- Developments in the non-Indigenous teacher’s practices regarding Indigenous students
- How your connection began and what keeps it going
- Examples or stories about important moments in your learning relationship
- Examples of what makes the learning relationship meaningful or productive
- Ways in which the relationship has changed over time
- What the relationship means to you

**Interview Conversation Guide
for Part 2 participants
before and after relational learning period**

[sent to participants before each interview conversation]

NOTE: The “*general research topics*” guide the entire study. I hope that each interview conversation will touch on these. All other discussion topics and story starters are optional ways to get at the research questions.

General research topics:

1. The experiences and qualities of productive learning relationships shared by non-Indigenous educators and Indigenous educators or community members
2. Stories and experiences about how these relationships are initiated and sustained, and how they affect non-Indigenous educators’ practices with respect to Indigenous students

Examples of potential discussion topics or story starters:

(before the relational learning period)

- What you are hoping for as you begin this learning relationship
- What you are unsure about as you begin
- What might make the learning relationship meaningful or productive
- How the learning relationship might affect the teaching practice of the non-Indigenous educator

Examples of potential discussion topics or story starters:

(after the relational learning period)

- ways in which the relational learning experience
 - met your expectations
 - surprised you
 - caused learning and growth
 - posed challenges
- Stories about how the two of you relate
- The kind of learning that occurs as you work alongside one another
- Developments in the non-Indigenous teacher’s practices regarding Indigenous students
- How your connection began and what keeps it going
- Examples or stories about important moments in your learning relationship
- Examples of what makes the learning relationship meaningful or productive
- Ways in which the relationship has changed over time
- What the relationship means to you

Appendix D: Letter of introduction

This letter was sent home with students when I was observing educators in their classroom over several sessions.



Faculty of Education

(807) 343-8708
paul.berger@lakeheadu.ca
memoon@lakeheadu.ca

Letter of Introduction to Families in [teacher's name] Class

[XXX date]

Dear Families of Students in [teacher's name] class,

My name is Martha Moon. I am a student researcher from Lakehead University working on my PhD. I will be in your child's class from [date] to [date] conducting research on teacher learning. I am interested in finding out more about how non-Indigenous educators learn from Indigenous colleagues and community members.

My main focus will be teacher learning, but I will be participating in classroom life from time to time, which will include interacting with students.

This research has been approved by [XXX specific school board]. If you would like to know more about it, please feel free to contact me or to speak to the school principal. I have included contact information below.

Sincerely,
Martha Moon, M.Ed.

Researcher Information:

The research is being conducted by:
Martha Moon PhD Candidate, Faculty of Education
Lakehead University , 955 Oliver Road, Thunder Bay, Ontario, P7B 5E1
email: memoon@lakeheadu.ca tel: 807-343-8701

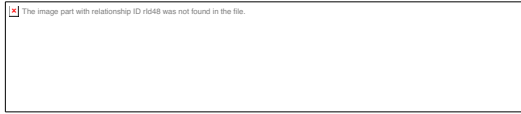
Under the supervision of:
Paul Berger Associate Professor, Faculty of Education
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email: paul.berger@lakeheadu.ca tel: 807-343-8708 fax: 807-344-6807

This research study has been approved by the Lakehead University Research Ethics Board. If you have any questions related to the ethics of the research and would like to speak to someone outside of the research team please contact Sue Wright at the Research Ethics Board at [807-343-8283](tel:807-343-8283) or research@lakeheadu.ca.

This research study has been approved by [XXX – specific school board].
tel: [XXX] – [XXX Name, school board role]

Appendix E: Consent forms

This appendix includes two versions of the cover letter and consent form. The first was for conversational interviews. The second was for the pair who I observed in addition to the conversational interview. When participants interviewed alone or were not working for a school board, I used approved alternate versions to account for those circumstances. Originally, the phrasing of these forms was for partners (not groups); these are the updated versions following an amendment from the university's Research Ethics Board. My cover letter and consent form for co-theorizing sessions followed a similar format to those you see below.



Faculty of Education

(807) 343-8708

paul.berger@lakeheadu.ca

memoon@lakeheadu.ca

[XXX date]

Learning Through Relationship: In-Context Development for Teachers of Indigenous Students

Description & Consent Form for interview conversations (participants involved in learning groups within the study)

Dear Potential Participant,

I am a PhD candidate at Lakehead University. The goal of my research is to learn more about how non-Indigenous teachers can support Indigenous students in public schools. As described below, I have noticed that one way non-Indigenous teachers become more aware and effective is by learning through relationships with Indigenous teachers, families, Elders, and other community members around them. In this research, I am planning to speak with both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people involved in that type of relationship. I am hoping to hear about how they experience that relationship and how they believe the non-Indigenous teachers' work with Indigenous students has been impacted.

I invite you to take part in one or more interview conversations where you will have the opportunity to discuss your story as someone who has been involved in teacher development in Indigenous education. If you choose to participate in the interview conversation(s), you will receive follow-up invitations to help shape the study through further conversations and through providing your input on my work. All of these future opportunities will be optional. In other words, your participation could be just one interview conversation, or it could involve lots of further interaction and discussion, depending on your preference. Participation is voluntary. You may refuse to participate in any part of the study and you may withdraw from the study at any time.

Description of the project: The research I am conducting is supported by an Ontario Graduate Scholarship and supervised by Dr. Paul Berger. The research is about the development of non-Indigenous educators who teach Indigenous students. From my reading and personal experience, I have become aware that many non-Indigenous teachers learn a lot through relating to Indigenous colleagues and community members, and that this makes them better teachers for the Indigenous students in their schools. I would like to hear about the experiences of these Indigenous educators and community members as well as the non-Indigenous teachers with whom they interact. I am looking for people who have already been engaged in Indigenous-non-Indigenous learning relationships that they feel have been productive and meaningful. I am inviting you to participate in an interview conversation where you share your stories about this.

In another part of this research, I will work with different pairs of people who are just beginning this type of relationship. In the end, this research will be a collection and interpretation of stories shared by non-Indigenous teachers and Indigenous educators and community members. Throughout the design of this study, I have asked for the advice and guidance of Indigenous people in my professional and personal circles including an Elder, educators, parents, and academics.

Interview conversations: Interviews conversations can be 1-on-1 or can be between the researcher and the two or more people who have been working and learning together. They can be as short or as long as you, the participant, decides. I estimate that interview conversations will last for an hour on average. You can choose whether to have just one conversation or to have more than one in order to share your stories and experiences. I will ask you in general about how you have experienced the learning relationship as a non-Indigenous educator or as an Indigenous educator or community member, and will also ask you how the relationship began, how it was sustained, and how you think it affected the teaching practices of the non-Indigenous educator involved. You can choose where to take the conversation from there. I will provide some optional prompts if you would like to use them. Participation is voluntary and you are under no obligation to engage in an interview conversation. If you choose to engage in an interview conversation you may refuse to answer any question, and you may stop at any time without penalty. If you agree, I will audio-record the interviews.

Confidentiality & Data Storage: Confidentiality between participants will not be maintained in group sessions. People who are in your group session will know who you are. This group will have access to early versions of your story for review. Early anonymous summaries of your story will also be available to the participants in this study who agree to help me with “co-theorizing” (interpreting the stories). Pseudonyms or general statements will be used when I present your views to others. Since the number of participants is fairly small (20-24) and since we will be describing specific school and interpersonal dynamics, it may be possible for people who know your school and community contexts to identify you. I will, however, do my best to limit identifying information being linked to your views and will invite you to review the PhD research before it is published to make sure you are satisfied. This can be done via email or by mail, based on your preference. All interview data will be password-protected during the study, accessed by only Martha Moon and Dr. Paul Berger, and then safely stored at Lakehead University in Dr. Berger’s office for a period of five years.

Risks & Benefits: Although you will be anonymous, there is a risk that someone could figure out who you are based on contextual information like your approximate age, gender, and city. This is a risk to your privacy. In terms of benefits, you will receive a small token of my thanks (such as tobacco, loose leaf tea, a book, a meal) for participating in the interview conversation and will have the opportunity to interact with others who are interested in teacher development in Indigenous education.

Harm: You may feel discomfort when discussing the subject matter. If someone guesses your identity, this could cause harm to your reputation if you share sensitive information. I will share the draft dissertation with you, with any quotes I’ve used from our conversations highlighted, so that you can be certain that you are comfortable with it before the dissertation is completed.

Research Results: Research results will be shared in various forms that will include a PhD dissertation at Lakehead University, and may include academic and non-academic journals and conferences, reports to school boards and other organizations, and through newspapers, online networks, and teacher magazines.

You will be invited to look over the transcripts, key findings, and PhD dissertation before it is submitted so that you have the opportunity to ensure that your views are represented accurately. Other reports, presentations, and articles will be summaries of the dissertation in various forms, so I will not invite you to review each of these.

Researcher Information: The research is being conducted by:

Martha Moon PhD Candidate, Faculty of Education
Lakehead University , 955 Oliver Road, Thunder Bay, Ontario, P7B 5E1
email: memoon@lakeheadu.ca tel: 807-343-8701

Under the supervision of

Paul Berger Associate Professor, Faculty of Education
Lakehead University , 955 Oliver Road, Thunder Bay, Ontario, P7B 5E1
email: paul.berger@lakeheadu.ca tel: 807-343-8708 fax: 807-344-6807

This research study has been approved by the Lakehead University Research Ethics Board. If you have any questions related to the ethics of the research and would like to speak to someone outside of the research team please contact Sue Wright at the Research Ethics Board at [807-343-8283](tel:807-343-8283) or research@lakeheadu.ca.

This research study has been approved by [XXX – specific school board].
tel: [XXX] – [XXX Name, school board role]

Sincerely,

Martha Moon

I, _____, have read and understood the information letter for this research study. I agree to participate. I understand the potential risks and benefits of the study. I understand that I am a volunteer and can withdraw from the study at any time and choose not to answer any question. I understand that the data I provided will be securely stored at Lakehead University for five years.

I consent to the interview being audio-recorded

Yes No

Please indicate how you would like me to refer to you public presentations and published research:

Here is my preferred pseudonym: _____

Please assign me a pseudonym.

How should I contact you to send you the report before it is published?

phone: _____ fax: _____

email: _____

mail: _____

May I contact you before I am finished the study to offer you opportunities to co-theorize (discuss and interpret a set of stories as a group) and to critique the research as it develops?

yes no

Signature of the participant

Date



Faculty of Education

(807) 343-8708
paul.berger@lakeheadu.ca
memoon@lakeheadu.ca

[XXX date]

Learning Through Relationship: In-Context Development for Teachers of Indigenous Students

Description & Consent Form for informal and interview conversations, participation, and observation

Dear Potential Participant,

I am a PhD candidate at Lakehead University. The goal of my research is to learn more about how non-Indigenous teachers can support Indigenous students in public schools. As described below, I have noticed that one way non-Indigenous teachers become more aware and effective is by learning through relationships with Indigenous teachers, families, Elders, and other community members around them. In this research, I am planning to speak with both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people involved in that type of relationship. I am hoping to hear about how they experience that relationship and how they believe the non-Indigenous teachers' work with Indigenous students has been impacted.

I invite you to take part in research on Indigenous education where you will be working alongside a learning partner for three months. In this research, one partner will be a non-Indigenous educator and the other will be an Indigenous educator or community member. Together, the two will focus on developing the non-Indigenous educator's teaching practices for the benefit of Indigenous students. As a researcher, I will help set up the learning partnership and I will be involved about once a week through informal conversations with you, participating in your planning and teaching if you would like me to do that, and observing you and your partner working together. Throughout this process I will be collecting data. Participation is voluntary. You may refuse to participate in any part of the study and you may withdraw from the study at any time.

Description of the project: The research I am conducting is supported by an Ontario Graduate Scholarship and supervised by Dr. Paul Berger. The research is about the development of non-Indigenous educators who teach Indigenous students. From my reading and personal experience, I have become aware that many non-Indigenous teachers learn a lot through relating to Indigenous colleagues and community members, and that this makes them better teachers for the Indigenous students in their schools. In this part of the study, I am inviting people to begin new Indigenous-non-Indigenous learning relationships. In another part of this research, I will be speaking with Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators and community members who have already experienced this type of learning. In the end, this research will be a collection and interpretation of stories shared by non-Indigenous teachers and Indigenous educators and

community members. Throughout the design of this study, I have asked for the advice and guidance of Indigenous people in my professional and personal circles including an Elder, educators, parents, and academics.

Relational learning process: The focus and form of each learning relationship will be unique. As the researcher, I will offer to help you as you decide where you would like to focus your time and energy and how you would like to structure your interactions. Some people may choose to spend the majority of their time together working directly with students. Others may decide to discuss questions, issues, and opportunities together outside of teaching time. In some cases, this will change over time or a blend of in-class and out-of-class time might be chosen. Some partners may focus on areas like teacher-family relationships, on a particular skill or knowledge base like treaties, local art forms, traditional building structures, history, or on traditions and protocols like respectfully incorporating local stories into the classroom, working effectively with Elders and community members, land-based learning, or holistic education. While these decisions will be up to you, I can provide guidance and facilitation if needed. Otherwise, I will check in approximately once per week with each partner or with the two of you together. This could include sitting in on discussions that you have together, being there as you work in the classroom, or having informal conversations. If I am invited, I may come more often.

Interview conversations: At the beginning and end of the three month period, I will ask each participant (either one-on-one or as a pair, based on your preference) about their expectations and experiences in Indigenous-non-Indigenous relational learning. These interview conversations can be as short or as long as you, the participants, decide. I estimate that interview conversations will last for an hour on average. You can choose whether to have just one conversation at the beginning and end, or to have more, in order to share your stories and experiences. I will ask about what happened as you worked together, how you felt about it, and how you think your time together affected the teaching practices of the non-Indigenous educator involved. You can direct the conversation, and I will provide optional prompts in case you would like to use them. Participation is voluntary and you are under no obligation to engage in an interview conversation. If you choose to engage in an interview conversation you may refuse to answer any question, and you may stop at any time without penalty. If you agree, I will audio-record the interviews.

Confidentiality & Data Storage: Your identity will be known to your learning partner in this study and this person will have access to early versions of your story for review. Early anonymous summaries of your story will also be available to the participants in this study who agree to help me with “co-theorizing” (interpreting the stories). Pseudonyms or general statements will be used when I present your views to others. Since the number of participants is fairly small (20-24) and since we will be describing specific school and interpersonal dynamics, it may be possible for people who know your school and community contexts to identify you. I will, however, do my best to limit identifying information being linked to your views and will invite you to review the PhD dissertation before it is published to make sure you are satisfied. This can be done via email or by mail, based on your preference. All interview data will be password-protected during the study, accessed by only Martha Moon and Paul Berger, and then safely stored at Lakehead University in Dr Paul Berger’s office for a period of five years.

Risks & Benefits: Although you will be anonymous, there is a risk that someone could figure out who you are based on contextual information like your approximate age, gender, and city. This is a risk to your privacy. In terms of benefits, you will receive a small token of my thanks (such as tobacco, loose leaf tea, a book, a meal) for participating in the interview conversation and will have the benefit of working alongside an educator or community member in a new learning relationship that may enrich the school experience of Indigenous students.

Harm: You may feel discomfort when discussing the subject matter. If someone guesses your identity, this could cause harm to your reputation if you share sensitive information. I will share the draft dissertation with you, with any quotes I've used from our conversations highlighted, so that you can be certain that you are comfortable with it before the dissertation is completed.

Research Results: Research results will be shared in various forms that will include a PhD dissertation at Lakehead University, and may include academic and non-academic journals and conferences, reports to school boards and other organizations, and through newspapers, online networks, and teacher magazines.

You will be invited to look over the transcripts, key findings, and PhD dissertation before it is submitted so that you have the opportunity to ensure that your views are represented accurately. Other reports, presentations, and articles will be summaries of the dissertation in various forms, so I will not invite you to review each of these.

Researcher Information: The research is being conducted by:

Martha Moon PhD Candidate, Faculty of Education
Lakehead University , 955 Oliver Road, Thunder Bay, Ontario, P7B 5E1
email: memoon@lakeheadu.ca tel: 807-343-8701

Under the supervision of

Paul Berger Associate Professor, Faculty of Education
Lakehead University , 955 Oliver Road, Thunder Bay, Ontario, P7B 5E1
email: paul.berger@lakeheadu.ca tel: 807-343-8708 fax: 807-344-6807

This research study has been approved by the Lakehead University Research Ethics Board. If you have any questions related to the ethics of the research and would like to speak to someone outside of the research team please contact Sue Wright at the Research Ethics Board at 807-343-8283 or research@lakeheadu.ca.

This research study has been approved by [XXX – specific school board].
tel: [XXX] – [XXX Name, school board role]

Sincerely, Martha Moon

I, _____, have read and understood the information letter for this research study. I agree to participate. I understand the potential risks and benefits of the study. I understand that I am a volunteer and can withdraw from the study at any time and choose not to answer any question. I understand that the data I provided will be securely stored at Lakehead University for five years.

I consent to interview conversations being audio-recorded

Yes No

I consent to informal conversations and planning sessions being audio-recorded

Yes No

Please indicate how you would like me to refer to you in the published research:

Here is my preferred pseudonym: _____

Please assign me a pseudonym

How should I contact you to send you the report before it is published?

phone: _____ fax: _____

email: _____

mail: _____

May I contact you before I am finished the study to offer you opportunities to co-theorize (discuss and interpret a set of stories as a group) and to critique the research as it develops?

yes no

Signature of the participant

Date

Sincerely, Martha Moon

Appendix F: Snapshots

As described above, these snapshots are early versions of each story. I shared these with participants as the second step after showing them transcripts. I brought the snapshots to the co-theorizing session with participants and presented them at conferences as early findings.

Dan

Relationship, story, acceptance, time



In a context where non-Indigenous teachers and administrators are feeling pressure to learn quickly in Indigenous education, Dan describes his work in supporting non-Indigenous educators' learning over time. He speaks from experience at board and classroom levels.

“But you’ve got to be willing to go to those uncomfortable places and ask those questions. And a *huge* part of my work is helping teachers, administrators, first of all slow things down so they don’t trip later on. But also to think about the *right* questions to ask and what they *need* in order to be able to ask those questions. So instead of just coming in and talking about Reconciliation, I ask teachers to tell me a little bit more about their experiences in Indigenous communities. I ask teachers to share with me some of *their* insights. And I share a lot of my own stories. I share a lot about who I am and how I’ve arrived at this place. I talk about my family, and their experiences in Residential Schools. And I literally open myself up to them as a process of making the environment safe, so they can see I’m willing to put myself out there, they should be willing to put themselves out there as well. And all of a sudden, we have this new type of relationship where teachers feel safe asking questions that they don’t know how to articulate, or saying things that they were worried before might offend me. And for them to be able to have that space, creates a dialogue, it creates a relationship, it creates a process where learning becomes part of who we both are.”

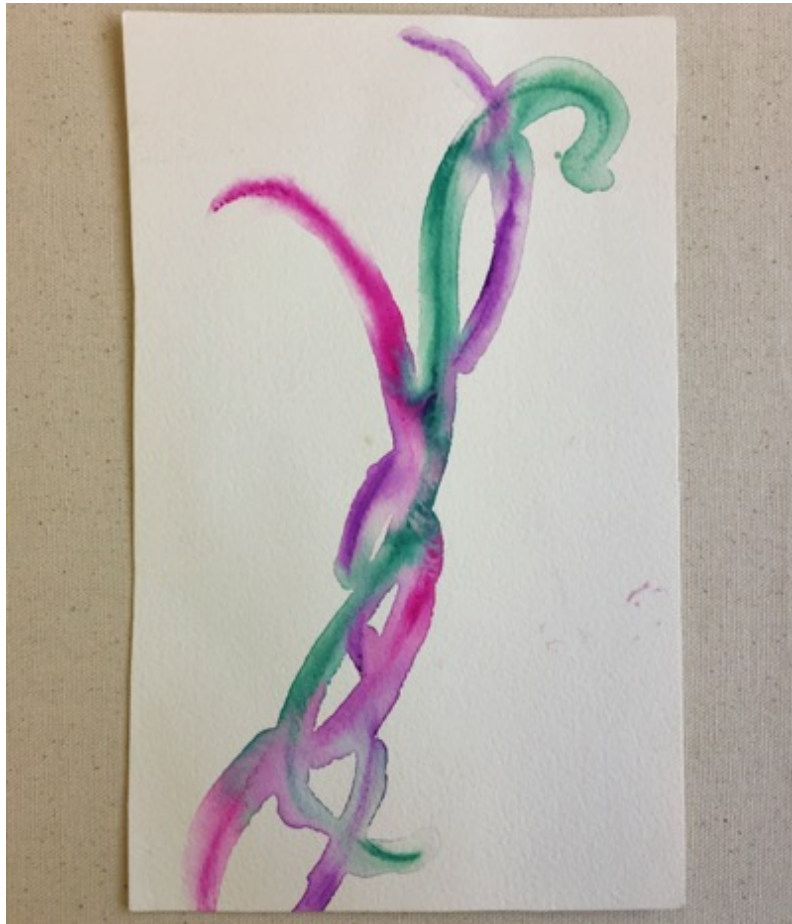
“Understanding the land for example, my experiences with this land are very different than theirs. And it’s different because I have stories and knowledge and family who’ve experienced this land in a very different way. So, when I ask teachers to try and imagine this neighbourhood we’re in right now without *anything*. And I share those stories All of a sudden that teacher’s

relationship with the place they're in changes. It shifts.... So, we share those stories, and we talk about those things, and then you begin to move into that truth side of Truth and Reconciliation. Talking about what really happened, how it happened, and that story... So once I've established that it's safe to not know, things begin to change and the relationship begins to grow.... And it's very exciting to be walking in that journey, and going together down this trail of growth, really."

"But I think our society, particularly our teachers are, again, scared, or hesitant, or not sure how to approach it, and they're worried that they're going to offend, they're worried they might say something. And knowing and learning and understanding can help break down some of those insecurities. Open up doors for other possibilities of a relationship with the child.... The child is feeling recognized, feeling supported, feeling cared for in a school, well that's going to translate to, 'I'm going home and I'm talking about school, talking about the teacher, talking about what I've done today. And I'm wanting to go back and get more of that.'"

Alise & Lydia & Renee

Building confidence and connections through experience



Alise, Renee, and Lydia are coming from three different roles and sets of experiences. They converged in a high school classroom where Renee, the classroom teacher, was seeking out support from Indigenous colleagues and specialists as she taught about local First Nation food

traditions. This was the beginning of sharing not only technical expertise, but stories and connections that the three believe benefit students and that they are open to building upon.

“I still feel a bit uncomfortable. Because I’m *obviously* not Indigenous.... So I don’t want to come across as misappropriating the culture or being disrespectful. And so that’s why I really rely on people like Lydia for guidance, and I’m just upfront and say, ‘Look. I don’t know how I’m supposed to proceed here. What do you suggest?’.... And I think that is probably the case with most non-Indigenous educators. That we don’t know how to proceed. We don’t know how – we want to be respectful, but we don’t know how to be.... So I’m really trying to make it clear that I don’t know and that I want to learn.... and I tell that to the kids, too.”

[Alise on how she learned growing up in her First Nation community]: “It’s all done by experience and observation. That’s how I see it now.... So we always done things in a family setting. And the relationship. We were always laughing and having fun and joking around.”

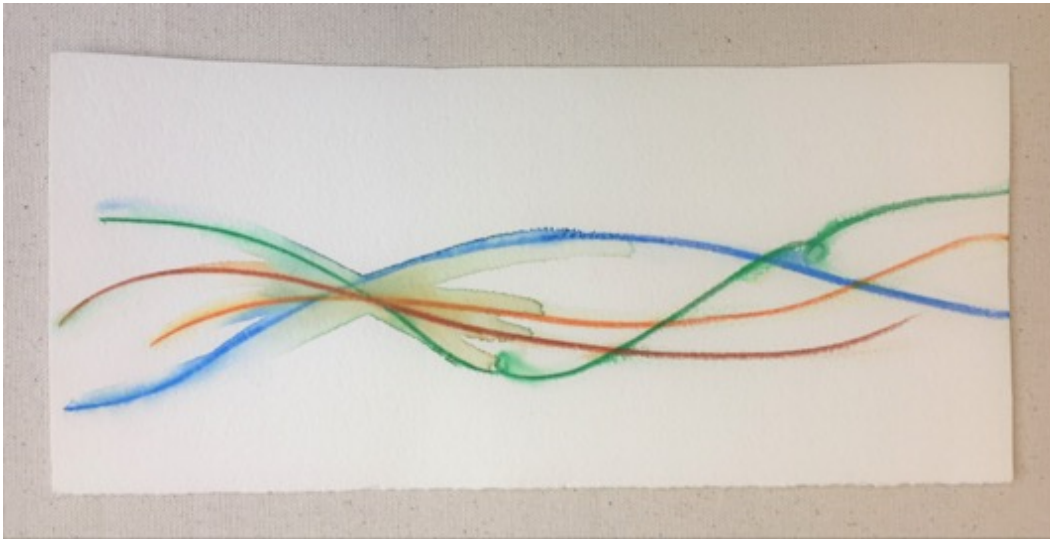
“It’s going back to if I can do it, anybody can do it, right? So – and I wasn’t sure if I *could* do it for awhile, but then I thought about it and I was like, “Yeah, I can do it.” So then I went in and demonstrated two classes, and I felt like a *teacher* after.... So, if I can do it, then I’m hoping to teach the kids I work with, teach my community members, teach my own children, that they can do it too.”

“There’s always this shift when teachers are exploring something that’s Indigenous. Because there is a fear attached to that. Because it’s something new, and it’s something – especially when you’re thinking about the climate in [this city] where there is a lot of misunderstanding in the general public, you don’t want to inadvertently incite something in your classroom.... I was coming in... and you were telling me that you had already brought in all this wild rice, and you were planning on bringing in all these other people, so I thought that was fantastic.... Just like jump right into the proverbial canoe and you’re on your way.... And even when you were learning, it’s the attentiveness and just the respect. And asking questions because there’s that—you were engaging with the content too, right? So that’s what I saw.”

“So, I had already done some foundational kind of community building in the class already, so that they could relate with each other a little bit more. And that’s something that I try to cultivate all semester long. So then I think that sort of sets them up to be a little more open when a guest comes,” “Yeah, that’s right.” “because they’re comfortable with themselves, and then maybe that helps them to be more welcoming when new people come in....” “Yeah, I have to agree.... Renee was one of the first teachers that had instant connection to feeling that welcomeness. And right from there I said, ‘Well, you know, it makes a difference.’ I mean if I’m feeling this as a new employee coming to a bigger population of employees, just imagine how the students feel.... but once you build, you connect with a new relationship, right, you feel more confidence in yourself, you feel more welcome, you feel trust, you feel. So that’s how she made me feel. And then I said, ‘Well, okay,’ it just gave me more confidence to teach a class, you know!”

“There are many ways that you can bring it into [subject area], but sometimes the curriculum is the challenge.” “Exactly. It’s very restrictive.”

Brittany & Michaela
Ongoing learning in support of students



Brittany and Michaela have interacted for multiple years since Brittany has been in Michaela's school to support Indigenous students and to guide teachers in integrating Indigenous content in curriculum. Brittany recently taught a set of lessons to Michaela's students and Michaela eagerly took it all in. As Michaela and Brittany reflect on their interactions, they often refer to specific students and their stories. Like in each class she visits, Brittany's lessons were responsive to students' life experiences. This shaped the form and content of the lessons for students, but also provided Michaela with the opportunity to learn how history impacts her students and their families.

[regarding teachers who actively reach out to Brittany for strategies and approaches]: They're very open-minded. It's one of my favourite schools to be at, because everybody is just like, 'Yeah, let's do this.' Anything I pitch, right?" "Yeah!" "Like, 'Let's do it.' Yeah there's been zero hesitation or resistance here, which is really great.... I could walk down the hall and have a conversation with every teacher."

"There's always that fear that when you talk about these things, that you might not teach the things appropriately, you might not say the right things. There might be questions that are asked of you that you don't know how to answer.... We kind of glossed over the whole Residential School [topic] because as a teacher, I was uncomfortable. I fully admit I did not know enough. And so, it's nice to be able to have somebody be able to come in, not just to have them sort of take over, but I was madly doing notes because if I'm approached with a question, I would like to be able to answer it. I would like to have some background knowledge. And I think the way in which you did it was not only—it was entertaining for the kids as well.... They were able to sort of see things from a different perspective.... Being able to sort of reach out and get some assistance with it teaches us a lot too. I mean I learned a lot that I didn't know." "It's stuff that we're not taught." "Exactly, because a lot of times we don't want to talk about it. It's uncomfortable." "It's uncomfortable and it's painful stuff to talk about it. How do you talk about it in an age appropriate way with kids."

“There were lots of things that you said [that] kind of resonated with me, even, in their simplicity. Like you took a really difficult topic that has so many facets, and you kind of talked...I don't know how to say that in words, but it was really just sort of like, ‘Oh, okay.’”
“Yeah, this is it. This is the way it is. This is just the way it is.” “...When you kind of laid it bare like that.... It gave me a new perspective.”

“Making sure that kids understand that there was a thriving society here. That was huge, right. Because it's not just like it miraculously appeared. It wasn't just something one day showed up, you know, Residential Schools. It was *systematic*, it was the government intention.... I think that that's the root of so much racism. It's based on frustration and the underlying tones are racism. It's like with us being frustrated with parents.... All of those are the undertones are racism, right? It's discriminating against poverty, because we care so much about the children, right? And it's discriminating. I go to that place too. But it's just that whole cycle of poverty.”

I really felt comfortable with you because... you had a sense of humour, you came in, and you know it wasn't just... ‘Do this! You should be doing this, you're not doing this.’” “Yeah. There were no judgments. And that's the thing, right? There's no judgements. And going into a classroom, and you walk out and think, ‘Well that was interesting.’ But I can't – it can't be deficit driven. It's all about, okay, where is the potential relationship here, or the growth.”

Greg & Bryn

Growing trust, laughter, collaboration, and friendship



Greg and Bryn have influenced each other in deepening ways over 5+ years of working together on projects at provincial and school board levels. Their interpersonal learning and mutual support has spilled over into how Greg teaches students and how he more confidently articulates his views to educators. Greg's openness with his personal stories, teachings, experiences, and perspectives has greatly influenced Bryn's worldview and her work guiding teachers and supporting students. Their relationship now continues as a friendship.

“Greg was sort of like a guide to me. I knew something about Greg made me feel like it was okay. He was accepting of who I was and I felt that it wasn't going to be too bad.”

“We went from there to being co-workers, and over time I feel like that relationship has molded, not just a coworker relationship, a friendship.... I feel like Bryn is a friend of mine that I can go to that I trust, if I need help. If I need advice. If I need to vent. Any of those things.... Bryn was very influential on my writing, coming up with ideas, how to express myself, keeping me on track on what I wanted to do, versus what I thought I had to do.”

“I *was* these kids growing up.” ... “When Greg talked to me about the kids, I *heard* the kids. And the work that he could then send to the [organization] was then really the voices of the kids. And that was extremely powerful.”

“So all these teachings and these things like that, these are all things that have been given to me and I [have] always been told that these are not your teachings to hold onto, these are your teachings to share. And—or else why have them? So that’s—all these things here, I just try to take the voices that have been given to me and keep them going... I’m not an expert by any means, but if I know something, if I feel something, I will share. I don’t even question.” “Yeah, and so I have directly benefited all the time from that.” “But it’s a two-way street. She’s the person I can go to when I need it the most.”

“Part of the relationship part is that I could tell that with Bryn—that that was important to me that I know that Bryn has kids’ best interests and always has. You can sense that, that those relationships with those kids mean the *world* to Bryn, and that the kid is supported and feels *loved*. If not by anybody, then at least by you, right?”

And even though it was done without people knowing explicitly what was happening, Greg was healing the room. It – for the people who were open to it – and *that* was powerful, to know that that could be done..... Our relationship is complicated because there’s the overt stuff that I can talk about... sometimes it’s a direct teaching that I can then take to the teachers, like the rock story. And sometimes it’s a gradual, or subtle, or unconscious way that I’ve learned to be, that I can then use indirectly with people.”

“Bryn has made me realize it’s okay to have a voice. And I do have a voice that I can use that voice. To help. People. Kids in particular.”

Hope & Chantal

Journey, invitation, love



Hope, an Indigenous educator, and Chantal, a non-Indigenous educator, have worked together for several years. As they have progressed in their career cycles, Hope has provided formal leadership, modelling, friendship, and support for Chantal, while Chantal's long term dedication to eager learning, embracing of students and families, and hard work are highly valued by Hope.

“I think in my opinion, this might be *exception*, because Chantal's *exceptional*. 100%. If you asked any school leader, “Who's one of the *best* teachers you've ever met, they would think of Chantal.... Her work ethic, her passion for kids and learning and excitement and joy for life transmit into the work. It's easy for her in whatever she does, to really embrace it and wholeheartedly approach it, and the learning experiences. We've been fortunate that we saw it in the classroom in her work with kids. Over time, we've seen her love and learn about the culture. She's built that relationship with not only students and parents and staff, but the community at large where she's accepted as someone who can do the things that she listed. That doesn't happen easily or frequently, I would say, in the Indigenous community, that trust being earned over time.”

“I honestly feel that we work better when we work together.... I do the same with staff. What are their strengths and then how can we make continuous improvement in what we do over time based on who we are as people, based on what our strengths are, based on what our love, our passions are?”

“[S/he] is a kind-hearted person who is very traditional in [her/his] beliefs and knowledge, but very modern and very engaging and supportive of people's learning curve too. So, it's helpful to find those key people to build relationships with too, to help my capacity.” [both Chantal and Hope speak about the importance of ongoing learning with Elders, community members, and experts in specific cultural areas].

“She reminds you about the holistic approach of the child. Thinking of the child as a whole, thinking of the family as a whole. Like just her modelling and her words of wisdom... she helps you see your 'job' in a new perspective, one that puts holistic wellbeing at the forefront for the 'work.' In other ways, she gives you opportunities to almost discomfort yourself in a way, to try something new and challenge yourself, which helps you grow. [Story about Hope asking Chantal to lead in a specific instance]. I was terrified. But she calms you down and supports you. She makes it seem like she doesn't even have a hesitation about it. She's like, 'You'll do great.' So [I] feel like, 'I need to do great, because I love her, trust her words, and have more faith in myself because of her support.’”

“I'm attracted to working with genuine people who *really* remember the purpose of why we're here, and it's for the kids and their learning. Not always just academic learning, although that's very important, but the holistic parts of self.”

“[Colleague] and Chantal *don't* judge. They instinctively know what to do to support our families, and our families then trust them, right?”

“While Chantal and I are really connected in the work, I think that we would still be friends, and have that same fun in life outside of work too.... just enjoy the ride, and enjoy it together.”

“It’s that frame of mind, personality, perseverance, dedication, optimism, right? Even when it’s hard, we still *love* it! We love the work, the culture, the kids, the learning, the families, the community. Love it all. Chantal loves it like she was born into it. What are some of the names they call you?” “I’m not sharing those. Okay, ‘Adopted cousin.’” “But endearing. In an endearing way, right? Not insulting. When she’s singing—oh she’s got an amazing singing voice. For the drumming and singing. And dancing.” [Story example]. “I’m excited to do this work, but I want to do it right. So I’m trying to take my time. Before—like even with the drumming,” “As much as you can.” Even with drumming, we’re trying to honour the different perspectives here. Like some women touch the drum, some don’t. So, we’re trying to get the different family beliefs and values that honour their cultural identities before we move forward in some of our programming. So, it feels like we’re moving slower, but it’s with good intentions to make sure our families’ voices are significant.”

Max & Kate

Always open



Max and Kate have been working in the same school for about five years. They emphasize openness: Max’s door is always open to guide Kate or be a listening ear, and Kate is open to learning new perspectives and collaborating.

“Well I know for myself, I’ve always been a little nervous about teaching Indigenous issues because I’m non-Indigenous. So, Max has provided that—helped me get that confidence about kind of tackling some of this stuff because he’s always approachable, his door’s always open for me to talk to him about any of those things.”

“And I think Kate is just—she’s an extremely kind, kind person. One of the kindest teachers I’ve come across in my career in the schools.... It is really refreshing to have people seeking out this sort of information—looking to do things properly. Kate was very careful of wanting to do it properly. And you know I think that made it very easy for me to open up and to work with her. And to just connect with her on that professional level. You know of course there’s a lot of uncertainties, there’s not a lot of education out there right now; obviously it’s coming, I mean with the study we’re doing right now, there’s a lot more of it happening, which is fantastic. And doing it properly. So, I really got that sense off Kate. It was just—I sensed the genuineness from her, and I think that was really important.”

“Another thing is I think Kate does a great job as a teacher because it’s not just, ‘Okay, what’s coming from the books you’ve read and what can I put on the blackboard and teach here?’ A lot of our working together involves excursions. Going out into the community and going to physical locations and learning from the various teachers of the area, you know traditional, whether it be [specific First Nation group], [specific First Nation group], teachers who we’ve offered tobacco to, done things properly, and were able to attain these teachings.”

“So, I think what keeps our relationship going, Max’s door is always open. Like it really and truly is. Like I can come and talk to him about [Indigenous perspectives]. But I’ve also, like I was mentioning earlier, my [family member] went through [health concerns].... Max’s door was always open if I needed to talk about anything, or he’d always ask me, like, ‘How are things going?’.... He was a really good, just a wonderful friend, actually. Just to be there to help me through....” “In that relationship with Kate and just how it developed, especially through the [health concerns] that we both faced within our families, and I do the same thing with my students, I was a student who went to school here. And I really see, that’s me. I’ve been through that. So it was kind of the same thing with Kate when, you know, hopefully this could alleviate some of what you’re thinking, and what you’re going through.”

“And then of course our Indigenous way of learning is kind of through experience.... Being able to experience a lot of this stuff and be on the journey with students and teachers alike is a cool, cool thing. And there are some great support people here.... We all kind of come together as a team and trust each other and work well with each other” “Yeah we are really, really lucky....” “And [person] and I will be the first to tell you as well, we’re still learning ourselves and trying to do things properly, and there’s – it’s just a never-ending path of learning, right? I mean that is life, right.”

“I think a greater understanding for what may possibly be the experience of some of those kids in the classroom.... I have to make sure those kids feel welcome, I need to make sure that they are looked after and that they feel comfortable, and that they have avenues to be successful in my

class...” “And I think Kate’s empathy on the matter is awesome and is what I’d hope for most teachers to have.”

Olivia

“It’s just all learning all the time”



For close to a decade, Olivia has been learning about Indigenous education from many people across several contexts. These include a multi-year project at the board of education and provincial levels, relationships and initiatives within her own school building, and ongoing connections with friends and colleagues she has met along the way. She is eager to apply and extend this learning in a way that honours the specific students and families with whom she interacts as a teacher each year.

“When I first moved to [this city] in [year]... I felt like it was the first time I ever had any interactions with any Indigenous people. Coming in like *super* blind to any history, just any teachings, or just relationships, or any conflict—just not knowing.... But I’ve been at [this school, with many Indigenous students], this will be my [close to tenth] year here... So *big* learning curve in that.”

“To smell a smudge around here is not unusual, right?”

“Yeah it was more of a group. And because there were some of us who were Indigenous and some of us who were non-Indigenous and learning from each other, right? It’s-” “What kind of things would you learn from each other?” “I think for me it was different relationships with—like for example, one of my friends would be very focused on the land relationship, right? And others with some of the more sacred teachings, or the Seven Grandfathers, like everybody kind of had different bits to share depending on what their- like [person]’s from [place], and [example of family experience, form of learning]. It’s just neat to pull from different people’s

understanding. And not—maybe not everybody being 100% on the same page, right? Because [this province] is pretty big, right?... Like [example of a colleague’s spiritual beliefs]. So I find that really an interesting.... So, different people, one about the land, one about religion, just different relationships, I think that’s an interesting way to learn. [Colleague] talked lots about Residential Schools... because [s/he] was heavily involved in the Truth and Reconciliation.... It’s just an ongoing learning. Like I can’t pinpoint one person. I *can’t* do that.

“And I think that’s sometimes hard to know- you want to do this lesson, and who do I call so that I *can* do this lesson? I know that that’s what people are saying. Right? Because you want to do it right.”

“Because [person] is also a friend, because [s/he] worked here... I can just send [her/him] a text and say, ‘What should I do?’ or ‘Who do you recommend?’ or ‘Do you want to come in?’ or anything like that. Or, ‘What resource should I use?’ and [s/he]’ll get right back to me. Which is helpful.”

“But then sometimes I feel like I’m not doing enough, and then it falls off and I’m too busy thinking about [standardized testing] to think about any Indigenous teaching and—but then sometimes it just happens, too.... But just being open to honouring the culture in *whatever* we’re doing.”

River & Agnes

“The space to be awesome”



River and Agnes’s relationship has grown over many years of working alongside one another. At first, Agnes was a teacher at River’s school with the intent of learning from River’s leadership. Now they both hold leadership roles within schools and other forums. They often work as a team providing learning opportunities to others, and constantly challenge and sharpen each other’s thinking and practice.

“I’m going to challenge you, other teachers are going to challenge you, you’re going to challenge us back. That’s how we work’.... So, we had really built this space of challenging each other, supporting each other, questioning each other, really interrogating student work. And each others’ thinking. But it made us all much stronger.... So, when Agnes earlier was talking about just having that space for learning, and it’s the same space for students as it is for teachers. And if you don’t have that collaboration, and you don’t have that safe space of challenging and interrogating and it’s okay to be wrong, like that was a big thing. It’s okay to be wrong because we learn from that.”

“You’ve got to move out there and grow and change.”

“So that was a pretty big conversation with them at the time, and it’s always a risk. I mean it is a calculated risk, of when is that right moment to have that conversation? But you know I’d backed it up with action. So, people knew I was there, they knew I was committed, they already knew what I was about and meeting students and supporting them, so it was kind of a... turning point.”

“I would say if you go to those Grandfather Teachings, humility has to be the place you lead from.”

“And if you give people the space to be awesome, typically they will be awesome.”

[context: learning with Elders]. “And I guess for me, part of this project was it wasn’t just First Nations kids that were involved in this. It was *all* the [specific gender] that were struggling with [specific academic area], regardless of their background. So, it created a different space *again* in the school of togetherness. And learning from each other. And actually, if you think of that Reconciliation piece now, like where we are now as a society, it was really about honouring the knowledge that was there and learning from that to benefit everybody that was there.”

“And recognizing that there’s an entire system of communication and community and reciprocal relationships and *business* as we, you want to term it, that has nothing to do with the rules that I learned or the way in which I—in a Western context it would have been remiss for me not to state upfront what was needed, what our thoughts were, and where our plan was.” “And that’s exactly what you did.” “And that’s what we do!” “And my brain’s going, ‘Oh my [goodness], she’s telling them what to do! Shut up!’ But I didn’t want to kick her under the table because I didn’t know her that well yet. Now I would kick her under the table.” [smiles]. “...Sometimes that’s the best learning space. It’s like immersion.... And you need to spend a moment in that time. Watching, listening, and learning. And deciding if there’s an entry point for you at all, or if your *only* entry point is to sit and be an observer.” “And sometimes it is.” “Sometimes that’s all it is.” “And it’s okay.”

“But because we’ve been able to dialogue about it and talk about our thinking through that, and what I thought about it at the time and her thinking and how it’s helped her grow and learn as an educator and a person, it’s come to one of those significant moments for me and learning through that.”

Simone & Sky
Passion, practice, and change



For more than five years, Simone and Sky have been developing a working relationship that has evolved into a friendship with deepening levels of learning and an increasing scope of influence within a school. Sky has moved from teacher to administrator and Simone has supported throughout as an Indigenous educator at the board level. They speak about their own working relationship and their ideas for major change within school boards, schools, and classrooms; change that they believe begins within educators themselves.

“I had an understanding of how important it was... to talk about culture, make kids feel empowered.... And Simone supported me with that, and I started to learn a lot from her.... I’m constantly making mistakes and trying to understand even that diversity *within* the community, and even how families work.... ‘Cuz you’re in your Whiteness and your privilege, you’re not conscious, you mess up all the time, right? You’re insensitive. I lean on her a lot to help me work through some of those things.... and together we planned a spring concert that was hip-hop dancing, but they learned about Residential Schools, they learned about identity. The whole thing was an amazing production that we put on. And we worked really closely together to do that, and we also consulted with [Elder]. So, we’ve just done amazing work, and I want to continue that.”

“I would not and *will* not continue on *anything* without her guidance, ‘cuz I’d never ever want to think I know what I’m doing.... The more I learn, the more I realize I really don’t know.”

“One thing I have to say [our school board]... has done well is allowing some opportunity for Indigenous and non-Indigenous teachers to work together... You come to *learn* about each other *personally*, which that relationship piece is key, and it’s key to Indigenous people. Not only in building relationship, but in being able to work together. Because then there’s a trust.

Especially when you're dealing with heavy things.... So, there's a risk, right, in opening yourself up to be open and honest."

"You work with the people who are *willing*, and you try and you start here, and you try and expand it and grow it out."

"It's that truly *collaborative*, working together, alongside. Not above.... She valued and honoured, that it wasn't that I didn't have the same position as her, but she valued that I had knowledge to share, and a willingness to learn from that knowledge. But then to take that knowledge, and put it into practice within the school.... But if you're not willing to share it, what use is that knowledge?"

"They need to be able to build the relationships. 'Cuz that's where it starts. When you hear someone's *story*, how can you not be affected?"

[Within larger explanation about "blood" and "belonging"]: "Who have that spirit. And intent, right? They are Indigenous in spirit. Not by blood, but by spirit. That sense of belonging.... the places they situate themselves, and the teachings that are true to who they are."

"'Cuz it's not just a one-shot deal and you're done. It's that continual journey.... but how do we move forward in the journey when we don't have knowledgeable people to support? Non-Indigenous people open and willing to learn?.... And the *time*.... [and] institutional support."

Tee-chaw

A journey in education



Tee-chaw shared a whole series of stories. Stories about her own learning as a child, her practices as a teacher, how she has supported teacher candidates and teacher educators over the

years; both Native¹⁵ and non-Native. These stories give practical guidance, philosophies to consider, and background information on Indigenous education in her city.

“When you look at people in the community... Who are your first storytellers that you run into? It’s your Elders and your grandparents, who come to visit your Mom and Dad. Then your mother tells you stories if she’s doing your hair at night, as we used to have long braids and she’d have to untangle them, and do the storytelling in the meantime. That’s how we learned... storytelling. We remembered them. So, I recall storytelling is one way of learning. While they were talking you were allowed to listen. We were treated like ‘little adults.’ We weren’t told, ‘Don’t listen, this is not for your little ears.’ We were never told that. We can learn by listening. We did. We’d sit there in a quiet corner, and nobody would even know we’re sitting there, listening.... Your friends of course told stories, and *then* school started. By the time you began school, you’re full of stories. You had a lot of knowledge already.”

“I’ve had experience with both teaching non-Natives and Natives, and teaching with all kinds of teachers. There weren’t any Native teachers. So, I had to work with them. Sometimes some of them had questions but most of the time they didn’t. The teachers seemed to have an idea that they know what’s needed and they don’t need to be told.... They don’t need to be reminded how to teach. Like in all professions, most people feel they know how to do their job. I said ‘Okay, fine, no problem.’”

“I think of myself Tee-chaw ‘the teacher’ and not Tee-chaw ‘the Native teacher.’ Because you can get labelled that, and that’s all they expect from you.... You’re the Native teacher. Just *teacher*. Tee-chaw. No matter what colour the child, or what nationality, I look to them for their needs as a teacher. To meet their needs, to make their education experience pleasant.”

“We worked with the teachers and to change their ways of thinking. We *met* with the students to tell them storytelling about how Natives live today, bringing artifacts, showing them the things that Native people do today. We worked with the administrators, because they worked with the teachers and with the students. So, we did free lectures and workshops for the teachers. Once a year on a PD day.... We got a little spot on their agenda to do our ‘Native thing.’ They need to be told, is what we found out. They need to be told, and shown, how to meet the needs of our children. So, upon myself I took it to bring a resource box of goodies, and storytelling. I started at a public school, grade two.... I worked with associate teachers and principals knew me. I said, ‘I’d like to come in and do some storytelling for your students.’ They said, ‘Sure.’ So, I did several schools and each grade level.”

¹⁵ The term “Native” is preferred by Tee-chaw.

Brittany & Christine
Fueling the growth



When teachers in her school board were offered the opportunity to have Brittany in their classes to present over several lessons, Christine was one of the first to respond. She was already actively learning more about Indigenous-Canadian relations and had interacted with Brittany at the school, but this was the first time they were together in the classroom for extended time. Christine built on what Brittany shared with students to develop a longer-term project that allowed students to advocate with the government.

“It’s a topic, in general, that is not *comfortable* for me.... I’m not from [this city], I’m from [city in another part of the province]. Okay, so my upbringing, and even in school, very different. I don’t even, to be honest with you, I don’t even remember having an Indigenous student in my school. I felt the education there wasn’t present. Just not having enough background and history and teaching, I feel there’s a gap in *my* learning. And having you [Brittany] come in is amazing for the students, but it’s also wonderful for me. It helps me feel more confident when teaching and talking about it.... I don’t want to misrepresent anything. And I *want* to understand it, and I *want* to appreciate it, and I *want* to represent it properly. So, I feel like having you there is comforting for me... I was taking notes while you were talking.” “Well it’s like professional development.” “It is. And I think more people need that.”

“Really, it’s the teacher engagement though that really determines the depth of the learning. I think that that’s super important, and if you don’t have classroom teacher interest or engagement,

if they don't value that learning, then the kids won't value it as much...." "If they feel the teacher's invested and it's meaningful to the teacher and it's being presented that way, you're right. You can grab them and pull them in." "And well your kids even went further with it."

"It was so good for me, and I think that's why I just jumped at it. Because I feel I need that comfort and that confidence. The only way I'm going to get it is if—it's one thing to read about things in a book, but it's another to have somebody who lives it. This is her life, and this is her history. I felt good about it, and I feel more confident going forward. I wish I had it sooner, to be honest with you.... 'cuz I've had to teach some Indigenous curriculum through Social Studies...and I mean I teach a little bit from the book, and I can't talk off of really a lot. Which is not—I like to be able to talk from experience, and talking to others, and now I can bring that in." "And telling stories. It's storytelling, right?... A lot of my teaching is telling stories."

"So, taking more time to debrief with teachers that wanted to debrief, right? And there was some teachers that were like 'That was great, thanks, see ya.' But then there was some teachers that really wanted to" "Question, dig deeper." "Yeah, wanted to dig a little deeper and just have more conversations and wanted me to come back in a different way. Some teachers even, you know like yourself, went and did something independently with kids and then brought me back as that wrap-up piece."

"Having these raw conversations, even having you come in, it's good. I need that. Because I want to know why, I want to know what I can do. So that—I don't want to partake in any sort of racist views or fall into some sort of trap that other people so commonly—I hate to say it, but it's honest, it is very, it's there in this city. And I don't want anything to do with it. I want to be a part of the good side, the pro side, the- I want to be the act—" "The right side of history!"

"They've got this though. [Colleague] and Christine get that piece.... I never worry about kids in their class.... Because I know that their needs are looked after. Like they're going to have clothing, they're going to have—whatever, right?" "Food" "Yeah, food." "Just comfort and kindness, yeah." "And if you can't get it yourself, you will find a way to get it, right?" "Yeah, absolutely".... "You can't force a teacher to say, 'I'm going to have Brittany come into my classroom.'" "And how do you change that mindset?" "Yeah, so how do you change that mindset, and that's where leadership comes in. 'Cuz you can do that kind of PD at, you know, staff meetings, or you can have little snapshots.... But it's just getting that engagement from teachers." "Yeah, and that's again why it's so important to develop it young, because as people get older, it is hard to change mindsets. Right?"