E/RACED: ABORIGINAL YOUTH IDENTITIES AND SCHOOLING

by

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Abstract

This qualitative study investigates Aboriginal high school students' negotiation of identity and identifying with school and community in relation to other representations. Within the literature, cultural and racial discourses provide contrasting, essentialized theories for Aboriginal students' lack of schooling success. Each of these discourses has conceptual limitations. Alternative conceptualizations illuminate diverse representations, engage complex articulations of identity, culture, class, and race with racialized students' agency and negotiation of/engagement with/ and alienation from schooling as performative identity.

The conceptual framework incorporates Aboriginal theory and methods: community engagement; ethical principles of respect, reciprocity, relevance, and responsibility; decolonized public education through deconstruction and reconstruction; and, border theory, which places borders as central sites of inquiry. Borders, as contact zones, examine social relations as they are marked by power and structured through racialization.

The research process involved four months of data collection with eight Aboriginal youths and five teacher/administrators within a public high school. Methods included multiple data sources: student photographing, interviewing, group discussions, letter writing; and, teacher/administrator interviewing and discussions.

This study celebrates students' successes with schooling and describes setbacks that most had faced. The findings challenged the two prevailing discourses (cultural and racial) of Aboriginal students. These theories failed to conceptualize and explain the complexity of students' and teacher/administrators' discourses. Conclusions demonstrate the need to gain greater understanding and appreciation of the complexity of performative identity, as well as the multiple ways that the institution shapes schooling and is failing racialized youth.

CHAPTER 1: AN OVERVIEW

Introduction

"The classroom is where our future well-being, both economic and social, is being forged. It is where we will discover whether our model of diversity passes or fails." (E. Greenspon, (Ed.), *Globe and Mail*, p. A2, 14-04-07)

The editorial comment above puts a strong onus on schools for well-being and economic success within communities and amongst groups of peoples. This concept of diversity, in cities such as Thunder Bay, is played out as Aboriginal peoples negotiate social and institutional borders and often face discrimination and racism in their participation in city life (Haluza-Delay, 2002; McCaskill, Fitzmaurice, & Desmoulins, 2007). At the same time Census Canada reports a growing and youthful Aboriginal population (McCaskill et al., 2007). Two recent local studies looked at many aspects of Aboriginal peoples' relationships with the city but did not fully engage youth within public institutions such as high schools. Before the study began, as I talked with groups and individuals from urban Aboriginal communities within Thunder Bay, the topics that generated the most discussion and controversy were discussions of culture and identity, schools as sites of racism, and the need for gleaning urban Aboriginal youths' views. In 2006 local youth workers reported education to be the largest challenge facing Aboriginal youth in Thunder Bay (McCaskill et al.). This challenge is historical: scholars' and political discourses of Aboriginal education have moved from the failed assimilation efforts of residential schooling to the current context where the majority of Aboriginal students attend public schooling. This challenge is also current: schools as institutions and their classroom practices impact upon knowledge and culture and negotiation of identities, and they are sites of racialization for Aboriginal students

(Battiste, 1998; Dei, 1996; James, 2003; Restoule, 2004; St. Denis, 2002). Because of the historical and ongoing challenges identified by education scholars, they advocate alternative theorizing on the relationships between identity, culture, and race.

Both cultural and racial discourses in education use the concept of race. Because race as a biological concept has been discredited, scholars use racism and racialization "to show the cultural or political processes or situations where race is involved as an explanation" (Murji & Solomos, 2005, p. 3). I use racialization to talk about processes that use race as an explanation, whether through culture as naturalized differences or through racism. Racialization is a concept used to refer to "those instances where social relations between people have been structured by the signification of human biological characteristics in such a way as to define and construct differentiated social collectivities" (Miles, 1989, p. 75). The contexts of racialization-- how it operates and is constructed in this study-- are the city and the school, and the social relations that occur between urban Aboriginal peoples and others (typically White) within the city and the school. Racialization is a concept which precedes racism, while maintaining a focus on difference as a superior/inferior binary. Privileging race through racialization opens up multiple subjectivities within the discourses on urban Aboriginal peoples and public schooling. In this sense I am using subjectivities to mean the personal views and beliefs of individuals about identity as well as the views and beliefs on identity that have emerged through the literature and research and within schools.

These discourses and discussions led to my research which examined how cultural and racial theories and practices of education (i.e. discourses) shape thinking about Aboriginal youth and schools. My two research questions were: 1) how do Aboriginal youths negotiate their identities within the school, within the discourses, and within the complexities

of categories such as race, class, and gender; and, 2) how do they identify with, engage

and/or disengage with schooling? Through the research I sought to illuminate how youth

seek and form their own identifications as they are embedded within representations and

discourses at the same time that these youth create identifications contradicting or outside of

the existing discourses. Youths' identities are expressed, repressed, negated, adopted,

contested, and voiced through self and their relationships with family and community as well

as schooling and school personnel. For individuals, these constructions of identity are

"shaped by society as it is constructed in relationship with others based on differences of

race, class, and gender" (Ward & Bouvier, 2001, p. 6). Culture is also germane to identities,

as illustrated in the predominant discourses on Aboriginal students and schooling.

Discourses

This section highlights literature from three relevant areas of literature on Aboriginal

peoples in urban centres; the concept of identity through definitional versus contextual

lenses; and, public schooling and race discourses from cultural and racial lenses, as well as

the emerging lens of identity, culture, and race as interactive.

Aboriginal Peoples in Urban Centres

This study uses a post-contact perspective. Although this perspective belies the reality

that Aboriginal peoples lived across the land pre-contact, this study examines the contact

spaces of cities and institutions. Aboriginal peoples in Canada began moving to cities at the

end of World War II (Newhouse & Peters, 2003). Scholars framed Aboriginal peoples who

moved to cities through assumptions of assimilation into the urban centre. Views of loss of

identity and assimilation of Aboriginal peoples are prevalent in the theorizing and the

literature (Newhouse & Peters). Loss or lack of culture is a persistent motif of Aboriginal

peoples in cities. Newhouse and Peters note, "for decades, public discourses have defined Aboriginal and urban Aboriginal discourses as incompatible. Migration to the city was interpreted as a decision to leave rural communities and cultures and to assimilate into mainstream society" (p. 7). This theme is developed further in Chapter 2.

The discourses on Aboriginal peoples and cities have social, cultural, and political implications for individuals, families, and for relationships in urban centres. The most comprehensive recent research into the contexts of Aboriginal peoples' lives, the five-volume Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) report published in 1996, devoted a chapter of one volume to researching Aboriginal peoples in cities. This seminal study precipitated Aboriginal scholars' renewed interest in identity in urban settings in Canada. Similar interest in identity studies in urban centres also appears in the American literature. Alternative theoretical approaches from Indigenous scholars' perspective have offered scholars new lenses to look at identity with Aboriginal peoples in cities.

Identity

The literature on Aboriginal culture and identity is viewed through two distinct lenses, one which defines Aboriginal peoples through pre-determined criteria and the other which uses a contextual approach—self-defined and related to the city and its institutions.

Studies by Berry (1999) and Liebler (2004) typify a definitional approach to identity research. Berry used Absolon and Winchester's (1994) data findings (discussed later in this section) to explore pre-defined identity characteristics and then rank the Aboriginality of the respondents. Leibler's two year study examined mixed-race Aboriginal respondents' identity and identification. She used statistical Census data. Neither scholar researched with Aboriginal peoples in their determinations of identity. These scholars' approaches to identity

research use pre-existing research with pre-defined criteria to determine one's identity, and do not consider how one identifies oneself. Definitional approaches typically evolve from pre-existing, legislative definitions. In Canada legislative definitions for Aboriginal peoples stem from the Indian Act and its iterations (Lawrence, 2003). These legislative and other pre-determined criteria tend to use racial and legal representations of Aboriginal peoples to determine membership and status to apply representations of identity.

Voyageur and Calliou (2000/2001) critique homogenous, legal definitions of Aboriginal peoples noting that it "…do(es) little to bring greater understanding of the heterogeneity of the Indigenous peoples of Canada" (p. 113; see also Henderson, 2000). Other scholars use a self-defined, situational, and contextualized approach; identity as the intersection of race, identity, identifying, representation, or as constructs that interact with each other (Absolon & Winchester, 1994; Lawrence, 2003; Restoule, 2000; Weaver, 2001). Rather than conceptualizing identity as externally defined, pre-determined, and fixed in time, these scholars see the constructs of identity and identifying through diverse contextual ways that are self-defined by respondents.

The most pertinent of the Royal Commission of Aboriginal Peoples reports to this study is Abosolon and Winchester's (1994) research circles on Aboriginal peoples' identities in urban centres across Canada. Absolon and Winchester challenged the notion of identity as pre-determined, disturbed more simple definitional approaches to identity by adding complexity, and grounded the relational aspect of identity in historical relations of assimilation:

> In general, modern Aboriginal identity—whether rural or urban—has at its core the profound impact of colonial assimilation strategies. In addition, it is evident from the research of the urban perspectives team that cultural identity is very personal and

extremely complex. In our discussions with urban people, the themes they identified when speaking about their cultural identity included family, spirituality, community, land, government, residential school, youth, language, women, elders, politics, self-determination, organizations, education, healing, colonization, and racism. All of these themes are interrelated to varying degrees, depending on the individual whose life they refer to: none can be examined in isolation, all are interdependent and integral to the make-up of urban cultural identity. (CD-ROM, no page)

Absolon and Winchester's (1994) urban Aboriginal participants identified 17 interdependent cultural identity themes.

Legal and contextual approaches to identity and its relationship to culture provide disparate approaches to researching identity and identifying. The first approach holds more in common with more essentialized constructs of the multicultural and anti-racism discourses that will be discussed in the next section as they relate to schooling; the second approach, self-defined, is a contextualized approach that does not rely on pre-determined representations.

Aboriginal Students and Schooling

Discourse, as a concept, attempts to combine language and practice, what people do and what they say (Hall, 1997). Discourses establish "the parameters for thought and action; the conceptual and classificatory models for understanding the world; and for the questions that may be posed and the possible answers that may be produced" (Yon, 1995, pp. 12-13). Discourses, then, provide lenses for interpreting and making sense of phenomena.

Scholars from two distinct academic discourses, the cultural difference and racism discourses, have focused their research efforts on Aboriginal youth in high schools and have influenced educational theory and policy–making. Much of the academic literature and school policy-making interprets achievement (often read as secondary school graduation) through a lens of racialized students' culture and identity (St. Denis, 2002; Ward & Bouvier,

2001). Scholars typically use conceptual models of race or culture when theorizing

Aboriginal students' achievement (i.e. high school graduation). The discourses can promote

particular conceptual models as taken-for-granted ways of knowing while promoting the

interests of the status quo. For example, cultural difference asserts that naturalized cultural

differences are the cause of academic failure. The cultural difference discourse factors and its

findings about academic failure do not address existing systemic level inequities or the

vesting of power in classrooms, schools, or educational systems. Racism discourses limit

understandings of how racism impacts individuals differently as well as how it works in

specific social locations in interaction with other forms of oppression (Graveline, 1998). It

often looks at either direct forms of racism or more systemic forms, and rarely within the

historical frame of racialization. The racism discourse requires an understanding of how

racism works within specific power relations and sites of racialization to better understand its

contextualization and interaction with other interlocking forms of oppression.

These concepts of identity, culture, and equity collide and elide with one another as

"the terrain of learning becomes inextricably linked to the shifting parameters of place,

identity, history, and power" (Giroux, 2005, p. 22), particularly for racialized students.

Limitations and Promising Approaches in the Literature

There are limitations within the literature on Aboriginal peoples in urban centres,

identity, and education. In the following section, I shall discuss the limitations relevant to my

study.

Earlier studies tended to perpetuate a strong sense that one cannot be Aboriginal

within an urban environment or within urban institutions. It links identity, culture, and race

(though un-named) from a naturalized cultural difference perspective, where difference is

subjectively constructed through the power to define and judge. This perspective also failed

to address identity within contemporary settings (e.g. non-land based), and identity within

varied contexts (e.g. Ablon, 1964; Dosman**,** 1972; Nagler, 1970).

Aboriginal identity viewed as pre-determined and essentialized (e.g. Berry, 1999;

Leibler, 2004) constrains complex understandings in several areas, such as: how identity and

culture are evolving yet contextualized historically; how identity is considered individually

and collectively outside of prescribed legal or definitional terms; and, how an individual's

race, culture, class, and gender interact with identity and identifying.

Promising perspectives that offer self-definitional ways of looking at culture, identity,

and identifying require connections to ancestral, historical, and tribal perspectives but not

from the unchanging and homogenous notion of culture (Henderson, 2000). Culture defined

as an either/or binary -- historical or contemporary, on or off-reserve, traditional or non-

traditional, tribal language speaker or English speaker--limits who can be considered

'Aboriginal,' rather than who identifies as Aboriginal and how s/he makes that identification.

In the educational literature, distinct cultural difference and racism theorizing and the

resulting research findings dominates the discourse on Aboriginal youth and education.

Theorizing non-binary approaches that consider a more holistic approach include the

following elements: 1) identity as a relational construct (Absolon & Winchester, 1994;

Graveline, 1988; James, 2003); 2) the interaction of culture and identity as self-defined

(Absolon & Winchester, 1994; Restoule, 2004; Voyageur & Calliou, 2000/2001); and, 3)

race and its relationship to racialization and other forms of oppression (Dei & Asgharzadeh,

2001; Graveline, 1998; Henry & Tator, 2006). This holistic approach provides promise,

while still maintaining a racial focus.

Some promising designs are described in the education literature through studies that examine youths' identities in public schooling from structural perspectives (e.g. representations, history of schooling for Aboriginal peoples, school culture, issues of race and schooling, etc.), contextualized subjectivities, and, the role of agency to address the interplay of representation, race, and identity (Grantham Campbell, 2005; St. Denis, 2002). Educational researchers, namely St. Denis (2002) and James (2003), consider culture, identity, and schooling for racialized youth and use dual lenses of the personal (subjectivities) and institutional (structural constraints). Dei (2000) and Giroux (2005) see this approach as fundamental to understanding youths' engagement with and alienation from schooling.

Finally, Indigenous scholars have re-defined the constructs of identity and culture and how these constructs intersect with race (Battiste, n/d; Grantham Campbell, 2005; Restoule, 2004; St. Denis, 2002). These scholars extend existing theories and thus offer an alternative discursive frame for identity, culture, and race. These theoretical considerations are discussed further in Chapter 2. These Indigenous scholars' discourses extend the parameters for how scholars and practitioners think about and act upon the questions of the intersections of identity, culture, and race for Aboriginal students within public schooling.

In Thunder Bay, McCaskill et al. (2007) used Statistics Canada data to show that Aboriginal students attend high school at rates comparable to their non-Aboriginal peers. The authors found that Aboriginal students in public schooling are not completing high school at the same rates as their cohorts (p. 29). In this study, exploring youths' discourses of relational identities with families, communities, and schools may provide insights into their engagement with and alienation from schooling. Because identity and identification are

relational, I also engaged teachers and administrators within the school. I discuss these study

participants' perspectives in Chapter four. Given the school boards' heightened interest in

Aboriginal students and their success in public schools, this research study provides a timely

study of how youths negotiate their identities within schooling and identify with schooling.

<div align="center">Contextualizing the Study</div>

This study is contextualized within Thunder Bay, a community in Northwestern

Ontario built upon the traditional territory of the Fort William First Nation. In a special run

of Census data commissioned for the *Urban Aboriginal Task Force: Thunder Bay Report*,

Statistics Canada (2006) confirmed that Aboriginal peoples continue to move into and live in

Thunder Bay (McCaskill et al., 2007). The Aboriginal population within Thunder Bay is

distinct in three socio-economic and demographic aspects: 1) it is the largest per capita for all

Ontario cities; 2) it is younger (with one in three persons under the age of 15) compared to an

older non-Aboriginal population; and, 3) it is expected to grow (p. 26). The demographic

distinctions above converge with income disparities between Aboriginal peoples and non-

Aboriginal peoples in Thunder Bay. Census data from 2001 report median employment

income for Aboriginal peoples as 67% of non-Aboriginal peoples' employment income (p.

32). Employment income disparities may relate to education outcomes. The 2006 Census

data on education showed that 64% of Aboriginal youth are attending high school (similar to

their non-Aboriginal peers), conversely, slightly over 1/3 (36.5%) of the Aboriginal

respondents over age 25 reported high school graduation (p. 76). Thus, Aboriginal students

attend high school at similar rates as their non-Aboriginal peers; Aboriginal students,

however, do not graduate high school at similar rates. The Census data complemented two

recent community-based studies (Haluza-Delay, 2002; McCaskill et al., 2007). These two

studies contextualized and informed the relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples in Thunder Bay. Importantly, respondents in both studies ranked public schools amongst the top three social locations where they experienced racism in Thunder Bay (Haluza-Delay, 2002; McCaskill et al., 2007). McCaskill et al. held sessions with youth about their relationships with schooling. The authors noted that "having less than a high school education was a topic of much discussion during the youth focus group" (p. 74). Participants spoke to an ongoing duality between engagement and alienation towards formal schooling (p. 75). This was confirmed by youth workers who "cited education and employment as the largest challenge facing their clients" (p. 78). These Census data and research findings have implications for the city with respect to racialization processes, racism, equity, class, and schooling.

In terms of schooling for Aboriginal youth, local school boards presently have no segregated or specialized schools for Aboriginal learners and few specialized programs within schools. The reasons are partly based in a Ministry-level ideology and school-level implementation of integration. One school board employs Native counsellors in two local high schools with high Aboriginal student populations. There is also one high school for Aboriginal students. Originally created for students from specific First Nations communities, the student body has become more diverse, including First Nations students from other communities. This school is funded through a tuition agreement between Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) and a group of First Nations within Nishinawbe Aski Nation's (NAN) Political Territorial Organization (PTO).

This study is contextualized within one of the local public high schools. During the study, the school introduced a pilot course in Ojibwe Language and Culture. A local

Aboriginal organization also ran a weekly drop-in, after-school based program for Aboriginal students at the school.

Situating Myself

For the first half of my life I lived as a White middle-class child, youth, and then woman. My father's grandparents came from the Ukraine to western Canada through an offer of land for farming. My mother's grandparents came from Alsace Lorraine in Europe, settled in America as Pennsylvania Dutch, and later immigrated to Canada. Both of my parents have genealogical books tracing their family roots back to the Old Country, their routes and roots to their current home in Ontario. I read these books growing up.

I have lived the second half of my life as the same White, ethnically-mixed, culturally-dominant, middle class woman. Then, in 1984, I gained Indian status through marriage. In the same year, under the same federal legislation, my sister-in-law had her Indian status revoked, also through marriage. These events marked the first time I had ever considered race and its relationship to culture and identity. The contradiction of representations accorded by Indian Act legislation—that seemingly crosses racial identity boundaries without consideration for identity, culture, or ethnicity—has, for over twenty years, provoked me to consider the historical, social and political contexts that made these situations possible. I maintain a peripheral belonging to the urban Aboriginal community through choice or border work (Haig Brown, 1992) —through my social location, as well as professionally through community-based research work, and through academic work. Professional and academic contexts that directly influenced my research study are outlined in Chapter 3.

Methodology

Methodological Assumptions

I borrow the term, methodology, from Saukko (2003) to mean the "wider package of both tools and philosophical and political commitments that come with a particular research approach" (p. 8). Her definition of methodology is congruent with Maori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith's (1999) decolonizing methodology as both the theory and analysis of how research proceeds as well as the tools used to gather data. Kovach (2005) concurs, stating that "theory is inextricable from methodology" (p. 28). These scholars' conceptualization of methodologies involve questioning traditional research approaches using critical frameworks to address social issues and relationships.

Methodology in my study combined theories and methods, as well as the research assumptions that make up the approach. Previous research approaches to Aboriginal education in the mainstream literature has produced two dominant discourses of cultural difference and, to a lesser degree racism, to talk about culture, identity, and race as it relates to Aboriginal students success and/or failure within public schooling. These discourses have constrained understandings of identity and culture based on assumptions within the discourses. The cultural difference discourse frame is constrained through sociological and anthropological comparative or cultural difference perspectives which fix differences based in cultures as naturalized. The racism discourse is constrained by a lack of contextualization, how it works within these contexts and with other forms of oppression, and, with identity and culture. More recently, Aboriginal scholars have introduced models of identity as relational and introduced identifying as it relates to negotiating identity within existing socio-cultural public institutions such as schools. As well, Indigenous scholars have provided alternative

conceptualizations of culture, and extended the discourse on race, racialization, and racism.

This study used Castellano's (2004) broad definition of Aboriginal research as any research that "touches the life and well-being of Aboriginal peoples" (p. 99). This project benefits from an understanding of respect, Indigenous research methodologies, and methods. Also included are the ethical intercultural research protocols to be addressed in an Aboriginal research study, as defined by Castellano (2004) and Smith (1999). My methodological assumptions included the following:

- incorporating Aboriginal research principles of respect, reciprocity, relevance, and responsibility into the research;

- bringing together seemingly disparate cultural and racial discourses (and their intersection with class, gender, and identity) and contextualizing them within the city and a school and relevant local research studies;

- using Indigenous scholars' conceptualizations of identity, race, and culture and how these concepts relate to identifying within socio-cultural institutions.

Indigenous scholars' conceptualizations of identity also incorporate outsiders' mediated notions of culture as fixed (unchanging) ethnic identities. What spaces are available for negotiating identity within specific social locations such as schooling? This view of culture also opens up space to look at the implications of how curriculum and race operate in day-to-day schooling. Re-thinking race as socially-constructed through the process of racialization, it then becomes socially-politically constructed as conterminous with class, gender, and culture. Identities and ongoing identifications within specific social locations and within the discourses that inform these locations then can be examined as bordered sites (Giroux, 2005).

The theoretical challenge for this study was to critique the dominant theorizing and resulting discourses of cultural difference and racism in the literature while considering the student and teacher/administrator participants' discourses of culture, race, and schooling. Saukko (2003) suggests that research approaches "focus on culture and identity without subverting the material and structural forces of inequality and discrimination" (p. 156).

To bring together identity while maintaining its connections to cultural and equity issues, I looked to Indigenous theorizing on identity, culture, and racism. Because the study was institutionally-based in a school, I employed conceptual frames of border pedagogy and racialization. Borders operated as Aboriginal students moved to the city and attended public schooling. I considered borders through several lenses (i.e. as an inter-cultural researcher; by Aboriginal youth participants within the city and school; and through the bordered identities of students by others within the contact zones of city and school). These borders were maintained in multiple ways in these contact zones, as students and teachers illustrated throughout the study.

Rosaldo (1993) uses border theory to describe the limitations of cultural theorizing. He notes that "from the classic perspective, cultural borderlands appear to be annoying exceptions rather than central areas of inquiry" (p. 28). Giroux (2005) conceptualizes border pedagogy to encompass the bordered site of the school as an institution and its policies, practices, and hidden and overt curricula. My study is also contextualized within Thunder Bay, and my own social location.

I used a variety of methods with Aboriginal high school student participants (interviews, photographs, letters, and group discussions) and interviews and discussions with teachers and administrators to investigate teachers and students' discourses and the

intersections of race, culture, and identity with schooling. The following sections describe the sample, methods, and data analysis that I employed.

Sample

The participants for this study included a self-selected sample of youth who self-identified as Aboriginal students as well as a self-selected sample of teacher/administrators at a local high school.

Methods

Data collection methods involved inviting students, teachers, and administrators to participate in a qualitative study which ran for four months, from early November 2006 until February 2007. Data collection methods included six data sets:

1. PhotoVoice which used student participants' photographs of themselves within the school to self-generate interview talk and "represent the everyday conditions which shape their [participants'] lives from their perspective…to provide clues to their concerns and identities" (Lutrell with Bautz, 2005, p. 2);

2. formal and informal interviews with students, teachers, and administrative staff;

3. students' letters to an Aboriginal student coming to the school (real or fictitious) to document their early experiences in the high school;

4. group discussion sessions with student participants;

5. participant observation outside of classrooms; and,

6. my own and students descriptions of the school.

The range of data provided different perspectives on how students engaged and/or disengaged from schooling and how the students constructed identities and identified through curricular and non-curricular aspects of schooling. These methods provided polyvocality

(Saukko, 2003) of students' engagement and alienation (Dei, 2003; Giroux, 2005) within the social location of the school.

Data Analysis

I use Alfred's (1995) central ideas of nested identities and belonging with Gravelines's (1998) Self-in-Relation model to describe the inter-related nature of identity and identifying (this is discussed more fully in Chapter 4). By adapting Graveline's model, four identity themes emerged from the participant data —identity/representation of self, family, school, and communities. A fifth theme, racism, also emerged through the data. I adapt Graveline's iterative model to discuss racialization. Racialization included the dimensions of racism (this is discussed more fully in Chapter 5). Three dimensions of racism emerged— interpersonal, institutional, and cultural racism. To these I added a fourth dimension, cognitive (sometimes referred to as cultural) imperialism, to represent the participants' data.

The way in which youths identify and negotiate their racialized/cultural/gendered identities is significant in light of recent initiatives by school boards in Ontario to have Aboriginal youths in schools voluntarily "self-identify." It raises questions such as: What does it mean to these youths to 'self-identify'? What does Aboriginal youths' racial constituency mean to educators and their educational institutions? Can Aboriginal youths be grouped together racially and culturally, untethered from their tribal affiliations and academic considerations, based in a racial ancestry and/or identity? How do discourses of difference and sameness and their relationship affect the discourse on self-identity? In sum, how does the interplay of lived experience, prevailing discourses, and the social relations negotiated through schooling impact youths' engagement with schooling?

Significance and Limitations

This study provided an opportunity to explore and discuss how youth construct and negotiate identities within the discursive site of schooling from existing discourses and scholars' conceptualizations of identity and racism, through the conceptual frame of border theory/border pedagogy. The student participants' voices provide some insights for educators about the students' engagement and/or alienation on which educators may base their strategies of Aboriginal students' engagement and to inform institutional change projects to be undertaken within the school or the board. I shall share the research with interested urban Aboriginal community members and groups through a variety of existing fora, where and when I am invited. My responsibility is to share the participants' stories for others to learn.

The 2001 Census showed that Thunder Bay had the highest per capita population of Aboriginal peoples in Ontario. This study of Aboriginal youth in public schools may provide insights for schools as institutions.

There are three limitations of this study, the generalizability of the study, the non-representative nature of the study sample, and my own position in the research study as an outsider/insider:

1) The research is not generalizable because of the qualitative nature of the study and how identity and identifying are always negotiated within historical and current contexts, spaces, and time.

2) The sample participants self-selected to give their time and stories to me. My school contact, Emily, assisted and directed me in talking with students, teachers and administrators. I invited any self-identified Aboriginal youth in the high school to participate in the study. Many students came out to hear about the research; over half of these students

returned permission forms, and approximately 1/3 of the original interested students were sitting around the table as participants in the final group discussion nearly four months later. I also invited all teachers and administrators to participate.

3) My own positions, as a non-Indigenous person, within the research. These positions are not fixed, as student participants' identities and identifying were/are fluid and responsive to contexts. Mine were/are similarly fluid, changing, contradictory, and contextually influenced. As with the student participants, teacher/administrators at times represented and fixed my identities and identifying through their own lenses. This complexity of my own positions influenced the data collection, data analysis, and interpretation. It shaped the writing of this dissertation.

In this chapter I have contextualized the study within the discourses on urban Aboriginal peoples, culture, race, and identity, and two salient discourses of schooling -- cultural difference and racism. I described an interactive discourse that intersects culture and race and its relationship to identity. This discourse is more fully developed in Chapter 2. Chapter 3 outlines the research framework. Chapters 4 and 5 integrate the presentation of findings and interpretation. Chapter 4 describes and discusses the findings on self, family, school, community, and agency. Chapter 5 describes and discusses the findings on racialization through racism and cognitive imperialism in the city and in the school. Chapter 6 integrates the findings of chapters 4 and 5 to interpret how identity, culture, and racialization interact/intersect in this study. It also considers implications and provides recommendations based on the study.

CHAPTER 2: CITY AND SCHOOL DISCOURSES

Introduction

This study was done within the socio-cultural and political contact zone of intercultural research, public spaces, and institutions. Haig Brown (1992) asserts that "people who work with First Nations education, Native and non-Native, work in a border world" (p. 245). She views the border as one between First Nations and Canada. Border zone studies are rarely named as such, so there are few models to study. Three noteworthy examples include: Cruikshank in collaboration with Sidney, Smith, and Ned (2004), Haig Brown and Archibald (1996), and Sommerville and Perkins (2003). Haig Brown (1992) names the overarching border as racial. Sommerville and Perkins view this border as contact zone; for them, this contact zone lies within research methodologies, particularly their model of collaborative community-based research. Recent thinking and research aligns border zones as discourses that challenge existing theory(ies)/methodology/political positions to examine social relations "…marked by relations of power and domination structured along the lines of race and other forms of difference (gender, sexuality, religion, language, and class)" (Dei & Asgharzadeh, 2001, p. 308). These are insightful models "for those who would undertake respectful research [with First Nations peoples] that articulates its own values and takes a political position" (Haig Brown & Archibald, 1996, p. 263). Three examples which investigate institutional contact zones include Graveline (1998), James and Haig Brown (2001), and Dion (2005). I used Giroux's (2005) border pedagogy to frame how these contact zones affect students' identities and identifying with school.

Scholars who do not acknowledge the contact zones have typically established and

maintained borders for Aboriginal peoples in cities and schools within the literature through their discourses of identity, culture, and race. In the following sections I describe Indigenous scholars' and other allies' conceptualizations of identity, culture, and race because I adopt their conceptualizations as a political position to frame this study. These conceptualizations illuminate different usages of terms, in contradistinction to the literature which I later critique.

Lakota scholar Hilary Weaver (2001) defines Indigenous identities as "a composite of many things such as race, class, education, region, religion, and gender" (p. 240). Weaver's identity as social locations incorporates identifying. Weaver and other scholars bring identifying, subjectivities, and representations into considerations of identity (Absolon & Winchester, 1994; Graveline, 1998; Hall, 1997; James, 2003; James, 2007; Lawrence, 2003; Lawrence, 2004; Restoule, 2004; St. Denis, 2002). These terms are discussed in the sections below.

There are multiple terms that scholars use in identity research—identity (Graveline, 1998), cultural identity (Absolon & Winchester, 1994; Hall, 1996; Restoule, 2004; RCAP, 1996), and Native identity (Lawrence, 2004). All three variations have relevant meanings for this study. My purpose is not to debate terminology. I followed Graveline's Self-in-Relation model of identity (see Chapter 4, Figure 1) that correlates to identity and identifying relationally with others (i.e. self, family, community and school). In this review I use the terms identity and identifying, although I leave scholars' terms intact when quoting others' works. I use 'identity' to provide "conceptual and political space to rethink issues of racialized social relations" (Brah, Hickman, & Mac en Ghaill, 1999, p. 1) through discourses. As Métis scholar Bonita Lawrence (2003) asserts: "for Native people, individual identity is

always being negotiated in *relation* to collective identity, and *in the face of* an external

colonizing society" (p. 1, original emphasis). Lawrence (2003) connects individual identity

to a collective and within the larger society through historical colonization and assimilation

projects and the continuing effects for Aboriginal peoples. This connection is discussed

further on in this chapter, in the section on race. One's identity also relates to culture.

Henderson (2000), in writing about identity and culture, explains the reification of

Indigenous cultures in relation to subjectivity: "around the globe, Aboriginal thinkers have

had to prove that the received notion of 'culture' as unchanging and homogenous is not only

mistaken but also irrelevant" (p. 255). Henderson's terms "unchanging and homogenous"

define an essentialized view of culture, that is, a view of culture without consideration for

differences between nations and/or variations within groups. Yon (2000) defines an

essentialized view of culture as a "…dominant view of subjects as the unified objects of a

culture which tells us who we are. Cultures are viewed as objects that can be set against each

other" (p. 6). One of the problems of homogenous and static views of culture is that it sets up

the possibility for discourses, such as cultural difference, which are based in essentialized

perspectives. Larocque (1991) takes cultural essentialization further by linking the culture

discourse to race. She critiques the discourse that employs culture while ignoring the larger

systemic forces of colonization and its current manifestation through racism. She says that

"Indian "culture," rather than colonization and racism, is blamed for whatever has happened

to Native peoples" (p. 74). I shall discuss Larocque's point further in the cultural difference

discourse.

Aboriginal scholars (Absolon & Winchester, 1994; Lawrence, 2004; Lobo, 2001;

Restoule, 2004) reflect a research shift to putting the concept of culture under erasure, as it

relates to identity and race. Culture is re-articulated as being traditionally maintained while

adapting to new realities and contexts. Culture is imbued with power relations that intersect

with nationhood, ethnicity, gender, class and race. In the urban context culture also relates to

race through racialized relations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples and within

the racialized spaces of cities and schools. The concepts of race and its relationship to

racialization, cognitive imperialism, and racism are considered below. I begin with a frame of

theorizing race as an ideological concept that creates objective conditions for racialized

peoples.

> The main task facing racial theory today, in fact, is no longer to critique the
> seemingly "natural" or "common sense" concept of race, although that effort has not
> been entirely completed by any means. Rather, the central task is to focus attention of
> the *continuing significance and changing meaning of race*: it is to argue against the
> recent discovery of the illusory nature of race; against the supposed contemporary
> transcendence of race; against the widely reported death of the concept of race; and
> against the replacement of category of race by other, supposedly more objective
> categories like ethnicity, nationality, or class. All these initiatives are mistaken at best
> and intellectually dishonest at worst." (Omi & Winart, 2005, p. 4, italics added)

Omi and Winart view the two conceptualizations of race—one as an ideological construct,

and the other as reflective of an objective condition—as insufficient to explain racial theory.

They critique ideological approaches for failing to consider "the salience a social construct

can develop over half a millennium or more of enforcement as a fundamental principle of

social organization and identity formation" (p. 5) despite scholars' denouncements of the

biological relevance of race (see also Dei, 2000; Henry & Tator, 2006). They critique the

conceptualization of race as an objective condition because it fails to acknowledge that race

is real for racialized peoples in terms of their experiences and identities. Omi and Winart thus

advance a racial formation theory (also known as racialization) which incorporates the

following five elements: 1) recognition of historical discourses and relations that have shaped

the contexts and contingencies of racial categories; 2) social construction of racially defined experiences; 3) the racialization of white identities; 4) the commonality of hegemonic relations; 5) the politics and changing lexicon of race.

The meaning of the term "race" is not fixed but has different meanings depending on the context (Dei & Calliste, 2000; Fleras & Elliot, 2002; Haluza-DeLay, 2002; James, 2003; St. Denis & Hampton, 2002). For example, James (2003) notes that race has been used to refer to many differing meanings, for example: 1) lineage; 2) subspecies; 3) ethnic groups; 4) religions; 5) nationalities; 6) minority language groups; 7) blood groups; and, 8) people from particular geographic regions (p. 37). Race is also is used to refer collectively to distinct Indigenous nations (Dion, 2005; Mihesuah, 1996). Thus, there is no one definitive use of race. The changing nature of race allows for its elusiveness (Dei, 2000; Essed, 2007; Fleras and Elliot, 2003; Henry & Tator, 2006; James, 2003). That is why Omi and Winart (2005) and others (Dei, 2000; Fleras & Elliot, 2002; Henry & Tator, 2006; St. Denis & Hampton, 2002) refer to race as a socially-constructed process. The social-historical construction of racial differences has real socio-political and material consequences through racialization and racism for groups and for individuals.

Historical discourses of colonialism are salient to this concept of race and to racialization (Laroque, 1991). Fanon (1967) coined the term "racialization" as a process by which colonialism erased differences among and within groups of colonized peoples within Europe. Fanon connects colonialism and the categorizing of colonized peoples to power relations. Fanon forged critical linkages between colonialism and earlier, more overt assimilation processes of colonization and the more diffuse processes of racialization, and to the ongoing colonial work of cognitive imperialism (and its premise of knowledge as power)

within schools. These historical links have been maintained in current theorizing of racialization within North American contexts (e.g. see Battiste, n/d; Dei & Asgharzadeh, 2001). A full discussion of colonization is beyond the scope of this review.

Miles (1989) built upon Fanon's (1967) idea of racialization as the process of categorizing diverse groups of peoples. He defines the concept of racialization as "those instances where social relations between people have been structured by the signification of human biological characteristics in such a way as to define and construct differentiated social collectivities" (p. 75). The most overt classification of racialization remains skin colour (Haluza-Delay, 2002; Henry & Tator, 2006; Sixkiller Clark, 1994; St. Denis & Hampton, 2002); racialization processes also have used biological, physical, and cultural characteristics, religious dogma, skin colour, and most recently cultural racism (Fanon, 1970, cited in Dei & Asgharzadeh, 2001, pp. 308-309) to maintain racial superiority that is currently locally contextualized within contact zones (Dion, 2005; Haluza-Delay, 2002; Henry & Tator, 2006; Sixkiller Clark, 1994). Thus racialization removed differences amongst peoples of colonized groups, creating a single racialized group. Racialization processes then emphasized these socio-constructed differences as inferior to the norm (also socially constructed) by using various criteria to maintain superiority. Today racialization is manifested within contact zones such as cities and schools. Cognitive imperialism is a form of racialization that is particular to schools.

Cognitive imperialism is another current manifestation of colonialism. Battiste, Bell, and Findlay (2002) illuminate the relationship between colonialism and the relationship to systemic discrimination:

Displacing systemic discrimination against Indigenous peoples created and

legitimated by the cognitive frameworks of imperialism and colonialism remains the single most crucial cultural challenge facing humanity. Meeting this responsibility is not just a problem for the colonized and the oppressed, but rather the defining challenge for all peoples. (p. 82)

Cognitive imperialism is a process of racialization specific to education and carried out within schools as socio-cultural political institutions.

Scholars examine the performative impact of race because "as a concept or an idea [race] does not signify inferiority or superiority" (Dei, 2000, p. 14; see also Fleras & Elliot, 2002; Henry & Tator, 2006): racial superiority is manifested, enacted, and maintained through language and practices of cognitive imperialism and racism.

Memmi (1982) proposed three tenets of racism: 1) real or imagined differences; 2) benefits to one group and the detriment of another; and, 3) justification of these differences and benefits for the purpose of maintaining them. Larocque (1991) writes about maintaining unequal relationships through power relations between groups: "racism is a particular prejudice that legitimizes an unequal relationship. In other words, racism is political; it facilitates and justifies socio-economic mobility for one group at the expense of another" (p. 75).

Thus, racism involves differences based primarily on skin colour (but also uses other characteristics) to establish inequities, justifies these inequities through power relationships, and maintains inequities through uncritical acceptance by those who perpetuate them, or benefit from them either explicitly or tacitly.

Racism scholars generally acknowledge a typology of racism that includes three dimensions: interpersonal racism as an overt form; as well as two systemic forms of racism typically referred to as institutional and cultural racism (Fleras & Elliott, 2003; Haluza-

DeLay, 2002; Henry & Tator, 2006; James, 2003; Larocque, 1991; St. Denis & Hampton, 2002). Overt and structural forms of racism are linked; interpersonal, institutional and cultural racism work conterminously within public spaces (e.g. cities) and institutional spaces (e.g. schools). In cities and schools this incorporates institutions' discriminatory policies, procedures, and practices (Haluza-DeLay, 2002; McCaskill et al., 2007) as well as the impacts of institutional practices on racialized peoples (Icart, Labelle, & Antonius, 2006).

This introductory section described the discursive framework of identity, culture, and race applied in this study. The next sections examine and critique three discourses and their literature: urban Aboriginal identity, culture, and race in cities; urban Aboriginal identity, culture, and race in schools; and, a third integrative discourse of identity, culture, class, and race within schools. This third discourse is also illuminated by study participants.

<div align="center">Identities, Culture, Race, and Cities</div>

Recent research on urban Aboriginal peoples and identity considers dimensions of social location, subjectivity, and representation (Lawrence, 2004; Restoule, 2000, 2004; St. Denis, 2002). This renewed interest in these added dimensions began with research studies commissioned by the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP, 1996). These dimensions were recently introduced in the identity research and represent new lenses with which to consider identity.

The predominant discourse had its beginnings in anthropologists' studies of specific geographic Aboriginal communities as well as the process of acculturation (e.g. Hallowell, 1955). When Aboriginal peoples began moving into cities post-World War II, sociologists and psychologists (Ablon, 1964, Dosman, 1972; Nagler, 1970) began studying Aboriginal cultural identity, along with anthropologists. Studies focused on acculturation, assimilation

and adaptation of Aboriginal peoples to the urban centre, social disorganization and cultural breakdown for Aboriginal peoples, the culture of poverty (Ablon, 1964; Dosman, 1972; Sorkin, 1978), and cultural conflicts and loss in the urban adaptation process (Sorkin, 1978; Zeitoun, 1969). The findings from these studies have established and perpetuated a view that urban Aboriginal peoples and cities are incongruous, and portray a homogenized image of urban Aboriginal peoples' lives focused on assimilation and poverty.

Others (Kerri, 1978; McCaskill, 1981; Nagler, 1970) considered push and pull factors. Push factors take people from their home community, for example, lack of adequate housing and employment opportunities. Pull factors bring people to urban centres, for example, medical care and education are reasons for Aboriginal peoples' decisions to relocate to urban centres. Push factors are pertinent to First Nations communities that continue to lack access to medical and educational facilities within their communities. Pull factors are significant in identifying insufficient services for Indigenous peoples in cities (Maidman, 1981; McCaskill, 1981). Nagler's (1970) approach is more typical of research studies that hypothesized about Aboriginal peoples not adjusting to cities and then found cultural difference. He found that " …Indians thus experience difficulty in adjusting to a new environment because their conceptions of living do not involve punctuality, responsibility, hurry, impersonality, frugality, and the other social practices which are part of the urban environment" (p. 25).

Researchers generally maintained a perspective of individual, family, and cultural differences as deficits, which also included education. Sorkin (1978) used two case studies, one in Wisconsin and another in Minneapolis, to study Aboriginal peoples in these cities. In both cases and within the context of schools, Sorkin found a disproportionate number of

Aboriginal students enrolled in special education classes, achieving below grade level, and dropping out at higher levels as compared to their non-Aboriginal classmates. Although Sorkin considered structural factors such as the schools, teachers, and curriculum, he ultimately recommended remedial summer school to address these discrepancies for Aboriginal students (p. 146).

Commonalities of many of these studies (Ablon, 1964, Nagler, 1970, Sorkin, 1978) included: the researchers' outsider perspective on Aboriginal identity; the notion of identity as cultural and as predetermined, unchanging, and non-urban (not able to adapt); and, knowledge and use of an Aboriginal language as essential to the researchers' conceptualizations of individual, cultural, and racial authenticity.

Absolon and Winchester's (1994) research differs from these early studies in their research purpose: " …to reach a clear understanding of Aboriginal cultural identity, as it has an impact on most other issues of spiritual, social and political significance for Aboriginal people (e.g. self-determination, self-governance, land rights)" (CD-ROM, n.p.). Research methods also differed. Absolon and Winchester conducted learning circles in Canadian cities—Victoria, Innuvik, Saskatoon, Winnipeg, Quebec City, and Halifax—to glean urban identity perspectives from Métis, First Nations, and Inuit women, men, service agency staff, youth, adults, and Elders. Despite the high urban Aboriginal populations in Toronto, Ottawa, and Thunder Bay, these Ontario cities were not included as research sites. Absolon and Winchester found 17 interrelated themes including: family, spirituality, community, land, government, residential school, youth, language, women, elders, politics, self-determination, organizations, education, healing, colonization, and racism. Although it might appear that the research had a fixed, unified view of culture, Absolon and Winchester note that "when we set

out to understand and describe identity we have to build constructs that are inclusive of all, or

we may contribute to a subtle form of 'ethnic cleansing' by defining narrowly who is and

who is not part of the community of Aboriginal people" (1994, CD-ROM, n.p.). This

research set up a dichotomy between the traditional definitional approaches to identity that

had dominated the research and contextual approaches to identity that followed. These

differences mostly relate to who defined identity and the identity criteria used.

Definitional Approaches to Identity

Scholars researching identity by definitional approaches measure identity against

existing criteria. These studies are often quantitatively-based, and use externally-derived

criteria. Findings are typically based on meeting pre-determined criteria. The two studies

described below illustrate the definitional approach (Berry, 1999; Liebler**,** 2004).

Using the data findings from Absolon and Winchester's (1994) RCAP research

learning circles, Berry (1999) compared the learning circle participants to one another. He

defines Aboriginal identity from a psychological perspective through five pre-determined

features.

Liebler's (2004) study examined mixed-race Aboriginal respondents' reporting on

three United States census criteria – tribal affiliation, American Indian language use, and

residence in a metropolitan area—to hypothesize the thickness or thinness of their racial ties.

In her findings, Leibler attributes respondents' residence in a metropolitan area to thinness of

racial ties.

Definitional approaches based in census data criteria often evolve from legislative

definitions. In Canada legislative definitions for Aboriginal peoples stem from the Indian Act

and its iterations (Lawrence, 2003). These legislative and census-based definitions tend to

use racialized, legal representations of Aboriginal peoples to determine membership and status and thus identity (or representations). As well, culture is viewed homogenously and as something one possesses (i.e. posited) through outward identifiers (e.g. speaking an Aboriginal language, expressions of material culture as understood by outsiders). It has also been a gendered discourse, excluding women (Lawrence, 2003).

Contextual Approaches to Identity

Other scholars (Gonzales, 2000; Jackson, 2001; Lawrence, 2004; Lobo, 2001b; Restoule, 2004) critique legislative identities and use relational, contextual, community-based approaches, in which they view identity as the intersection of race, identity, identifying, representation, or as interactional constructs. They regard the constructs of identity as contextual and self-defined by respondents. The five studies, described below, demonstrate these approaches to identity.

Hopi scholar Angela Gonzales (2000) examined "the transactional and interactional aspects of identity and the interconnections between experience, context, and relationships between and among individuals, groups, and their social and cultural environment" (p. iii). She uses three contexts: federal legislation of American Indian tribal groups; legal definitions for production, marketing and sale of American Indian art; and, ethnic verification processes of higher education institutions for education and employment of American Indians. Gonzales found that federal legal intervention in American Indian identity and the resulting economic impacts have engendered a political and polemic identity definition and impacted criminal, child custody, health, land claims and many other personal, social, and political spheres (p. 212). Her inclusion of American schooling contexts related to equity legislation and fraudulent identities highlighted problematic legislated identities and education but is

tangential to this study within a public high school. She links legislative identity to education.

Lobo (2001b), in her research with urban Aboriginal peoples of the San Francisco Bay Area (SFBA), identified identity in urban Aboriginal communities through four aspects: 1) ancestry; 2) appearance; 3) cultural knowledge; and, 4) Indian community participation (p. 81). Lobo (2001b) frames identity relationally rather than from a place-based (i.e. urban) perspective; she states that urban Aboriginal identity relies on community assessment.

Lawrence (2004) also found themes of urban locatedness and community acceptance in her Toronto-based case study of urban mixed-blood peoples. She explains that "it is important to recognize the extent to which identity is dependent on social milieu…the existence of such an identity [as mixed] must be recognized by other individuals before it can be lived as real" (p. 11), thus supporting individual identity as contextual, relational, as well as performative (Absolon & Winchester; 1994; Alfred, 1995; Dei, 1996; Graveline, 1998; James, 2003; Restoule, 2000; Weaver, 2001).

Jackson (2002) conducted a two-year cross-cultural ethnographic study of ethnic identity for first-generation urban-raised Indian people. Jackson found that cultural identity related to community participation. She found that participants in cities sought cultural revitalization. McCaskill et al.'s (2007) research participants also sought cultural revitalization in Thunder Bay.

Ojibwa scholar Jean-Paul Restoule (2004) investigated how urban Aboriginal men maintain an Aboriginal cultural identity in Toronto. In an earlier work, Restoule (2000) found that "obviously identity issues come to the fore when there is sustained contact between culturally different groups, and especially when they are valued differently on the social scale" (p. 106). In his more recent study in which he collected data through learning

circle methods, Restoule (2004) found that cultural identity was shaped through everyday relationships. His findings support the work of James (2003) and Hall (1996) who conceptualize identity as a dynamic process and identifying as ongoing, exclusive, and tied to material and symbolic resources.

Lawrence (2004), Restoule (2004), and Gonzales (2000) look at the impact of identities and identifying within the context of racialization and within the social milieu of cities, schools, and workplaces as contact zones.

There is a tension in the literature between viewing identity essentially and definitionally (as established criteria to be demonstrated) and viewing identity as contextual and relational. Tafoya (1995) notes the contradiction of the two approaches:

> …In cross-cultural research one can have definitions or one can have context, but not both at the same time. In other words, the more one tries to define something the more one removes it from its context. The more one recognizes the context of something, the less possible it is to give a specific definition of it. This is one of the difficulties of designing a Western-style course with an understanding of how Native people think or how we work with education. The more we try defining it, the more it loses the context and value and ceases to be a living thing. The more we recognize Native culture as a living thing, the more indefinite we are in trying to define what it is we are talking about, because it will vary." (p. 19)

The variability that Tafoya refers to is also considered through relational and performative approaches to identity. Relational approaches acknowledge that identity relates to identifying when it is considered within larger group and place affiliations. Performative approaches embed identity within external representations and larger societal ideologies and institutions. Both relational and performative approaches provide contextualization to identity and identifying.

Relational and Performative Approaches to Identity

Mohawk scholar Gerald Alfred (1995) advances two central tenets—nested identities

and belonging. Alfred refers to multi-layered, nested identities and brings in belonging as a central facet of identity. For Alfred, these identities are multilayered including localized Kahnawake, national Mohawk, broader Iroquois, and pan-Native identities (p.18). Building on Alfred's nested concept, Graveline's (1998) Self-in-Relation embodies identity and self as "related to and interconnected with others—family, community, the world…" (p. 58) and incorporating multiple, relational aspect of identity. In considering identity, Self-in-Relation then also integrates the relational identity components discussed above: historical relations; one's social location in terms of race, class, education, religion, and gender; place; and the power relations that permeate these relations in contact zones. To acknowledge the social, relational aspect of identity (Absolon & Winchester; 1994; Dei, 1996; Graveline, 1998; James, 2003; Restoule, 2000; Weaver, 2001), I use the term identity to connote the multiple ways of referring to the interconnecting relations and aspects of one's identity. I used Graveline's conceptualization of Self-in-Relation in Chapter 4 to discuss and interpret student participants' discourses of identity and belonging. Following Absolon and Winchester's studies of identity in urban centres, identities are contextualized within three aspects: 1) relationally; 2) socio-cultural political locations (performatively); and, 3) historical relations in cities and schools (racialized).

To look at identities contextually and relationally within specific histories and locations such as cities and schools is called 'performative identity' (Dei, 2000; Hall, 1996; James, 2003; Restoule, 2004; St. Denis, 2002). Hall situates performative identity saying that "contextualized performance [is] produced within specific historical and institutional sites, within specific discursive formations and practices, and by specific enunciative strategies (p. 4). Performative contexts highlight and make explicit existing power relations and the

relations of race and culture to identity, identifying, and agency within social locations.

Scholars have researched the performative impact of racial affiliation and/or representation for Aboriginal peoples, the relationship of race to culture and identity (Graveline, 1998; Weaver, 2001), and the power relations at play within the social location of cities (Lawrence, 2004; Restoule, 2004; Stymeist, 1975) and within the social location of public schooling (e.g. Deyhle, 1995; Dion, 2000; Grantham Campbell, 2005; Reid, 2001; St. Denis, 2002). It is noteworthy that performative-based identity research has dissenters among Indigenous researchers. For example, Quecha scholar Sandy Grande (2007) dismisses theorizing on identity and education. She asserts that it fails to challenge the colonial education project, undertheorizes historical social and political power relations, and fails to conceptualize decolonized models of education. Grande's arguments for emancipatory pedagogy through self-determination surpass the confines and limitations of public education and this study which is contextualized within an existing institution and its history and discursive practices.

Restoule (2000) defines identifying as "a process of being and becoming what one is in the moment. The power is placed on the self, for the person who emphasizes his or her Indigenous roots at a particular place and time…" (p. 103) and that employing place and time perspectives "may reflect the situational and contextual identifying that exists in contemporary Aboriginal life" (p. 103). Restoule asserts that identifying has meanings and consequences depending on the context in which one identifies and the representations that may be implied (p. 106). For example, external representations have consequences for identification (as student participants illustrate in Chapter 4).

Representations and Essentialism

"The misrepresentation, commodification, and distortion of Indigenous identities have existed from the moment of first contact." (Bataille, 2001, p. 1)

Representations relate to definitional approaches to identity, legislative identities, and essentializations that emerge out of racialization. These concepts are explored below. Weaver (2001) speaks to the relationship between self-identity and representations, calling identity a "combination of self-identification and the perceptions of others" (p. 243). In terms of perceptions of others, Lawrence's (2003) notion of decolonizing Indigenous identities incorporates the social construction of identities, the relationship to perceptions of others and the project of deconstructing historical misrepresentations and externally-defined (mis)representations.

The earliest representations of Aboriginal peoples can be traced to legislated representations such as the Indian Act (1869, 1876, 1951, 1985). These legislated representations relate directly to authenticity and defining who is an Indigenous person. Many Indigenous scholars (e.g. Graveline, 1998; Grande, 2007; Henderson, 2000; Lawrence, 2003; Restoule, 2000) denounce legislative identities and the essentialisms and divisions between and amongst Indigenous peoples that legislative identities have created.

Lawrence (2003) illustrates how the Canadian Indian Act in its previous and its current iteration (1985) served and continues to control every aspect of Indian life (p. 3) and has regulated Native identity (p. 5) for over a century. Specifically, she shows how identity is racialized and gendered. Section 12 (1) b of the Indian Act (1876) states "the following persons are not entitled to be registered, namely…b) a woman who married a person who is not an Indian, unless that woman is subsequently the wife or widow of a person described in

Section 1" (Jamieson, 1978, in Lawrence, 2003, p. 8). This legislation established Indian status by patrilineal affiliation and discriminated against Indian women and their descendants by denying legal status to Indian women who married men without Indian status (Lawrence, 2003; Voyageur & Calliou, 2000/2001). As well, until 1951 women on reserve had fewer political rights than men. For example, women with status could not vote in band elections, nor hold political positions of the band. In 1985 the passing of Bill-C31 reinstated status to women, but not before the challenge had been rejected through the Canadian court system to the level of the Supreme Court. It was Sandra Lovelace's United Nations' challenge that forced the change to the Indian Act section (Lawrence, 2003; Voyageur & Calliou, 2000/2001). Over one hundred years of legislative disenfranchisement have had long-term impacts for these women and their children's identifications with Indigenous communities. Thus, the Indian Act (1951) has shaped identities, identifying and gender by who is and who is not federally recognized as Indian. Legislative identities interact with other representations.

Historical representations have shaped knowledge of Indigenous peoples in disciplines within social sciences, the arts, and sciences. Representations have been reified through these disciplines, their discourses, and research studies. St. Denis (2002) argues that history, knowledge, and institutions are "productive of Aboriginal subjectivity" (p. 13). Over time these ways of knowing the Other become essentialized, thus socially constructing subjectivity as self-identification alongside perceptions of others.

Essentialist perspectives create static or fixed images of Indigenous peoples where traditional cultures and lifestyle can be juxtaposed in a binary relationship with assimilation and marginalization. Lawrence (2004) names academic understandings of Indigenous

peoples as "*primordiality,* a state of existence in contradistinction to modernity, whereby

language, ways of living, and cultural knowledge as manifested by distinct beliefs, traits, and

practices, transmitted in relatively unbroken lines from a distant past, and generally

combined with "racial" purity, have defined membership in a specific tribal group" (p. 1).

This primordial image of Indigenous peoples has saturated popular culture (Berkhoffer,

1978), media (Francis, 1992), research (Smith, 1999), and literature (Bataille, 2001; King,

2005). Smith (1999) documents how research using racial or cultural differences become

codified and enduring; essentialisms set Other peoples apart and perpetuate misconceptions

and stereotypes (see also Dion, 2000; Lattas, 1993; Mihesuah, 1996). For more information

on stereotypes as essentialisms, see Choctaw scholar Devon Mihesuah (1996).

Strategic essentialism (i.e. essentialism which is internally-produced) may provide

insight into cultural difference discourses that are maintained by Indigenous scholars and

educators. For example, in the section below I review how two cultural revitalization projects

contributed to cultural difference theory and findings and reiterated these findings through

strategic essentialism. The authors downplayed local control of education and greater control

over public schooling. The unintended outcome is the contribution to discourses of cultural

difference in schooling.

From another perspective, Mohawk scholar Gerald Alfred (1995) dismisses the

concept of essentialism as an oversimplification. He critiques the binary constructed by

scholars between primordialism, as Indigenous identity as unbroken tradition and continuity

with the past, and instrumentalism, as the conscious manipulation of traditions and cultural

inventions. He views both conceptualizations as essentialized discourses: neither can be fully

accurate because peoples and cultures both change and remain the same (p. 188). This

dichotomy is also rejected by other Indigenous scholars (e.g. Lattas, 1993; Lawrence, 2004;

St. Denis, 2002).

Thus, researchers connect urban Aboriginal peoples' relationships with cities to

institutions such as schools (Absolon & Winchester, 1994; Haluza-DeLay, 2002; McCaskill

et al., 2007; Restoule, 2004; Weaver, 2001). The researchers cited above found education to

be one of the primary contexts of urban Aboriginal identity and schools as a context for

which students identified and/or did not identify, based on a variety of contexts, situations,

and factors. Alfred (1995) names political and economic contexts as significant. Social,

cultural, and political contexts, as well as economic consequences emerge through the

research on schooling.

<div align="center">Identities, Culture, Race, and Schooling</div>

Within the intersections of political, social and historical realities, identities emerge

within social locations such as schooling because "questions about how we construct social

identities and seek representation still plague our academy" (Dei & Calliste, 2000, p. 11). In

the Canadian context, identifying with schooling and representations relate to the historically

colonial legacy and its project of residential schooling.

Canadian government officials determined education to be an ideal vehicle of

assimilation and to remove "the essential structures of family and community [who] house

the languages, values, and culture, as well as give identity to Native people" (Hare &

Barman, 2000, p. 332). Indian Residential schools in North America demonstrated cultural

racism towards Aboriginal, mostly First Nations, peoples, that is the "degradation of and

prejudice against Aboriginal life styles, including language, dress, food, and traditional social

mores" (Adams, 1975, p. 29). The prejudice and the resulting unequal treatment of

Aboriginal peoples was justified through a colonial assimilation ideology of racial

superiority/inferiority and implemented through assimilation policies (taking children away

from their parents, Indigenous languages forbidden to be spoken in schools), practices

(physical and sexual abuse within the residential schools) as well as the quality of education

(focused on vocational training for minimally-skilled labour positions) that ensued. In the

case of Residential Schools, the federal government's explicit purpose was to assimilate

children into mainstream society through separation from their families, isolation within

residential schools, and the industrial training provided. Residential schools justified, through

the colonists' assimilation ideology, that Aboriginal peoples were inferior and needed to be

assimilated. Notably, the Indian Residential School period is the most significant educational

context of the Canadian historical racialization process. The federal government and its

officials sought to colonize First Nations and Métis peoples based on racial and cultural

characteristics. Officials conceived and structured residential schools for assimilation and

education to position Aboriginal peoples within the lowest social and economic ranks of

society. The Indian Residential Schools period is a significant historical period of Aboriginal

education that continues to impact schooling for Aboriginal peoples. A full review of Indian

Residential Schools and its implications is beyond the scope of this paper. (For more about

Indian Residential Schools, see Hare & Barman, 2000; RCAP, 1996.)

These ideologies, policies, and practices illustrate federally sanctioned colonization

processes for groups (Indigenous nations) categorized by race (i.e. Indians as defined by the

federal governments). Once the overt projects of the colonization system had ended, the

categories were defined and constructed for the racialization process to continue.

As mentioned previously, there are two predominant and distinct discourses, cultural

difference and racism, of Aboriginal students' education in public schooling. The first discourse, cultural difference, explains either Aboriginal students' failure (cultural difference between home and school) or success (cultural sameness between home and school). In this discourse the explanation for racialized students' lack of success in public education is explained through students, families, and cultures/race and the disparities between their cultures and the culture of the school (which can be read as the dominant culture of administrators, teachers, and students). The cultural difference research on Aboriginal students in public schooling has a 35 year contemporary history from the Hawthorne Report (1967) to the Indian Control of Indian Education (ICIE) (1972), commissions (e.g. RCAP, 1996), and academic research (e.g. Demmert Jr., 2001; Giles, 1985; James, Chavez, Beauvais, Edwards, & Oetting, 1995; Larimore, 2000; Willeto, 1999). Cultural difference was critiqued initially by Ledlow (1992) and Deyhle and Swisher (1997).

The second discourse, racism in society and schools, examines racialized relations through a lens of power relations. This discourse, often expressed through anti-racism or equity studies, focuses on the production of knowledge, subjectivities, and social relations, as these productions relate to institutional and cultural racism (referred to as systemic racism) within society and its socio-cultural organizations. This discourse theorizes that dominant ideologies and discourses about schooling are constructed as neutral for all participants which depoliticizes and dehistoricizes the impacts of schooling on racialized students—thus negating the need for theories focusing on racism or studies that examine school and societal practices of education. Below I discuss these two discourses and then a third emerging research direction that examines the intersection of these discourses, called discursive intersections.

Cultural Difference

When I began reviewing mainstream schooling studies, I noted that much of literature found cultural differences to be germane to Aboriginal education. The concept of identity has pervaded the urban Aboriginal and schooling research since the release of the Hawthorne Report (1967). This report marked the first large-scale, federally-funded, Canadian study of Indigenous students in public schooling that theorized Aboriginal peoples' identities as homogeneously incongruent with public schooling. The concept of culture and identity regarding Aboriginal youth and schooling began as a Canadian discourse with the Hawthorne report. St. Denis (2002) asserts that "the Hawthorne Report is a text that is productive of identities" (p. 44). In the Hawthorne Report, the two chapters on education are a section of a larger report that examines economic, political, and educational needs. The Hawthorne Report was prepared during a period when sociologists and anthropologists were studying urban Aboriginal peoples in cities. Hawthorne's report investigated life in cities and its socio-cultural institutions and used a problem focus on the individual and family. Hawthorne did not directly address racism, as few studies of the time considered discrimination and racism in cities. As well, to contextualize Hawthorne's (1967) research, St. Denis notes "integrated schooling was not widespread until the early 60's…" (p. 45). This study marked the early years of integrated schooling.

In the section on education (Part II, Chapter 4, Education of the Indian Child), Hawthorne (1967) purports to examine "schooling and its adequacy" (part II, p.6, original emphasis) from the perspective of "making *schools* better for the unhappy or failing Indian child" (part II, p. 7, my emphasis). The research was organized under key headings that introduced the study, defined key terms (e.g. culture, cultural dissonance), stated researchers'

assumptions, tested assumptions, considered related research, and provided key findings. In the next chapter (part II, Chapter 5), Hawthorne examined attitudes such as reasons for absenteeism, student and parent attitudes towards education, as well as 'cultural' factors such as orientation, failure, and curriculum.

Hawthorne (1967) outlined cultural dissonance theory (also called cultural difference) and then defined cultural dissonance as 'a discontinuity of experience' affecting scholastic achievement. He claimed "for the child the outcome [of differences in outlook between teacher and student] is a challenge to his identity" (part II, Chapter 4, p. 7). The researchers used purposive sampling of communities and research participants. In particular, the researchers sought out communities with Aboriginal children in schools, and larger reserve communities located near other reserves and/or near urban areas. The researchers conducted three in-depth studies of schooling on-reserve and developed and administered a questionnaire.

Hawthorne (1967) posited several family-level factors for Aboriginal children's school failure: early socialization, shelter, food, clothing, and objects (e.g., toys and books), and individual psychological factors (e.g., verbal nature, parent interest, discipline, and routines for learning). He also posited community-level factors, such as cultural value differences, as reasons for failure: "…the system of values of some Indian communities tend to devalue formal education" (p. 118). His findings led to the conclusion that schooling forces a choice for Aboriginal children "between being an Indian or an Indian 'White' " (p. 126). He noted that becoming White was not an option for Aboriginal students. Hawthorne's study set the theoretical ground for future cultural difference studies, a perspective that has remained fundamental to educational research literature (Demmert Jr., 2001; National Indian

Brotherhood, 1972; RCAP, 1996).

Following Hawthorne's (1967) seminal study that was grounded in cultural difference and maladaptation theories (echoing approaches found in the Aboriginal peoples and cities discourses) to explain Aboriginal students' failure, two large tribal school programs, the Rough Rock Demonstration School (RRDS) and the Hawaiian Kamehameha Early Education Program (KEEP) conducted a series of studies of their local schools and then studies comparing the two programs to determine if their programs were transferable from one to the other (1983). These studies are examples of cultural revitalization, another aspect of the cultural discourse. Cultural revitalization studies sought to revitalize natal cultures and languages through education. The RRDS had two distinguishing features that set it apart from the existing schools; local control and cultural identification. Other features included: school/home/community engagement; natal and English language development; adult education; and support services for students and their families.

In 1983 RRDS began a collaborative project with KEEP. The KEEP had developed educational practices and strategies for Hawaiian children and designed to be compatible with Hawaiian child culture. The KEEP's pedagogical foundations were: centre-based learning; small-group bilingual instruction; culturally-relevant discipline; and, locally developed criterion-referenced assessments of students that appropriately reflect achievement. The collaboration was established to determine if KEEP's practices and strategies were transferable to other Nations with similar results. The findings from the collaborative project were that the two programs shared three common characteristics: local bilingual teachers funded and supported through board policy (Begay, Sells Dick, Estell, McCarty, & Sells, 1995, p. 133); senior administrators as program champions (Begay et al.,

p. 134); and, using Elders in a variety of roles (McCarty& Sells Dick, n/d, p. 3). Despite

findings of using local bilingual teachers, having administrative champions, and use of

Elders, later scholars citing the research focused predominantly on cultural findings. Little

acknowledgement is paid to the community control of education and the contextualization of

the programs, to the local community, or to the role of school administrators in championing

the school.

Following Hawthorne's cultural difference theories and KEEP's and RRDS's cultural

revitalization studies, researchers have studied a wide array of research topics to explore

cultural difference for Aboriginal students: home environment versus school environment

often expressed as differences in parenting style/family background (Eberhard, 1989;

Medearis, 1996); language/communication styles (James et al., 1995; Willeto, 1999); home

versus school values-orientation (Giles, 1985; Platero, Brandt, Witherspoon & Wong, 1986);

and learning styles (Larimore, 2000). Other cultural difference studies focus on

teacher/student interactions and teachers' methods of instruction (Malin, 1990; Nickels &

Piquemal, 2005), parental/community involvement and/or support (Barnhard, 1999;

Kavenaugh, 2003; Leveque, 1994), and curriculum (Demmert Jr., 2001). These studies found

that cultural difference explained Aboriginal students' failure with schooling.

Some cultural difference studies have incompatible findings. James et al. (1995) and

Willeto (1999) both examined Aboriginal students' cultural identity and its impact on school

success. The authors' findings conflict with each others'. James et al. found that successful

Aboriginal middle and high school youths with Anglo cultural identities were more

successful than Aboriginal youth with Indian [sic] cultural identities. Willeto's study of

Navajo high school youth found no relationship between cultural practices and academic

success. How culture is defined and represented is ambiguous in many of these studies; the findings are equally ambiguous.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, scholars studying cultural difference theorizing added to the focus on difference related to Aboriginal families and homes with a focus on teachers in public schooling and the difference they can make through culturally-appropriate (also known as culturally-responsive or culturally-relevant) teaching for Aboriginal students. Cultural difference is still problematic for Indigenous students and schools, but in this shift the teachers, rather than students, need to adapt towards cultural relevance in the classroom (Doige, 2003; Eberhard, 1989; Hesch, 1999; Kanu, 2005). There is little consensus among these studies for what constitutes 'cultural relevance' other than the identification of Aboriginal students having higher drop out rates and/or lower high school completion rates than their non-Aboriginal peers. The majority of these studies essentialize culture—that is, that researchers can compare one 'culture' (i.e. Aboriginal students from one or more Nations in public school settings) against another (i.e. often White students).

Deyhle and Swisher (1997) argue that the cultural difference discourse predominantly uses "…a cultural framework for the analysis of schooling and Aboriginal children, parents, and communities" (p. 117). Reid (2001) argues that theories of cultural differences are naturalized differences arising from "some sort of essential Aboriginality" (p. 27) and that we need to "hang on to a dynamic model of culture that recognizes agency with constraints" (p. 28) while acknowledging that cultural theories are insufficient explanations of Aboriginal students' underachievement. She advocates research work combining culture with subjectivity, gender, and race.

Racism

The majority of Aboriginal youth do not complete high school. They leave the school system without requisite skills for employment, and without the language and cultural knowledge of their people. Rather than nurturing the individual, the schooling experience typically erodes identity and self-worth. Those who continue in Canada's formal school systems told of regular encounters with racism, racism expressed not only in interpersonal exchanges but also through the denial of Aboriginal values, perspectives and cultures in the curriculum and the life of the institution. (RCAP, 1996, v 3, p. 434)

Supporting the RCAP Report finding of racism in schooling are two localized research studies which found that racialized study participants rank public schools as primary sites where they experienced racism (Haluza-Delay, 2002; McCaskill et al., 2007). This discourse critiques the dominant discourses for constructing schooling as neutral for all participants, and depoliticizing and dehistoricizing the historical and current effects of schooling.

In a literature review commissioned by the Minister's National Working Group on Education for Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, St. Denis and Hampton (2002) explored the racism literature. They identify four issues and/or gaps within the Canadian studies of racism in schools: 1) limited scholarly attention; 2) denial of racism; 3) teachers' understanding of and preparedness to deal with racism; and, 4) how it impacts on school success. These four issues continue to challenge scholars' and activists' abilities to identify and challenge racism in schools.

St. Denis and Hampton (2002) explain that in the schooling discourse "forms of racism directed against Aboriginal and Indian students or teachers has [sic] not received scholarly or systematic attention…" (p. 5). There is a small and growing scholarship that has studied racism towards Aboriginal students in schools (Dion, 2005; Fisher & Campbell,

2002; Haluza-DeLay, 2002; Henry & Tator, 2006; Ledlow, 1992; McCaskill et al., 2007; Ryan, 1998; Sixkiller Clark, 1994; St. Denis, 2002).

St. Denis and Hampton (2002) write that "there is very little research and educational literature on racism and Aboriginal people, yet on the other hand, the literature is filled with references to the effects of racism on Aboriginal people in educational institutions" (p. 4). Other scholars have also found interpersonal, institutional, and cultural components of racism (Cleary & Peacock, 1998; Deyhle, 1995; Fisher & Campbell, 2002; McCaskill et al., 2007; Ryan 1998; Schick & St. Denis, 2001; Sixkilller Clark, 1994) as well as denial that racism is institutionalized (Dion, 2005; Haluza-Delay, 2002; Henry & Tator, 2006; Larocque, 1991). This denial of racism is complicated by the elusive (Chartrand, 1992), and multi-faceted (James, 2003) nature of racism. Part of the reason for the dearth of research studies has been the effectiveness of cultural discourses to replace racial discourses (Larocque, 1991; Reid, 2001; St. Denis, 2002; St. Denis & Hampton, 2002). St. Denis notes the connection between race and culture and how it has been used by dominant cultures: "the concept of culture is not innocent, but deeply implicated in the colonial enterprise" (p. 12).

St. Denis and Hampton (2002) identify another gap with teacher training. They state that "there are far more texts and research literature that address the challenge and problems of teaching culturally different Aboriginal students than there are about how to teach for anti-racism…" (p. 5). Other scholars have found that pre-service teachers, in-service teachers, and non-Aboriginal student participants were reluctant to engage in issues of racial and ethnic relations in Canada and in schools, particularly around White privilege and how schools have structured inequities for racialized groups (Dion, 2005; Goulet, 2005; Schick & St. Denis, 2001). Dion (2005) notes that there is still work to be done to overcome racism and

discrimination. She contends that training and school board initiatives of zero tolerance for overt forms of racism have been successful; however, personal denial of injustice as well as systemic inequities resulting from historical oppression and manifested through curriculum persist in schools.

There is also limited literature on racism as antithetical to Aboriginal students' educational success in public schooling. Scholars (Cleary & Peacock, 1998; Deyhle, 1995; Deyhle & Swisher, 1997; Ryan, 1998; Schick & St. Denis, 2001; Sixkilller Clark, 1994) found that a lack of school success is linked to overt and systemic forms of racism as well as cognitive imperialism (Battiste, 1998; Smith, 1999). Deyhle and Swisher (1997) assert that institutional racism and assimilationist educational models "must be analysed as a critical problem to be addressed in the education of American Indian youth [and their success in school]" (p. 139).

Researchers and scholars studying racism in education have found that racism and discrimination within schools included the following manifestations: relations with/treatment of students; rejection, blaming, and stereotyping (via texts, curriculum, and teachers/administrators); a continuum of discrimination from social marginalization to racial harassment incidents; training, attitudes, and expectations of teachers and administrators; Eurocentrically-focused curriculum and representations; and, assessment, streaming, and discipline (Cleary & Peacock, 1998; Deyhle & Swisher, 1997; Dion, 2005; Fisher & Campbell, 2002; Haluza-DeLay, 2002; Henry & Tator, 2006; Larocque, 1991; McCaskill et al., 2007; Ryan, 1998; Sixkiller Clark, 1994; St. Denis & Hampton, 2002).

Thus, both the cultural difference discourse and the racism discourse connect to student success: both discourses find that many Aboriginal students have not and do not

succeed within public schooling. In most instances the benchmark for not succeeding is graduation rate of Aboriginal students as compared to their non-Aboriginal peers. Graduation rate is a final indicator, rather than an indication of the processes that lead to/contributed to the disparities within these graduation rates. Both discourses employ conceptualizations of racialized students, identity, identifying, culture, race, and school success. Both discourses portray culture: cultural difference portrays 'cultural traits' as natural differences; and racism discourses portray cultural racism as a form which "draws upon overt and covert codes of 'culture and difference' in multiple ways" (Yon, 2000).

But the two discourses differ primarily in that each of these approaches provides radically different explanations for the lack of Aboriginal students' success. Cultural difference focuses on individuals and families or teachers and classrooms. The major criticism of the cultural difference research is the need to address structural factors within schooling in considering cultural and individual academic engagement or alienation from schooling (Deyhle & Swisher, 1997; Dion, 2005; Reid, 2001; St. Denis, 2002). Racism focuses on overt more than covert forms of racism and documented racial incidents within schools. The racism discourse is also criticized for not contextualizing racism, not exploring multiple forms of racism and their inter-relationships, and illustrating how racism works in practice. Few racism studies address the racialization processes of pedagogy and its relationship to other forms of oppression (Dei, 2000; James, 2007). Both discourses have shown inattention to one another within the research and within the landscapes of schooling.

Thus, racialized students and concepts of culture, race, and outcomes are not easily distinguished within discourses. They bump up against one another in multiple ways, demonstrating the embedded nature of racialization and the inter-relationships of culture and

race with identity and identifying relationships.

<center>*Intersections of Identity, Culture, and Race*</center>

In a literature review of American Indian drop-out research, Ledlow (1992) critiqued scholars' four assumptions: cultural difference theory to explain the causes of Aboriginal students' disengagement; their methodological assumptions around cultural difference; the lack of definition of definable factors of cultural difference; and a lack of measurable outcomes. Ledlow states that "cultural relevance is rarely defined and almost always assumed to be significant…How and why a relevant curriculum will solve the problem is rarely addressed…." (p. 23). The discourse of cultural difference has a naturalized, taken-for-granted aspect, despite which factors are considered. Ledlow introduced the idea that these discourses intersected by positing other interlocking economic and social factors "that are not culturally specific to being Indian (although they may be specific to being a minority)" (p. 29) for dropping out. She advocates looking beyond the micro levels (of the student and family or teacher) to wider community-based economic and political structures (macro level). Ledlow recommends further research investigating the relationship between micro and macro level factors.

In an extensive review of literature on American Indian and Alaska Native education, Deyhle and Swisher (1997) called for new research approaches that do not stem from a deficit perspective of Aboriginal youth guided by theories of assimilation:

> …understanding the cultural context is not enough. The structure of school and society that harbors institutional racism and an assimilationist educational model limits both educational and economic opportunities and must be analyzed as a critical problem to be addressed in the education of American Indian youth. (p. 139)

Finally, Deyhle and Swisher (1997) advocated research studies using community-based

research partnerships that are sustained over time.

Alternative conceptualizations of identity, identifying, culture, and race as well as racialized students' engagement and alienation (Dei, 2003; Giroux, 2005) as multi-faceted have extended these discursive intersections that explores race in conjunction with other interlocking dimensions of oppression (class, gender, culture, ability) and the historical, political, and social contexts of schooling (Chartrand, 1992; Dei, 2000; Fisher & Campbell, 2002; Goulet, 2005; Grantham Campbell, 2005; Ryan, 1998; St. Denis & Hampton, 2002; St. Denis, 2002). These researchers critique one-dimensional approaches and theorizing using cultural difference or racism as either/or factors that are micro-level (student/family or teacher/classroom) or macro-level (systemic forms of racism) educational factors for racialized youths and schooling. Scholars examine the confluence of identity and identifying with race, culture, gender, class, and ethnicity in their studies of Aboriginal youths' academic success (Cain, 2002; Grantham Campbell, 2005; Reid, 2001; Ryan, 1999; St. Denis, 2002).

Grantham Campbell's (2005) critical ethnography examined Native youths' transitions to and school achievement in urban school settings (elementary, high school and university) from 1988-1991 in Fairbanks, Alaska. Her border ethnography framework included influences from Anzualda's (1987) physical, political, and psychological spaces, Rosaldo's borderlands as both "home" and "alien," and Giroux's pedagogical borderlands. Grantham Campbell's methods included participant observation, interviews with teachers, students, and Elders, and a student questionnaire. She found that cultural difference and school participation studies under theorize Native youths' adjustment and school achievement.

St. Denis (2002) draws on a poststructuralist theoretical framework of difference and

inequality to challenge cultural explanations for the educational failure of Aboriginal students in Canadian public schools. She conducted a study from 1996 to 1997 with Aboriginal students in schools in Saskatchewan. She used critical discourse analysis (CDA) to analyze the data. Her findings challenged three beliefs: 1) that cultural difference theory sufficiently explains educational failure of Aboriginal students; 2) that educational strategies promoting positive cultural identity and revitalization efforts are sufficient to overcome educational inequality; and, 3) that the presence of Aboriginal teachers in schools helps to eliminate educational failure. St. Denis found that the cultural difference discourse is a "widely accepted explanation for this educational failure" and that the cultural discourse actually "can aide and facilitate practices of inequality" (p. 2). She recommends a dual approach, using culturally relevant education as well as critical race analysis to incorporate constructs of difference, identity, and inequality.

Cain's (2002) phenomenological study involved seven Mi'kmaq student participants (who had come from the school in their home community to complete their intermediate and secondary level education) in a publicly-funded school in Prince Edward Island. She conducted participant interviews with Mi'kmaq students. Cain found that the students had varied experiences of racism, inclusion, group relations, and high school experiences. Her findings support non mono-cultural educational experiences for racialized students.

Ryan (1999) criticizes multiculturalism for its "positive images of the 'cultures' of various racial and ethnic groups to provide greater understanding and tolerance" (p. 10). He similarly criticizes anti-racism for homogenized, positive, cultural representations. He used a critical case study methodology to investigate five topics: difference, race and racism, stereotyping practice, curriculum, student identity and community in schooling, and

language. Methods included talking to teachers, observing classes, key informant interviews with school staff and students, shadowing students, a diversity questionnaire, and parent interviews. Data were analyzed using discourse as a form of power and as "the terrain on which individuals and groups struggle over meaning" (p. 183). Ryan recommends targeting the following educational discourses: stereotypical; curriculum; identity and community; and, language use. As well, he recommends disturbing the knowledge and discourses of social sciences through critical theoretical approaches to address and contest the representation of marginalized groups in secondary schools.

Bazylak (2002) and Young (2003) used Aboriginal research methods of storytelling in their research. Bazylak's research with Aboriginal student participants used methods of storytelling and focusing on the positive. He sought Aboriginal students' stories and perceptions to better understand success "rather than continue to focus solely on the failure of [Aboriginal] students in high school" (p. 135). Young used stories as a way of knowing, rather than explaining. She highlights the relationship between language, identity, and world view. Their approaches consider spirituality, relationality, and success and engage Smith's (1999) projects of reframing, storytelling, and studies that focus on success. They incorporate agency and engagement as relational for Aboriginal students (Graveline, 1998).

Two studies examined teacher preparedness (James, 2003; Goulet, 2005). James' 12-year longitudinal study of undergraduate students in a Faculty of Education in Toronto investigated pre-service teachers' racial understandings in Canadian society through classroom narratives. James' findings integrated issues of ethnicity, race and the confluences of social class, gender, disability, sexuality, and other factors. Goulet studied teacher practices that engaged Aboriginal students. She used teachers' discourses to illustrate the

interplay of culture and colonization. Goulet had three findings: 1) the connectedness in relationship building is fundamental to Aboriginal students' engagement; 2) Aboriginal education needs to move beyond cultural difference to include culture, race, and colonization; and, 3) teacher education need to better prepare teacher candidates.

The studies described above engaged student and/or teacher/administrator participants to investigate school level practices and/or social interactions related to race, culture and/or ethnicity, and class within educational sites. These studies found schools to be cultural sites that structure social categories (such as race, class, gender, and ethnicity) and the formation of ethnic and racial identities for youths. The studies extended the discourse on 'Other' by considering subjectivities and variation among participants, as well as agency, which are typically not found in the cultural difference and racism discourses.

The intersecting discourse illustrates an expanded and more nuanced approach that engages complexity and expanded understandings of identity, culture, and race as well as theorizing and researching beyond the conceptualizations of cultural difference (from a deficit and essentialized perspective) and racism (not contextualized within historical racialization and cognitive imperialism) and as distinct from each other. A many-sided response to youth identity and identifying with schooling connects to culture, race, class, and pedagogy. It also engages youths' subjectivity and agency.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

Introduction

In Chapter 2, I outlined the conceptual frame that guided my study using Indigenous scholars' conceptualizations of identity and identifying, race, and culture in cities and schools. This chapter builds on the discursive frame (Dei, 2001) of the intersecting discourse described in Chapter 2 through the design of my research study. I begin by placing the study within an Aboriginal research framework and then positioning myself within community, research and academic contexts that informed this study. After discussing these larger contexts, I provide an overview of the study, the research participants, the research instruments, and the processes that I used for collecting and analyzing the data.

Decolonizing Research Framework

Because of the nature of this study, I sought an Indigenous methodological framework. This framework is decolonizing research, an approach that Smith (1999) defined as decolonizing methodology; a theory and analysis of how research proceeds and the tools used to gather evidence. Smith acknowledges that non-Indigenous social/organizational settings (school, health care, justice, welfare sectors) are often an entry point for non-Indigenous researchers, because they are a contact zone. Smith advocates that non-Indigenous researchers apprentice with Indigenous groups who can guide the research and the researcher to do decolonized research. Decolonized research literature and experiences inform my research framework.

Battiste (n/d), Graveline (1998), and Smith speak to decolonizing methodologies within education. This study considers the theoretical and practical space to 'challenge the

colonial education project' for *everyone* within the socio-political cultural institution of

public schooling. Graveline describes the process of decolonization within Eurocentric

institutions as challenging the complex system of denial that allows for continued

colonization through acknowledgement and re-visioning. Graveline's project is echoed in

Battiste's assertion that the decolonization project is two-pronged—deconstruction and

reconstruction. Battiste (2002) theorizes decolonized public education

> As teachers begin to confront new pedagogical schemes of learning, they will need to decolonize education, a process that includes raising the collective voice of Indigenous peoples, exposing the injustices of our colonial history, deconstructing the past by critically examining of [sic] the social, political, economic and emotional reasons for the silencing of Aboriginal voices in Canadian history, legitimating the voices and experiences of Aboriginal peoples in the curriculum, recognizing it as a dynamic context of knowledge and knowing, and communicating the emotional journey that such explorations will generate.[55] (p. 20)

In the previous chapter I critiqued outsider approaches to identity (as it intersects with

culture and race in cities and schools) in favour of contextualized approaches. These

contextual approaches relate to identity, culture and race within education. Lawrence (2004)

proposes that "decolonization must involve deconstructing and reshaping how we understand

Indigenous identity" (p. 3). Battiste (2002) contends that a primary goal of educational

systems "…is to help Indigenous students explore the primary questions of who they are,

where they live, and how they are to be enriched by learning" (p. 95).

Decolonizing research critiques the status quo and works towards social changes

(Smith, 1999) with a specific focus of acknowledging colonial history and current racialized

realities and contexts within schooling (Dion, 2005). Indigenous research involves a critical

or decolonizing methodology (Battiste, n/d; Graveline, 1998; Kovach, 2005; Smith, 1999)

with philosophical and political commitments of hearing from/interpreting voices of

experience, acknowledging the history and current reality for those within institutions, and research that advocates a commitment to change.

As noted previously in Chapter 1, this study used an Aboriginal research design (Castellano, 2004) because my study participants were Aboriginal students. The research was undertaken from an intercultural perspective (Cruikshank, 2004; Haig Brown & Archibald, 1996; Sommerville & Perkins, 2003), as I chose to work within the contact zones. Castellano asserts that "much of what is formally called research is addressed to both insider and outsider constituencies" (p. 106) and because of this interaction "…it is essential that the criteria for ethical intercultural research be developed and distributed" (p. 107). Inter-cultural research requires relationality on the part of the researcher, to the research, the research participants, and to the larger community. Smith (1999) developed a set of 10 ethical questions for intercultural researchers to ask themselves:

> Researchers must go further than simply recognizing personal beliefs and assumptions, and the effect they have when interacting with people. In a cross-cultural context, the questions that need to be asked are ones such as:
> > 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? (p. 173)

I respond to Smith's questions through my story of community and academic contexts, and the research process described below. It is through this learning process as apprenticeship that I have gained mentors within the Aboriginal community to support the research, and to whom I am relationally accountable (personally and for bringing the research back to the

community).

Process is critical to Aboriginal research, as it also relates to relationality. Absolon and Willet (2005) explain "…when we talk about research in Aboriginal circles we are not just talking about the goal and the finish; we are talking about everything that happens in between….Aboriginal research methodologies are as much about processes as they are about product" (p. 107).

Reflecting on my study, I found that it emerged through the process and outcomes of my previous involvement in collaborative research and it is an extension of that research. These processes began before this study began and the end is yet unseen; the story is relational to the community and the research needs identified, and it is evolving.

Locating Myself in Community and Research

One of the tenets of Aboriginal research is relationality (Absolon & Willet, 2005; Haig Brown & Archibald, 1996; Kovach, 2005). Relationality includes both the researcher's position in relation to the research (as I described in Chapter 1) as well as one's position in relation to larger contexts. In the following section I relate my study to larger research, community, and academic contexts.

My research process for this study was relational in two ways: the people involved in the research, and the research topics studied. My research for this study was informed by my involvement with community-based research processes. My entry into community-based researching and the urban Aboriginal community began in February 2005 with an informal lunch meeting with a leader in the urban Aboriginal community. This talk led to a series of seven formal and informal discussions with people involved with the Urban Aboriginal Strategy (UAS) project in Thunder Bay. In May 2005, I was invited to a meeting of the

Aboriginal Inter-Agency Committee (AIAC), a local group of Aboriginal agency directors that also includes non-voting directors of non-Aboriginal agencies. In June 2006 I met with the AIAC board and I proposed a community-based research study related to the ongoing Urban Aboriginal Strategy project which was being implemented within several public schools. The community members agreed-in-principle to my work, and two committee members volunteered to meet with me in an ongoing dialogue to determine a more suitable research question related to youth and education in Thunder Bay.

From these meetings with community members, I was invited to the first Thunder Bay meeting of the Urban Aboriginal Task Force (UATF), in July 2005. The UATF study was initiated and commissioned by the Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres (OFIFC), the Ontario Native Women's' Association (ONWA), and the Ontario Métis Aboriginal Association (OMAA) in five sites across the province. I participated in the Urban Aboriginal Task Force research study for the Thunder Bay site as one of three researchers. Our work was guided by the Research Director as well as a Community Advisory Committee (CAC) of Executive Directors of Aboriginal agencies who directed the research process and topics. The CAC identified local research priorities including youth, culture and identity, service delivery, and racism.

Our research team looked at relationships between Aboriginal peoples and the socio-cultural institutions mandated to serve them. The CAC chose to study service delivery to urban Aboriginal peoples in urban Aboriginal, tribal, and non-Aboriginal organizations. Many non-Aboriginal respondents from mainstream organizations spoke to the challenges they faced with growing Aboriginal client populations and the lack of specialized services for Aboriginal peoples (McCaskill et al., 2007). The researchers found that although non-

Aboriginal or mainstream organizations and institutions worked to meet Aboriginal peoples'
service needs, there remains a gap in outcomes among Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal clients
served in institutions such as schools. As well, UATF researchers investigated racism, and
found that participants identified public spaces and institutions (policing and schooling in
particular) as sites where they consistently encountered systemic racism. Thus, participants
identified that the relationships between Aboriginal peoples in cities and institutions include
racialized relationships manifested through interpersonal and systemic forms of racism.

When the data collection was completed and findings were reported out to the CAC
for discussion and writing, further questions emerged around youth, culture and identity, and
youths' perceptions of racism in schools. In my collaboration with CAC members, we
discerned that these topics could be investigated in more depth through a qualitative study
within a local school. Thus, my process answers Smith's (1999) questions of who defined the
research question and the relevance to leaders of Aboriginal organizations within Thunder
Bay. The study may also have relevance for the local school board. A member of the board's
Aboriginal Education Committee has asked me to present to their group; and the Aboriginal
Education consultant from the board office has asked me to present to teachers. All of these
representatives believe that the study may have relevance for their respective groups.

In December 2005, I proposed two research questions based on community
discussions. 1) What are the unintended impacts of (Neighbourhood Capacity Building
Projects) coalition work on students, on teachers, and on schools? or, 2) How do Aboriginal
youth negotiate their identities and identify within the context of public schooling? (01
December 2005, notes). The first question followed-up the Urban Aboriginal Strategy (UAS)
community work and the second followed-up gaps that had been identified from the Urban

Aboriginal Task Force research study. The community members present chose the second question as the focus for my study.

I had originally wanted to conduct the research as a collaborative ethnography (Lassiter, 2004), with community involvement throughout the research process. The community assisted me to develop the research questions and advised on potential schools as research sites, but community will to engage more fully in the study did not materialize. Many of the people whom I had initially approached were fully engaged with the UATF study by January 2006, and they would remain engaged with the study until February 2007. My research proceeded concurrently with the UATF research. By the time these community members engaged with the UATF project were finished the study, I had developed the question that they had selected and selected the sites they had proposed, sought and obtained ethical approval, and collected the data.

Flicker and Savan (2006) found in their Canadian review of community-based research that community members' involvement in researching tends to focus on problem development and developing the methodology to answer the question(s) (participants, research site(s), methods), just as my study had evolved. Community members are typically less involved with data collection, analysis, and the writing process. Community members often re-engage with research dissemination and using findings in the advocacy process (p. 14). My own experience with this research project supported Flicker and Savan's findings. In the UATF study, in contrast, the CAC was very involved in how the final report was written and with developing recommendations for the study.

For my study, I honoured the community involvement given and their direction and guidance with the research. I shall also bring the research back to the urban Aboriginal

community, and will accept additional requests to present this research, or to be involved with other research projects, as I am invited to do so.

Post-UATF, an Aboriginal leader invited me to serve on an institutional and social change project to improve relationships between local police and racialized peoples in Thunder Bay. This community-based research project, *Diversity in Policing*, brought together Thunder Bay Police Services (TBPS) leadership with community leaders from Thunder Bay Indian Friendship Centre, Thunder Bay Multicultural Association, and Diversity Thunder Bay to address institutional racism within policing. These leaders comprised the Project Management Team (PMT). From December 2007 until March 2008, in my role as researcher and in collaboration with the PMT, we worked on institutional change through these activities: conducted a needs assessment of policing with racialized peoples; examined policies and practices; researched training and then created a local training program to address racial profiling for the membership; measured the progress of the TBPS through an implementation evaluation; and, made recommendations to the TBPS for its post-project work on institutional racism.

This study, then, is located within these community-based research projects and ongoing community work. As I explained above, this research study is not the community-based research study I had envisioned; however, I shall share my research in community and with interested groups. As a researcher I have gained knowledge of institutions as contact zones, thereby extending the UATF study findings of racism through the community-based policing project (Diversity in Policing) and schools (dissertation study) with further research on these institutional contexts. My research involvement with the urban Aboriginal community has shaped my thinking on culture and identity and race in significant ways and

influenced this dissertation study.

Another significant event that influenced my dissertation work occurred over the 2006-2007 fall and winter terms as I was collecting data for my study. Although published texts, numerous articles, the RCAP research and reports, and dissertation studies using Indigenous methodologies were acknowledged in the academy, it was not until I did a graduate assistantship in 2007 with Métis scholar Judy Iseke-Barnes that I first participated in a course dedicated to Indigenous social political thought. My awareness and understandings of issues such as decolonization and research methodologies exploded through working with this Indigenous scholar, in ways that I could not have achieved through reading. Dr. Iseke-Barnes' course, *Aboriginal Peoples and the Politics of Decolonization*, as well as my research experiences, contextualized Indigenous research methodologies for me within the urban Aboriginal communities, organizations, and peoples of Thunder Bay. These community and academic contexts as well as an apprenticeship to Indigenous methodologies as theory and method, have been foundational for me in this research study and relationally, beyond the realm of this study.

Method

The purpose of the study was to explore how Aboriginal youths' identities—racial, cultural, tribal, class, gender, and as students—impact how they identify and how their identification(s) confront and complement their identities and others' representations as they are negotiated within the social locations of the city and the school. Through the research I sought to illuminate how youth form and see their own identifications as they are embedded within representations and discourses and at the same time how these youth identify outside of the existing discourses available. The following objectives guided the study:

1)   To observe and discuss with youth how their identities are self-expressed through photography, discussions, and writing.

2)   To unpack youths' relationships with schooling through personal experience as a way of knowing through the stories they shared of engagement and alienation with schooling (Bishop, 1996; Graveline, 1998; Kovach, 2005; Smith, 1999).

3)   To explore the tensions between/among identity and race/gender/culture and class as interlocking and to see if and/or how racialization processes relate to these identities and identifications expressed by students.

4)   To explore systemic forms of racism, institutional and cultural, within the context of a school that disavows interpersonal racism.

5)   To cross the borders between academic and community-based research work to contribute to the scholarly body of research as well as building on studies that have taken place within the community, and sharing my learnings within the urban Aboriginal community.

Data Sources

A decolonized methodology requires hearing the voices of the research participants through the research methods used (Bishop, 1996; Graveline, 1998; Smith, 1999). I selected these data sources based on Bishop's (1996) collaborative stories, Graveline's (1998) first voice as a voice of experience, and Smith's (1999) 25 Indigenous projects. Based in these scholars' methods, I used multiple data sources for this study: student photography, interviewing, group discussions, and letters; teacher and administrator interviews and discussions. Data collection with students consisted of 8 students' photographs using PhotoVoice as a gateway to the initial student interviews, 17 student interviews, 16 student

discussion groups, and five students' letters. I used students' self-generated photographs to encourage and engage students to talk about their identifications with school during the initial interview. As well, the photographs and the initial interviews provided conversation openings for group discussion sessions. The letters were intended to provide an opportunity for students' reflections on identifying with school.

I collected data from teachers and administrators through interviewing and informal discussions. Teachers and administrators' data provided insights into institutional perspectives and the challenges that they identified. I provide more detail on these methods further on in the section on Data Collection.

Sample

Initially 12 students self-selected to participate in the study. Eleven students followed-up by returning consent forms. Of these 11 students, three students left the study and eight students continued through the completion of the study. Of the original eleven student participants, eight were female and three were male. The students ranged from grades 10 to 12. The youngest participant was 15 and the oldest was 20. The remaining nine participants were 16 to 18 years old. All of the student participants were from First Nations communities: four students were from Ojibwe communities; two from Cree communities; and, five were from Oji-Cree communities. Four of 11 students came to Thunder Bay from remote communities. Eight students had come to the city since 2000. The other three students didn't remain in the study long enough for me to know their stories of coming to the city.

The eight student participants, who participated through to the end of the study, are the ones whose stories and experiences appear throughout chapters four and five. Profiles for these student participants are more fully developed at the beginning of Chapter four. The

three study leavers' experiences appear briefly in Chapter four, through the theme of Agency and particularly with disengagement.

I also invited teachers and administrators within the school to participate. Four teachers and two administrators self-selected to participate in the study. Of these six participants, five were female and one was male. These participants had a range of tenure at the school, from one to 17 years. Only one teacher had been at the school for only a year, and she was on a long-term occasional contract. Four participants had been at the school for seven to ten years. The participant with the longest tenure, a teacher, had been at the school for 17 years. All of the teacher and administrator participants were White. Two of the teachers had previously taught in First Nations schools; one taught for a year in a remote Northern community in another province, and one taught for 10 years in two First Nations communities in Northwestern Ontario and then for two years in an urban Aboriginal high school. Profiles for these teacher/administrator participants are shown in Table 1 of the participant profiles, Chapter four.

<div align="center">Research Process</div>

<div align="center">*Gaining Entry*</div>

After receiving ethical approvals from the Research Ethics Board (REB) at Lakehead University and the local school board, I contacted the principal of the high school. It surprised me that the school also had its own informal approval process for doing the study. I had assumed that the board's ethical approval (in which I had named the high school at which I intended to do the research study) also implied school-level approval. I later re-read the agreement and noted this condition of gaining school-level approval from the school officials.

I learned that this was not the case when I met with the principal on 31-10-2006. I explained the study to him/her. The principal voiced some initial concerns about the study, suggested potential alternative sites to the school, and agreed to read the information I left (the REB ethics package and approval from the board). S/he agreed to call me to meet me again and include the guidance counsellor. I left with my own concerns about gaining access to the school and participants. I really didn't know what I would do if the principal and guidance counsellor denied the study in the school, as the site had been recommended by the urban Aboriginal community organizational leaders, based in their experiential knowledge of the local schools.

I returned to the school again on 08-11-2006 to meet with the principal and one of the guidance counsellors to discuss the study, in particular, the ethical parameters around students' participation. The principal had three main concerns around my conducting the study in his/her school:

1) The other, non-participant, students in the classroom. S/he requested that I collect data outside of classes, during spare periods, lunch periods, and after school. I revised my study methods to exclude classroom observation.

2) The Aboriginal student program, led by a local Aboriginal organization in collaboration with a school staff representative, which met weekly. The principal asked me not to engage any Aboriginal student participants after school on the day the group ran.

3) The ethical review process from the board in which I had calculated the student participation hours at approximately 40 hours per student. The principal felt that this level of participation was too onerous for student participants, given that I would not be allowed into their classrooms. The guidance counsellor suggested that I inform students that I required a

minimum of five hours participation. Thus, I set the five hour minimum (which would allow students to participate in taking photographs and two interviews as a minimum requirement).

I considered and then agreed to the principal's three conditions for the study. I did not believe that these conditions would negatively affect the purpose of the study, the community members' input/expectations, engaging participants, or the study's outcomes. The principal and guidance counsellor agreed that student participants could claim the hours spent on the study as volunteer hours needed for graduation. I was pleased, and saw the volunteer hours as another way that I could provide reciprocity for students' participation in my study.

The principal and the guidance counsellor also suggested that I go beyond the high school to interview other Aboriginal students. The principal suggested two other high schools within the board as additional sites, one alternative school and another non-alternative school. They were both concerned that students would not participate in my study. Because the study followed a relational approach, my intent (and community members' guidance and direction) was not to compare students or sites, but to more fully engage students and teachers/administrators within one site. This approach had been determined through a community-based research approach with Aboriginal community leadership. I opted to meet with students initially to determine their interest in participating in the study.

My initial call for student participants went out in November 2006. The guidance counsellor estimated that there were approximately 50-60 Aboriginal students attending the school. I drafted an announcement, seeking Aboriginal students within the high school to participate in a study, and sent the announcement via email to the guidance counsellor. The announcement ran first thing in the morning, at lunchtime, and before the end of the school day on Friday, Monday, and Tuesday, November 10, 13, and 14, 2006.

On Wednesday November 15, 2006 I arrived at the school with pizza, snacks, drinks, copies of consent forms, and a description of the study. The initial meeting with students was held in a multi-purpose room within the school with kitchen and laundry facilities as well as large tables with chairs. It was a good space for group discussions and sharing food. For me, sharing food was an important part of the research process for developing relationships and for reciprocity.

Approximately 15 to 20 Aboriginal students showed up to hear about the study and share food and drink. I described the study orally to the group. The students did not choose to ask any questions about the study in the large group. I "hung around", met students, and answered their questions one-on-one or in small groups. Eleven students requested consent forms and letters. I provided additional consent forms and letters to Emily (pseudonym), the guidance counsellor, and my school contact for the study. She offered to provide information about my study to Aboriginal students, who did not attend the initial meeting for the study, and whom she saw through her work at the school. She directed several student participants to me for more information on the study.

My initial call for teacher/administrator participants went out in November 2006. The principal read and approved my written explanation and s/he permitted me to place the letter and a consent form into teachers and administrators' mailboxes. I included my contact information for them to contact me for further information. Emily suggested that I contact particular teachers, for a variety of reasons but primarily because they taught courses with a higher proportion of Aboriginal students. I followed-up on her suggestions in person with these teachers. Teacher/administrator participants returned consent to participate forms to Emily, who forwarded them to me. To arrange interviews, I contacted the teachers whose

consent forms I had collected, and we mutually agreed to interview times.

Data Collection

Above I outlined the data sources and the study participants. Below I describe how I collected the data with participants. Within this section I also respond to a question posed by teacher/administrator participants, Robert and Emily, about how I engaged student participants with the study.

Smith's (1999) project of celebrating survival involves methods that include creative forms such as story, popular music, and art (p. 145). I used a variety of these methods to collect data. I intentionally ordered these data collection methods with student participants so that the data that I collected and built upon was generated from the students' experiential knowledge of identifying as an Aboriginal student in a public high school.

I used Photovoice with the student participants as the initial data collection method. Wang and Burris (1997) developed Photovoice as a participatory action research method based on the premise that people can best describe their own worlds. They define Photovoice as

> A process by which people can identify, represent, and enhance their community through a specific photographic technique. It entrusts cameras to the hands of people to enable them to act as recorders, and potential catalysts for social action and change, in their own communities. It uses the immediacy of the visual image and accompanying stories to furnish evidence and to promote an effective, participatory means of sharing expertise… (p. 370)

Wang and Burris (1997) identify three main goals of Photovoice: "(1) to enable people to record and reflect their community's strengths and concerns, (2) to promote critical dialogue and knowledge about important community issues through large and small group discussion of photographs, and (3) to reach policymakers" (p. 370). They based their method on the

theoretical literature for critical consciousness (e.g. Friere, 2002) for their work in public health education.

The advantages of using Photovoice are that issues and concerns of the participants, rather than the researcher, are illuminated, that it gives researchers and practitioners the opportunity to perceive the world of school from those who live it, and it is a source of experiential knowledge. As well, this method engages the participants and provides a gateway to further discussion. The limitation of Photovoice is that it is critical by design. Students asked to photograph how they do not fit in and whether they feel safe at school may experience risk if they articulate that information. Because of the risks involved, another limitation is that students may opt to edit their photographs. The opportunity for students to create their own dialogues of identifying with school outweighed the risks.

Once a student returned his/her consent form to the guidance counsellor, I explained the photography work and the nature of the photographs I sought through a list of potential questions, gave the respondents disposable cameras, provided information on using the camera, and took a photograph of him/her as the first one on the roll. One student lost her camera, and I replaced it. Another student returned her camera without having taken any photographs. One student did not pick up his camera from Emily. In all, eight students took from 12-24 exposures and returned the cameras to me. Some of the students needed more guidance with taking photographs while others took to the task without further questions. I provided the following questions to all student participants to guide their picture taking:

- Do you see yourself reflected in the school (the building, the curriculum, the other students)?
- How do you fit in?
- How do you not fit in?
- What safe spaces do you have at school?

- What places aren't safe for you here at school?
- How do you describe yourself as a member of the student body?
- How do you describe yourself as a high school student?
- Who are your friends here at school?
- What do you enjoying doing at school?
- What is the worst thing you face here?
- What roles do you play while you're here (academic and other activities)?

Other relevant questions were generated from the students' photographs.

When I had several students' cameras back, I took them for development. I ordered two hard copies, one for me to use in the study and one for the student to keep, as well as an electronic copy of the photographs. Once the photographs were developed, I contacted the students, either at the group session or through Emily, to set up interviews to discuss their photographs.

Initial interviews were based on students' photographs. The first interviews were individual informal conversation interviews (Patton, 2002). Informal conversation interviews were appropriate as I wanted to query what was relevant to individual students, as illustrated through the photographs s/he had taken. The drawback of using this type of interview is that it is less systematic, making it more difficult to organize and analyze the data (Patton).

To facilitate the interview process, I gave the student his/her developed photographs. The students described each photograph in turn and, if the student did not explicitly state the connection, I used probes to elicit from him/her how the photograph illustrated his/her identity or identification with school. Once the student had finished, I asked him/her to tell me which photograph s/he identified with the most with respect to schooling and why. I marked the photograph(s) chosen as the most important.

For the second individual interviews with students, I reviewed the topics that had evolved out of three data sources with students: 1) photographs, 2) initial interviews, and 3) group discussions. I queried student participants whose voices and experiences had not been heard on the topics that had emerged. The strengths and weaknesses noted for the informal conversation interviews (Patton, 2002) applied for these interviews as well. In Chapters four and five I indicate group discussions that generated future interview questions.

I completed audiotaped, individual interviews with a total of six teacher/administrator participants. All teacher/administrator interviews took place within the school. An interview protocol was developed using a standardized, open-ended interview guide**.** The same open-ended questions were asked to all teacher/administrator participants. This interview guide approach has the advantage of ensuring that key questions are covered with all respondents (Patton, 2002). This approach also facilitates faster interviews that can be more easily analyzed and compared (Patton). The disadvantage of this approach is that it has little flexibility for individuals and their circumstances.

I posed the following questions to teacher/administrator participants:

- When and where do you see Aboriginal students fitting in at this school?
- When and where do you see Aboriginal students not fitting in here?
- Are there designated spaces for Aboriginal students to gather at the school?
- If yes, do they use these spaces to gather?
- Are there other school spaces that Aboriginal students use as a gathering place?
- Do you include Aboriginal students in your school, your classroom(s), or the curriculum?
- If yes, how do you see Aboriginal students reflected at your school?

I did not always follow the questions in the prescribed order. I allowed the teacher/administrator participants to bring in their own perspectives, but I ensured that the questions listed were addressed before the interview ended. I ended the interview by asking if the

interviewee had anything more to add. I also followed up when respondents brought new information to the discussions or afterwards, during transcription, to clarify information.

I had many informal interviews as conversations (Haig Brown, 1992) with student, teacher, and administrator participants. These interviews are different from the informal conversation interviews discussed above, as Haig Brown notes, in that these conversations often involve reciprocity. The interviewer discloses information about him/herself, just as the study participants do. It involves more of a conversational approach, where information is shared. These interviews as conversations were not tape recorded, but I took notes directly following the conversations, noting the date and time and any follow-up questions that these conversations generated.

To collect data, I conducted talking circles (Restoule, 2004) with student participants. Restoule notes that circle methodologies have a process similar to focus groups. The key difference between the two processes is that with circle method the researcher sits amongst the participants and participates fully in the group discussion(s). As in the conversational interview (Haig Brown, 1992), the circle method engages reciprocity through the mutual sharing of information. A disadvantage is that the researcher does not control who shows up for any particular session. I labelled these talking circles as group discussions.

I completed a total of 16 student group discussion sessions over a four-month period -- from November 2006 to February 2007. The sessions were distributed across the months. All 11 original student participants attended at least one group discussion session. Eight students attended more than two sessions. Six students attended at least one session per month or more, over the four months of the study. Teacher/administrator participant, Emily, often came by the group sessions, especially in November as we were getting started. To

mitigate the disadvantage of who participated in sessions and who did not attend, I used the group discussion topics to inform the second interviews with the student participants. If a student participant had not discussed a topic, for example Aboriginal peoples in the curriculum, I asked him/her in the interview if s/he could think of an example of learning about Aboriginal peoples in their courses.

The final form of data collection with student participants involved the students writing letters (Smith, 1999). I requested that students write a letter to a real or imagined person from their community or from the city. I asked students to write about their experiences as Aboriginal students at the high school, and tell the recipient things that would be important for them to know about if they were coming to the high school. An advantage of the letter-writing method is that it used a relational approach, connecting students within the school to those who would follow. Another advantage of the method was that it valued the students' experiential knowledge (Graveline, 1998).

Four students wrote letters about their schooling experiences and handed them to me. One student wrote another letter, to herself, which she shared during a group session. Thus, in all, I collected five student participant letters.

In the course of my study, teacher/administrator participant, Robert, (12-01-2007, interview) asked me to explain, in my methodology section, how I engaged the Aboriginal student participants in the study. He felt that it would be important for future researchers doing similar studies. During the study Emily too noted her surprise that students were coming to see me (14-12-06, personal communication). I honour Robert's request by including his question and Emily's comments, but the answer to why students participated eludes me. In truth, I always had believed that the student participants would come forward

to share their stories of identity and schooling, and they did. Partly their participation might have related to our relationship that shared more 'equalizing power' (Graveline, 1998) than the teacher/student power relationships that existed within the school. Existing teacher/student power relationships might have also explained Robert's and Emily's surprise with students' participation. It might have related to the students wanting to share their stories of how they identify with schooling: most had not been asked before. These students were all positively engaged with schooling during the study, and we valued and celebrated that through the research methods. Thus, these were engaged students' stories and experiences of schooling. As well, I followed Graveline's suggested approach; I used humour and heeded her caution of not taking oneself too seriously. The students responded to humour as two teacher participants, Mary and Jennifer, also noted in their interactions with students (21-12-06, interview and 09-01-07, interview respectively). I also found student participants were motivated to participate in the study for the volunteer hours that they accrued.

I welcomed student participants and shared food, tea, stories, and humour with them. I used Indigenous methods, such as talking circles, for collecting data and interacting with participants, listened to their stories, and offered the students' participation in the study as hours to contribute to their mandatory community involvement hours. Respect for their experiential knowledge and reciprocity guided my interactions. Otherwise, there is little more that I can offer about why the students participated. I am grateful for their time and their stories relating their experiences with the city and the school.

Smith (1999) asks what processes are in place to support the research, researched, and researcher? The research was supported by my supervisor and my committee, the urban Aboriginal community leaders involved through the community-based research process (who

I kept apprised while I was in the school). The school board and the school supported the research by allowing me into the school and access to the student, teacher, and administrator participants. My supports as researcher came from those sources as well as many other critical friends and colleagues. I offered support for student participants by driving them home (whenever possible) after our group discussions finished, providing food during group sessions and interviews, creating an open and confidential environment for sharing information and our stories, and respecting their integrity and privacy.

I completed the data collection for the study as the second semester began, in February 2007. I completed the last student interview on 09-02-07 and the final student participant group session on 07-02-07. At the final group session with the students we once again shared food, drink, and discussion. I thanked the students for telling me about their experiences and sharing their stories of schooling. I handed out the required school forms (Community Involvement Agreement) outlining their volunteer hours of participation for their review and any amendments. I told the students that I would invite them, once I had completed my dissertation report, to a community forum to share the study in community with others. I will invite youth, community members, community leaders, and Elders, so that the youth participants remain anonymous and their identities confidential. I also met with Emily and Robert separately and thanked each of them for their permission and assistance to me in negotiating the study within the school.

Data Analysis

Data from the interviews and the focus groups were fully transcribed. Data from the photographs, group sessions, interviews as chats, and my interview notes and field notes were also recorded in Word. I began the data analysis by using Graveline's (1998) identity

dimensions in her Self-in-Relation model as it related to the data collected. These identity

dimensions included self, family, community, agency, and world. As the study was located

within the high school, I incorporated the dimension of schooling between family and

community. I did this because the study focused on student participants' identifications with

schooling. Students spoke to their relationships with First Nations communities as well as the

city and both are included under the relational dimension of community. Within the identity

dimension of agency, I included students' stories of processes of engagement,

disengagement, and re-engagement with schooling. I did not include Graveline's final

relational identity dimension, world, because study participants did not.

Using the software program, Word, I created a matrix to consider all of the data

collection methods simultaneously by five identity dimensions (self, family, school,

communities, and agency). By using a chart format I was able to view the participants and

their data holistically. This is an abbreviated version of what it looked like, using a sample of

only four participants and one identity dimension (i.e. self):

Identity dimension: Self	Name of participant	Name of participant	Name of participant	Name of participant
Interviews				
Photographs				
Letters				
Group sessions				

Within each identity dimension I analyzed data from all sources and developed codes

to organize the data within a matrix. By doing this I could see where codes repeated across

data sets and participants. Then I collapsed codes into larger themes within each identity

dimension. Racism was a theme that emerged within the school and the community identity

dimensions. Following the literature, I organized race-based data through the existing racism

typology (interpersonal, institutional, and cultural forms) as well as racialization and

cognitive imperialism, as it emerged through the data.

Racism dimension: interpersonal	Name of participant	Name of participant	Name of participant	Name of participant
Interviews				
Photographs				
Letters				
Group sessions				

Once the data were analyzed, and, before writing up the findings, I took my draft

back to community members to discuss my analysis and get further feedback on my data

interpretations. Their reflections on the data were considered and included. One community

member asked that the racism data be integrated within the identity dimensions. S/he asserted

that racism is not separated in institutions or in life for the study participants, so it should not

be presented as separate from identity/identifying in the study. I present the racialization data

in a separate chapter, and then bring together identity dimensions with culture, class, and

racialization to demonstrate how performative identity operates, within the final chapter.

Smith's final three questions ask about positive outcomes and negative outcomes of

the research study, and how negative outcomes were eliminated. At this point I cannot

definitively answer these questions. The ultimate positive outcome would be that

administrators and teachers listen to the student participants' stories and use these students'

experiential knowledge to learn and to facilitate institutional changes within the school. As

for negative outcomes, it was difficult for me to write about racism, as it occurred in the

school and the city while honouring participants. Community members strongly asserted that

I honour participants' stories and the stories coming out of the school to benefit everyone's

understandings of how racism operates at interpersonal and at systemic levels, and how these

remain interconnected. There are few examples to follow. I am grateful for the samples of work from scholars that I received to guide my writing about a difficult subject.

As well, I took care to respect participants' anonymity. The urban Aboriginal community in Thunder Bay is small and there are many relational connections. Information, which I believed could have identified student participants, based on descriptions of families and/or communities, was omitted. Any participants' data that could identify him/herself or another participant was left out. I did this to respect participants' confidentiality and anonymity and to mitigate potential negative outcomes of the study.

Ethical Considerations

This research underwent an ethical review by the Research Ethics Board (REB) at Lakehead University. I was granted ethical approval for the study via letter. Castellano (2004) advocates for REBs in post-secondary institutions to raise additional considerations for researchers who are proposing to do Aboriginal research. The REB review process for my study did not include any additional requirements. I included an additional requirement in the REB ethical review. I included sharing my research with the urban Aboriginal community and other interested guests via a community forum. The urban Aboriginal community organizational members, with whom I had consulted for the study, agreed to co-host the community forum.

This research also underwent an ethical review process by the school board. Within this ethical review process I indicated the school at which I intended to collect the data. I was granted ethical approval from the board. I also got approval from the school officials.

Informed consent

I made participants aware of the nature of the study, their role in it, the provisions for both confidentiality and anonymity, and their options to withdraw from the study at any time. For student participants I explained the study orally and then gave them the same information in a letter attached to an informed consent form for their signature, if they were 18 years old or over, or for their parents or guardians and them to sign (if they were under 18). On the guidance counsellor's advice, I orally gave students guidelines around the hours of participation that I expected of them for the study. For teacher/ administrator participants, I put information in a letter into each of their mailboxes at the school; this information included a letter introducing myself and the study and an informed consent form for signature. Teacher/administrator participants returned signed consent form and contact information to Emily, the contact for the study. She collected these forms and passed them to me for follow-up. (See Appendices A, C, D, and E to view these documents.)

I informed student participants that their participation would be based on taking pictures, participating in interviews and group sessions, and writing letters. I informed teacher/administrator participants that their participation would be based on one-on-one interviews, both formal and informal. I informed both students and teachers that they could choose voluntarily to share additional data (such as school assignments or talk about issues that arose while I was in the school). All data collected were kept confidential and anonymous.

Ethical considerations included the following:

- All data remained confidential and anonymous and were viewed only by myself and my supervisor, Mary Clare Courtland, as necessary.

- The hard data will be securely stored at Lakehead University for seven years. Electronic data will be securely stored on a password-protected hard drive by Mary Clare Courtland at Lakehead University for seven years.

- I will share information gleaned from this study with research participants, community members (with the Urban Aboriginal Strategy (UAS), the Urban Aboriginal Task Force and others), and the larger urban Aboriginal community through presentations and a research summary of the study.

- I will do additional presentations about the study to community groups as invited.

Above, in the section on methods, I detailed the purpose. Based on the purpose, I outlined the data sources, the participants who took part in the study, the ethical approvals from the university and school board levels, and how I engaged participants around informed consent. These are important considerations for any study. I also addressed the relevant questions posed by Smith (1999) for doing inter-cultural research. The following sections continue to address Smith's questions. As well, I detail the research procedures that I followed to conduct the study.

Introduction

There are three sections within this chapter. In the first section, I describe the organizing framework that I have adapted from Graveline's (1998) Self-in-Relation model. The second section presents the study participants' profiles. All participant names are pseudonyms. The last section discusses the findings and the interpretation

I adapted Graveline's (1998) Self-in-Relation model (discussed in Chapter 2) to represent identity and identifying through five inter-related themes: self-identity/ identifying (and representation); family; school; community (First Nations and the city); and, agency. I illustrate the model in Figure 1, to introduce the organizing framework that I used for the findings and discussion that follow.
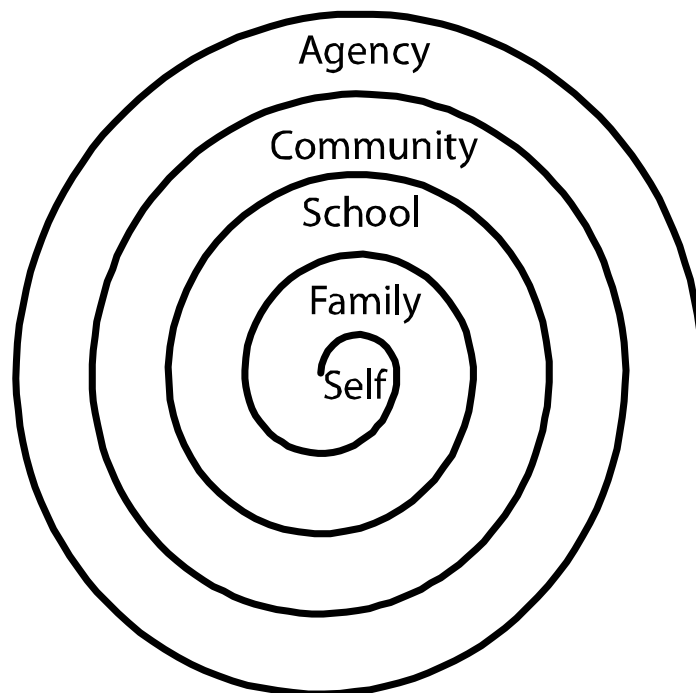
Figure 1: Self-in-Relation identity and identification model (adapted from Graveline, 1998)

Thus, each of the five themes within the model contains the findings and a discussion of the findings for the study participants. I begin with the theme 'self' and move outwards to larger contexts through the themes of the model.

<div align="center">Participant Profiles</div>

Participants included students and teachers/administrators. I provide profiles below for these participants. As well, I weave in personal stories from Muk Kee Qweh, an Anishnabe Elder with whom I co-researched a study based on her storytelling.

As mentioned in Chapter 3, there were originally 12 student participants, eight females and four males. One of the male participants, Matthew, and three of the female participants, Sarah, Cedar, and Courtney, left the study within the first month. Two of the three students disengaged with the school and the study. Eight student participants continued to the end of the study: Isabel, Emmett, Amber, Tricia, Lorraine, Tyler, Ella, and Jade.

<div align="center">*Students*</div>

Isabel

Isabel was from an Oji-Cree community in the Nishnawbe Aski Nation territory. The fly-in community is accessible by winter road for several months in the winter. She left the community with her family after having completed grade 4 at the elementary school on reserve. Isabel lived in Thunder Bay with her mother and her older brother. During the study, she lived in a neighbourhood distinguishable for its low income housing and large number of Aboriginal families. Isabel was 17 years old in grade 11 for the second time. She had previously left high school for several semesters to return to her home community. In grade 9 Isabel had originally enrolled in the general program. During the study, she was repeating some courses at the academic level to expand her options at the post-secondary level. Isabel

did not speak Oji-Cree. She enrolled in the Ojibwe language and culture course offered as a pilot course at the high school.

Emmett

Emmett was from an Ojibwe community of the Anishnabek Nation's (Union of Ontario Indians) territory. The community is within an hour's drive of a small north-western Ontario town. Emmett and the other students from the reserve were bussed to an elementary school and later a high school in a nearby small town. At age 18, Emmett left his home community to move to Thunder Bay. At the time he left his community he was not attending school. He left on his own to complete high school in Thunder Bay. Emmett was 19 years old and doing both grades 11 and 12 coursework. He needed to graduate because he was turning 20. Emmett accessed social assistance while attending school. During the second semester he was offered a part-time job from the employer with whom he had recently completed his co-op placement. In the city Emmett belonged to a group of singers and dancers. He had not learned Ojibwe at home or at his elementary school. Since coming to the city he had determined to learn his language. During the study, Emmett had enrolled in an Ojibwe language program offered by an urban Aboriginal agency.

Amber

Amber was the only student participant who had recently come to the city from her home community, an Oji-Cree community in Nishnawbe Aski Nation's territory. She had come to the high school the previous year for grade 11. Her first language was Oji-Cree. She learned English in the elementary school on her reserve. She lived as a boarding student in Thunder Bay. Her sister had joined her this year at the high school. Amber was 16 and completing her final semester of grade 12. In February, after the data collection for the study

was completed, Amber was accepted into a community college for post-secondary studies. She planned to return home for the summer break, before beginning her post-secondary studies.

Tricia

Tricia was also from a remote, Oji-Cree community within Nishnawbe Aski Nation's territory. Tricia left the reserve with her mother and siblings when her parents separated. She attended several elementary schools within Thunder Bay. Like Isabel, she also lived in a neighbourhood distinguishable for its low income housing and Aboriginal families. Although eligible, she had chosen not to attend the Aboriginal high school in Thunder Bay. Tricia was 17 years old and in grade 11. Tricia played on the girls' volleyball team. She loved volleyball because it connected her to her home community.

Lorraine

Lorraine was from an Ojibwe community within Nishnawbe Aski Nation's territory. Her grandfather was the Chief in her community. Lorraine had completed her elementary schooling on reserve. Lorraine was not a fluent Ojibwe speaker, although the school had an Ojibwe teacher who taught elementary students. She planned to take the Ojibwe language and culture pilot course at the school. Lorraine had moved to the city the previous year with her step-father and her siblings. Her mother had stayed in her home community to work. Lorraine traveled from Thunder Bay back to her community to see her mother whenever she could. She went home for the summer to work, during March break, and to attend the annual winter carnival. She had many relatives in Thunder Bay and in her home community. She was 15 and in the general program in grade 10. Lorraine planned to attend college after getting her high school diploma.

Tyler

Tyler was from an Ojibwe community of the Union of Ontario Indians' territory. He had left his home community as a young boy and had lived with his family for many years out of province. His family moved to Thunder Bay when he was 14 years old and he attended a local high school. During the year Tyler learned that he could not live with his family and attend high school. At age 15 he left them and went to live with his auntie in the city. Shortly thereafter his family left Thunder Bay. Tyler transferred to the high school that his cousin attended. During the study, he lived in the same neighbourhood as two other participants, an area distinguishable for its low income housing and large number of Aboriginal families. At school Tyler played basketball daily. He was 17 and in grade 10. He did well in his courses. He did not speak Ojibwe fluently; and he was not taking the Ojibwe language and culture pilot course offered through the school. He intended to attend post-secondary education at college upon graduation. He envisioned using his college education skills within his home community.

Ella

Ella was from a remote Oji-Cree community within Nishnawbe Aski Nations' territory. While attending grade 7 on reserve, Ella's family had moved to Thunder Bay for her father's work. She went back to her home community for holidays and school breaks as often as possible. She graduated grade 8 at a local elementary school. Ella came to the high school in grade 9, in part because she was ineligible to attend the Aboriginal high school at the time. When she was in grade 9, Ella's grandmother died. She stopped attending classes, and failed her credits. Ella turned 18 during the study, and was in grade 11. She anticipated graduating in two years. Upon graduation she explained that she might return to her

community to work there.

Jade

Jade was also from a remote Oji-Cree community within Nishnawbe Aski Nation's territory. She moved with her family to the city as a young girl. During the study, she lived in the same neighbourhood as three other participants. The neighbourhood was distinguishable for its low income housing and large number of Aboriginal families. Jade attended most of her elementary schooling at local schools in Thunder Bay. Jade started high school last year. Jade was 15 and in grade 10. She had passed all of her credits since starting high school. Jade had many family members who had completed post-secondary education. She was certain that she would go on to post-secondary education. Jade did not speak Oji-Cree. She enrolled in the Ojibwe language and culture pilot course at the school. She was excited to attend a class of Native students, many of whom were friends and relatives. During the study, Jade played on the girls' volleyball team.

<div align="center">

Teachers and Administrators

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Because I did not develop the same relationships with the teacher/administrator participants at the school, I cannot provide introductions to each participant in the same detail as the student participants above. For teacher and administrator profiles, please see Table 1.

Table 1

Teacher/Administrator Profiles

Name	Andrea	Emily	Jennifer	Kelly	Mary	Robert
Gendered identity	Female	Female	Female	Female	Female	Male
Role at school	Family studies teacher	Guidance counsellor	Science teacher	Co-op teacher/ student success	Art teacher	Principal
Years @ school	17	7	9	10	1	8
FN* teaching (in years)	N/A	N/A	Yes—1 in a remote FN	NA	Yes—10 in FN; 2 in urban Aboriginal	N/A
Race	White	White	White	White	White	White

*First Nation school on reserve

As well, several years ago, I worked with Muk Kee Qweh (Frog Lady), also known as

Dolores. She is an educator, an Elder, and a storyteller. We collaborated on a study of

storytelling that "involved an Anishinabe Elder describing, through her personal stories, her

experiences of living and teaching interculturally within a variety of social, cultural, and

political contexts" (Desmoulins, 2005/2006. p. 119). Elders' stories hold important lessons

about life and living (Cruickshank, 2004; Graveline, 1998). I have incorporated Muk Kee

Qweh's stories as guiding lessons and added her voice to inform and complement the

students' experiences within the high school. Her stories and her experiences returned

to/resonated with me as I coded and analyzed the data for this study. I privilege her

experiential knowledge to inform and illuminate the participants' storied experience within

this study.

Identity Negotiation and Identifying

Self

Within the study, student participants identified, alternately and sometimes

concurrently, as Aboriginal students, and as students within the larger student body at the

school. In their interviews, photographs, and group sessions, respondents also shared their perceptions of negative representations of Aboriginal students held by others (teachers and students) within the school. Student participants also talked about their identifications with these groups of teachers and students. During the time that the study took place; the boards of education in Thunder Bay were considering an Aboriginal Voluntary Self-Identification policy. Teacher/administrator participants spoke about this initiative and I include it here as a representation of identity. Finally, students also identified with the Ojibwe and Oji-Cree languages of their home communities, particularly those participants who did not speak their natal languages. Participants' discourses on the first dimension, self, are presented below. To begin, the Aboriginal student participants talk about identifying as an Aboriginal student within the school.

Identifying as an Aboriginal Student

Student participants had a range of identifications. Some, but not all, students identified as Aboriginal students. The students that identified as Aboriginal students added qualifications to their self-identifications. Other student participants chose to identify with the larger student body. All of the student participants' self-selected as Aboriginal students for this research study and yet many of these participants qualified and/or resisted identities as Aboriginal students within the school. For some students, Aboriginal student identity was integral to self. For example, Isabel said "I see myself in a number of ways, but mainly that I'm an Aboriginal student. I just live it…" Isabel added that she perceived constraints to her student identity. She believed that these constraints were imposed by others' essentialized and negative perceptions of Aboriginal students. She noted that "…sometimes I would like to prove that I'm just not an Aboriginal student, I'm just a student. And I have dreams like

everyone else, and there are things I want to do… And to show that not all, not everyone has to be the same" (13-12-06, interview). Isabel's concept of living an Aboriginal student identity was expressed matter-of-factly by Jade. Her response was an identity statement of 'how I am' rather than a label of 'what' she was. She said "that's how I am; I can't change that" (11-12-06, interview). She portrayed her Aboriginality as fixed and non-essentialized.

Isabel embraced living as an Aboriginal student (as identifying with),but rejected the label of 'Aboriginal student' because she perceived it to have negative connotations by others and that being an Aboriginal student constrained her academic goals (not identifying with). She wanted to be seen for herself, for her skills, to 'prove' her academic abilities as a student.

Isabel's rejection of the 'Aboriginal student' label and connotations was reiterated by Lorraine and Tyler. These two participants focused solely on their roles as students, which they expressed as central to their goals of schooling. Lorraine saw herself "just as a student at the school. I'm here to get an education" (14-12-06, interview). Tyler also didn't connect personally to an Aboriginal student identity. He explained that "I don't really identity myself as that [Aboriginal, First Nations, from reserve name]…Just a student at [name of school], like everyone else" (08-12-06, interview). His sense of belonging was to the larger group, all students, rather than identifying with the group of Aboriginal students attending the high school. Neither Tyler nor Lorraine chose a racial identification. Tyler rejected any pan-Aboriginal or nationhood identities in relation to schooling.

Like Tyler and Lorraine, Emmett emphasized his student identity within the school first. Unlike Tyler and Lorraine, he did not identify with the larger student body, but reflected on his student self. He said, "Myself? As an Aboriginal student? How I see myself. I'm quiet but I can get along, I can get along easy, I'm not a trouble maker. I do my work; when I try

my best I do my work. I get my work done." (12-12-06 interview). Within the same interview, Emmett reflected on his identity as constructed in difference from the larger student body. He told me that "I'm one of the only guys, me and my friend [name], are the only ones with long hair in the school. The only Native ones" (12-12-06, interview). Emmett emphasized this difference as important to him, as an assertion of his right to claim his own identity. He created and expressed this difference by having long hair, thus marking himself as an Aboriginal man. He identified himself as a student while maintaining a Native identity thorough physical appearance that transcends the social location of schooling.

Students' Perceptions of Others' Views

In the data above Isabel asserted that as an Aboriginal student she had to negotiate negative stereotypes; but she did not elaborate on the sources of those perceptions and stereotypes. Later, both Isabel and Jade said that they perceived that these negative stereotypes came from the teachers and the other classroom staff. Jade stated, "I guess some teachers think, you know, the Native students are stupid in a way. They think they need help most of the time. But not really. We can do work. Sometimes we get lazy, but still. We're not that dumb" (11-12-06, interview). Jade resisted the teachers' negative stereotypes of Native students as less capable than other [non-Aboriginal] students in the classroom. She noted that "I think that they [teachers] think not a lot of Native students pass. They don't get their high school diplomas. I don't want to be like that really" (11-12-06, interview). Jade's sense that teachers labeled Aboriginal students and that she didn't 'want to be like that' is echoed by Isabel. She was aware of stereotypes and perceptions, held by others in the school, about Aboriginal students in general. She, too, resisted being unfairly labeled. Consistent with Jade's perception that Native students don't pass, she stated, "I don't want to be in a category

of these people…" (13-12-06, interview). Jade and Isabel tacitly resisted esentialized

representations of Aboriginal students. Significantly, both students sensed that they could be

Native students or good students, but teachers had no category of good Native students.

Jade's and Isabel's resistance to being categorized (by teachers or grouped with

others) brought me back to my study with Frog Lady or Muk Kee Qweh, the Anishnabe

Elder/educator. While telling her stories, Muk Kee Qweh showed the same resistance to

being seen as Native, rather than being seen for her gifts. Muk Kee Qweh articulated the

perceptual borders that she crossed in relation to others and to schools:

> I went to teacher's college, and at that time, while at teacher's college I felt I want to
> teach, I want to get a job because I'm Dolores, the teacher. Not Dolores the Native.
> Because wherever I went, people say, oh, you're going into teaching, that's good. We
> need more Native teachers. We need them to come to our homes, you know, to our
> reserves to teach. Well, that wasn't my intention. The first time I wanted a teaching
> job in a non-Native school just to prove that I got hired because I was a teacher; not
> because I was Dolores the Native. So I told everybody that I'm going to teach down
> east and they said "huh, teaching jobs are hard to get and you are a Native, going to
> get a job down there, never! Indian Affairs told me that. (28-05-2003)

Later in her story Muk Kee Qweh related that she had faced negative perceptions

within the urban Aboriginal community where she lived. She felt she had to justify to a local

community leader why she wasn't teaching in a reserve community. She explained to him

that "…first of all, I have to prove to myself that I'm good enough to teach any child and to

do that I had to teach for a White system, White school. They accepted me as a teacher, not

because I was Dolores the Native" (28-03-2003). Muk Kee Qweh saw herself within the

border zone of schooling as a teacher in the public system, and chose to prove herself as a

teacher within that contact zone.

Similar to Muk Kee Qweh, Isabel described being an Aboriginal student in a public

high school and negotiating her identity and her belongingness as a student in the school with

teachers and their perceptions of her as part of the larger group of Aboriginal students. She perceived that "they don't think that you can do it" (15-12-06, group session). Isabel told the group about her math teacher's assessment of her abilities. She explained that "he told my mom and [name of teacher] that I shouldn't be in advanced math" (29-11-06, group session). Like Muk Kee Qweh, Jade and Isabel spoke to societal and teachers' perceptions of negative, esentialized representations of Aboriginal students within the contact zone of schooling. They faced challenges identifying with schooling because of others' perceptions of them as less than competent.

Amber, Emmett, and Tricia took another perspective. These students focused on how teachers viewed them as students, distinct from larger stereotypes. Amber said that "[Teachers see me] as a good student" (18-12-07, interview). Emmett described teachers' perceptions of him as "hard working" (12-12-06, interview). Tricia explained that "I usually get told that I have a lot potential. They say that I'm really smart but I don't have the habit of doing my work all the time. A problem there" (09-01-07, interview).

Identifying With Other Students

Isabel illustrated her desire to distance herself from her teachers' perceptions of Aboriginal students as a group. She also believed that she needed to distance herself from her perceptions and experiences of other Aboriginal students. Isabel explained that "I don't fit into the usual Aboriginal group that I've known. Like I said, I want to be an individual. I think that making it on the Honour Roll is more important to me than having a big social life or being popular. Having good grades is more important to me than that" (13-12-06, interview). Isabel viewed a social life with other Aboriginal students and getting good grades as an either/or (i.e. binary) situation for her at school.

Emmett did not socialize with other Aboriginal students within the high school for different reasons. He explained that "I don't really hang around with all the other Aboriginal students, like some of them are my family like my cousins, and I just really say hi to them whatever but they're just not my type of people to hang out with" (12-12-06, interview).

Tricia did not distance herself from other students at the high school, but she noted that "when I tell them [other students] that I'm from a fly-in community up north, they usually don't ask any more questions" (14-12-06, interview). Tricia sensed that her peers categorized 'Aboriginal students from remote First Nations' as an essentialized group and that a unique student from a remote northern community was not a possibility for them.

Ella had different experiences. She juxtaposed her experiences as a student at an elementary school here in the city and the changes that occurred for her when she entered high school:

> Um, I don't really, I don't really talk to like, the [non-Aboriginal] people I graduated from, I mean with, from [name of school] and I don't really talk to them anymore. And then I usually just talk to the Aboriginal students that are here. And I don't really talk to them now 'cause they're, I guess I can say, they are like really more like immature and I don't like that. I don't know. (12-12-06, interview)

She had distanced herself from the non-Aboriginal friends that she had from elementary school. Ella did not elaborate on what had changed in the relationships with her peers from elementary school. For Ella, high school became a more segregated space (a bordered racial zone) that she had not experienced in her elementary school relationships.

Jade acknowledged the Aboriginal students in the high school, when identifying with other students. She perceived the growing number of Aboriginal students in the high school as positive; she noted advantages in terms of reducing discrimination from students and teachers through numbers. She said "no one really says anything because there's a lot of

other Native students here…We all talk to each other, you know" (11-12-06, interview).

Jade made reference to the growing number of Aboriginal students in the high school. This growing population has also been noted by the public and separate school boards of Thunder Bay. The growing cohort of Aboriginal students led to a joint (public and separate board) initiative called the Voluntary Aboriginal Student Self-identification policy.

Voluntary Self-identification Policy

Although the Voluntary Aboriginal Student Self-identification initiative had not yet been established in the local school boards when I began the study at the high school, there was talk about it among the local school boards because another board within a northern community, Kenora, had recently initiated a voluntary Aboriginal student self-identification policy (www.thestar.com/GTA/NativeEducation/article/108111 - 59).

I spoke with teacher/administrator participants, Robert and Emily, to get their perspectives on the Voluntary Aboriginal Self-Identification policy as the school board considered its implementation in local schools. Both Robert and Emily spoke favourably about the initiative for Aboriginal youth to self-identify in our conversations.

Emily saw the need for the self-identification policy. In our interview, she noted the lack of a self-identification policy:

> I mean, they [Aboriginal students] don't self identify, so we're only really picking them up because I've asked teachers to identify the Aboriginal students in their classrooms. They're not allowed to say that because they're not supposed to, but we needed a list for the [name of program] so we could target how many there are. So, I did get a list from teachers, but if somebody doesn't look Native then they obviously didn't get that student on the list. We have fifty plus [Aboriginal students]. (18-12-06, interview)

Emily wanted to be able to collect demographic data on Aboriginal students to target them. She does not elaborate on the purpose of targeting them, but needed the students' names:

Leisa: And if the board goes through a self-identification of Aboriginal students which is in the planning stages, and certainly it's happening in [name of city], is that something that would help you in your job, do you think?

Emily: Yeah, it would make it a lot easier, all I have to ask is for is a printout of the Aboriginal students. The only ones that we know of are the ones that come in from out of town, from the outlying areas and they're covered by the tuition agreement. But those are the only ones we know. The others that live here with their parents—what we know are the ones that are boarded here—the ones that live here are the urban Aboriginals. The ones that live here with their parents, we really don't know." (18-12-06, interview)

Emily used an external representation of identity when she differentiated between students from outlying communities at the school on tuition agreements from 'urban Aboriginal students' who live in the city with their families. Emily indicated that she didn't know the urban Aboriginal students. Before the study, she knew Tyler, Ella, Isabel, Jade, and Tricia, as Aboriginal students. None of these students were at the school on tuition agreements, as they lived in the city. Tuition agreements are formal agreements in place for on-reserve First Nations' students who must leave their communities to attend provincial schools. Many First Nations communities receive federal funding to operate schools only in the elementary grades. Provincial public schools receive funding for First Nations students to attend their schools. Emily did not elaborate on why it would be easier for Aboriginal students to self-identify, or for what purpose she would use the data.

Like Emily, Robert articulated a positive perspective on Aboriginal voluntary self-identification, despite his perception of possible risks or backlash from communities:

I think when you start to ask people, whether it's Native or Slovak or whatever they are, you run a risk. But the other part is it's not being done to be in detriment. I think it's [voluntary self-identification] being done in support of those people. So, once you clear out why am I having to identify whether they are an Aboriginal, whatever national background I have. I think the bottom line is it's looking for, how do you give support for these students? Once you get past that why, I think you can start

putting out information or supports for those people in place. (12-01-07, interview)

Robert believed that the policy was being implemented to provide supports to Aboriginal students in the high school. In his explanation of the Voluntary Self-identification policy, Robert did not differentiate ethnic identities (e.g. Slovak) from what he named national identities (i.e. Aboriginal). As well, Robert did not acknowledge, or perhaps he was not aware, that the Voluntary Self-identification policy used legislative identity choices for students to self-identify (i.e. First Nations, Métis, or Inuit), or racialized identities. His use of the term 'identities', whether intentionally or unintentionally, followed the definitional approach to identities of the racialized discourse on identities and identifying, as historical and federally legislated within the Indian Act (as overviewed previously in Chapter 2). Thus, the acceptance of self-identity categories has become naturalized. They are the categories available, and are viewed as normalized groupings. These legislative identities (Lawrence, 2003; Churchill, 1999; Smith, 1999) intersect with schooling and how Lawrence connects identity definition to external colonizing society (p. 1) that I discussed earlier within the literature review of Chapter 2. The intersection of a colonized, political identity to representations within schooling overlaps the border zones of the political realm of power with education and other sectors of society. Smith writes to the phenomenon across colonized countries of legislative identities and borders regulated by colonizers stating that

> …legislative identities which regulated who was an Indian and who was not, who was a *metis*, who had lost all status as an Indigenous person, who had the correct fraction of blood quantum, who lived in the regulated spaces of reserves and communities, were all worked out arbitrarily (but systematically), to serve the interests of the colonizing society. (p. 22, original emphasis)

Emily and Robert did not articulate how the Aboriginal Voluntary Self-identification Policy would serve the interests and needs of students, families, and communities (home and the

city). Robert did not demonstrate understanding of or articulate supports that could/would be provided to self-identifying Aboriginal students to mitigate the risks involved for these students' self-identifications as constructed through legislative identities.

In the quotation above, Robert used the term 'national background' as consistent with 'Aboriginal'. Here Robert's use of the term 'national' equates to pan-Aboriginal (i.e. including First Nations, Métis, and Inuit), rather than examples of Nationhood (e.g. Ojibwe, Cree, Métis, or Algonquin) or self-selected identities (Alfred, 1999; Lawrence, 2003). The brochure for the policy, and its legislative self-identity choices, is located in Appendix F. Student participants did not speak to the Voluntary Self-identification policy. Many students addressed language as related to their identity and with identifying also.

Language and Identity

Amber was a study participant who spoke Oji-Cree as her first language (18-12-06, interview). She explained that "I had to learn English at school" (24-01-08, interview). Some of the other student participants, Emmett, Tyler, Ella, and Loraine, who did not speak an Indigenous language, were the most animated about the connection of self-identity to language. They spoke of not learning the language while in public schools (either on reserve or in other communities) as well as the importance of learning their language themselves, for relational reasons.

Ella expressed her wish that she could speak Oji-Cree. She connected language to family and community. She spoke Oji-Cree with her grandparents whenever she returned to her home community, but her grandmother often switched to English early in their conversations (28-11-06, group session). After the school Christmas break, when Ella returned from her home community to the city, she told a story of a telephone conversation

she had had with her grandfather. Over the phone her grandfather gave her a message in Oji-

Cree. Ella related the story with many "uh huhs" on her part. Finally her Grandpa switched to

English, said "Go to the post office" and hung up (09-01-07, group session).

In reflecting on his schooling, Emmett noted

And I went to a school with like Italians and it wasn't Native that's for sure. We had to go to that school and it was mostly Italians; there weren't a lot of Natives there. There weren't a lot of people that talked it [Ojibwe language]. (22-01-07, interview)

Emmett also reflected that learning Ojibwe was not a priority for him while he lived in his

home community, but that his valuing of speaking Ojibwe has grown as he's matured:

And on my reserve there weren't a lot of Natives that talked Ojibwe. And I kinda remember hearing my dad heard him on the phone and talking to my mom in Ojibwe. By that time I was thinking about living here. And when I was younger, I didn't really care. As I've gotten older, language is a big part of my life. It's almost like a couple of students here have their language because it was in their school and I wish I could have learned it in school. (22-01-07, interview)

He again illustrated his valuing of language when he said "But I'm trying to learn.

And there's a language course at [name of organization] on Thursdays in February" (22-01-

07, interview) that he intended to attend. Like Ella, he connected language with community.

Lorraine made a connection between language learning and culture. She noted that

she would like to "learn more about my language. Learn more about my culture" (14-12-06,

interview). She explained that although Ojibwe language classes were offered in her

elementary and secondary schooling on-reserve, she did not learn Ojibwe there because "[the

teacher] didn't really explain it well to me or I didn't understand it 'cause I didn't learn it

there" (30-01-07, interview). These participants identified with language connected to

identity, relationally with their families, cultures, and communities, and to world views. It is

significant that these three students also connected language to something lacking for them.

Young (2003) writes about the connection between language and identity, and how one's identity is connected fundamentally to one's world view: "…the relationship between language and identity is not so different from that between language and world view. I see it as one in the same… (p. 104). Battiste (1998) re-iterates the fundamental connection of language to identity, and describes Indigenous languages as tool for Indigenous knowledge transmission, to invoke a world view. She also adds the connection to healing. She writes

> Indigenous languages offer not just a communication tool for unlocking knowledge; they offer a process of orientation that removes us from rigid noun-centred reality and offers an unfolding paradigmatic process for restoration and healing. It reflects a reality of transformation and change in its holistic representations and processes that stress interaction, reciprocity, respect, and non-interference. (p. 24)

Thus Battiste (1998) and Young (2003) assert that the re-vitalization of Indigenous languages connects to relational identities and world views for Indigenous peoples. These themes also connect to how students connected language to culture and to mitigating loss, and to strength through healing and through deeper relational and cultural connections.

School personnel saw Indigenous languages as a tool from a fundamentally different perspective. They saw language courses as a means to support Aboriginal students' engagement with schooling. To assist with Aboriginal students identifying with/connecting to school, the high school was piloting a language and culture credit beginning the next semester (Emily, 27-11-06, discussion). Further on, in the theme of school, I discuss the Ojibwe language and culture classes that were introduced into the school while I was doing the study. Students spoke about their engagement with the Ojibwe language and culture course, their initial perspectives on the course, and their reactions to the course.

In the discussion above, student participants related the connection of language to their self-identity as well as connecting language relationally to larger family and

community. These family connections are explored in more depth through the next theme.

Family

Family is the next inter-related identity dimension. This theme iterates back to self relationally, because self is embedded within the family. Students and teacher/administrator respondents talked about family in relation to identity and schooling. Many of the student participants identified with family members relationally as role models, life teachers, and supports related to their schooling. Two student participants had broken their iteration between self and family. I present their discourses further in the section on agency. Within family, I juxtapose the way the students talked about families with the teacher/administrator participants' discourses on Aboriginal families and schooling. Participants' discourses provided a glimpse into the complexity of school and family as it is lived by students and as it is perceived by teacher/administrators.

Student Discourses of Family and Schooling

Five student participants talked about family members as their role models for school. Lorraine, Tricia, Jade, Ella, and Tyler named family members as role models for schooling. Lorraine chose role models from her family, but she had a hard time choosing one. She noted that "My mom's job's pretty cool. And my step-dad. Or my grandpa -- he's the Chief" (14-12-06, interview). In a later interview, talking about post-secondary education and careers, Lorraine mentioned a cousin of hers because of his/her occupation: "Probably [name] …S/he's a police officer and that's what I want to do" (30-01-07, interview). Her choices of familial role models related specifically to job choices that Lorraine knew of and was considering for herself. Like Lorraine, Tyler focused on job choices. He did not talk about following in his sister's chosen career path, rather he spoke of his pride in what his sister had

accomplished: "she's got a degree in electrical engineering… I think she got her Master's, and I'm pretty proud of her, yeah" (08-12-06, interview).

Tricia's choices were not job specific. She named several relatives because they had completed post-secondary degrees. She said "Well there's my aunts. They both went to college and university and I think that's just crazy. [laughs] And my mom went to university. Well that took her some time 'cause she had me" (09-01-07, interview). Tricia's role models were all women in her family.

Jade also identified relationally with family members as role models: "my family, I guess. Cause most of them finished university and stuff like that, my family. Or they are doing university right now. My auntie came here and she finished high school by the time she was 17. And she finished college by the time she was 19. And she's in university right now too" (11-12-06, interview).

Ella expressed pride in her father as a role model for schooling. His story of schooling resonated with her. She explained:

> And he told me that he dropped out of school for one semester, and then he asked the Board if he could make up the four credits while he was doing the four more credits. He got those four credits and within two months. He did all the work and yeah." (12-12-06, interview)

Ella's father's personal story showed her how her father was able to succeed in school, despite his having had a setback.

Jade, Tricia, and Tyler related to family members as role models because they had attended post-secondary education. Lorraine focused on careers that family members held, for her own consideration. For Ella her father's story provides a lesson of how he persevered to reach his own goal of graduating high school. These student participants' familial role

models connected them to schooling as well as their futures beyond high school. These supports and role models were not available to all study participants. For example, Emmett's silence about family support and family as role models demonstrated respect. McCaskill et al.'s (2007) youth plenary session participants, who were currently not enrolled full time in high school or post-secondary education, spoke to their need for role models for post-secondary schooling and potential future careers (p. 52).

Tyler, Tricia, Ella, Lorraine, Isabel, Jade, and Amber also identified with family members as life teachers. Tyler chose his grandfather, who had remained in his home community until his death. He explained, "it was my grandpa but he passed away…maybe four years ago" (09-02-07, interview). Tricia identified with her grandfather and her connection to him with her home community, a remote northern reserve. Tricia valued her grandfather's traditional, Indigenous, place-based knowledge. She said, "I suppose my grandpa. He teaches us and he lives up north and he teaches us little things that help us over there and learn from" (22-01-07, interview). In her responses Tricia acknowledged the different contexts of the city and 'up north,' as well as the skills and knowledge that she learned from her grandfather for living off the land.

Like Tricia, Ella considered her grandmother her life teacher. She recalled learning skills and gaining traditional knowledge by doing many things with her grandmother. Although her grandmother was still alive, she was physically less able to do many of the traditional activities that they had shared together. Ella explained how she enjoyed making crafts to re-connect to her grandmother:

Ella: And I like doing that [Native crafts] 'cause I used to do it with my grandma when I lived in [name of reserve].

Leisa: Did she do beadwork?

Ella: Yeah. I was pretty good at beadwork but I don't even know how, I don't even try.

Leisa: Really? What else did you do with her?

Ella: Um, I don't know. There was a lot of things, like physical, outside, like setting traps and check up on the net. I don't know I did a lot of things with her.

Leisa: Do you miss that?

Ella: Yeah, a lot. But now she can't do those things. This summer when I went home I really wanted to do all that but she couldn't. (12-12-06, interview)

Ella spoke of her self-in-relation to her grandmother, in various ways -- language learning, as a life teacher, and as a connection to her Oji-Cree culture. She said, "she taught me a lot of things about our [struggles for word] cluture, culture or whatever…Like how to take care of things without spending any money…and she teaches me how to set up a net" (23-10-07, interview). Through her examples, Ella used culture contextually, demonstrating her understanding of culture as relational to her grandmother's experiential knowledge of beadwork, setting nets and traps for sustenance, and other ways to live off the land. Ella refers to living for sustenance as living 'without spending money'.

Like Ella, Lorraine chose her grandmother and made a similar connection to culture as she equated culture to learning to live off the land and other traditional activities. Lorraine's grandmother taught her and her siblings "beadwork, how to skin a beaver, and make a teepee" (30-01-06, interview). Lorraine also described her grandmother's experiential knowledge of providing shelter.

Isabel and Jade chose their mothers. Isabel said, "my mom is my greatest teacher also… [she teaches me] things about life and what she's experienced in her forty years of

life. Her knowledge. And she has a lot of wisdom, I would say. And I admire her. She's

really smart." (08-02-07, interview). Isabel valued her mother's experiential knowledge and

her life wisdom. Jade named her mother as a life teacher. She chose her mother because she

supported her with her schooling. She explained, "my mom, yeah. You know she tells me to

go to school and work…You know I think it's my mom" (30-01-07, interview). Jade saw her

mother as both a life teacher and a personal support for schooling. Other students, Amber,

Ella, and Lorraine also talked about how their family members supported their schooling.

These familial supports were not always direct; some student participants identified family

relations as indirect, or motivational, supports to them.

Amber talked about her family, particularly her siblings, as supports for schooling.

She explained, "My brother, I think him. My brother is 10 years old. And he likes to follow

me wherever I go. I keep going" (24-01-07, interview). This year Amber's sister came to the

high school, and offered further support. Amber said "yeah, I like to watch her play [on a

school team]" (24-01-07, interview)…and "I watch her play almost every day" (18-12-06,

interview and photograph). For Amber, these are not tangible supports such as getting a ride

to school or parental help with homework. In Amber's examples, her siblings are important

relational motivators that keep her going.

Ella saw her father as a support for schooling. Ella's father described to her the

advantages of the high school she's attending:

Ella: My dad told me that they only have applied courses or residential courses
         [at another school] and if I graduated from [name of school] I had to take
         upgrading at [name of post-secondary school]. And he just told me to
         apply to here at [name of school] so I don't have to do, I don't have to take
         upgrading or whatever.

Leisa: So you can go right into college?

Ella: Uh huh. (23-01-07, interview)

Ella's father provided her with valuable information that supported her choice of high school. School personnel may not have had this critical insider knowledge of the implications of these choices of high school for post-secondary education when she was making the decision about where to go to high school that her father had.

Lorraine's family was proud of her accomplishments as a student; they showed it by teasing her about being a good student:

Lorraine: They always say I'm a good girl here in school.

Leisa: Who says that?

Lorraine: My family. They're like, you're such a good girl. School girl. I'm like, I know. (14-12-06, interview)

Jade, Ella, Amber, and Lorraine all spoke to relational, familial supports that connect them to schooling in multiple ways.

Muk Kee Qweh demonstrates a way of understanding this relational connection of self and family. As a school teacher, Muk Kee Qweh used her Aboriginal students' family connections as motivations for their learning and engagement with schooling:

> I discovered that families are a priority among native families and we're more group oriented, we think in terms of "we" instead of "I." So I used the family as a motivating factor in order for them to learn how to read, and it worked at that time. Somebody else would probably say it should be more intrinsic or way of learning how to read because you want to appreciate good books some day. That kind, instead of moneywise. But it went further than that, it's to do with family, not just having concrete, like I can buy a car. For a Native, to buy a car and transport all my relatives around, taxi them around. Goes a little one step further. (28-05-2003)

Teachers' Discourses of Family and Schooling

Teacher/administrator participants saw families as either absent or detrimental to Aboriginal students' engagement with schooling. Two of the teacher participants, Jennifer

and Mary, believed that Aboriginal students were attending the school without familial support. Jennifer noted, "…and they're not with their families…" (09-01-07, interview). In our conversation, Mary reiterated Jennifer's belief. Mary had worked in schools in First Nations communities as well as a provincially-funded school for students from outlying First Nations communities. For Mary, this high school was her first public-school teaching experience. In speaking about her move from another high school, where all of the students were boarding students, to this high school, Mary discussed her perceptions of why Aboriginal students' families did not attend school functions. She said, "In town, no. Cause a lot of them are [from] out of town obviously and they just have boarding parents. I've talked to a couple parents on the phone. None of them showed up for parent/teacher [night]" (21-12-06, interview).

Emily talked about Aboriginal students continuing on to post-secondary education. She believed that many Aboriginal students would be disadvantaged because they did not have parents or family members who had attended post-secondary education: "I can see that as a big barrier because nobody's really talked it up at home about what they could do here, what they could be" (18-12-06, interview). Emily signalled students as having deficits.

Student participants spoke about attending post-secondary education in their interviews. Amber intended to attend college post-graduation. She saw being apart from family as a challenge for her and to her schooling and, at the same time, she was motivated by family (24-01-08). During the data collection phase of the study Amber applied to college. She graduated high school in June. Amber was the first person in her family to leave the community and, in September 2007, she was the first member of her family to attend a post-secondary institution.

Both student and teacher/administrator participants believed that family relations were important to students' success with schooling. This belief is borne out in the Aboriginal education literature (Bazylak, 2002; Demmert Jr., 2001; Kavenaugh, 2002). In a study of Aboriginal students' success in schooling, with students in grades six to nine, Melnechenko and Horman (1998) found that family was one of the most important success factors for the Aboriginal student participants.

Many of the participants agreed on the importance of family relations and student success. But teacher/administrator and student participants' perceptions of family relations differed significantly. Teacher participants, Mary and Jennifer, perceived that Aboriginal students lived in the city and attended the school without family supports and/or lived with boarding families. These teachers' beliefs that Aboriginal students lived with boarding families demonstrated an esentialized view of the students and did not reflect the experiences of the student participants in the study, most of whom lived in the city with their families. Emily's perception that 'nobody's really talked it up at home' may or may not be true for individual students. Emily's perception negates student agency and family as a motivating factor for student participants in attending post-secondary education. It also refutes the research on the importance of family for Aboriginal students (cited above). Significantly, the three teacher/administrator participants framed families from a deficit perspective (Adams, 1998), that is, what was missing from Aboriginal students' lives. They viewed Aboriginal students' families as detrimental to their success with schooling. The student participants, although not representative of a larger group, presented an alternative, experiential discourse for understanding/viewing family as supportive and critical --role models and mentors central to their schooling success.

The student participants' identification with families and schooling mirrored Muk Kee Qweh's observations and how she connected families to schooling for her students—not as families showing up at the school for parent-teacher night, or at the teacher's behest, but family members as role models and as life teachers for students' learning. As well, some students saw family members as their motivation to attend school away from home and family.

School

Within the identity dimension of school, teacher/administrator and student participants again had differing perspectives and perceptions. These are presented through curriculum identifications. Participants' identifications with schooling also brought in identity constructs of class and gender, as they related to school. Student, teacher, and administrator participants spoke about the challenges that they faced as well as the available supports within the school. Within all of these topics, this identity dimension, school, iterated back to previous dimensions of self and family and also iterated forward to community in the participants' discourses. School related to identity and identifying within a contact zone, the socio-cultural political organization of school, for both student and teacher/administrator participants. To begin, students talked about their experiences with learning about or seeing Aboriginal peoples represented in their courses at the high school.

Curriculum Identifications

In a group discussion, student participants discussed what they had learned about Aboriginal peoples in school (09-01-07, group session). The students' conversations encouraged me to ask all student participants, in interviews, if they had learned about Aboriginal peoples in the high school curriculum. Amber had taken a philosophy course:

"yeah, about status cards and things like… I can't remember what it was about". Although

Amber no longer recalled the course content, many students took photographs relating to

courses they were taking and their identifications with their courses, such as art, science, co-

op education and math.

Art. Tyler had recently finished an art course that he enthused about, for its First

Nations and Inuit content:

> The paintings how they've…, from like the different regions they had like a different style of painting so if you were like here, around here, it'd be like Woodland style, and then if you were going down to B.C. it's called West Coast. I think up North it'd be like ah, Inuit or I forgot what that last one was called. But, and there was another one too, but I forgot about that one. That one was another one I really don't remember. Ah, [and] there was legends about it and we took artists who painted it. Artists, you know. (09-02-07, interview)

Mary, the art teacher, explained that she had had many Aboriginal students sign up for her art

course that covered art forms and legends of First Nations and Inuit peoples:

> Mary: There's quite a few [Aboriginal students] in my art classes but many of them have disappeared unfortunately. I've come in contact with quite a few of them.
>
> Leisa: Disappeared how?
>
> Mary: Oh, they've either quit or been suspended or just can't attend or whatever.
>
> Leisa: OK. So you lose a lot of them?
>
> Mary: Yeah. (21-12-06, interview)

Mary acknowledged that there were Aboriginal students who enrolled in her course, but did

not complete the course. Student participant, Matthew, provides an example of Mary's

observation about Aboriginal students disappearing from her classes. Matthew was

suspended for several weeks before the Christmas break, disrupting his participation in

course work (Emily, 14-12-2006, personal communication). He did not return to the study

upon his return to the school.

Isabel was not taking Art that semester, but she had gone to the Art corridor to photograph her identifications with the school. In the art corridor she had photographed some Aboriginal art. She had identified with the art; she connected it to her Aboriginal heritage and also to herself as an artist. She described a photograph that she had taken:

> Yeah. It's up in the art room. In the arts section. Whenever I walk down those halls I just feel this great need to do something. To accomplish something that makes me feel prouder. I took this picture for a reason 'cause it's…These ones are Native art and I feel proud of my heritage. And if university didn't work out for me I would want to go into art and express myself and make people aware of things that are important to me. (13-12-06, photograph & interview)

Science. Jennifer, one of the teacher participants, believed that Aboriginal students' deficits in English language abilities affected their success in her classes. She noted that "'because science has… there are heavy, heavy, heavy vocabulary demands in Science, heavy. And so it's a really big problem for them [Aboriginal students]. (09-01-07, interview). She credited this problem to Aboriginal students' English skills:

> And so they [Aboriginal students] just don't have the richness of vocabulary, I don't know how much reading they do. And I don't know if they have a second language because it takes so long to get to know them, or actually English as a second language even, but they don't seem to be very strong. Particularly the kids who are coming from the remote communities. (09-01-07, interview)

Based on her teaching in a Cree community, Jennifer specified some of the strategies that she had learned when she was living and teaching there. She used these strategies with Aboriginal students in and out of the science classroom:

> I go to them, give them more instructions, give them help -- the pace, the vocabulary demands--I mean I do a lot of trying to work with literacy stuff and things like that, really flexible like time lines and things like that. You know, use of humour, trying to talk to them, just interact with them in the halls. Because it takes a long time for them to warm up to a stranger. Letting them sit with their friends. All those kinds of things. But it's all kind of, it feels very patch work to me. And it is. So it's like get you here,

get you comfortable, try to get some stuff done. But then they're gone. (09-01-07, interview)

Jennifer noted both course content modifications and relational approaches in her strategy to engage Aboriginal students in her courses. She acknowledged that her ability to affect changes that met her perceptions of Aboriginal students' needs was limited. Her scope was within the classroom and the halls of the school. She believed that the school needed to implement structural changes, that her classroom adaptations were patchwork and inadequate. Jennifer's discourse was consistent with Kanu's (2007) observation that classroom (micro level) and larger school changes (macro level) are necessary to effect change.

Isabel noted the absence of any inclusion of Aboriginal peoples' contributions in the science curriculum she had studied through school.

Leisa: Isabel, in our previous interview you talked about scientific discoveries and it was because of one of the pictures that you had [taken], have you learned about in school about any kinds of scientific discoveries that were by Aboriginal peoples?

Isabel: Not as far as I know. (08-02-07, interview)

Jennifer and Isabel each identify different perspectives of why Aboriginal students might have been challenged by the science curriculum: it has a specialized vocabulary that students may not be familiar with; and it negates Indigenous perspectives of and contributions to science. But these two challenges do not account for the gender difference, amongst the student participants, in talking about science. In student participants' discussions about curriculum, science was noted as a curriculum challenge by female participants Isabel, Jade, Amber, and Ella (07-02-07, group discussion) and not male participants.

Co-operative Education. Emmett took many photographs of his teachers. He viewed

his teachers as integral to his success with schooling. In a photograph of his co-op teacher, Emmett spoke positively of the range of supports that he had received from her: This is my co-op teacher [name]. She's a real big help to me. Like for my placement at [name of employer]. She gives me advice on lots of things…Yeah. School and other" (12-12-06, photograph & interview). Later Emmett said "she lets me do like, I have a uniform for [name of employer], and she's the one who does my laundry for my job at [name of employer]" (12-12-06, photograph & interview). The teacher's support, through laundering his uniform, made it possible for Emmett to afford to take the co-op course.

One of the teacher participants, Kelly, was a co-op teacher at the school. Based on Emmett's interview, I asked her about possible class barriers to students' participation in the co-op programs, and whether the school financially accommodated their participation. Kelly explained:

> Yeah, no, yeah we try to break down all those barriers because it shouldn't [restrict participation in the co-op program], whether you're Aboriginal or not. It shouldn't be a hindrance to the experience. We're very lucky that the administration here is very, very supportive of that and they adjust our budget accordingly. I mean at $30.00 a [transit system] punch pass, we can go through an awful lot of punch passes in a year. To the tune of about $5,000.00 a year, so it's relatively costly program to run. (22-01-07, interview)

Kelly also spoke of a challenge with placing Aboriginal students in co-op locations because the students often wanted to do their co-op placements within Aboriginal organizations:

> The Aboriginal students tend to want to go to organizations where they feel very safe; [name of organization], [name of organization]. Those two being the two really big organizations that we get requests from students to go to. There's no way that they can take all of those students on because they take college students, university students and there are, you know, six other high schools in Thunder Bay, and it's open competition. So, we try to, you know, find out why they want to go there. Do they want to go there simply because it's a comfort level? Sometimes you need to break out of your comfort level. (22-01-07, interview)

Kelly highlighted two issues with Aboriginal students and placements. First, Kelly's believed that Aboriginal students on a co-op placement 'needed to break out of their comfort zone,' by not working in Aboriginal organizations, within which they felt safe. She did not expand on the 'comfort zone' that Aboriginal students occupied, other than within the two local Aboriginal organizations mentioned. Second, she perceived that there were a limited number of Aboriginal organizations for co-op placements within the city (22-01-07, interview notes).

Aboriginal students who took the co-op course might not have been aware of the range of Aboriginal organizations (urban and reserve) within the city. The co-op teacher, Kelly, also headed up the student success initiative, yet she too was unaware of the 33 Aboriginal organizations within Thunder Bay recently identified by the Neighbourhood Capacity Building Project (A Circle of Certainty, 2005) and the Aboriginal organizations listed in a recent Lakehead Public Schools resource document, *Anishinaape Pimaatisiwin Kikinoomaakewikamikong: An Aboriginal Presence in our Schools: A Guide for Staff*. I discuss the document and provide links to it below in the section on teacher supports. The Aboriginal organizations, agencies, and businesses listed in the guide span a diverse range of work places and occupations (e.g. education, social services, health, child welfare, advocacy, police, art, etc.) that could connect relationally to students' participation in the co-op program and to the urban Aboriginal and reserve-based organizations and businesses within the city. For example, Emmett discussed accruing volunteer hours (for the Community Involvement requirement for students) with the Nishnawbe Aski Policing Services (NAPS), located out near the airport (07-02-07, group session).

Math. One of the gendered differences in the study was that several female participants struggled with math. Isabel was one of the student participants who did not feel

that she struggled with math. She was re-taking math, at the advanced level, for university

admission. I asked Isabel why she did not take a picture of her math teacher. She explained,

> Cause s/he scares me. I took his/her class beginning of this semester. And then I wasn't doing very well in it. My mom went to go speak to him/her about that. And then s/he just, she [mom] said s/he completely just said oh she's not ready for this class; she can't do this class; she can't do it; she doesn't have the credits. S/he just practically questioned what I was capable of. S/he didn't even know. That kind of got me angry, but I think it was just him/her. S/he's just one of those people who don't believe in me. Yeah, every time I see him/her I try to stay away from him/her 'cause s/he scares me. (13-12-06, interview)

Jade took a photograph of her math teacher. In our discussion of her pictures, she said, "And

I don't like my [math] teacher either. And that's him/her [laughs]" (11-12-06, photograph &

interview). In a later interview, while discussing her courses, Jade explained: "Just math I

have a bit of trouble" (30-01-07, interview). In our final group session the student

participants suggested that school could be more relevant to them if they only had to take

courses related to their career choices. I asked them what they would drop, if they could.

Three of the female students believed that they would not use math and science (07-02-07,

group discussion). This belief might have spoken to the struggles that these young women

were experiencing in their math and science classrooms. In contrast, when Emmett and I

discussed his photographs, he included his math teacher: "This is the math teacher, period 4.

I like him. He's a pretty cool guy. Good teacher." He commented that he was doing well in

math. "Yeah, I've got like a 78%. Very good" (12-12-06, interview).

Family studies. Like the science curriculum discussed above, the participants'

discussion of Family Studies showed a significant disparity between the teachers' and

students' discourses. In Family Studies it was not that the teacher and student participants

identified different issues, it was the difference in their perceptions of what was important.

Andrea, the Family studies and parenting teacher, expressed frustration with the Aboriginal students' participation in her classes. She said, "…it's mostly girls that I have in the parenting class, and the Aboriginal girls are pretty much all failing" and credited the students' failure to their work ethic and engagement. She said, "…I think they're [the Aboriginal female students] in denial that they're failing because they just don't hand anything in…They never ever ask for help" (18-01-07, interview). Andrea linked Aboriginal students' failure in her classes to three factors: Aboriginal culture, families, and the students themselves:

> My big thing with the Aboriginal culture as a teacher is the lack of communication and on all levels, in the classroom, outside the classroom, asking for help. Just not being advocates for themselves. And unless they [students] have somebody at home, it just doesn't happen. Even when you have somebody at home that's interested, sometimes it doesn't happen. It's frustrating. As a teacher it's really frustrating because sometimes after a while you just go, well what can I do? (18-01-07, interview)

Above Andrea equated culture with communication skills. She expressed frustration with Aboriginal culture and, in turn, Aboriginal students and their families. Andrea identified problems with the course requirements, but this too she attributed to the Aboriginal students. She noted that "if I was to have an observation about the Aboriginal kids I've taught over the years, they won't come up and stand in front of the class and do a presentation" (18-01-07, interview). Andrea's frustrations came from her perception that students should ask for her help, conform to the structure and the requirements to make class presentations for assessment of learning, and participate in large group discussions as requirements of her courses. She believed that Aboriginal students' failure came through cultural difference between students themselves, their families and culture, and the school and the classroom. Andrea echoed the cultural difference theory, as naturalized, essentialized differences which

could be attributed to Aboriginal students' lack of success with schooling. At no time in our

interview or discussions did Andrea illustrate awareness of/ or reflections on her own teacher

practices and the implications of her practices for Aboriginal students.

Scholars have critiqued this cultural difference discourse as inadequate because it is

one-dimensional (Deyhle & Swisher, 1997; Ledlow, 1992), and for its ability to absolve

schools and teachers of responsibility (Dei, 2003). Other researchers, using a race-based

analysis, see teachers as gate-keepers whose discourses of supportive parents and

communities serve to deliberately exclude racialized parents' and communities' participation

in schools (Crozier, 2001).

Student participant, Ella, was taking a Family Studies course. Recently a guest

presenter had come into the class to speak about midwifery. Ella reflected on that and made

personal connections:

Ella: I wouldn't mind going to my reserve and teaching parenting to the girls up there. I don't think they even know anything about stuff like STDs [socially transmitted diseases] and all that or anything and all of that. And I wouldn't mind going there to teach them what it's all about and all that.

Leisa: Is that what sparked your interest in being a midwife?

Ella: Yeah. A midwife came into the class and she started talking about all of this, I don't know. Yeah that just got me thinking. [laughs]

Leisa: That would be good. And that's the program in Winnipeg, [sic] right?

Ella: Yeah. The Aboriginal midwifery [program]. (01-12-06, interview)

Post-interview I searched the Internet for the midwifery program that Ella was referring to.

The University College of the North in Manitoba recently introduced the Kanácí

Otinawáwasowin Baccalaureate Program, a midwifery program based in Aboriginal

perspectives, in September 2006 (accessed 03-01-07 @

www.copse.mb.ca/en/whatsnew/newprograms/index.html). In an earlier group session Ella noted that she would like to bring the information on parenting and STDs (sexually transmitted diseases) because "I'd never heard of that till I got here." (28-11-06, group session) The parenting class had an impact on Ella in a relational way. She connected what she had learned back to her home community, and how she could contribute to the wellbeing of others in the community, especially the girls.

Ojibwe language and culture. In the second semester, the school offered a pilot course known as Ojibwe Language and Culture. Teacher/administrator participant, Robert, explained the introduction of the Ojibwe course offering:

Robert:	One thing will be substantial, I believe, come second semester will be the introduction of a Native language course for the students. So, the students will be given the opportunity to take that.
Leisa:	Okay, and is that just going to be offered that semester, or will it be ongoing?
Robert:	It's just a pilot project right now, it will be offered period one, I believe and period five at [name of other high school]. Because, I don't Leisa, I would say proportionately, we might have, proportionately maybe a higher number of Native students here, but I think right across Thunder Bay, whether it's our board or the [name of other board], the number of Aboriginal students is increasing the population as it is in our city. So, it's being reflected in our schools. (12-01-07, interview)

Thus, Robert equated the new the Ojibwe language and culture course as reflecting the growing Aboriginal student population in the school. Emily equated the language and culture credit with connecting students to the school (27-11-06, discussion).

The student participants saw the language and culture course as a positive course offering. They gave a variety of reasons for enrolling in the course. Jade saw it as connecting her relationally to Anishnabe and Oji-Cree friends and relatives: "Yeah I just switched

yesterday to Native language. My [relative's] in it and my [relative] they're all in it and my friends. I might as well take it" (30-01-07, interview). Tricia had registered for the course, and said, "Yeah I'm going to take that" (22-01-07, interview). Isabel pragmatically noted the connection to course requirements for graduation. She said, "I need a language credit so I'll take [Ojibwe] language and culture" (09-01-07, group discussion). Ella said "Yeah I'll be taking it" (23-01-07, interview).

Ella later cautioned the other student participants: "It's Ojibwe" (09-01-07, group session). She noted the language as Ojibwe as the majority of the student participants (five of the eight) came from Oji-Cree communities, and the course combined language with culture. Many of these Oji-Cree communities practice Christianity, and denounce Indigenous spiritual world views, beliefs and practices. In the final group session, Ella noted: "I don't feel comfortable [in the language and culture course] talking about all that spiritual stuff. That lady is talking about fasting or Moon or Sun" (07-02-07, group session). Between Ella's Oji-Cree community and the Ojibwe course offered at the high school, there are language differences as well as spiritual/religious differences. These spiritual/religious differences of beliefs caused discomfort for Ella in her course participation.

Other student participants agreed with Emily's assessment, that the course offered a connection between themselves as Aboriginal students and the school. For student participants, only Tyler had identified course offerings within the curriculum specific to Indigenous peoples' languages, histories, stories, or beliefs/world views through the Grade 10 Art curriculum. In the final group session with student participants, I noted to students that they had talked about family/home/community and school in compartmentalized ways. Many students agreed by nodding or commenting. Isabel concurred with the hypothesis:

"yes, they are separate." Jade noted that the language and culture course and the [name of after- school program] changed that [disconnection between her life outside school and within school]. She also named the language teacher and the community that she was from. Both Emmett and Isabel noted that more courses, such as the Ojibwe language and culture course, are needed to connect schooling to Aboriginal students' home and community lives better (07-02-07, group session).

Thus, student and teacher/administrator participants identified curriculum and its challenges. Beyond curriculum both students and teachers also talked about other school challenges that they faced and supports available to them. These are presented in the following sections. I begin with challenges identified by teacher/administrator participants.

Teacher Discourses

Teacher/administrators identified challenges with students and supports, and also the lack of resources and supports available to them through the school. Teachers readily shared the challenges that they faced, specifically Aboriginal students' behaviours and lack of engagement with schooling. Emily related her frustrations with Aboriginal students' success based on the school's criteria of the number of credits obtained:

> But, most of our Aboriginal students are not on track. We want, the goal is to have sixteen credits by the time they're sixteen. That's the goal. And when they come to us in grade nine, we do everything we can to get them to pass courses. You know, by phoning parents, trying to engage them with the school. That's another reason for the [name of program]. Because we feel Aboriginal students are not engaged with the school. Parents are not engaged with the school. So, we try to do everything we can to try and get them to come to school. Setting up their timetables so that they like class, like gee, if I take guitar, I'm really excited about that, I'll come to school everyday. And they will attend all their other classes as well. But, on the whole they're behind in their credit count. [Name of student] and [name of student], we have been chasing them for weeks, to try to get them to come back. Mom's been in, social worker, you know, we really try a lot of interventions, but if they don't want to be here, they don't come. But, they're here; they're around the school hanging out. (18-12-06, interview)

Emily attributed the number of credit issues directly to students' and their parents' engagement with schools. She listed the available options at the school for facilitating students' engagement including: timetables, course offerings such as guitar, and, family and professional supports, such as social workers. None of the courses and/or supports listed by Emily was specific to Aboriginal students' success. This was incongruent with her discourse that she wanted to change Aboriginal student success within the school. She did not consider knowledge-based changes such as additional course offerings or integrating course content relevant to Indigenous peoples into existing courses within the curriculum.

Emily expanded on the attendance challenges that she faced working with Aboriginal students:

> Trying to get them to attend I think is number one. Because if they would attend, I mean over half of the battle would be over. But, they just don't get here. They don't see the importance of attendance. So, that's number one. Number two, well, I think most of the problems would be solved if they were here, at every class. (18-12-06, interview)

Emily explained that since the school lost the funding for Aboriginal student supports (such as counsellors in the school), the school staff had participated in a multi-school committee on addressing the needs of Aboriginal students more effectively. She felt that the committee's recommendations were challenging to meet. For example, the committee members suggested the school personnel assist Native students to feel that they belonged in the school. This committee saw belonging as related to Aboriginal students identifying with the school, as closing the difference gap (that student participants had raised previously in students' discussions). Emily felt that the committee offered her few concrete examples of how to do that for students. She was frustrated with how to implement their broad

recommendations of increasing Aboriginal students' belonging (27-11-06, discussion). I noted to Emily that I saw nothing in the school building identifying that there were Aboriginal students among the study body. Emily countered my observation. She said that the principal's office, that in fact all of the administrators' offices, had Aboriginal artwork in them to welcome Aboriginal students. I had observed in my log that the administrative offices—the principal's, the vice principal's, and the student services' offices—had art work hanging in them, but that the public spaces of the school are nearly devoid of any art work [27-11-06, notes]. In my log I noted that this placement of art suggested that belonging for Aboriginal students was spatial; it was restricted to certain areas (i.e. the offices of administrators—the helpers and disciplinarians) of the school, while the larger, public, school spaces remained primarily bordered zones. As identified by participants in the discussions above, one art course devoted to Indigenous content and the pilot project for the Ojibwe language and culture classes were the two courses offered within the four-year curriculum to promote belonging for Aboriginal students within the curriculum. After my conversation with Emily, I searched for and found some Aboriginal artwork hanging in the entrance to the cafeteria, and along the art corridor [30-11-06, notes].

Later, Emily expressed confusion/frustration with the committee's recommendation [for community involvement] and her day-to-day reality [trying to connect with Aboriginal community members and parents] at the school (27-11-06, discussion). She saw this as an existing, natural barrier between the family/community and the school that she worked within. Emily tacitly identified and maintained the border zone of the school and Aboriginal students' families while simultaneously claiming not to know how to broker these zones.

Andrea also expressed frustration in connecting with Aboriginal students:

Generally speaking, I just don't feel connected in any way to any of the Aboriginal students. [Name]I do. I mean she's a delight. It doesn't, I mean, I don't care. She's just a keener; as a teacher you just love students like that. But any of the Aboriginal students, I don't have a relationship with them. If I walk down the hall and none of them would say hi to me, "hi Mrs. [her name]", nope. If I saw them personally they might say hi. Then, I think that there's, I've had, mostly girls, and their parents or people that they board with that I think enable them. Maybe there's times when they go home, maybe back to their reserve, and they miss a whole week of school. I, we dealt with that quite a lot. Like I didn't want to come to school today, and I'm like well… I mean, I don't care whether you're a boy or a girl, or Aboriginal, or whatever culture, there are just certain rules and the expectations are that you're in school unless you're really sick. So, what do you do, I mean, you get notes and some people say that it's okay. They're from a family physician. (18-01-07, interview)

Andrea's frustrations stemmed from her lack of connection with Aboriginal students' families and/or boarding families, and the students themselves. By naming parents and boarding parents as enablers, she demonstrated where 'the problem' lay. Andrea also saw Aboriginal students' doctors and communities as complicit. All were unwilling to conform to and perform within the school's established rules, expectations, policies, and practices (such as students greeting her in the hallways). She believed that families and boarding parents behaved in ways that countered the school's goals, and impeded her ability to do her job as the students' teacher. Emily and Andrea shared the perspective that parents and students and their cultural differences thwarted student engagement and achievement with schooling. Jennifer took a different perspective from Emily and Andrea.

Based in her experiential knowledge, she compared her previous teaching experiences in a school (in a northern Cree community) with this high school. She reflected " but I don't feel that I'm near as successful teaching the Native students here as I was in a classroom of Native students because they are in the minority here and I find it really hard to adjust my methods to suit their needs" (09-01-06, interview). Jennifer exemplified the more recent

cultural difference discourse, in which the teacher is responsible to adjust his/her teaching

methods (and sometimes content, which Jennifer was unaware of) to meet the students' needs

(Doige, 2003; Eberhard, 1989; Hesch, 1999; Kanu, 2005). But she also identified challenges

due to the changes that had occurred within the high school over the years:

> We had a better system here [within the high school] before. When we had the [name of organizational supports] here in the school…Yeah. And they had counsellors and a whole set of support people in the school. And so it was just more visible. And of course when the other high school opened up, that's I think when we lost all that. And there is, I mean, there's the [name of program]. And I mean we have some counsellors who are involved in trying to develop those supports… But ahhh, there could be a lot more. But what happens is that they [Aboriginal students] end up in your classes as a minority group and they disappear. You know, we lose them. They come late and they leave early, you know really. And I know all these things and I know how successful I was when I worked up north. (09-01-07, interview)

In contrast to Andrea Jennifer expressed frustration; however, she saw herself

confined through her teaching and the school supports that had previously been in place for

Aboriginal students. She was frustrated that support services for Aboriginal students had

been rescinded, and the resulting impacts on Aboriginal students' engagement with the

school. She described students' disengagement as 'disappearing' from classes.

These three teachers expressed challenges in working with Aboriginal students in the

school in varied ways. Emily and Andrea followed the cultural difference discourse and

focused on deficits of Aboriginal students including: home environment versus school

environment, often as differences in parenting style/family background (Eberhard, 1989;

Hawthorne, 1967; Medearis, 1996); language/communication styles (James et al., 1995;

Willeto, 1999); home versus school values-orientation (Giles, 1985; Hawthorne, 1967;

Platero et al., 1986); learning styles (Larimore, 2000); and, teacher/student interactions and

teachers' methods of instruction (Malin, 1989; Nickels & Piquemal, 2005). Emily recognized

the need for parental/ community involvement and/or support (Barnhard, 1994; Bell, 2004; Eberhard, 1989; Fulford, 2007; Kavenaugh, 2003; Leveque, 1994), but was unaware of how to engage parents. They used the cultural difference discourse to support their experiences.

Jennifer illuminated the need for the school to make structural changes for Aboriginal students' engagement with schooling. Dei (2003), Henry and Tator (2006) and, James (2003) discuss the need for school-based changes within the institutional racism discourse. Henry and Tator (2006) extend the need for school-based changes and link relationships between schools and racialized parents and communities as a manifestation of racism (p. 199).

Teacher/administrator participants also addressed supports to help administrators and teachers to teach Aboriginal students. Robert described a board-level support that had recently become available within the school for teachers and/or students, the Aboriginal Liaison person, who had been hired to support schools to work more effectively with Aboriginal students.

> I guess, I don't know if you're aware of this, but our board has been proactive this year in hiring an Aboriginal Liaison person, and that's significant for our board, where that person will be his/her responsibility or his/her expectations will be working with administration and looking at some of the needs that we have for our students and things that s/he could help to work with our Aboriginal populations. This is something new to our board and we're really glad that they're putting this in place because it's going to be very supportive for administration but also it will trickle down to our students. (12-01-06, interview)

This new resource person was an administrative-level support for the high schools of the board, rather than a teacher support. Some of the teacher/administrator participants acknowledged some current initiatives such as a board-level committee as well as the need for greater teacher supports for teaching the growing numbers of Aboriginal students in the high school.

Emily attended professional development sessions and she had also participated on a

committee that had been struck to address the needs of Aboriginal students more effectively:

> But I try to go to anything Aboriginal that I can, just to learn more about Aboriginal
> students and where they're coming from. But, the school, you know, that was another
> thing that actually I went, I was part of this Aboriginal project since last year and it
> was something that we had talked about, educating the staff more on the Aboriginal
> culture. There was a book that, I guess it's not out yet, but [name], I don't know if
> you know her; she's a vice-principal at [name of school]. She had a big part in
> writing it because she is Aboriginal. So, we did that and that's where this whole thing
> about getting Aboriginal courses in the schools, getting Aboriginal role models in the
> schools, making them feel more welcome, like the environment, you know,
> Aboriginal paintings and things, engaging the parents more in the educational system.
> (18-12-06, interview)

Emily showed an awareness of the needs identified by the committee by listing:

Aboriginal role models, creating a welcoming environment for Aboriginal students,

developing courses from Indigenous perspectives, and, engaging parents. All of these needs

have been identified through several other sources. For example, the research on Aboriginal

education and Aboriginal students' success clearly articulates the changes that schools need

to make (Bell, 2004; Fulford, 2007; Kavenaugh, 2002; Silver & Mallett, 2002). These needs

had also been identified through a resource guide, developed by the committee. *Anishinaape*

Pimaatisiwin Kikinoomaakewikamikong: Aboriginal presence in our schools: A guide for

staff, published by the board of education in March 2007. The guide was directed to "…staff

and administrators on Aboriginal heritage and traditions, cultural teachings, celebrations,

treaties, terminology, best practices, and community linkages to Aboriginal community

agencies" (p. 1). It is available at

www.lakeheadschools.ca/public/aboriginal_ed/AE_Guide_Feb07.pdf**.**

Andrea expressed frustration with not getting professional development support to

assist her in the classroom:

So I'm not sure, I've said to Robert umpteen times, you know, I'd love to go to a workshop or something to help me engage them into the course. There's the time issue of getting things in on time, motivation, coming in, you know you try to engage them. Well, what do you do after school and they say nothing. I mean, quite literally, [pause] just [pause] I don't know. (18-01-07, interview)

These teachers expressed challenges. Although several resources were available these teacher/administrator participants, Emily and Andrea struggled with how to engage Aboriginal students, and how to implement recommended changes. Jennifer believed there could be many more structural changes that would be needed for the school to facilitate Aboriginal students' engagement with schooling. All teachers maintained cultural difference discourses and lack of knowledge and/or resources which removed them from the problem of Aboriginal student engagement and these students' success with schooling.

Student Discourses

Students identified challenges that were specific to the school, as well as larger challenges that impacted their schooling. Emmett's challenges related to his decision to leave home to focus on completing high school. His decision to attend school in Thunder Bay had economic consequences for him. Emmett openly discussed his poverty. When I asked him what challenges he faced with schooling, he replied "struggling to meet basic needs" (12-12-06, interview). This struggle related to the monies he received to live on. Emmett explained his situation:

For living support, Ontario Works. I signed on a, student contract and like I come to school and they'll basically they can give me the money for that. They give me a living allowance for basic needs and enough for my rent as long as I go in school. But if I don't go to school they'll, basically it gets cut off. (22-01-07, interview)

This arrangement was financially difficult for Emmett and he described the added challenges he faced in living without sufficient income:

Emmett: They pay my rent and they give me a, (amount unclear on transcripts) for a bus pass and I buy that, I buy that 'cause I gotta get around town. And then I've got (amount unclear on transcripts) left and I gotta buy my food and all that.

Leisa: That's a small amount.

Emmett: Yeah. Just try that, just try that. It bugs me sometimes. Every now and then I run out of money. And I 'm not a drinker or anything but if I want a coffee or I want to go to a movie or go out and buy anything, it's tough. (22-01-04, interview)

Emmett was the only student participant who spoke about not being able to meet his basic needs on the income he received to attend school. His situation mirrored a larger problem, as demonstrated through recent local research. In the City of Thunder Bay's 2003 Indicators Report, poverty was one dimension measured. Of the groups for which data were provided (i.e. children, economic families, Aboriginal peoples, and seniors) the group of Aboriginal peoples was above the provincial average for poverty, as measured by the Low Income Cut-Off (LICO). It was also the only group of the four groups for which the poverty rate rose in Thunder Bay (City of Thunder Bay, 2002 and 2003). Specifically, the rate for Aboriginal peoples was the highest of all of the groups and rose from 36% in 2002 to 46% in 2003 in Thunder Bay (available @ http://www.thunderbay.ca/docs/fastforward/496.pdf).

Emmett's situation and the Statistics Canada data findings used by the City were echoed by McCaskill et al.'s (2007) youth respondents. These "[Aboriginal] youth plenary session participants also spoke of the need for food to meet basic needs" and they provided recommendations to organizations for meeting youths' needs around poverty (p. 52).

Other student participants illustrated some of the challenges that they had faced when making different kinds of transitions into high school. Tricia described her transition from the elementary school that she attended on reserve to an elementary school in the city from a

number of perspectives:

> Tricia: Yeah, it was [a challenge no longer being at the top of the class when she came to school in the city]. I'm usually good at like answering questions from the teachers and stuff like that. But since I was so quiet, when I came here I was so quiet, like I never knew anyone and I wasn't used to seeing all those other people. I was used to seeing the same people from kindergarten all the way to whatever.

> Leisa: How many people live in [name of First Nation]?

> Tricia: Probably roughly about 700; last time I asked it was around there.

> Leisa: So that's probably similar to the size of the student body here.

> Tricia: [laughs] I never thought of it that way.

> Leisa: That could be a bit of a shock, eh?

> Tricia: Yeah. That's crazy. (09-01-07, interview)

One teacher, Jennifer, empathized with Aboriginal students who were making the

transition to the school from remote First Nations communities, in relation to the large

student population in the school. She recalled her own experiences coming back to the school

after spending a year in a small northern Cree community:

> …because the community we were in has 650 people in it. And I remember when I came back from living in [name of reserve] for one year I came back to [name of school], in the fall, to kind of get set up for supply teaching, and the bell rang here and the halls were filled with more kids than lived in the whole community, and I was like ducking for cover. Looking for a place to go. So I think there were lots of things. I found that 10 months in [name of reserve] was like two years, it was quite different. I really noticed a big difference when I came back. And it sometimes helps me in figuring out where the kids are coming from. (09-01-06, interview)

Amber's transition began when she arrived for grade 11 at the high school. She noted

three differences coming from her school on the reserve to this high school. The first related

to Jennifer's reflection on population; in Amber's case it was the number of students in the

classroom: "When I was in grade 9 [at FN school] there were only three students there" (24-

01-07, interview). The second difference involved her experiences of adjusting to different rules and codes of behaviour. She explained that "in [name of FN] I usually walk out of class without permission and over here you have to ask. Or they'll stop you [laughs]." Finally, Amber noted the higher workloads she experienced: "And a lot of work, a lot more work here" (24-01-07, interview). It wasn't only these three differences she had to accommodate; Amber explained that the biggest challenge that she faced coming to the school had been with taking exams:

> Amber: I never had an exam before [coming to this high school].
>
> Leisa: Oh really. Yeah. How did you prepare for your first one, or what did you do?
>
> Amber: I don't know. I didn't know what to do.
>
> Leisa: Yeah?
>
> Amber: I read a couple of books and took some notes. And I passed. (21-01-07, interview)

Amber's challenge with not having experienced exams before was unique among the student participants. But it may not be unique to other students coming from a First Nation community to the high school in grades 10, 11, or 12.

Lorraine came to the school from her First Nation community for grade 9. She described her transition to the school and why she did not succeed, which was based on school expectations and workloads:

> Lorraine: In Grade 9 I failed courses when I came from the reserve 'cause it was a bit harder here. It's harder.
>
> Leisa: Was it harder to get used to, or was the school work harder, or both?
>
> Lorraine: Both.

Leisa: What was harder to get used to?

Lorraine: The school work. I wouldn't hand in any work and I wouldn't do it. I had to get used to it here. I didn't know that's what my marks were for. (14-12-06, interview)

Although Lorraine started at the high school in grade nine, she faced challenges with doing assignments and handing them in. She had not known or experienced this in her previous schooling. Because Lorraine was unclear about the work requirements and the expectations at the new school, she failed some of her courses in her first year there.

Isabel came from a local elementary school to the high school. She felt challenged by her own ability to turn her dream of studying science at the post-secondary level into reality. She spoke of a different kind of transition in taking that step to realizing her dream:

Yeah, it makes me feel like I can do anything. When you set your mind to something you can do it, if you want to really do it. It's kind of a scary thing, though, to think that you can actually do it. When I wanted to go into Science I thought it was just a dream. I'm more of a thinker than a doer. And then when I chose all the courses I wanted do to, that would lead me there, it kind of scared me because then I knew I would be capable of doing it. It was kinda scary. It's a scary thing when I stopped thinking about it and starting doing it rather than thinking about it. (13-12-06, interview)

Cajete (1999) demonstrates the importance of dreams within an Indigenous world view: "Dreams are considered gateways to creative possibilities" (p. 65) and are used as "a natural means for accessing knowledge and establishing relationships to the world. They are encouraged and facilitated" (p. 71). By articulating her dream and then taking steps to facilitate the dream as reality, Isabel moved forward with her dream knowledge.

Along with the challenge of working towards her dream, Isabel also wanted to belong as an Aboriginal student and be seen individually for her skills and abilities. Isabel's desire to belong to the group of Aboriginal students in the high school, at the same time as expressing

her own unique gifts, created a conflict for her. She explained the challenge of this

complexity:

> It's pressure. Peer pressure. It's the pressure to want to be a part of that group [of Aboriginal students]. But right now I'm trying to be an individual and I don't want to be in a category of these people. Like, ummm, kind of hard to describe, but that's all I want to be is an individual and I don't want to be compared to anybody: I don't want to be put in the same group as another group of people. I know that's kind of hard to do but that's one of the challenges that I'm trying to be. (13-12-06, interview)

Isabel's challenge juxtaposed her self-identification as part of 'that group' while

understanding and exercising her subjectivity from 'the category of these people.' She

wanted to distance comparisons of herself as part of a larger Aboriginal group as well

as her self as a student as distinct from the larger Aboriginal group of students. This

challenge came from perceptions of self and other students. Isabel experienced a

duality between belonging as an Aboriginal student and her success as a student.

Tricia experienced difficulty making the transition from elementary school to high

school. Tricia said that her greatest challenge was "trying to find new friends I would say…It

was a lot of confusion, I didn't really know who to talk to. Usually, I was, I was so scared to

talk to the teachers" (09-01-07, interview). Although she was not coming from a First

Nations community, she needed more supports to make this transition.

Robert noted the challenges he perceived for Aboriginal students coming to the high

school from First Nations communities:

> I guess my question to people who are working with these students is how do we make that transition easier for those kids? Should there be kind of almost like a pre-orientation for when those kids come here? A lot of the times these kids won't show up until early September, so they're, they're coming here probably by van or whatever it is, or they fly and they come directly to the schools and register. At that point, we're limited sometimes in the courses that we can offer to them. Some of them are over-age and, what I mean by that is, they are probably sixteen/seventeen years old and they have very limited courses. Where do we put them in? Fortunately

at [name of school] we've been able to have this transition program which allows those kids who are over aged as far as where they should be, and put them in a program where they're kind of in a group by themselves, where they're able to work with the curriculum and teachers that are more representing their needs. It doesn't make sense to put a person who's sixteen/seventeen years old in a grade nine course with kids who are thirteen/fourteen. So, you disadvantage them right off the bat. Who would want to be in, why would you be motivated to be there with kids that are three to four years younger than you are. (12-01-07, interview)

Robert saw transitions as a challenge for the Aboriginal students from outlying First Nations communities. His question of a pre-orientation for Aboriginal students may have benefited Amber, in understanding the role of exams, and Lorraine, in understanding the role of assignments, if these topics had been covered. One transition challenge that the school addressed was the age difference for students re-entering school. The transitions program existed for over-age students: it is not specific to Aboriginal students. Emmett noted that he originally chose this high school because of the transition program offered. In his letter to other students, he said "now I was out of school for two years and when I came back the transitions program is pretty basic" (02-07, letter). Emmett added that the "Transitions program, might I add, is a good way to get back into school if you are rusty or been out of it [school] for a while" (02-07, letter). Emmett was in the transitions program last year for his re-entry into high school and he moved into the regular stream this year. He also attended the Independent Learning Centre (ILC) program for students. The program allowed him to complete credits outside of the classroom setting (12-12-06, interview).

McCaskill et al.'s (2007) youth worker participants articulated that supports for youth transitions were the largest service gap for their Aboriginal youth clients. Youth workers contended that the gaps in basic needs and transitions supports produced major challenges for education and employment success for Aboriginal youth (McCaskill et al., 2007, p. 49). The

literature has long identified that transition supports are needed for Aboriginal youth (Bell, 2004; Fulford, 2007; RCAP, 1996; Silver & Mallett, 2002). Robert recognized the need for students coming from remote communities to attend high school in the city. Student participants' provide experiential examples of the types of supports that the school could focus on in their work with Aboriginal students.

As noted above, one support offered by the school for all students was the transitions program. Emmett perceived that this program addressed some of his concerns about returning to school. Participants also spoke about a range of available supports in the school. Only one of the available student supports, the weekly after-school program for Aboriginal students run by an outside organization, is specific to Aboriginal students in the school. Other supports available for all students were mentioned by the student participants.

Both Isabel and Emmett used the Alternative Education (Alt Ed) room. Isabel described a photograph she had taken and explained that she preferred the Alt Ed classroom to the regular classroom setting, because of the independence it offered her for catching up on credits and for working at her own pace:

Isabel: This is the Alt Ed room. This is where I spend most of my time in and I can work independently on courses. I work better on my own.

Leisa: As opposed to being in the classroom?

Isabel: Yup.

Leisa: And so can you go down there instead of being in the class or when do you go down there?

Isabel: If you don't want to be in a class you can have this as your period and do whatever course you want. It's more just about being motivated to finish the course. I use the Alt Ed to get ahead 'cause I'm a little behind on credits. And I want to catch up. And I'm ready to catch-up now.

Leisa: And is there any teacher support in there?

Isabel: Oh, yeah there's [name] and [name]. I had them both. I had [name] last semester and now I have [name] this semester. She's very supportive. And she's encouraging, I should say. (13-12-06, photograph & interview)

In a later interview, Isabel explained that she was back in the Alt Ed room for the second semester. She said "I use that as a back up in case I have trouble in my academic classes then I could maybe take the time in that period to catch up and maybe earn a few credits along the way" (08-02-07, interview).

Emmett also used the Alt Ed room to complete courses independently. He said "Yeah, like, I might be graduating this year though. I'm going for nine credits this year and I might be doing some MPLAR [credits for Prior Learning Experiences] which will grant me some credits. So, I might be able to graduate this year" (12-12-06, interview). I asked Emmett to explain more about the Prior Learning Experiences courses that he does in the Alt Ed room. He explained,

> Mplar is like right now you know last semester and like these assignments and you know like little assignments they give me like 2 credits for that, I guess. I got like credits for that. I just write some assignments. It something and you write the test for it. And then if you do that you pass, you get an extra credit for that. And if you're not really sure, if you're not familiar with what you're doing you, they'll prepare you for that, I guess. It's almost like writing the final exam [without doing the coursework]. (22-01-07, interview)

Emily described the Alt Ed program as a program for students who, for any number of reasons, did not succeed in the regular classroom program. She explained:

> We have Alt Ed running every period. It's for students that for some reason are not doing well. Whether it's attendance, or whether the level is completely wrong. It's usually extenuating circumstances that they end up back there. The problem is that those classes are capped at eighteen. And there are a lot of students that are unsuccessful, you know at different points of the school year. So, you know, each is an individual case; we listen to each case and see, you know, what is best for them. Because by law, if the student is sixteen and under, they have to be in four classes.

So, if they're bombing out in, say the applied classes, and that's way too hard and they got a 20 per cent and are skipping because, you know, what's the use of going, then we would move them into Alt-Ed because they have to be in school. And they have the opportunity to work on another credit. But, it is with books. They are independent learning credits offered by the government and there are four books, twenty lessons in total. There's what, five lessons in each book and when they finish those they get a credit. (18-12-06, interview)

Although Isabel and Emmett used the Alt Ed program that was available to all students in the high school to support their success with schooling, the school offered only the after-school program to support Aboriginal students' success, through Aboriginal-specific initiatives, programming, course content, supports, and/or world views.

Given the limited supports for Aboriginal students available at the school, I asked Robert why the surrounding First Nations without high schools sent their students to this high school for their secondary schooling. He described programs and supports that had been previously in place within the school:

Robert: I think it's because tradition has been at [name of high school] over a number of years. I think this goes back probably until the late 1980s because there was a teacher by the name of [name] here one time. [Name] used to probably run one of the first [name of program] for Native students at the school. Now, at that time they also had two counsellors that were from the Native communities who were located right within the school. So, obviously the tendency was with those kids coming here directly. Plus [name of school] at that time was running probably three or four programs that were specific towards native students, such as a Native art program, Native history, so you'd have a tendency for a lot more Native kids here.

Leisa: And what happened to the Native art and Native history programs?

Robert: Well, those programs didn't sustain themselves as far as numbers. Plus, we lost the teacher, [name], when s/he retired, so the programs, a lot those programs, I believe, were specialized for the kids. But also they were teacher driven, so when [name of teacher] left and we didn't have a number of Native students wanting to take it, we dropped that. I wasn't here when that decision was made, I was gone then. (12-01-07, interview)

Although the courses did not previously sustain themselves, Emily and Robert both acknowledged the growing numbers of Aboriginal students at the school; these courses (Native art and Native history) had not yet been considered for re-introduction at the school. Wilson and Wilson (2002), writing within the context of First Nations education, use an example of a First Nations Graduate Education program at the university level. They apply a different lens than Emily and Robert had applied above for looking at the situation with Aboriginal supports. Wilson and Wilson note that power influences the fluency of changes to Aboriginal course offerings. This power rests with the school administration and impacts Aboriginal students in programs: "As administrative changes are made, courses are dropped, core course requirements change, and with these changes comes a shift in the power differential" (p. 68; see also Adams, 1999).

Returning to Emily and Robert's comments above about the Aboriginal counsellors (from the First Nations communities and previously located in the school) who were previously available to students, both of them were unsure why the counsellors were withdrawn. Ella spoke about her experiences accessing the counsellors previously at the school. She explained that she used to see [name of counsellor] when she worked at the high school. The counsellor helped Ella get back to school after she had disengaged during a difficult time. Ella said that "She told me just to go to classes and do my work, and ask for help if I really needed it…and cut down instead of giving up. I cut down on the drugs and alcohol" (23-01-07, interview). Ella explained that the counsellor had moved to another local high school (10-01-07, personal communication). She identified with that counsellor and she continued to see her in her new school location. Ella credited the counsellor as a critical participant in her re-engagement with schooling. She continued to rely on this relational

support person as part of her ongoing engagement with schooling (10-01-07, personal

communication).

Despite losing the counseling staff from First Nations' communities, Robert

explained other initiatives for Aboriginal students in the school:

> This year, now, obviously we've done things to try to bring community members in, whether it's [name of organization] people in, with different programs for the kids. One thing will be substantial I believe, come second semester, will be the introduction of a Native language course for the students. So, the students will be given the opportunity to take that. (12-01-07, interview)

Robert explained that the after school program for Aboriginal students began because of a

racial incident (12-01-07, interview). One of the recommendations coming out of the incident

was to establish an after-school program to support Aboriginal students at the school.

This program is run once a week at the school by a local urban Aboriginal

organization. Ella identified with the after-school programming. She explained that "they do

crafts that I like, like the Aboriginal crafts or Native crafts, whatever. And I like doing that

'cause I used to do it with my grandma when I lived in [name of reserve]" (12-12-06,

interview). Many of the student participants attended the after-school program.

Robert sensed that it was important to bring urban Aboriginal community

organizations and staff into the school. His belief is supported in the literature (Bell, 2004;

Fulford, 2007; Kavenaugh, 2002). As well, Robert shared his philosophy of staff support for

students as inclusive: "When I talk about staff, it's not only teacher staff, its support staff,

whether it's a custodian, the office staff, whether it's the cafeteria. It's the whole school

working from that kind of philosophy that everyone's treated equally here. That's what we

try to do" (12-01-07, interview).

Above, in the section on student challenges, Emmett spoke about his financial

challenges as a student on Ontario Works. Emmett did not suggest that he needed equal

treatment, he needed food. He occasionally received support from cafeteria staff who

provided lunch to him. He took photographs of the cafeteria staff. He showed their

photograph and he elaborated: "Here's, this is [name] and [name]. They're the caf[eteria]

workers. Sometimes they give me a discount on things or free food. 'Cause they know my

situation that I'm kinda poor and they give me a hand" (12-12-07, photograph & interview).

He also received occasional support from others at the school. He took a photograph of a

staff person who he said has also been helpful:

> And here's [name]. She's the person at the front desk. Sometimes during lunch times, like I don't know, I don't have a lunch or I forgot my lunch and I gotta eat something, so I go to Co-op foods or once in a while I ask her for lunch coupons. She gives 'em to me and she's pretty cool. S/he helps me too. (12-12-07, photograph and interview)

These supports are not institutionalized, but are provided, as Emmett noted, "cause they

know my situation". Emmett described other supportive staff members in another

photograph. He said "She puts a lot of faith in me, she does. She sees me doing big things in

the future like teaching youth and helping other people…She's the janitor" (12-12-06,

photograph & interview). These school staff made a difference for Emmett by providing him

with needed food and personal supports.

Two of the student participants, Isabel and Amber, spoke highly of their science

teachers having made a difference for them. Isabel took a photograph of her science teacher

and described the photograph:

Isabel: And this is my teacher [name]. She's my biology teacher. I like her, she's
            very encouraging. She's….I don't know, I admire her a lot.

Leisa: Does she know about your dream?

Isabel: Yeah, she does…And she seems very, she seems supportive of it and I

don't know. (13-12-06, interview)

In our interview, Amber also noted that her science teacher had made a difference through

her help and encouragement.

Leisa: Are there any teachers here that you felt have helped you to get by while
           you were here?

Amber: Hmmm, there was [name]. She helped me.

Leisa: How did she help you?

Amber: Um, she never gave up on me.

Leisa: What did s/he teach you?

Amber: Science.

Leisa: Yeah. You pass?

Amber: From her help, yeah. (24-01-07, interview)

Isabel photographed the welcome message in the front entrance to the school. I asked her if

she felt welcome at the high school. She replied:

Yeah. There's a lot of support here. Like [name], she supports me a lot. And I like her
support and I feel comfortable talking to her about what I want to do. I feel welcome
here at school and I don't feel like I shouldn't be there. Yeah (13-12-06, photograph
& interview).

Emmett identified with school staff for their support through food and personal

encouragement. Isabel and Amber both identified with teacher's support for coursework and

guidance. The other five student participants did not mention identifications with teachers or

other staff of the school relationally or as supports to their learning.

Community

All student participants identified with a First Nations community (from within one of

two Political Territorial Organizational (PTO) boundaries--Nishnawbe Aski Nation and the

Anishnabek Nation, Northern Region). During the study, all of the student participants lived in Thunder Bay. This section explores the student participants' discourses of two communities—the city and their home communities. In Chapter 2, I noted previous studies that had considered what pull factors had led families to move to the city. Student participants talked about coming to the city for various reasons, mostly because secondary schooling was unavailable within their home communities. Not having a high school in their communities meant that some of the students traveled 12 hours by car to attend school in Thunder Bay (23-11-06, group discussion).

Discourses of the City

Student participants had varying experiences and discourses of the city. Most participants felt connected to their First Nations' communities. All of them spoke about their experiences coming to the city. These connections and experiences were not dichotomous, rather they co-existed. For many students, the city and the reserve did not represent borders.

Amber was the only student who came from her First Nation community for high school and lived with a boarding family. It was not her decision to come to the city for high school. She explained that "I didn't want to come here [to the city] to go to high school, but my mom made me come here." (24-01-07, interview). She moved to the city last year for grade 11 (24-01-07, interview) because her home community has been funded for students to complete secondary schooling through grade 10. She considered herself fortunate because she knew her boarding family before arriving in Thunder Bay, as they had previously taught in her school. As well, her boarding family was funded by her home community to serve as counsellors for students from the community who must come to Thunder Bay to complete high school. Amber said that "you can see them if you're having trouble. And they're my

boarding parents too" (24-01-07, interview). Her boarding parents/counsellors also arranged

social events for students from the community, regardless of which high school they attended

in the city. Amber told me "yeah we went mini golfing with my boarding parents who are

also our counsellors. So every two weeks we do something activities for [name of FN]

students only" (18-12-06, interview). Later Amber showed me one of the photographs she

had taken for the study. Her photo was of a group of students doing an activity. She

explained that the photograph "is an activity we go. [Name of FN] hires counsellors, and they

do activities with the group. And this is one of them [shows photo]" (24-01-07, photograph

& interview). As noted above, this year Amber's sister came to the city to complete her high

school education. Amber spent time after school watching her sister play sports. This

supportive environment and familiar adults mitigated the isolation that Amber felt in coming

to the city. Amber identified her biggest challenge with schooling as relational, which is,

"being without my family. Yeah, especially my little brother" (18-12-07, interview). Amber

had returned home during the Christmas break, and found it difficult to return to the city for

school without her family.

As a young girl, Tricia had moved from her home community with her mother and

her siblings when her parents separated (14-12-06, interview). Like Tricia, Ella had moved to

Thunder Bay while she was in elementary school. The family moved for her father's work

(28-11-06, group). Isabel had moved to the city with her family so that her older siblings

could attend high school (28-11-06, group). She was also in elementary school when her

family came to Thunder Bay. Lorraine's family moved to Thunder Bay with her when she

started school in the city. She lived here with her step-father and her siblings; her mother

stayed back in her home community, for work reasons. She explained that her family wanted

to support her transition to the city and the school. She said, "They wanted to come up here for me when I started school" (14-12-06, interview).

Emmett had everyone in a group session laughing with his story of coming to the city. He told the group about applying for a job with a fast food restaurant in town. He arrived alone and he needed money, but he didn't know what he was supposed to wear or how to write a resume. The resume that he handed in was full of errors (07-02-07, group discussion). Emmett was keen to share his experiential knowledge of coming to the city with others, too. In the letter that he wrote he explained "when I moved to Thunder Bay in August 2005 I didn't really have a place to stay. I had money in my account and decided to get a room for one month of September. I spent the first few nights in a shelter house at Salvation Army so if you're ever in the same position" (02-07, letter).

Neither Emmett nor Tyler lived with boarding families, or with their immediate families. Emmett lived alone, and Tyler lived with his auntie and his cousin. Their stories are presented below. Both of these male youth had made Thunder Bay their homes and both of them identified with cultural practices in the city.

Emmett, Isabel, and Tyler talked about their participation in Aboriginal cultural practices and ceremonies in and around the city. Emmett spoke of the cultural practices that he participated in around the city: "I guess at my friends' place [we sing and drum]. We go there, [name of organization]. And sometimes I go to demonstrations for [place] and for schools. For example, a demonstration at [name of school] and we did one at [name] for [event]" (22-01-07, interview). He also noted ceremonies; for example, he had danced in the annual New Year's powwow (15-01-07, group session). Emmett contextualized his experiences living in the city with life teachers: "I meet teachers all over the place. [Name].

Elders. Especially now that I have come here [to Thunder Bay]" (22-01-07, interview).

Isabel also participated in ceremonies held within the city. She said "yeah, well I do

do stuff once a week. I attend a sacred circle and that's something that I like doing. It helps

me and I like listening to other people talk and, I don't know, it just makes me humble (08-

02-07, interview). Isabel identified a life teacher that she had met in the city:

> Well there's a lady I met through this—and I don't know what organization I met this lady in—I've known her for almost over a year and she tells me things that I want to know about. And I ask her a lot of questions. She says I ask questions that normally someone my age wouldn't ask. And she teaches me things. (08-02-07, interview)

Isabel found that the city had drawbacks as well. She noted that the city had made her more

wary than she was at home in her community:

> Isabel: And people change and they've noticed that I've changed and just living here changed me; it made me more aware of my surroundings and made me cautious of things.
>
> Leisa: What kinds of things?
>
> Isabel: Things like safety. And I'm kind of, I'm a bit paranoid about things. I try to not walk around at night. And just little things like that.
>
> Leisa: That you could do in your home community?
>
> Isabel: Yeah. And I don't talk to strangers. I don't do stuff like that. (08-02-07, interview)

Tyler explained that he participated in a number of cultural ceremonies: "I like going

to sweat lodges, and, you know, pow wows, stuff like that. I think the next one I'll go to is

probably that, one on ah, what's that one called on that hill again? Fort William" (09-02-07,

interview).

Tricia noted that she did not participate in urban Aboriginal organizations' activities

for youth. She explained "I used to go to the [name of organization]. I don't know what it

was for, I think I was there and they had like a band or something there. But I only went there a couple of times. But that was about it" (22-01-07, interview). Tricia appreciated the many other, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, social events that were held in the city. In her letter she enthused to other students "Living in Thunder Bay has been great! There is lots of stuff you can do around here" (02-07, letter). Amber identified with socio-cultural events for Aboriginal students in the city. She said "We only go to [name of event] on Tuesday nights" (24-01-07, interview).

Discourses of Home Communities

Student participants spoke of their home communities in various ways. Nearly all of the students maintained ongoing connections with their home communities while they were living and attending school in the city. Tricia connected her membership on the senior girls' volleyball team back to her home community. She enthused,

> Yeah it's the best! [laughs]. I actually grew up around volleyball all my life. Ever since I was a little kid, my parents would be playing and my aunts and uncles. Anyone in the community plays. Just for summer nights: just for something to do. And it was always fun to do or watch. And eventually I got into it. I started playing around eleven or ten [years old]. (09-01-07, interview)

Amber maintained connections with her community through a broomball league that she joined in Thunder Bay. She connected broomball back to her home community, saying "I don't know, a coupla friends told me that they had a broomball team and I played broomball in my [pause] home town" (24-01-07, photograph & interview). Amber played broomball with an Aboriginal team every weekend (18-12-06, interview). Her connection to the broomball team was one of the relational connections that made the transition to the city easier for her.

Tricia noted that she did not participate in cultural events in the city: "No. I go to

pow wows whenever they have them here. Whenever they're around. But I don't know too

many that are here." She noted that the cultural practices that she participated in were based

in her home community:

> They [cultural practices] are all on the reserve. I don't really do anything out here,
> although I should. And my mom's actually trying to convince me to join, what was it,
> [name of program] at the [name of organization] and there's no way. Like they're just
> way too boring for me. (22-01-07, interview)

Many students spoke to the importance of maintaining relational connections to their

home communities and their families there. Jade said that she went back home with her

family "[e]very summer mostly. And if we don't go back for the summer we go back during

the break and for Christmas or something like that" (30-01-07, interview). She described her

work in the community the previous summer: "Last year I worked in Recreation. Doing

activities for the community, like tennis and stuff like that. It was fun" (30-01-07, interview).

Lorraine went back home to see her mother and her extended family as much as possible:

> Lorraine: I go back in the summer actually.
>
> Leisa: Yeah. And what do you do?
>
> Lorraine: In the summer I work and March Break I go up to the winter carnival.
>
> Leisa: And what do you do in your job in the summer?
>
> Lorraine: We do labour work or, I file. For the secretary. (30-01-07, interview)

Tyler had gone back to his home community over the Christmas holidays. He

described his visit: "Yeah, I have a big family. I visited most of them. Well, my aunt, all my

first cousins and everything, say hi, keep up with, chat with them and stuff like that" (09-02-

07, interview). Tricia returned to her home community over school breaks for Christmas,

summer, and sometimes during March break to see her father and other relatives, who still

lived there. Ella returned to her community over Christmas to visit. She often returned to her community for the school break over the summer.

Going back and forth between the city and their home communities was not always a smooth process for some of the student participants. For example, Amber, Isabel, and Ella had difficulties moving back and forth between their home communities and the city.

Amber spoke of the challenge of going back and forth between her home community where her family lived and the city where she attended school.

Leisa: Did you go home for the whole holiday?

Amber: Yeah, I did. Fun.

Leisa: Was it hard to come back?

Amber: Yeah. (24-01-07, interview)

Returning home for holidays and breaks also brought relationship challenges for participants. Isabel had begun dating someone in her home community over the Christmas holidays while she was there. She wanted to quit school and stay there. She didn't elaborate on what caused her to change her mind and return to Thunder Bay. Isabel planned to return to [name of First Nation] for the upcoming March break (15-01-07, group session). Ella had a friend who asked her to drop out of school and stay in [name of reserve]. He had also asked her to stay when she had been up in the community the previous summer (10-01-07, group discussion).

Ella and Isabel felt the pressures of living in the city while maintaining connections back to their home communities; they identified with both home and urban communities and they found it difficult to maintain strong connections to each community simultaneously because of distance. Both girls compromised by spending time in both communities, and by keeping in touch with home communities through MSN and by phone during the school year.

In contrast, Emmett did not identify with his home community; he had severed connections to complete his high schooling in Thunder Bay. Since Emmett left his home community in 2005 to come to Thunder Bay to complete high school, he maintained no relational connections to his home community. He had not returned since. He viewed attending to schooling and his home community as incompatible:

> I guess if I would have stayed at home it woulda been harder to get my education living at home than it would up here in town. Especially on the reserve; like there's a lot of trouble going on; not sure that it's the kinda place to be trying to get to school. Well not for me anyways. (12-12-06, interview)

Emmett believed that the central issue for him leaving his home community and relationships was maintaining sobriety:

> Getting away from my reserve, just all the, there's just a lot of negative, there's an awful lot of, negative activity down there, I guess mainly drugs. Plus there's really nothing down there for me anyway. You can't really grow down there. There's no way to grow down there. Like my reserve is awfully small. And if I went back to school there I'd probably get into something that would distract me. It's so small. I found that's the worst thing. (22-01-07, interview)

Emmett's high school experiences and successes contrasted with his home life. His goal to complete his secondary schooling motivated him to continue living in the city, despite living in poverty. He explained, "Just sometimes also the thought of not going back home… I know what waits for me when I decide to drop out and I'll probably get into trouble or something like that" (12-12-06, interview). In his letter to fellow students, Emmett concluded that "After a while I have discovered that getting off the reserve was the best choice for me. You can't really grow or focus on your schooling" (02-07, letter). His decision to leave the reserve and come to the city demonstrated his motivation to continue his high schooling and the steps he took towards his goal to complete Grade 12.

Agency

Grande (2007), writing about Indigenous education and the role of student agency, quotes the North Central Education Laboratory, explaining that "Agency in this context, refers to the degree to which we believe our thoughts control our actions, and, more specifically, that we can positively reflect our beliefs, motivation, and academic performance (North Central Regional Education Laboratory, December 2003, www.ncrel.org) (cited in Grande, 2007, p. 62). Within the theme of agency, I include students' stories of engagement and/or disengagement with schooling and how it relates to their relationality and their sense of responsibility and reciprocity towards their families and their communities. Many of the student participants (Tricia, Emmett, Tyler, Ella, and Isabel) had disengaged with school at some time while attending high school. Their stories also illuminate their perspectives and experiences re-engaging with schooling.

In this study, student participants willingly shared their stories of the processes and motivations for leaving school and the decisions and factors that led them to return to school. I place their stories within the identity dimension of agency, because the students reflected their beliefs, motivations, and goals around schooling. As with the schooling dimension discussed above, these stories also involved the students' relations with their families and communities. These dimensions are inseparable and critical to self-in- relation to schooling for student participants' engagement and re-engagement. I begin with teacher/administrator participant Emily's perceptions of Aboriginal students' engagement with schooling.

Engagement

The student participants articulated engagement with school in various ways: sports, friends, resistance to others' perceptions and expectations, and as a mean to get into post-

secondary education. In contrast, teacher participant, Emily, did not believe that the school

was engaging Aboriginal students. In an interview with Emily I asked her if she observed or

had used strategies that worked to engage Aboriginal students. In her response, Emily

observed what students enjoyed doing; she was dissatisfied, however, that they did not

engage in the ways that she expected Aboriginal students to perform their culture:

> No, I wish I did. Even with our [name of program] I don't feel that we're engaging the students. Last year we tried a format at lunch and the only reason they would come was for food. We did get a lot of guest speakers which they said they liked. And I thought they were very good, you know, the Aboriginal police officer, some other Aboriginal people that work in the community, talking about getting jobs and having career goals and a motivational speaker—all Aboriginal people. And all really, really well done. We did have quite a few that came out for that, but you know, when we just had kind of the [name of program] for us to talk about things and how things are going, they didn't like that… And when I see, you know, when they come and see you, some of them do just sit there, but they seem to not want to leave. So, maybe that's what they like, just to sit there and have something to eat. Like for our [program name] now, the [name of organization] is involved and [name of worker] brings food, and they have crafts, but they don't really want to do the crafts. I don't really know what they want to do. At the beginning, we asked them what they wanted to do, but it seems like they just want to sit around and watch movies, have something to eat, and read. So, it's not engaging them in the way that I'd like to see the engagement. I would like them to come with the homework that they have to do. We'll talk about how things are going at school, or talk about Aboriginal culture, or, you know, the seven teachings of Aboriginals, or maybe it's five, I don't remember. I would like them to learn how to make bannock. You know I would like to do those kinds of things. Now that [name's] doing it, I wanted to see how that goes. So maybe next year we'll try a different format. I don't know. (18-12-06, interview)

Emily expressed frustration with engaging Aboriginal students with schooling through

cultural events that the school hosted. She believed that Aboriginal students were not

engaged with her perceptions of 'Aboriginal culture' and activities. She believed that if

students went to an Aboriginal group after school, then they should actively engage in

Aboriginal cultural activities such as making bannock, rather than sitting around, watching

movies, and having something to eat.

Jade confirmed Emily's sense of what students wanted to do. She explained that she could not attend the after-school program regularly, because of volleyball practices and games. She said she attended the program "Only for a while now. I used to go there the whole time. Now that I have volleyball I only go for 15 minutes." She also articulated what she liked about the program: "The fact that I can sit around and do nothing. Watch movies. And get to eat" (11-12-06, interview). Thus, Emily's observations that Aboriginal students wanted to engage were accurate. Emily's expectations of Aboriginal students expressing their Aboriginality as she perceived it were self-constructed and thus unfulfilled.

Some of the student participants, Jade, Tricia, and Tyler, identified with sports programs offered through the school. Jade took a photograph of herself and her teammate on the volleyball team. She said "Me and her are both on the Junior team and we're the only two Native girls…" (11-12-06, photograph & interview). She identified with the other volleyball players on the team. "I feel like another volleyball player; I made some friends on the team" (11-12-06, interview).

Like Jade who was engaged with volleyball, other students were also engaged with school through sports. In a letter that Tricia wrote to other students, she suggested "Do try to get into after school activities if you can. It can be fun and keep you motivated to stay in school" (02-07, letter). In an early group discussion, Tricia told the group that she was on the senior girls' volleyball team (28-11-06, group discussion). Tricia was motivated to attend classes because of her membership on the volleyball team. She explained that "I can't play if I miss a class without a note or permission…on game day" (09-02-07, interview). She also identified with other teammates. She took a photograph of a team social event that she attended. She explained that "This is us, some of my volleyball team and one of my coaches.

All dressed up pretending to be gangsters, for bowling" (09-01-07, photograph & interview).

Emily also noted some of the Aboriginal female students' engagement with sports. She said,

> And so, seeing now the girls [name and name] both involved and one of the [name] girls involved in volleyball. That's really great. It's so nice to see them down in the gym when the girls are playing. The other girls go the [names of girls]. It gets the other Native girls down to the gym and watching the sports. But really very few of them ever try out and play, so I think it's really great that those three girls are on the teams. I don't think that any of the other [Aboriginal] students are involved in anything. (18-12-06, interview)

Participants identified strongly with friends as school supports. For Emmett and Tyler, who lived in the city and attended school without parental support, the support of friends was critical to their identities as students and to their school success. For Emmett friends were critical for maintaining sobriety. In his letter he wrote, "instead of seeing the same people every day, up here I was able or am able to maintain my sobriety with sober friends" (02-07, letter). Emmett also spoke of a friend from school who connected him to his Ojibwe culture. He said "mostly just I have one Native friend here. His name's [name]. I sing with him. And I drum with him. And go to pow wows, we travel—go here and there. We've been friends since last year when I came here" (12-12-06, interview; 27-11-06, group session).

Tyler credited his friendships to his engagement with schooling: "There's my friends. Coming to school, hanging around, yeah. Seeing new people, making friends. The reason I mostly come here everyday is to see my friends" (09-02-07, interview).

Teacher participant, Jennifer, noted the importance of supportive friendships for two Aboriginal students in her class: "and that's the thing too. One of my girls had to go home because someone died. Well her friend was really unhappy that whole week. You know

because I could hardly get her to do stuff because she was so uncomfortable with not having

her support" (09-01-07, interview).

Lorraine explained the role that she assumed with her friends at school. Our

conversation showed her determination to get her friends to attend their classes, despite their

reluctance:

> I don't know. [pause] Kind of, I just think they're really important because I try to force them to class but they don't want to go to class. I just force them and I'm like "go to class" and they're like "no" and I'm like "go" if they are in the hall I'll see them and say "come to class" or "go to class". I hafta like practically drag them to class. (14-12-06, interview)

Isabel illustrated her engagement with school through resistance to others who

believed that she would not succeed. She stated "And another thing that drives me is the

people who doubt me…It makes me want to try harder. I guess by doing it I'm lifting a lot of

barriers, and it's better than not doing anything at all" (13-12-06, interview). Isabel implicitly

understood the barriers that prevented her success in schooling. For Isabel, these barriers to

success included teachers. Isabel's sense of those who doubted her was reiterated in her

letter. She wrote a motivational letter to herself, which she shared at a group session. She

read "You want this because they [teachers] don't think you can do it." (15-12-06, group

session). For Isabel 'this' included re-doing courses at the academic level so that she could

attend university in the future. She described another, positive, motivator for attending

university. She reiterated her dream of attending university in group sessions (28-11-06,

group session; 16-01-07, group session). Isabel spoke with pride about being the first in her

family to attend post-secondary:

> Yeah, but then it really motivates me to go, want to get far with my education knowing that my family didn't go far with their education. It just makes me want to be the first one to become something rather than just staying in the reserve and going

to work. I have so much pride in my culture and that's what drives me. (13-12-06, interview)

Many of the student participants spoke about their intentions to go on to post-secondary education. When asked what motivated them, some students, such as Isabel, wanted to attend for their families (Jade, Trisha, and Tyler) and others for their communities (Tyler, Ella). In group sessions student participants talked about and asked questions about post-secondary education (28-11-06, group session; 16-01-07, group session). Ella, Lorraine, Amber, Tyler, Jade, Emmett, and Tricia talked about going on to post-secondary studies. Above, Ella mentioned studying midwifery so that she could go back to her reserve to teach parenting skills and provide health information to the other girls who lived there.

Tyler also spoke about attending college, saying "Yeah, I want to try finishing college. Or going to college." (08-12-06, interview). Like Ella, he wanted to attend college and then use his skills in his home community. He explained, "I was looking at like [course]. It deals with like waste management and stuff like that, where you can… Like a water treatment, kind of…So I was thinking of going for that. 'Cause I know I'd get a…maybe a job on my reserve. If I got that." When I asked if he would return to the reserve, he responded, "Yeah. I'd probably do that" (08-12-06, photograph & interview).

Near the end of the study, Emily told me that Amber had applied to a college program for September. Emily expressed surprise that Amber had applied to go to college independently, without the help of the school or its staff (08-02-07, discussion).

These students wanted to attend post-secondary for the same relational motivations that Muk Kee Qweh knew and used with her students many years ago in her classroom. Germane to agency, participants also talked about their disengagement from schooling.

Disengagement

Family and community were critical supports for some of the student participants who had left school. Their stories include disengagement from family and community to attend high school as well as needing to return to community, but not having access to a high school while there. Two student participants, Tyler and Emmett, described their disengagement from family and the implications for their schooling.

Tyler first signaled his alienation from his family in a group session. He mentioned that he lived with his auntie and his cousin here in the city (23-11-06, group session). In a December session, as students talked of going home for the holidays, Tyler said that he would not be returning to his family's home in [name of city] for Christmas. He would probably 'hang around here' with his auntie and his cousin. He said that he hadn't seen his family for over a year and he was not going to start now (01-12-06, group session). He had lived with his family for a short time in Thunder Bay. While living with them, he had attended another local high school. He explained that he left that school because "well I kinda moved out of my parents' place" (08-12-06, interview). Tyler identified the period living with his parents as the greatest challenge with schooling that he had faced. He explained the turmoil that he experienced:

> Yeah, I was like, the school mostly, I was like, I was starting to start failing grades, and I didn't really like that. And I just started giving up on school and stuff, and skipping. I was like thinking to myself well this school year is already finished really for me so what's the use in trying to fix it. That was the biggest challenge for me. (08-12-06, interview)

He expanded on his decision to leave his family when he was fifteen years old: "…I just didn't like living with my parents any more. And I ah, got fed up with it. And I was old enough to leave them, then like OK I'm leaving and I'm not coming back. Haven't been

since. All this time" (08-12-06, interview). In a later interview, I asked Tyler if he was not

attending classes at the time or if he had left school altogether. He replied, "I did drop

out…Yeah. I started again the next semester" (09-02-07, interview). Tyler discussed coming

to this high school when he moved in with his auntie. Once his living arrangements had

stabilized, he had been able to return to high school. His parents had since moved away from

Thunder Bay.

Emmett struggled with attending high school when he lived in his home community.

He explained "Like maybe at my last school when I was more like a troublemaker, and a

slacker, and I didn't really care about anything, and sometimes I was angry. I had a lot of

problems with my last school" (22-01-07, interview). He credited these problems to several

things: "Ah, drugs, drinking, just kinda like problems, and depression I guess. A bunch of

problems that caused me to drop out. I just didn't really care at the time. Slacking off. That

kind of thing" (12-12-06, interview). Emmett came to Thunder Bay in 2005. When I asked

him what had motivated him, he explained that living in his community and his goals for

school were incongruent:

> Oh, ah just like I know I didn't want to live under my dad's roof all my life. I know
> like I wanted a good job. Wanted to make something of myself and then I had to go
> back to school. Plus I think really think I needed to come up here to get away from
> home. Needed to get away. (12-12-06, interview)

Both Emmett and Tyler believed that they have had to disengage from relationships

with their immediate families to engage with school. Both of these youth had cut ties with

their immediate family members to attend high school in Thunder Bay.

Ella's disengagement from schooling was also relational to family, but not in the

sense that she disassociated herself from her family. Ella explained her disengagement from

school, which began in her first year of high school, when "I started slacking off in grade 9, second semester and I regret it now" (29-11-06, group session). Ella was already behind in her coursework when her grandmother died. She disengaged from schooling after her grandmother's death:

> After she passed away all my marks went down like on all my tests. And, I don't know, I just didn't…I don't know. I just didn't bounce back. I had all these feelings. I was crying all the time. I don't know. I was always mad for no reason. And I was always mad at myself. I don't know why but now I know. (12-12-06 interview)

When I asked her what she did while not attending classes, she explained, "I skipped school and I didn't go to any of my classes. I went to the library. I wouldn't do work. I would just sit there and stare. And then I started doing drugs after that" (01-12-06, interview). She explained that she had eventually lost four credits that year.

Isabel was also behind in her high school credits because, when she returned to high school one fall, she experienced homesickness for her home community where she had recently spent her two-month summer break. We discussed her decision to leave school and how long she had been out of school. She said, "I left for about a year and a half. About three semesters of school" (08-02-07, interview). When I asked her what had caused her to leave school, she attributed it to one cause—the discontinuity between her personal life in her home community and her school life in the city:

> It would be one thing—my personal life took over my school life. I was, I don't know. I went home for the summer one year and guess when I came back here for school here and I felt so really homesick and I just wanted to go back there. So then I just left school and went back there. And then I realized there was nothing there. I ended up messing up some of my school for a while (08-02-07, interview).

I asked her to clarify what she meant by 'there was nothing there,' whether she was talking about the place or the ability to attend high school in the community. She explained: "It's not

the same excitement as it was in the summer when everyone is off of school. It's kind of dead over there and boring and there's nothing to do. Doing the same old stuff every day" (08-02-07, interview).

Tyler, Emmett, Ella, and Isabel had disengaged from schooling. Tyler and Emmett were unable to live with their families and attend school. Ella noted that she could not 'bounce back' after her grandmother's death. Isabel had felt too conflicted in the transition from her summer in her home community to the school in the city.

Tricia's disengagement also related back to transitions. Although she had attended some elementary schooling here in the city, it did not prepare her for the transitions from elementary school to high school. She faced challenges in the new school environment, and became overwhelmed. Her greatest challenge was "trying to find new friends I would say…It was a lot of confusion, I didn't really know who to talk to. Usually, I was, I was so scared to talk to the teachers" (09-01-07, interview). She explained that this challenge got her into trouble. She said that she "ended up with the wrong crowd and I ended up doing drugs and drinking" (09-01-07, interview). I asked Tricia what happened next. She replied,

> Yeah I stayed in school but sometimes when I would be behind in my work, like really, really, behind in my work, I would just get so scared to come back and face all the junk that I had to do you know. That I just decided that I couldn't face all of that. I would just stay home. My mom would think that I was gone to school and that just caused more trouble at home. And that just spiraled me into this, oh, this, this—it was just crazy. (09-01-07, interview)

Five of the eight student participants talked about disengagement with schooling. Each of the students had relational stories about his/her disengagement from schooling. Dei (2003) cautions that too often social science has focused on families and communities when accounting for racialized youth leaving schools. He examined systemic sources that

contribute to racialized youths' disengagement from schooling. He observes the dilemma of "student disengagement from school through the lens of race and difference" and contends that "Educational research on the performance of academic students show the severity of issues for certain student bodies. Despite some successes, Black/African Canadians, First Nations/Aboriginals, and Portuguese students are at the forefront of student disengagement from school (see Brown, 1993; Cheng, Yau, & Zigler, 1993; Brathwaite & James, 1996; Dei, Holmes, Mazzuka, McIsaac, Campbell, 1995; Radwanski, 1987)" (p. 244). Thus, student participants talked about the critical incidents that led to their ultimate disengagement with schooling. Their experiences, when viewed through the larger structural perspective, mirrored the high proportion of racialized youths' disengagement from schooling (Dei, 2003, James, 2007).

All of these student participants returned to school to continue their schooling. Beginning with a group session discussion, students shared their stories of re-engagement with schooling.

Re-engagement

One group discussion topic emerged when a participant ended his story with the phrase "that's when I was bad" (27-11-06, group session). I asked "How do you go from 'being bad' to not 'being bad' anymore -- what happens?" Two students were forthcoming in talking about their experiences. Both students' experiences involved a critical incident that offered them experiential knowledge and inspired in them the will to change. One student noted that "my friend died, and then I stopped" (27-11-06, group session). The other participant reflected, "Something really bad happens and you have an epiphany or some word like that. You realize that you don't want to die on the street" (27-11-06, group session).

I later asked students about their re-engagement with schooling in individual interview sessions. Four participants, Emmett, Tricia, Isabel, Tyler, and Ella, noted that a critical incident had led them to their current status as an engaged student. Many participants described the assistance and support that they received and continued to receive to overcome the critical incident and remain on their path. Their stories follow.

Tricia's re-engagement with schooling came after she sought help. She explained, "But now that I -- I went to counseling before and I saw a doctor and after that--but actually it was in my reserve one time. Basically I told the doctor that I had depression and so I got prescribed something that would help me. I'm still on them" (09-01-07, interview). Tricia described her re-engagement strategies:

> Yeah. When I was in first year I used to just hang around with one group of people who did drugs and stuff like that. I wouldn't want to do that anymore. I get too close to people like that. Even if they're not, like that, they weren't into drugs. I just like keeping to myself. (09-01-07, interview)

She kept to herself, rather than 'hang around with' a group of friends, as a strategy for identifying with school. She also abstained. "Now I don't really do either of them [drugs and drinking]." As a final strategy Tricia explained, "Well after that I just really decided that I was never going to get that far back in school. And try to keep on top of things. Like really try to, and not skip so much again" (09-01-07, interview). In her letter, she shared with others the life lessons that she had learned from her experiences of disengagement. She cautioned "Don't listen to other friends or students when they say it's OK to be skipping school. It's just a waste of time, no matter what you're doing in that time" (02-07, letter). Along with not skipping school, Tricia also shared with others her experiences of how drugs and school did not mix: "Don't listen to friends or students that do drugs, especially if they go to school all

high. You can't learn anything while you're high. Same thing for drinking. That's just dumb"

(02-07, letter). Tricia re-engaged with schooling with professional help and agency.

Isabel initially returned to school out of boredom:

> Well, I realized that I wasn't doing much with my life. All I did was stay home and sleep all day and wake up at night. I finally realized I feel like doing something; I wonder if I should go back to school? I saw school as a way to pass time. So when I first came back to class, in first semester, and I came back with not really knowing what kind of courses I should do and stuff. I just thought "OK just come to school" And I didn't really have an idea of what I wanted to do. (08-02-07, interview)

Through dream knowledge Isabel re-engaged with schooling. She explained her dream which

came to her last summer: "Well I wanted more out of my life. I felt like I wasn't doing

enough. So I decided to try school again. I realized I like it. I'm finishing my credits, started

having a dream and I wanted to pursue it." When asked to describe her dream, she said,

"going to university. Doing the program. Go to Environmental… stuff (13-12-06, interview).

Isabel knew that she had to work to make up her lost credits. She told me "And I want

to catch-up. I'm ready to catch-up" (13-12-06, interview). Her strategy to catch up with the

missing credits involved separating her social life from her school life. She explained,

> Well, the reason why I didn't take any pictures of my friends is because I have a, I try and have a different school life than… well, when I come to school school is all I think about and I don't want to be busy socializing with friends because school's important to me. And I can talk to them later, after school, but when I come to school its all business for me. 'Cause it's very important. I just don't see, I just don't see, I just don't see myself having a social life at school 'cause I can have it after school when I'm not in school. Yeah, that's the reason why. (13-12-06, interview)

Isabel reiterated her re-engagement strategy in her letter: "I still have a social life, just not

during school hours" (02-07, letter). Like Tricia, Isabel needed to distance herself from

friends to focus on school. This distancing further maintained and supported binaries of

identities and spaces -- between friends/good student and school/home as border zones.

Emmett had a friend's help to re-engage with schooling. Emmett credited his friend's help for his return to school: "And then when I came to Thunder Bay I was more maturity level, more mature, and I smartened up."

Leisa: Was there a person who helped you in terms of smartening up?

Emmett: One of my friends. My friend [name]. And my dad wasn't able to help me at that time. Sometimes you try to get help out of your family and they aren't there all the time. But he kinda straightened me out.

Leisa: Kinda straightened you out?

Emmett: Kinda kicked me right here [points and laughs]

Leisa: You needed that?

Emmett: Yeah. (22-01-07, interview)

As well, since he arrived in the city, Emmett credited rediscovering his Aboriginal culture as a key influence in his engagement with schooling. He identified himself as a "drummer and singer" (15-12-06 group session & 15-01-07, group session) as well as "spiritual, but no longer Catholic" (07-02-07, group session). He drummed and sang with other urban Aboriginal youth. Emmett also engaged his Ojibwe identity through singing and dancing demonstrations which he performed with a group for schools (22-01-07). His re-engagement and ongoing identification with schooling were partly based in his disassociation with his home community:

Just sometimes also the thought of not or going back home just giving up on a lot of things and if I don't do this, this is gonna happen. I don't want to do that. I know what waits for me when I decide to drop out and I'll probably get into trouble or something like that. (12-12-06, interview)

For Emmett, identifying as sober (15-12-06, group session) was critical to his re-engagement with schooling. He wrote that "Up here I was able or am able to maintain my sobriety with

sober friends. I am not able to do so back in the reserve" (2007, letter).

Ella had also re-engaged with schooling after a lapse. She credited her inability to reconcile her grandmother's death as a catalyst for her disengagement with schooling. I began our conversation by asking "And what was it that made you come around to deciding that you were gonna be here, and attend and work?"

> My grandma, my grandma gave me, like she gave me this 20-hour lecture. Yeah, she was mad at me and she was talking to me about all these things and she told me that I really need my education. And she used my uncle for an example, because my uncle didn't finish high school. He only lasted for like a week, and then he went back home. Now that my uncle is living in [name of city] and I don't know what he's doing. And he usually asks my grandma for some money and I never want to do that. That's why. (12-12-06, interview)

Ella's disengagement with schooling related to one grandmother; her re-engagement related to her other grandmother who impressed on Ella the importance of completing high school. As part of her '20-hour lecture' she related Ella's uncle's story of not completing his secondary education as a life lesson for Ella. She took her grandmother's storied guidance, as her incentive to re-engage with schooling.

Tyler's story of re-engagement also related back to family. I asked Tyler what made him decide to return to school after leaving at the end of the previous semester. He responded "Well, of course, I wanted to doubt my mom wrong that she was saying I wouldn't graduate. I decided I would prove her wrong" (09-02-07, interview). Later in the interview I asked Tyler about his success with schooling, in particular the most successful thing about school this year. He explained:

> Oh, it's all a mixture of what you just said. Like the marks are right now like, are like really good right now I thought. What else, well I'm attending school almost every day, so I like that. Not like when my parents were there and like I wasn't really going to school or anything like that. (08-12-06, interview)

Tyler was determined to complete his high school education, and continue on to post-secondary education. I asked him whether he would let his mother know when he graduates. He said, "No. I haven't talked to her for about a year already" (09-02-07, interview).

All of these students spoke candidly of their alienation from schooling and their re-engagement with schooling. Their stories were all relational—family, friends, and communities played a role in their disengagement and/or re-engagement. What is not visible in their stories is any role that the school or any of its personnel might have had in their disengagement or re-engagement with schooling.

In this chapter on identity and identifying, I adapted Graveline's (1998) Self-in-Identity model to illustrate student participants' identity negotiation and identifying and teachers' perceptions of identity and identifying through five inter-related dimensions: self-identity and identifying; family; school; community; and agency. Below I summarize and discuss the themes that came through each of the dimensions.

Within the first dimension of self, some student participants identified as Aboriginal students, but qualified this identification because of negative perceptions and stereotypes that they perceived others held of Aboriginal students. Participants believed that these stereotypes were unfounded and unfair, and not related to their self-identifying and identifications with school. Other student participants rejected an Aboriginal student identity outright, preferring to identify as another student within the school. Perceptions of what was possible impacted students' identifications as Aboriginal students within the school, and constructed binaries and knowledge-based borders for students' ontologies and epistemologies. With engagement, all students had to leave something behind to engage with schooling. For student participants school did not play a significant role in their re-engagement with schooling.

Teacher/administrator participants, Emily and Robert, focused on a recently introduced policy of voluntary self-identification for Aboriginal students. Robert saw students' self-identification as a means for the school to support Aboriginal students' academic success. Finally, within the theme of self, student participants, who did not speak an Indigenous language, viewed language as critical to their identities. Students saw language related to self, family members, home communities, culture, lack, and healing. Within the relational dimension of family, teacher and student participants used significantly differing discourses and held different perspectives. Many students viewed their family members as role models, life teachers, and as supports critical to their school success. This relationality was a motivating factor for student participants. Conversely, teacher/administrator participants viewed students' families as a deterrent to students' engagement with schooling and their academic success. The teachers constructed families through deficit, which contradicted the lived experience of many of the student participants.

The lack of curricular connections to Aboriginal peoples' lives, experiences, and contributions to society in the school curriculum emerged through the relational dimension of school. Only one of the eight student participants, Tyler, recalled learning about Aboriginal peoples within the high school curriculum. The students' lack of any learning of Aboriginal peoples within the school curriculum revealed the knowledge that is valued and expressed in schools. What these students had not learned about within their courses established the school's pedagogy and teachers' pedagogical practices as bordered experiences for them.

Student and teacher/administrator participants again held differing perspectives about Aboriginal students' identifying with school. Teachers addressed the theme of the challenges that Aboriginal students faced in school. Teachers identified three significant challenges for

Aboriginal students:

- The pacing and the content of the curriculum (Andrea, Jennifer)

- Aboriginal students' language and communication skills (Andrea, Jennifer), and

- Aboriginal students 'fitting in' and/or transitions (Jennifer, Kelly, Robert)

Student participants also identified transition challenges through lenses of their own experiential knowledge of moving into the high school. Their stories illuminate the variety of challenges that Aboriginal students could face and the range of transition supports that could have facilitated their successful transitions. Reflecting the students' experiences, academic and local research also found that transition supports for Aboriginal students are needed in the high schools to facilitate their success with a range of transitions (McCaskill et al., 2007).

Teachers also identified challenges that they faced when teaching Aboriginal students:

- teaching the course content and structuring the classes to meet students' needs (Jennifer)

- relating to/connecting with Aboriginal students (Andrea, Emily)

- students, their families and their cultures as detrimental to student engagement and success (Andrea, Emily)

- Aboriginal students' attendance (Emily)

- insufficient professional development to teach Aboriginal students (Andrea)

Some teacher/administrator participants expressed concerns that programs and services previously offered at the high school had been rescinded. For example, Andrea, Jennifer, and Robert, noted that the Native art and Native history courses previously offered

were dropped when the teacher who was teaching the courses left the school. As well, Emily, Robert, and Jennifer mentioned that the school had previously had two counsellors from First Nations communities who provided educational and social support services to Aboriginal students within the school.

Teacher/administrator participants also identified supports available for Aboriginal students and teachers in the high school. Robert believed that the new Aboriginal Liaison worker would support administrators in schools to develop solutions to these challenges. Robert also saw the transitions program, offered by the high school for over-age students, as an available support for Aboriginal students. Emily identified the Alt Ed room as a support within the school that Aboriginal students accessed. Robert and Emily both mentioned the weekly after-school program for Aboriginal students offered by a local Aboriginal organization. This program was the only one designated for Aboriginal students that the school offered. It had been established by the school in collaboration with the community several years ago in response to a racialized incident. The majority of teacher/administrator participants did not view themselves as implicated in Aboriginal students' schooling failure, or as contributing to aboriginal students' success, choosing to maintain cultural difference throughout their discourses of Aboriginal student success.

Many of the student participants identified with teachers relationally. They demonstrated this theme of relationality through the photographs they took of their teachers, and their talk about the teachers. Their relational identifications with teachers contrasted with their teachers' beliefs about identifying with and engaging Aboriginal students in their classrooms and in the school.

Many student and teacher/administrator participants believed that the school's recent

introduction of an Ojibwe language and culture course was a positive addition to the

curriculum. All of the student participants, except Ella, identified with the course offering.

Many students believed that the course connected them, as Aboriginal students, to the school.

Ella, because of the influence of Christian missionaries who had come in to her community,

struggled with the incongruency between her community's Christian beliefs and the Ojibwe

teacher's spiritual teachings in the course.

Students identified challenges to their school success. Emmett identified poverty as

his greatest challenge. Four students mentioned their challenges with transitions, in different

ways. Tricia identified that her home community had the same number of people in it as the

high school had. Amber, Tricia, and Lorraine identified challenges that they faced through

differences between their schooling experiences on reserve and in the public school system in

the city. None of these students felt prepared for the different expectations they encountered

when they arrived in the public school system. These expectations had not been made

explicit to them.

Three student participants identified supports within the school:

- Free food, discounts, and lunch coupons (Emmett)

- Supportive staff and teachers (Amber, Emmett, Isabel)

Within the dimension of community, participants identified themes particular to the

contexts of cities and home communities. The students did not construct binaries between

these communities; rather most students moved freely between them. Student participants

experienced borders within the contact zones of the school and the city.

Throughout the themes of identification and representation, teacher/administrators

perceived Aboriginal students from a racial perspectives (e.g. Aboriginal student self-

identification; Aboriginal students and their parents not engaging with school, requesting

professional development for engaging Aboriginal students). Although they used racial

lenses to classify students, teachers' hypotheses and explanations of what was happening in

the school and in their classrooms for these students, were overwhelmingly framed as

culture-based. The culture-based explanations often established students, families, and their

cultures as incongruent with the dominant school culture which teachers reproduced and

maintained. The lone exception was the example that teacher participant, Jennifer, provided

about knowing how much more could be done for Aboriginal students' success at the school

level. Because of the persistence of the teachers' use of racial identifications, I introduced

scholars' race-based lenses which provided an alternative interpretation of what was

happening within the school.

In the next chapter I describe how participants discussed relationships in terms

of racialization and racism in the school and in the city.

CHAPTER 5: RACIALIZATION IN THE SCHOOL AND THE CITY

Introduction

Within this introductory section, I describe the organizing structure of this chapter. I adapted and extended Graveline's (1998) Self-in-Relation formation to depict a typology of racism and cognitive imperialism. I call this organizing framework a racialization model (see Figure 2 below). In the following section, I present the themes using the four dimensions of racialization of the model: interpersonal racism, institutional racism, cultural racism, and, cognitive imperialism. I discuss each theme/dimension as it relates to the contact zones of racialized spaces -- the school as an institutional contact zone space and the city as a public contact zone space.

Earlier (in Chapter 2) I provided Omi and Winart's conceptualizations of race as both an ideology and as an objective condition. I also used Fanon's (1967) term 'racialization' and the connections that he forged between the processes of racialization and colonialism as conceptualizations of race. Racialization and colonialism maintain their currency through racism and cognitive imperialism respectively. Cognitive imperialism is a process of racialization that is specific to education and carried out within schools (Adams, 1999; Battiste, Bell, & Findlay, 2002). Cognitive imperialism has an ideological basis similar to racism. It is also an objective condition demonstrated through indicators and outcomes for racialized students in schools.

Scholars describe three interacting dimensions of racism -- interpersonal, institutional, and cultural (Fleras & Elliott, 2003; James, 2003; Laroque, 1991; St. Denis & Hampton, 2002). To illustrate the connection of the dimensions of racism to cognitive

imperialism, I created a conceptualization of racialization using these three dimensions of racism as well as cognitive imperialism. Figure 2 portrays racialization as related to the ongoing project of colonialism, through cognitive imperialism.
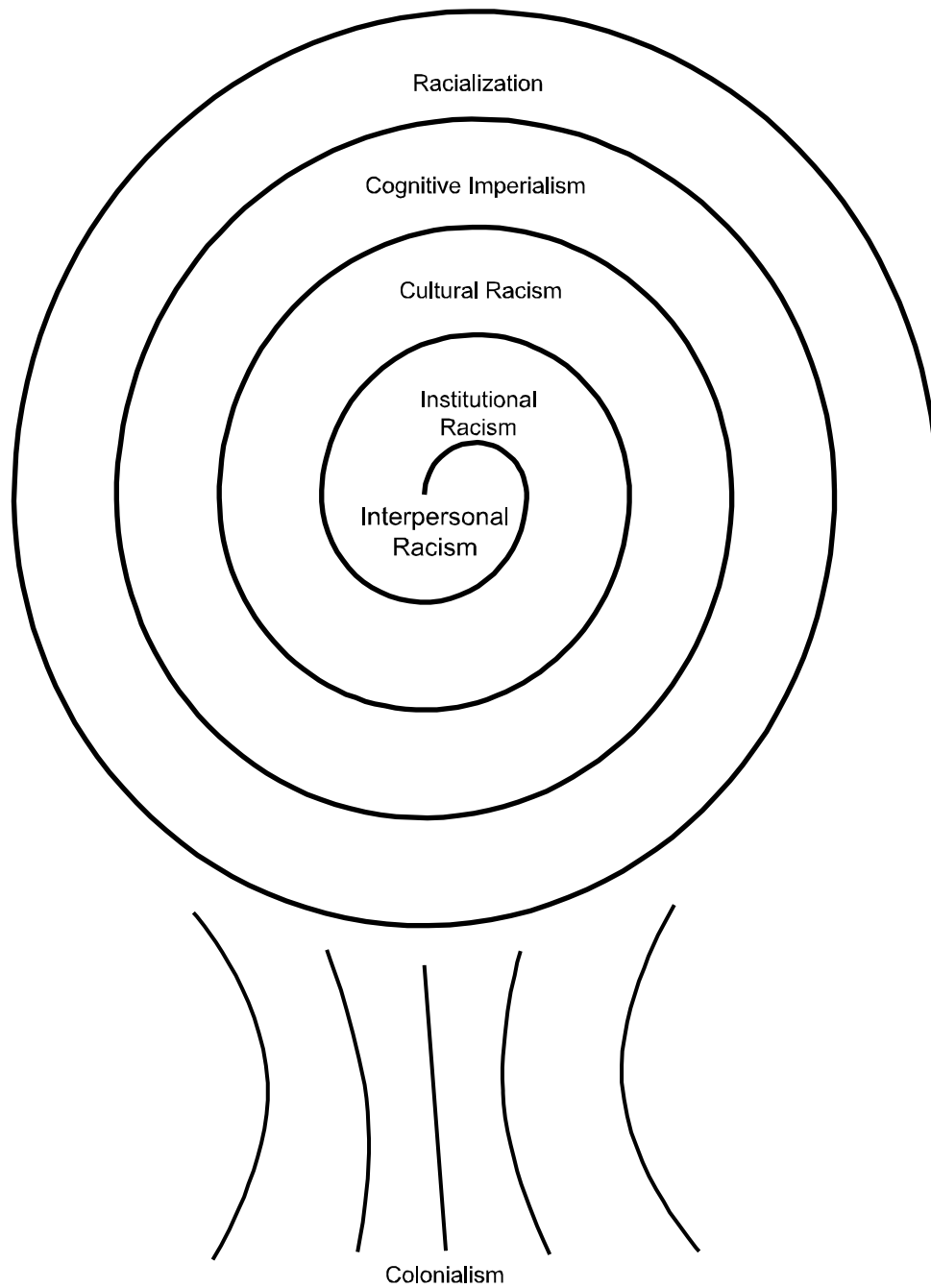
Figure 2: Racialization and its relationship to racism and cognitive imperialism.

I use this model to situate the findings and discuss them. I work through each form of racism, beginning at the micro level (i.e. interpersonal racism) and moving through racism to the macro-level (cognitive imperialism) for the two contexts where participants identified and experienced racism -- the school and the city. Cognitive imperialism is unique to education, and is described within the context of the school (Battiste, Bell, & Findlay, 2002). These contexts, the school and the city, illuminate where and how racialization occurs and how it operates.

These dimensions of racialization are iterative -- they are presented as discrete forms that are interactive and inter-related to one another and to the larger historical processes of colonialism and racialization. I present the data findings and discussion by dimensions, starting with a brief description of each dimension.

<div align="center">Interpersonal Racism</div>

Interpersonal racism is the most overt form of racism. It has many manifestations, including any and all of the following: an individual's avoidance of racialized persons; contributing to racism through acceptance of and/or promotion of racism; attitudes and actions of prejudice or discrimination against another person or a group based on race; and, hate crimes and violence. What is always present is a belief that one holds superior values and norms and that other racial groups possess inferior traits and attributes (Henry & Tator, 2006). These beliefs must be acted on for racism to be overt. Individual actions are commonly expressed through racial slurs, racial gestures such as mocking, and/or violence towards the targeted person(s). This form of racism is often not directed at a person individually, but rather at whom that person represents (Fleras & Elliot, 2002; Henry & Tator, 2006, James, 2003; St. Denis & Hampton, 2002). Student participants understood

racism as overt through "physical assaults perpetuated by bigoted individuals, racial slurs, and harassment in schools or the workplace, defacing property or similar overt acts" (Henry & Tator, 2006, p. 17).

In the School

Participants' perceptions of racism varied in relation to their identifications, their own levels of awareness of racism, students' markedness as looking 'Aboriginal' (through for example, predominant racial markers such as skin and hair colour), and their experiences of racism. Students had differing perceptions and experiences of racism as well as responses to racism. One teacher participant, Mary, also spoke about racism and the varied experiences of racism that her two daughters had experienced within the school system. Student and teacher/administrator participants described the school's role in addressing racism. I describe these below, beginning with student participants' perceptions of racism.

Emmett said "I just think if there was any racism [in the school], I'd ignore it. There isn't anything I would do about it; I would walk away. But I would tell them I don't like it. I would probably just tell them" (23-01-07, interview). Emmett posed his comments hypothetically neither confirming nor denying his experiences of racism in school. Tyler said that he had not experienced racism within the school, and did not consider racism a problem within the school, his classes, or with other students (09-02-07, interview). He later explained that his typical strategy was avoidance. He said "I try walking away or whatever" (09-02-07, interview).

In contrast, Trisha's response left no question of her perception of racism in the school. Tricia said that she had faced a lot of racism at school when she moved to the city from the reserve as a girl in elementary school (14-11-06, interview notes). In a later

interview, she discussed her response to experiences of racism. She stated, "Yeah, I just try to ignore it" (22-01-07, interview). Like Emmett and Tyler, Trisha preferred to ignore racialized comments from other students. She noted that "it says more about them [the students making comments] than about me" (14-12-06, interview). Emmett, Trisha, and Tyler understood racism as comments or behaviours by others directed against them as Aboriginal peoples. Their responses to racism involved ignoring it, avoiding it, or not acknowledging it whenever possible**.** Tricia, as a female participant, identified and acknowledged racism in a way that the males did not. Gender may play a role, but there is not enough information from the participants to explore this idea further. Haluza-DeLay (2002) noted that this response from racialized students, ignoring racialized comments, could lead to an under-reporting. This under-reporting may influence teachers' and administrators' perceptions that less racism occurs in the school than actually does (p. 76).

Lorraine had not experienced racism at school. She stated "Not really in school" and then she added "Because they [other students] know I'll confront them" (30-01-07, interview). Lorraine believed that she had defences against racialized comments and acts, through her confrontation skills and the consequences of the school's zero tolerance policies.

Two male students, Emmett and Tyler, perceived that their own intimidation deterred other students from racist talk and behaviours at school. Tyler stated above that he had not experienced any racism at the school. He hypothesized the reason, saying: "Because I'm pretty big compared to the other guys and so, if they were going to start something, of course I'm gonna start in and not gonna stop" (09-02-07, interview). Tyler believed that other students understood that he would not tolerate any verbal taunts or racialized acts. He explained, "I think they know that…Don't mess with me; you'll likely get punched out after"

(09-02-07, interview). He had not experienced racism at school. He believed that his size and reputation deterred other students from targeting him. In contrast to Tyler's physical size, Emmett is shorter with a slight build. Like Tyler, he also perceived that "some students can be intimidated by me" (22-01-07, interview). Emmett did not expand on why he believed that others perceived him to be intimidating. These male participants believed that their intimidation by size, reputation, or other attributes shielded them from other students' racial slurs and acts. Lorraine perceived that her confrontation skills prevented other students from engaging her in racialized talk and behaviours.

Teacher/administrator participant, Robert, believed that Aboriginal students did not experience discrimination within the school. He did not use the word 'racism':

> You saw, being here for probably the last month and a half, I don't think you would see that here because the kids mention that kid's picking on me? I don't see that here. Because I would hope, if it is happening, kids would come to us. Kids whether they're, all kids have issues with being picked on, sometimes harassed from bullies or whatever it happens to be, but I don't see that being towards the Native kids here. (12-01-07, interview)

Robert alluded to discrimination (but not racism) towards 'Native kids' without ever mentioning the word 'racism' or acknowledging race as a factor. He likened it to non-racialized experience of being picked on or harassed. His conceptualization placed bullying as equally oppressive to racism. By doing this he denied, consciously or unconsciously, the historical social relations that have been formed through colonialism and continue to be manifested through racism against Aboriginal peoples (Adams, 1999; Smith, 1999). Robert also expressed his hope that Aboriginal students felt comfortable approaching administrative staff with any incidents that occurred; yet he maintained that these incidents did not occur in the school.

Ella (23-01-07, interview) had experienced racism within the school. She described an incident in the high school in which another Aboriginal student, with the same name as hers, was accused of stealing a purse from a White student. The White student mistook Ella, the study participant, for Ella who allegedly stole the purse, and confronted her with an accusation of theft which she linked with racial slurs. This conflating of non-racialized behaviours (theft) to racial slurs demonstrated the power of racism. The accuser used her perceived racial superiority to retrieve her belongings. In my interview notes I asked myself why and how a theft incident became racialized. Why it was accompanied by a racial slur? Is this how power works when the accuser believes an unequal relationship exists to be exploited? (23-01-07, notes) Or is it a belief of an innately unequal relationship that links the two (theft and race) in a perceived to be obvious yet synthetic relationship? James (2003) notes the function of power within the unconscious and conscious practices of racism and discrimination. He states that "Power is the critical component within which the exercise of ethnocentrism, prejudice, and racism operate" (p. 139). In this instance, Ella recognized the racism and took the racialized incident to Student Services, where it was resolved quickly. Ella explained, "Yeah, they had a talk with her and she never bugged me after that. Now we're good friends" (23-01-07, interview).

One teacher participant, Mary, acknowledged the school-based policy on racism, and her participation in supporting the policy by relating a recent incident. A student in one of Mary's classes had endured a racial slur from another student which she had described to Mary while she was in the art classroom at lunch time. Mary said "So I asked her [the student] if she had taken it up with the principal or [name of counsellor] or whatever right. She goes 'yeah, I mentioned it.' Mary continued, "And I think that the student was called to

task. It's [bogan] a very slang, racial term" (21-12-06, interview). When I asked the meaning, Mary replied "dirty Indian." She noted the longevity of the term 'bogan' in the city saying "Oh, it's old. It's actually an old term. It's obviously come from a previous generation" (21-12-06, interview).

The term 'bogan' provides an example of how a discourse on urban Aboriginal peoples conflates with racism. It also exemplifies an historical term that continues to have currency today, an intergenerational production that continues to carry meaning and worth for those who use it. Bogan is a localized term that, through its continued use, has created a negative stereotype, a kind of shorthand. Its continued use and ongoing usefulness maintains a racial superiority/inferiority dichotomy that essentializes Aboriginal peoples living in the city. Lorraine also mentioned the term 'bogan' and demonstrated how it is related to other terms as well as others' perceptions of superiority: "We always get called bogans or stupid Natives or other bad words, but I don't know if I'm allowed to say them [laughs] (30-01-07, interview). Haluza-DeLay (2002) also found in his study of racism in Thunder Bay that "Many Aboriginal peoples commented on the derogatory term 'bogan' " (p. 75).

Interpersonal racism is based primarily on visible markers -- e.g. skin colour, hair colour or style, and/or clothing (such as a jacket from one's home community). Language, accent, and other physical traits are also used for classifying (Henry & Tator, 2006; Dei, 2000; James, 2003). This classification system is illustrated through an example given by teacher participant, Mary. She talked from a mother's perspective about her two bi-racial daughters. She noted that one of her daughters had not experienced racism in school. She hypothesized that this is due to visible markers. She said of her daughter, "But s/he's not blatantly, s/he doesn't have the blatant Native features either" (21-12-06, interview). Her

other daughter, with more discernable features marking her as an Aboriginal student, had experienced racism in high school from her peers (21-12-06, interview). Mary's perceptions echoed Sixkiller Clarke's (1994) findings that "…there are a number of studies which seem to support the idea that the more 'white' a student appears (mixed-bloods), the more acceptability is defined in terms of more opportunities in school and employment" (p. 71; see also Adams, 1999; James, 2003).

Ella noted that her skin and hair colouring had marked her as "another student from the rez" amongst her classmates (12-12-06, interview), despite Ella's family having left 'the rez' more than five years ago to move to the city for her father's work. As noted in the student profiles in the previous chapter, Ella completed Intermediate grades at a public school in the city.

Thus, Aboriginal students who experience racism are marked as the 'Other' through skin colour, hair colour and style, facial features, and clothing. These students experience interpersonal racism from others within the high school.

In the City

Tyler initially denied experiencing racism in the city. He paused, then said "Well the last person that did that I broke his nose. So no one else ever did that since then" (09-02-07, interview). Tyler then described his most recent experience of interpersonal racism that involved an unprovoked incident that had occurred one day as he walked along the sidewalk. As Tyler passed another youth who was walking in the opposite direction, the youth shoved him. He then identified Tyler as Aboriginal using a racial slur. Tyler explained that "…actually he said something really racist and I didn't like that, so I got mad and I started fighting him" (09-02-07, interview). Although he explained his strategy above as 'walking

away' he could not do that in this instance. He explained, "Yeah, usually I don't plan to, I try walking away or whatever. But that guy pissed me off a lot. I felt pretty mad that day. The insult triggered it" (09-02-07, interview). Tyler's story demonstrated the power of racial slurs and insults, and its potential for provoking violence.

Interpersonal racism may also include the physical power of assaults. Student participants described racialized physical assaults and the added dimension of concern for their safety. They described a racialized, localized phenomenon in the city, drive-by racism. This form of interpersonal racism targets individuals (who are typically strangers), and involves stereotypes, racial slurs, and physical assaults towards Aboriginal peoples. Lorraine explained that drive-by racism occurred "when I'm walking and they're in a vehicle driving" (30-01-07, interview). Other students added more contexts to Lorraine's definition. I expand on Lorraine's definition.

In an earlier paper (Desmoulins, 2008), I call these students' examples of interpersonal racism 'drive-by racism' because of the violent, essentializing, random, racist, and public nature of the act. The targets of drive-by racism are chosen by distinguishing markers (such as their skin colour, hair colour and/or styles such as ponytails or braids, and/or distinguishing clothing featuring Indigenous and/or First Nation affiliations) by drivers and/or passengers in passing vehicles. Drivers and passengers made it clear to the study participants that they were being targeted through their racial slurs and comments. Because the drivers/passengers did not personally know the Aboriginal participants, these racial slurs appeared to be directed at Aboriginal peoples in general. Another aspect of 'drive by racism' is that while it is interpersonal, it is also spacialized. It occurs in public spaces.

This idea of racism directed at someone because they are 'marked' as belonging to a

group was a common experience of racism for study participants. For example, Isabel,

Emmett, and Jade each related recent, separate incidences of drive-by racism in the city --

walking along the sidewalk and having people in cars or on busses target them by shouting

racialized insults and throwing things at them. These items included handy objects, for

example, take-out remains such as food remnants and wrappers and cups of pop. Emmett

described his experience with drive-by racism:

> You see down on [street name] there, by [place]. Last year I was walking there with a friend and people drive by. And drive by and they say something or they throw something at you. One guy threw his drink at me. I don't know, we just look at them and say well, they're in a vehicle and we're walking by. There isn't much that we can do about that when they've driven by. (23-01-07, interview)

Sometimes the perpetrators intended to injure the recipient. Jade recounted that she

was walking down the street with her cousin when suddenly "this one guy started yelling at

us and you know then he threw something at us. It was heavy. He threw it at us" (30-01-07,

interview).

Lorraine addressed the prevalence of drive-by racism, noting that it happens "all the

time" (30-01-07, interview) while she walked around the city. Participants in Haluza-

DeLay's (2002) study also spoke to racism by people in passing vehicles. One of Haluza-

DeLay's participants mentioned that there are particular streets where this form of racism

occurs regularly (p. 44). This localized phenomenon adds to the spacialization of drive-by

racism against Aboriginal peoples in the city.

Many of the student participants took public transit to get around the city. Bus stops

were also mentioned by two of the student participants as locations where they had

experienced drive-by racism. Amber noted that the perpetrators target Aboriginal persons

who are waiting for buses (24-01-07, interview) at bus stops around the city. Amber related

that her friend had experienced this form of racism in the city. She said "One of my friends was standing at the bus stop and a car pulled over". The driver then directed racial slurs towards the woman and then pulled away (24-01-07, interview). Jade recounted another incident that occurred when she was with a group of friends: "…we were walking and I guess she [the perpetrator] was on the bus and she was throwing things at us too" (22-01-07, interview). As with Amber's example, the racialized person's gender may also factor in to this form of racism. it may also evoke fear in lone women targeted by men.

Thus, public spaces, the sidewalks, and bus stops are spaces where study participants experienced interpersonal racism as well as potential or actual violence in the city. These acts of 'drive-by racism' are not based on an individual him/herself (i.e. their behaviours or any interactions with another person); but rather the acts are directed towards them generally as Aboriginal peoples. These students are targeted because they are racially marked as Aboriginal. Drive-by racism exemplifies interpersonal racism because it is experienced at an individual and personal level, while it simultaneously occurs in public spaces, with the intent of essentializing Aboriginal peoples and treating them as inferior. It relates back to biological conceptualizations of race and the early notions of racial inferiority. Although the theorizing of racial superiority/inferiority has been rejected, the social construction of inferiority is maintained through acts of interpersonal racism (Dei, 1996, Smith, 1999).

Sixkiller Clarke (1994) noted that interpersonal racism directed towards Aboriginal students also interacted with systemic forms of racism. He found that these Aboriginal students also had fewer school and resulting employment opportunities in the future. His findings support Omi and Winart's (2005) and Icart, Labelle, and Antonius' (2005) conceptualization of racism as both ideological (socio-cultural) construct as well as objective

conditions. These objective conditions are circumstances that establish and maintain inequality, such as Sixkiller Clarke's findings that Aboriginal students had fewer school and employment opportunities because of racism directed towards them. The next section examines institutional racism in the school, where power exists within the institution to systemically suppress a group of students.

<div align="center">Institutionalized Racism</div>

Institutionalized racism exists within sectors of society such as education, justice, employment, etc. and it is manifested within their socio-cultural, political institutions such as schools (Adams, 1999). Because of the reach of institutional racism, Métis scholar Emma Larocque (1991) notes the ubiquity and pervasiveness of it within all of these socio-cultural political institutions for Indigenous peoples. She states that "It is especially important to understand that racism against Native (Indian, Inuit, and Métis) peoples is embedded in Canadian institutions" (p. 73). Institutional racism includes the laws, policies, procedures, and practices of socio-cultural, political institutions that disadvantage racialized groups intentionally and/or unintentionally. For example, racialized groups are often disadvantaged by the unexamined, status quo nature of organizational policies and practices that serve to exclude them in schools (Dei, 1996; Dion, 2005; Fleras & Elliott, 2002; James, 2007; St. Denis & Hampton, 2002). Because institutionalized racism is a form of systemic racism (along with cultural forms), it is often not expressed overtly, like interpersonal racism. It is based in systems and ideas, and is thus often referred to as ideological. Like all forms of racism, it is also an objective condition.

Icart, Labelle, and Antonius (2005) studied six international cities to investigate institutionalized racism as ideological and as objective conditions. They studied these cities

to discern commonalities and develop possible measures of racism that could be used within cities. They developed two measures of the prevalence of institutional racism in communities. One measured the policies and practices of institutions as ideology. The other measured the impacts of these policies on racialized peoples as compared to their non-racialized counterparts, to examine objective conditions. Icart et al. called the first set of measures implementation measures. These examine the institution and its implementation of policies, procedures and practices to counteract racism and discrimination. Icart et al. called the second set of measures impact measures, because they were intended to measure the impacts of the implementation of policies, procedures, and practices that they are intended to redress for racialized peoples. These examine quantitative, census-derived, socio-economic and demographic data for racialized and non-racialized peoples in various sectors that relate to the impacts of racism (e.g. housing, education, justice, employment, etc.). Icart et al. contend that the data for Aboriginal and other racialized peoples, when compared to the general population, determines the impact of policies for racialized groups based on the prevalence and year-over-year maintenance of differences in outcomes across socio-cultural political sectors.

The use of census-based data allows researchers to examine differences or patterns over time as well. Using these sectors, or dimensions, the researchers developed impact indicators (i.e. residential segregation graduation rates, employment rates, unemployment rates, and reports of racism).

Icart et al.'s (2005) theorizing is consistent with other scholars' theorizing on the intersection of race with other forms of oppression, such as gender and class (Dei, 2000; Graveline, 1998). These scholars assert that the intersection of race with other oppressions

creates a 'cage of oppression' (Graveline, 1998) which produces borders for Aboriginal and

other racialized peoples. These borders are erected and maintained through systemic forms of

racism such as institutional racism within schools. These forms of racism are called systemic

because of the historical, socio-cultural, changing yet pervasive nature of the racism (Dei,

2000; James, 2007; St. Denis, 2002).

In the School

Institutionalized racism exists within all institutions. It is often maintained

unintentionally by those with power within the institution. Teacher/administrator

participants, Emily and Robert, provided examples of unintentional racism, as unexamined

assumptions or taken-for-granted beliefs that they held. These examples are not meant to

expose school teachers, administrators, and/or staff as racists. Rather, as Dei and

Asgharzadeh (2001) state "In the absence of an understanding of the social reality informed

by local experiences and practices, decolonization processes will not succeed" (p. 299). Thus,

these teacher/administrator examples illustrate how beliefs about Aboriginal peoples were so

embedded, so normalized, that they were taken for granted as shared beliefs and/or facts.

Without an analysis of the racialized, taken for granted language and practices (i.e. the

discourses) of teachers and administrators in schools, institutional racism may be perpetuated

regularly and unconsciously, like a marinade (Battiste, n/d). Awareness and

acknowledgement of institutional racism disturbs the normalized, taken-for-granted basis and

may open pathways to decolonization.

Teacher Discourses

Teacher/administrator participants' beliefs, language, and practices impacted their

work and relationships with Aboriginal students, and their discourses reiterated some of the

prevailing discourses. Four examples are presented. These include: 1) engaging Aboriginal parents with schools; 2) streaming Aboriginal students into non-university programs; 3) externally- imposed Aboriginal students' identities; and, 4) the juxtaposition of the board's Aboriginal initiatives with their socio-cultural institutional policies and their implementation within the school. Each is explored below as an example and in relation to the literature. In each example, the teacher/administrator framed the problem with Aboriginal students.

In the first example, while discussing the frustrations that she had working with Aboriginal students, Emily stated that "[Aboriginal students'] parents are not engaged with the school" (18-12-06, interview). She expanded on her beliefs about parents of Aboriginal students, providing examples as facts to demonstrate parents' attitudes about schooling, and finally, expressed her desire to facilitate parents' engagement with the school:

> You know, even getting parents engaged with the school, that's another thing that I would like to do in a [program]. Have them in for a big feast or something, to get them in to the school. Because some of the students that I work with, when you try to phone parents, parents sometimes don't even talk to you. They will hang up on you, or they don't want to come from [name of reserve] to talk to the school. They will come [to the city] to play bingo, but they don't want to come into the school. So they're not very engaged with the school, so the kids aren't really engaged. I'm sure they don't talk school up at home. They don't, it's not a big priority for them. (18-12-06, interview)

Emily did not elaborate on how she knew that parents from a nearby First Nation community were coming in to the city for other, non-school, events. Knowing information as facts and essentializing parents, as bingo players who do not value schooling, exemplifies the third dimension or form of racism, cultural racism. Emily's quotation exemplifies how forms of racism can iterate with each other, in this case cultural racism iterates with institutional racism. It also raises several questions: How did Emily conflate parents' bingo playing with not valuing school? What spaces did the bingo hall offer parents that the school did not offer?

Emily initially expressed frustration because the Aboriginal students' parents were not engaged with school. Her implied meaning, illustrated through the longer quotation, demonstrates that, for Emily, parental engagement meant coming in to the school.

In contrast to Emily's framing of the problem of parents of Aboriginal students not being engaged with the school, Toulouse (n/d) frames parental engagement in relation to the larger failure of the school and its schooling for Aboriginal peoples. She asserts that educators must be honest that schools have failed Aboriginal students, and that increasing parental involvement may encourage change (p. 8). Emily's idea of having parents in for a big feast could be an initial step towards encouraging change and to demonstrate to parents of Aboriginal students that the school welcomes them. She did not acknowledge the first phrase of Toulouse (n/d) above, that is, the failure(s) on the school's part. Emily's racialized ideology informed her ideas about parents, families, communities, and nations as the problem, rather than informing a belief that schools have failed students. This failure is also evidenced through the next example, the teachers' discourses of non-university streaming of Aboriginal students.

The second example illustrates streaming into non-academic studies. Early in the study I asked Emily for the names of potential teachers that I might invite for interviews. Emily recommended six teachers to me. She paused and added, "You wouldn't want to interview grade 12 academic teachers because they don't have any Aboriginal students" (24-11-06, informal discussion). It is possible that Emily's statement reflected her not knowing the Aboriginal students in the school who may be in the academic stream. As the Aboriginal Voluntary Self-Identification Policy had not yet been implemented, Emily's statement reflects a common understanding of racial classifications of Aboriginal students through

visible markers such as skin colour and hair style (Fleras & Elliott, 2003; Henry & Tator, 2006; James, 2003; Sixkiller Clarke, 1994). As noted in Chapter 2, James (2003) connects these visible markers back to the concept of biological race.

From another lens, and presuming that Emily's information was accurate, then Emily's information that Aboriginal students comprise 10% of the student body (24-11-2006, informal discussion) is significant with respect to racism as an objective condition. If Aboriginal students comprised approximately 10% of the student body at the school, why would these students represent 0% of the students in the academic stream? Emily considered this fact as a natural occurrence within the high school; Aboriginal students were not enrolled in the university stream.

Using Icart et al.'s (2005) concept of impact indicators (of the board's and school's policies and practices), an indicator could be the number of Aboriginal students in the academic, university-bound stream within the school's student body. Having no Aboriginal students within the university stream or academic stream would illustrate that the school is intentionally or unintentionally discriminating against Aboriginal students through its policies and practices, based on this impact indicator.

Racism exists, as Laroque (1991) notes, because it facilitates socio-economic mobility for one group at the expense of another (p. 95). James (2007) contends that the practice of streaming in high schools for racialized groups is an indicator of racism. He states that "too many marginalized students are 'streamed' into work-related college programs rather than advanced university programs" (p. 26). His findings on the streaming of racialized students are supported by other researchers (Cleary & Peacock, 1998; Dei. 2003; St. Denis & Hampton, 2002). Dei (2003), in the introduction to a paper discussing youth

disengagement, notes that researchers have demonstrated that racialized students (specifically Black/African Canadians and Aboriginal students) are disproportionately represented in high schools through non-university streams (p. 244). Cleary and Peacock's (1998) research with Aboriginal students also found that students are typically streamed into non-university programs (see also, James, 2007). They connect Aboriginal students' access to advanced high school programs for university to teacher expectations of them as inter-related conditions that promote institutionalized racism against Aboriginal students.

Of the eight student participants, only one, Isabel, was re-taking courses, previously taken at the general level and during the study at the advanced level, to be eligible to apply for university. I reported in the previous chapter that Isabel related the difficulties that she faced with her math teacher and she said in a letter (15-12-06, group session) that she found motivation to succeed in the advanced stream through others who "did not think she could do it". She noted that she "had to lift a lot of barriers" (15-12-06, group session). Thus, the academic research, Isabel's experiences, and the other student participants who were in the general stream, reinforce Emily's assertion that there would be no need for me to interview 'grade 12 academic teachers because they don't have any Aboriginal students.' What Emily appeared unaware of was the institutional racism inherent in these practices and the impacts for Aboriginal students' educational outcomes. The next example introduces how teacher/administrator participants reproduced the discourses of authenticity.

The third example illustrates the discourse of authenticity. Emily imposed definitions on who qualified as 'authentic' Aboriginal youth, based on how students performed their Aboriginality. She hypothesized that the Aboriginal students who were not participants in my study were not participating because they did not acknowledge their Aboriginal heritage. She

noted another characteristic amongst these Aboriginal students, who denied their heritage,

and that was that they hung out with White kids at school (27-11-06, discussion). She used an

external representation of students' identifications, the race of friends within the school, to

determine his or her connection to Aboriginal heritage and/or identifying. Her prescribed

characteristic of Aboriginal students' identities (i.e. friendships) followed definitional

approaches to identity (Berry, 1999; Liebler, 2004) and the older discourse of authenticity

(Nagler, 1970; Sorkin, 1978) discussed in Chapter 2. Both of these discourses use externally-

determined identity characteristics to define who may have and who may not have an

Aboriginal identity. Both relate to having the power to define another.

Finally, in the fourth example, teacher/administrator participants, Robert and Emily,

discussed the board's policy of integration of Aboriginal students. Robert's explanation of

the board's policy is presented below:

Leisa: I know that the first time I came in, you talked about, and it might not have been you, it might have been Emily, that there is, that [name of school] has a policy of integration. You're looking to integrate Aboriginal students into the larger student body. Is that a school policy, or is that a larger board policy?

Robert: I think that's a board policy. We try to, because we know where some of the pitfalls have been and as I say we get the kids here, we want to make that transition for them a little bit easier, that's why the transition program. Our hope is that with the transition program, second semester they are into the mainstream and they're into classes.

Leisa: Oh, okay, so that's not permanent?

Robert: No, it's not. The board, next semester we won't have that for the kids. There's no transition program second semester. What we will have for the kids, that native language program, we will have a grade eleven ESL [English Second Language] course, which will be, probably a lot of the Native kids will be involved with the program. So, there's support there for the kids. (12-01-07, interview)

Robert conflated the board policy of integrating Aboriginal students into the student body with the transition program to ease non-traditional students into the mainstream programming of the school. Robert deflected talk about the board's policy of integrating Aboriginal students, preferring to focus on the supports in place within the school for students. None of the permanent supports were specific to Aboriginal students in the school.

Emily also spoke of the board's integration policy. She articulated the contradiction between the board's policy of integrating Aboriginal students into the mainstream student body with the specialized (or segregated) board and school-level initiatives and program offerings (such as the after-school group for Aboriginal students, the committee that she had participated on, the handbook that had been developed for teachers and staff about Aboriginal students, and the Ojibwe language course offering). Simultaneously, integration and segregation were intended to engage and retain Aboriginal students in the school.

Leisa: Do you think there's something that [name of school] could be doing to make it more welcoming or do you think that there's just…

Emily: Well, we try and, you know, now with this Aboriginal class [Ojibwe Language and Culture] maybe that would be more welcoming to them. We used to have a room here where the Aboriginal kids got together, much like the foods room. There used to be a teacher that taught the Aboriginal history and there used to be Native counsellors here. I guess with the funding that went by the wayside, but you know, with Aboriginal students, we're supposed to, we're not supposed to be segregating them anymore. We're supposed to be integrating, and that's the whole idea so.

Leisa: Is that a school idea or a board idea?

Emily: It's a board idea. Integrating them into the classroom (18-12-06 interview)

Emily signalled her support as a teacher/administrator for the integration policy. Emily explained that now that the school had an integrated focus there was no official space within the school for Aboriginal students. There were previously spaces within the school for the

Aboriginal counsellors and students. She argued that if the school were to open up distinct spaces for Aboriginal students then they would also need a space for Finn students, or the Chinese students, or even the White students, within the school (27-11-06, discussion). Her reasoning on space is refuted by examples provided by teacher and student participants and within the literature cited below.

Both student and teacher/administrator participants acknowledged racialized spaces for Aboriginal students within the school. Teacher/administrator participants, Emily and Jennifer, were aware of Aboriginal students' unofficial or claimed spaces within the school. Once, when I was looking for Tyler, I bumped into Emily in the hall. She took me directly down to the gym area where she knew he was. He was not in class at the time. Jennifer, the science teacher, confirmed that the gym area was a space for Aboriginal students. She said: "And we have lots of Native students in the school; 'cause I supervise the gyms, too, at lunch. That's one of my supervisory duties. And there's lots of the [Aboriginal] boys come in and play basketball. And they like that" (09-01-08, interview).

Student participants also noted that they had defined spaces within the school. I begin the next section with students talking about the same spaces that Emily knew of and Jennifer referred to in the teacher discourses above.

Student Discourses

 Outside of the classroom, student participants produced racialized discourses of geographic and cognitive spaces within the school. Mostly they referred to 'our space' through their photographs of identifying with the school. Tyler, Jade, and Lorraine, each photographed and talked about the gym space.

Tyler showed a photograph of friends playing basketball in the gym at lunch time. He

explained how the spaces were segregated. Tyler described a photograph he had taken of his friends playing basketball (08-12-06, photograph & interview). They played daily over the lunch hour. He expanded on their basketball playing as he described another photograph that he had taken. He said "And then this one is where we play basketball -- it's downstairs. We always play games there like everyday. It could be against maybe 2 on 2 or 3 on 3 or you have a full court game" (08-12-06, photograph & interview). He explained the difference between this court, where he and his friends played basketball daily, and the other court space adjacent to it:

> Yeah. But there's like another court to it, like right here, like right here that plays like, I guess was like full of girls and every kind of guy. Yeah, but you have to bring like the right stuff to wear to the gym; shorts, shoes, and stuff. But usually I don't, we don't, like doing that that way, like the game gets boring that way. (08-12-06, photograph & interview)

In the photograph the basketball players were wearing street clothes. I asked Tyler if that's what he meant by 'not doing it that way'. He confirmed, saying, "Yeah, we just like our street clothes. That's how we usually play" (08-12-06, photograph and interview). Tyler's mention of 'girls and every kind of guy' and the dress and play requirements of the other gym signaled a bordered space. The court on which Tyler and his friends played was a claimed space constructed by and for Aboriginal students in contrast to the games in the adjacent gym.

Amber also identified with the area. She described a photograph saying, "We're hanging out during lunch period and that's the gym hallway where we play basketball sometimes too" (24-01-07 photograph & interview). Jade also took a photograph of a group of her friends in the same area. She described it as "me and my friends and during lunch we just hang around in the girls' locker room or outside [the gym]" (11-12-06, photograph and

interview). I asked Lorraine to situate a photograph that she took of a group of friends within the school. She explained, "We're in the gym area. On the stairs" (14-12-06, photograph and interview). Thus, Tyler, Amber, and Lorraine each mentioned the gym area as a racialized space that they had claimed as Aboriginal students.

Other students mentioned other spaces that they claimed within the school. In describing where a photograph was taken within the school, Amber located Aboriginal students' spatially. She says "By the corner. Our corner" (18-12-07, interview). She also described it as 'our space' in a photograph of a group of friends having lunch (18-12-07, photograph and interview). Student participants, Lorraine and Tricia, also talked about racialized spaces in the school. Both participants mentioned "the doors where we usually hang out" (14-12-06 photograph and interview; 09-01-07, photograph and interview respectively). These doors are located nearest the gym area that student and teacher/administrator participants mentioned. Aboriginal students lost a gathering space when the Educational Assistants funded by a First Nations community left their school; but they have claimed other spaces that teacher and student participants alike were aware of.

James (2002) notes that marginalized students have claimed spaces within high schools. These students' negotiated and claimed spaces are where individual's identities and voices are affirmed. Tyler stated "We don't like doing that [playing basketball] that way," where that way refers to the standardized way that basketball was played by 'girls and every kind of guy.' Despite the school's attempts to integrate and not provide an official space for these students, they have claimed their own space, in difference to other students. Pete (29-10-08 personal communication) refers to this space within the context of the university as 'brown space', in the same way that these student participants speak to "our space" within

the context of the high school. James also credits these claimed spaces for racialized students as contributing to their stake in their own education and knowledge production, where it is both accepted and secured. (James, 2002, cited in James, 2007, p. 24). These constructed spaces compensate for the real spaces within the curriculum and the school that remained bordered for Aboriginal students.

Talking about space was not limited to bordered spaces within the context of the school building. Student participants also talked about racialized spaces that they experienced within their classrooms and within the curricula. The racialized, spacialized discourse also overlapped with the discourse of identities, as demonstrated in the examples below.

In Chapter four, I described the lack of Aboriginal content and emphases in the curriculum. Institutional racism was transmitted through the content within subjects that were offered, such as history and social studies, via curriculum, textbooks, and teachers. In relation to teachers, I followed up an earlier interview with Jade on her perception that teachers think that Native students are dumb. I asked her if she had had personal experiences of being treated as dumb. Our conversation follows:

Jade: Well I experienced that with the EAs [Educational Assistants], you know the ones that walk around and help students. I had this, this one EA in science; she was standing over me, like the whole period sometimes eh, watching me do my work. And that was so annoying. And, sometimes I would just sit there and, you know, wait for her to go away, so I could do my work. 'Cause she was so annoying. One day finally, I just said "If I need your help, I'll ask you". And then she was being all mean to me, she was like saying I was rude and all that stuff.

Leisa: Oh, really?

Jade: Yeah. She was complaining to my teacher, she was saying "that Jade is really rude." But I didn't need her help most of the time. She was just standing there, you know, and watching me do my work. And that made it kinda hard. (30-05-07, interview)

Jade used passive resistance, not doing her work while the EA was standing over her and watching her, to resist what she perceived to be interference from the EA and her perceptions of Jade's inferiority as a student in the science classroom.

Students also spoke about the history curriculum. In one of our group discussions Ella told a story about her history course, which brought lots of laughter and discussion amongst the group (09-01-07, group). Because of the lively group discussion that Ella's story generated, I asked student participants in the one-on-one interviews if they had learned anything in schooling related to Aboriginal peoples. Jade summed up her exposure holistically, across the curriculum and noted that there had been no mention of Aboriginal peoples. She exclaimed:

> Nothing. She paused then continued, recounting "Not in my history. We learned about WWI and WWII and that but nothing about Natives…No kidding, Canada. Canadian history too. Kinda weird. Nothing about Natives. Even overseas countries too. No history about that. Not even in geography either. Nothing about Natives. (30-01-07, interview)

None of the student participants could recall learning about Indigenous peoples through their history courses in high school. Jade's experiences with not learning about Aboriginal peoples in curriculum were reiterated by other student participants, and their stories about classroom experiences in particular courses are recounted below.

Ella's story about her history class and the laughter and conversation that emerged, led me to explore the idea of curriculum with the student participants further. I begin with Ella's experience within her history course, as she described in a group session.

Ella: I loved history, Canadian history.

Leisa: Did you ever learn about Aboriginal peoples through history courses?

Ella: No just that phony Indian…Grey Owl. (09-01-07 group)

Isabel [to Ella]: You should have chosen Christopher Columbus. He's the one who started calling us Indians. (09-01-07, group session)

To provide some context and background, Archie Belaney assumed the name and Indigenous identity of Grey Owl. Archie Belaney immigrated to Canada in the early 1900s. He moved to Temagami in Northern Ontario, married an Ojibwe woman, and invented the name Grey Owl along with a fabricated Apache ancestry. Archie Belaney, through his Grey Owl identity, wrote books, was a published author, and toured England. His fraudulent Indigenous identity was discovered posthumously; when his publisher could not verify his claimed Apache ancestry (Wikipedia, accessed 25-06-08).

The group discussion about Grey Owl and Aboriginal peoples' presence within the history curricula raised two issues. The first issue for students was the lack of representations of Aboriginal peoples in their history text books and lessons. None of the student participants in the group session had learned about Aboriginal people in their history courses. Dion (2005) addresses what is included and what is omitted from the curriculum. She asks "Does the work being done in Canadian classrooms do anything to promote an understanding of the position that Aboriginal people occupy today?" (p.45). She contends that, by not considering Aboriginal perspectives post-contact, high school students cannot understand current issues such as why the Chippewas had to take a stand at Stoney Point and, further that students then believe that "current concerns have nothing to do with me" (p. 45). She notes that the absence of Aboriginal perspectives on post-contact history reinforces White superiority and privilege as well as denying all students the ability to critique the dominant myth perpetuated through history course omissions and language that "…the dominant white Eurocanadian culture is superior to others and deserves advantages not provided to the 'inferior Other' " (p.

45). Dion (2005) analyzes the omissions of Aboriginal peoples in history curricula as part of the discourse of the dominant (Eurocanadian) culture/race myth.

Smith (1999) concurs with Dion that the reason that students have not seen themselves in history texts is due to positional (i.e. racial) superiority and the power to include and exclude Aboriginal peoples and the maintenance of historical myth. She writes

> In fact history is mostly about power. It is the story of the powerful and how they became powerful, and how they use their power to keep them in positions in which they can continue to dominate others. It is because of this relationship with power that we have been excluded, marginalized, and 'Othered'. In this sense history is not important for Indigenous peoples because a thousand accounts of the 'truth' will not alter the 'fact' that Indigenous peoples are still marginal and do not possess the power to transform history into justice. (p. 34)

Following Smith's (1999) argument, Archie Bellamy as Grey Owl would have had the racial, positional superiority to find a place in history texts, where students' Indigenous identities, Aboriginal peoples' historical presence and contributions, or existence beyond the fur trade, did not (Adams, 2000; Dion, 2000). This example from the history curriculum connected identity, power, and knowledge within curricula as well as the discourse of the centre and the margins (Smith, 1999).

The other issue that emerged through the group discussion was fraudulent identities taken up by non-Aboriginal people who choose to pass as Aboriginal. Grey Owl provided a good laugh for the students. Ella was surprised, as she had originally believed that she would be researching an Indigenous historical figure. In a later interview, I followed up with her choosing Grey Owl as a topic for a course in Canadian history. Ella was surprised "Because I didn't know about Grey Owl, who Grey Owl was, 'till I researched him on the Internet" (23-01-07, interview).

This example of the denied existence of Aboriginal peoples in history classes while

Grey Owl is included on the curriculum intersects with/illuminates cognitive imperialism.

What is omitted from the curriculum is as important as what is included in the curriculum

(Dion 2005). What message did learning about Grey Owl send to students who had never

seen Indigenous peoples represented in their history curriculum? What knowledge is

reproduced? Whose knowledge is reproduced and valued?

In the introduction to this section on institutionalized racism, I noted that

institutionalized racism is pervasive and thus it occurs within all socio-cultural political

institutions. Institutionalized racism is also perpetuated within the institutions and the spaces

of the city.

In the City

Student participants spoke about retail establishments and neighbourhoods as

locations in the city where Aboriginal peoples are racialized in Thunder Bay. The racism

within these locations is institutionalized within public spaces, particularly by those vested

with the power to police the public spaces within retail centres and neighbourhoods. This

type of racism is also called spacialized racism (Razack, 2002). Surveillance within retail

establishments is a form of racial profiling (Tator & Henry, 2006), a phenomenon where

individuals in public spaces are targeted, or over-scrutinized based on racial markers, by

people in authority. I differentiate racial profiling from the incidents above (where student

participants were also targeted in public spaces based on what they looked like) because with

racial profiling there is a control element of the public space (by those who are authorized to

control the space). These public spaces are not racialized in the historical sense of public

spaces that were segregated by race; but rather the spaces are bordered, deliberately

organized with separate, unstated rules that are used to control groups such as Aboriginal

youth (Razack, 2002; Tator & Henry, 2006).

Razack (2002) defines spacialized racism as occurring in socio-cultural spaces that are deliberately organized and policed to perpetuate unequal social relations:

> When police drop Aboriginal people outside the city limits, leaving them to freeze to death, or stop young Black men on the streets or in the malls, when the eyes of clerks follow bodies of colour, presuming them to be illicit, when workplaces remain relentlessly white in the better paying jobs and fully "coloured" at the lower levels, when affluent areas of the city are all white, and poorer areas are mostly of colour, we experience the spatiality of the racial order in which we live. (p. 6)

Razack's (2002) example, of areas of the city that are racialized, relates back to Icart et al.'s (2005) impact indicators which include racialized neighbourhood segregation as an indicator of systemic racism. Many of Razack's examples of locations such as streets, malls, and stores, where spacialized racism is practiced, were mentioned by female student participants.

Ella, Isabel, Jade and Lorraine spoke about being racially profiled at the mall. Lorraine spoke directly to the unposted rules that are in effect for Aboriginal peoples' use of the food court area of the mall. She said "We're not allowed to take pictures or [be] all in a big group and laughing" (30-01-06, interview). Isabel explained that it isn't her as Isabel, but rather her membership in the larger group of Aboriginal peoples as the reason for being profiled within the public space of the mall: "Like at the mall I do see it but it's not directly at me but indirectly" (08-02-07, interview). When I asked her to clarify, she explained that it's neither something that she witnessed at the mall nor something she experienced because she's Isabel as a person but because "…they pick on all of the Natives in that food court and we have to go outside. I don't know, that's mostly at the mall I see it" (08-02-07, interview). But if you are an Aboriginal youth, your racialized presence is quickly known and monitored by security guards, as Ella related: "Yeah. It's just one security guard and whenever we go

there we try and avoid her…but then eventually they find us" (23-01-07, interview). And like Isabel, she, too, is required to leave the mall. One of Lorraine's photographs was of her friends huddled near a service door at the mall. The photograph was taken just outside the mall after the mall security guard had directed her and her friends to leave the building (07-01-07, photograph & interview).

Isabel noted that spacialized racism as surveillance also happened at stores within the mall. She explained that she and her friends were tracked by store clerks who "really stare at us like we were going to take something" (08-02-07, interview). Isabel believed that the store staff assumed that because she was Aboriginal and a youth, she needed constant surveillance. This idea of race and behaviour being linked is the same as the situation that Ella described (see Chapter 4) of the student who had accused her of stealing her purse, again by racializing the behaviour of stealing. Isabel countered this profiling saying that store staff "just assume that we're all like that, that we steal stuff, so you know, we're not all the same" (08-02-07, interview).

Although these students did not name racial profiling, they had experiential knowledge of it from living in the city and having public spaces defined differently, and unequally, for them as Aboriginal peoples. Their experiences and descriptions of their experiences named racial profiling in public spaces.

Male study participants did not talk about experiencing profiling in stores and within the mall, although Emmett acknowledged it (22-01-07, interview). Thus, in this study, profiling at the mall appeared to be a gendered experience for the student participants. Haluza-DeLay's (2002) and McCaskill et al.'s (2007) study participants also identified malls and shopping centres as racialized spaces. Haluza-DeLay's (2002) participants ranked malls

and shopping centres as one of the top three locations for racialization, behind the police and schools. Male and female participants in these two studies confirmed the racial profiling at the mall that student participants had experienced and had continued to experience over the five-year span of the two local studies.

These examples of racialized practices or racial profiling are less overt than participants' examples of drive-by racism. Participants' examples of treatment from store staff and in malls were based on their experiences and perceptions. Some researchers and readers may doubt them or consider these students' stories misunderstandings of a situation. Some may credit youth culture rather than race to the student participants' profiling experiences. But it is unlikely that these stories are false, or are not experienced by many Aboriginal peoples in Thunder Bay, as participants from Haluza-DeLay's (2002) and McCaskill et al.'s (2007) consistently related similar experiences and treatment within the city across a five-year span.

Neighbourhoods can also imply segregation as a form of spacialized racism, that is, concentrated areas, usually poorer neighbourhoods, where Aboriginal and other racialized residents live. In a student discussion about neighbourhoods, students saw areas of the city as 'marked' by large numbers of Aboriginal families living within specific neighbourhoods. One participant, upon learning where another lived within the city, remarked "[name of area] is nothing but Aboriginals. It's a rez" (29-11-06, group session). They compared Thunder Bay to Winnipeg, concurring amongst themselves that Winnipeg is referred to now as Winnipeg First Nation. All five of the participants in the session identified with the idea of a growing urban Aboriginal population in Thunder Bay, but not the growing racial segregation that has accompanied it (15-21-06, group session).

Isabel, Tricia, Tyler, and Jade (1/2 of the students participating in the study) lived in low-income neighbourhoods with high Aboriginal populations. As well, Emmett's income assistance constrained his options for rental accommodations. Where students lived within neighbourhoods around Thunder Bay highlights the relationships between class and race, and the racialization of areas within the city (29-11-06, group session). The relationship between race, income, and residence is noted by Icart et al. (2007). The authors use the category of 'residential segregation' (i.e. areas of the city defined through census boundaries that are typically areas with low income levels and high concentrations of racialized residents) as one of the impact indicators of systemic racism in cities.

Thus spacialized racism sustains unequal racial relations in public spaces through security guard surveillance, the unequal enforcement of posted loitering rules, and store clerks' over-surveillance of Aboriginal participants for theft. Haluza-DeLay (2002) and McCaskill et al. (2007) also found spacialized racism through participants' experiences of store clerks' rejection of status cards and/or disparaging comments, looks, or attitudes when using Indian Status cards for purchases. This form of racism is spacialized and it invokes cultural racism as muted criticisms of a specific group such as Aboriginal peoples, for example when First Nations' members use status cards to make purchases in a retail establishment and meet with disapproval. Institutional racism may also be invoked through formal policies and practices in institutions and informal practices, such as different rules being enforced for one group of people. Finally student participants identified institutional racism as spacialized as well as an objective condition (i.e. class intersecting with race) through the acknowledgment of low income neighbourhoods where they lived being identified as a rez (meaning reserve) due to the large number of Aboriginal residents.

Cultural Racism

Structural, systemic, and cultural are terms used to describe a form of racism that is most difficult to define, because of its changing forms, and contextualized applications. Métis scholar Howard Adams (1995) names this form cultural racism, and describes it as

> A more sophisticated and insidious form of eurocentrism. It is the degradation of and prejudice against Aboriginal life styles, including language, dress, food, and traditional social mores. Unlike the more obvious biases and gross errors that typify vulgar racism, cultural racism is more vague and flexible to suit new generations and is, therefore, harder to dispel from the mainstream's consciousness. (p. 29)

This type of racism moves away from the older, historical concept of biological or racial inferiority to more benign and elusive cultural differences to justify incompatibility or exclusion. Cultural incompatibility or culturalism "constructs and perpetuates a two-race binary" (Battiste, n/d). Cultural racism assumes that conformity to the dominant culture is normal, desirable, and the only rational alternative. It also assumes that assimilation should be tried, but is ultimately impossible, due to naturalized cultural differences. Colonial discourses and practices related to Aboriginal peoples permeate society and socio-cultural institutions within societies. These established ways of thinking and doing are naturalized and taken-for-granted within socio-cultural institutions. The culture as race notion assumes that a group that shares origin or ancestry would have a common past and, thus, common language and cultural traditions (Adams, 1999; Fleras & Elliott, 2003; Henry & Tator, 2006; St. Denis & Hampton, 2002; Yon, 2000).

Fleras and Elliot (2000) explain that cultural racism "suggests the existence of cultural values that reinforce the interests of the dominant sector at the expense of the subdominant" (p. 85) or as an indirect endorsement of "dominant value orientations by privileging them as necessary and normal while dismissing others as irrelevant or defective,

and the prime cause of minority failures" (p. 85) or thirdly as a subliminal racism that

denounces explicit racism while reinforcing racial inequality through "muted criticisms of

minority actions" (p. 85).

In the School

Teacher/administrator and student participants provided incidents of cultural racism.

Participants' examples encompass dominant beliefs and value orientations, speaking to race

without using race language, and muted criticisms of Aboriginal peoples. In all, the incidents

described below illustrate the scope of cultural racism within the context of the school.

Cultural racism was less commonly cited by students, perhaps due to its elusive

nature. One student, Isabel, described cultural racism hesitantly. In our interview, she had

been talking with certainty about the racial profiling she had experienced at the mall. She

named it 'paintbrushing.' When I asked her whether she had experienced stereotyping at

school, she determined quickly that she had not. She hesitated, struggling over the intangible

nature of her experiences of cultural racism within the high school:

> Sometimes I feel like, I don't know, sometimes I feel like I do see it [racism in the school]. But they just don't say anything about it, but maybe they just think about it. But I don't know if it's just me thinking it but sometimes I can read peoples faces and their eyes. Maybe I think I do. That's the kind of impression that I get. Even with my math teacher. There's just something about him/her that scared me and I didn't like it. S/he made me feel, s/he made me feel like I didn't deserve to be there, I didn't deserve to be in that class. I wasn't smart enough or something. That's the kind of feeling that I got off of him/her. Or s/he intimidated me. (08-02-07, interview)

Isabel questioned her own perceptions "I don't know if it's just me thinking it…" yet

she remained convinced that she is being racially 'paintbrushed.' During one of our

interviews, I asked Isabel if what she was describing (amongst teachers at the school and the

way she described their treatment of her as negative and being like all other Aboriginal

students) could be called 'stereotypes.' She exclaimed "Yes, exactly." She explained, "That's something that I would like to stop, stop that. What they call paint brushing people, paint brushing everyone with one colour" (13-12-06, interview). For Isabel "paintbrushing everyone with one colour" led to racism towards her as an Aboriginal student by teachers and others in the school. She reinforced her perception in a motivational letter to herself. In her letter Isabel reiterated her perceptions that many of her teachers did not believe that she deserved to be at the high school or that she was smart enough to do the course work required. Her motivation came from her perception/belief that "they don't think that you can do it" (letter # 1, 15-12-06). In Isabel's letter, institutional racism interacted with cultural racism as muted criticism of Isabel as a student because she was Aboriginal. Within the study Isabel demonstrated the effects of teachers' doubts of her abilities. Isabel's discursive practice shifted back and forth from resistance to teachers' criticisms [letter example cited above] to feeling intimidated by and accepting the perceptions of teachers. For example, Isabel stated, "Maybe I should just give up my dream and go to college. It'd be easier" (15-12-06, group discussion).

An example of a teacher expressing cultural racism emerged as Emily talked about an Aboriginal student in the school. She said, "But he is a poster boy for Aboriginal students" (18-12-06). I asked for more information and Emily explained that

> Well gee, when you meet [name], I mean, even before you know anything about him, he's so friendly, he says hi to you, he says Mrs. [name], and you know, every time he sees you and he acknowledges you in the hall. He's very friendly, he's always happy and smiling. He comes to appointments when you want him to come to appointments; he read a poem on the intercom for Remembrance Day. You know people ask him to do these surveys, because he's such a nice boy, and he's doing really well in classes when you look at the academic portion. He tries hard and he's all by himself here. He tries really hard and works hard at everything. You know he'll be successful. (18-12-06, interview)

Here, in her interest in and enthusiasm for this Aboriginal student, Emily practiced tokenism. The 'poster boy' is part of a minority of students at the school (approximately 10% of the student population according to Emily's information) so he was both representative (of all Aboriginal students) and, at the same time, held up as an exception to the group that he was representing (a poster boy). Because he was an exceptional example to Emily and others in the school, he was often shown as the representative/exception and "people ask him to do these surveys…." He is chosen by administration to perform his exceptional Aboriginality publicly. The complexity is that this student cannot be representative of other Aboriginal students; yet, by repeatedly asking him to perform his Aboriginality, he becomes a standard bearer to which other Aboriginal students are expected to conform and perform (St. Denis & Hampton, 2002). In another conversation, Emily reinforced the disparity between this 'ideal' Aboriginal student and other Aboriginal students. She explained that "he's willing to talk with people, he gives you a straight answer—some of the others, you never know if they're going to do something or not" (14-12-06, discussion). Because this student had learned to mitigate white teachers' perceived racial/cultural borders, cross class borders, and employ the class-based and institutional-based norms and expectations of responding to her questions directly, he became an outstanding example of what was possible for Aboriginal students.

A racialized classroom incident occurred at the school during the study. I did not observe the incident. I include it here because it generated a lot of discussion between Emily and me. Andrea also related the incident to me in our interview session. As well the example, related by Emily, illustrates how cultural racism works, how it overlaps with other forms of racism, and how teachers are unprepared and uncertain of how to address racism that is more nuanced than the overt, interpersonal racism for which school-level policies and practices

exist (St. Denis & Hampton, 2002).

Emily explained that a group of students in one of Andrea's classes had presented to

the class on "Aboriginals." Through the course of their presentation the students had

presented facts to the class such as Native students getting free tuition and a free truck when

they graduate (11-12-06, discussion). Emily was disturbed by the misinformation presented

by the student presenters.

Later in an interview, Andrea described the course that she taught as being about

social issues, with groups of students in the class presenting on self-selected controversial

topics. She encouraged frank, open dialogue and discussion amongst the students within the

class. She saw her role as a non-judgmental facilitator of the class. She described the course

as structured through group presentations. The student presenters were also required to lead a

class activity as part of their presentation. One group's class activity engaged the class

participants in brainstorming their thoughts and feelings on Aboriginal peoples. Andrea

believed that discussing social issues without restrictions on the students was an important

learning tool within her classroom, but she had not anticipated the racist attitudes, beliefs and

statements that emerged during a recent class presentation on Aboriginal peoples:

> Yeah, because what had happened was, in my grade twelve class, you obviously have
> to do some academic in with what I do is communicating and giving them some
> skills, but they do a discussion and debate, where they facilitate a whole class and
> they provide information, the facts, and they facilitate a debate and it's usually on a
> controversial subject. It could be gay marriage, violence in television, pornography,
> prostitutes, some sort of social issue. Last week, or two weeks ago, we had a, then
> they do it in pairs, a group, a guy and a girl, do an Aboriginal presentation. They did
> an activity where they had the kids do some brainstorming about their thoughts and
> feelings about Aboriginals. It was, I wasn't surprised, but it was still disturbing
> because it was extremely racist and I think uneducated. I mean, most of the words,
> 90% of them were negative. I always try to, there's no restrictions if it's within the
> context of the class. I wouldn't, they know I wouldn't want them to say any of that
> stuff outside, but, you know, you want them to feel safe that they can say things, even

if you don't agree with it. I'm not supposed to judge them either. I'm trying to educate them and change them so I've got a number of names [of Aboriginal people within the community] that I've been sort of, linked with certain people [to come in to the class as a follow-up to this particular student presentation]. (18-12-06, interview)

The student presenters displayed cultural racism through codes of culture rather than race (race is never mentioned) and difference as unequal benefits, in this case the 'rewards' that Aboriginal students received for graduation. What is observable or known (to the student presenters) was presented as a factual, objective discourse of race and unequal benefits. The students presented misinformation -- that all Aboriginal students get handouts -- based on their own misperceptions and presented the misinformation as fact (Fleras & Elliott; 2003; James, 2003; Yon, 2000).

Both teacher/administrator participants spoke to me about the student presentation in Andrea's classroom. Emily brought it to me by asking me if I knew of someone in the Aboriginal community who might be able to come in and speak with Andrea's class. Andrea felt unsure of how to deal with the 'facts' the students had presented, the racist nature of the presentation, and the student responses to the class activity. She had re-acted to the students' presentation by bringing in Board-level expertise. Andrea related that

There's a woman, [name], who is the new Aboriginal person at the board, she's linked me with somebody named [name]. They came on Friday [to meet with Andrea], and I don't know if they [the Aboriginal staff at the board level] get what I'm saying, what I want. (18-12-06, interview)

Andrea was dissatisfied with the proposed solution from the two Aboriginal board staff that met with her to discuss the incident:

But, I don't want somebody coming in here and talking about treaties and laws and this and that and the other thing because that doesn't help. If they take a whole course, and actually next semester I think I would like to do a small little unit on it myself. But, I was hoping to get somebody in here that would be able to listen to what they have to say, and I think, respond without judging them and making them,

wanting them to feel safe. (18-12-06, interview)

Andrea was conflicted between wanting to dispel myths that the students presented and her comfort level with having an Aboriginal speaker in to dispel these myths through information about treaties and rights. She did not believe that historical information about treaties and rights would dispel the students' myths about issues of treaties and rights (i.e. educational funding for Aboriginal students). She appeared concerned about the consultants judging the dominant students' beliefs. This sense of protecting dominant perspectives at the expense of others was strengthened when Andrea also mentioned that there was an Aboriginal student in the class:

> After they did this exercise, I have one girl, [name], who's Aboriginal, and she wasn't there, and she would have been fine anyway because she's very, she's integrated, she has a Caucasian boyfriend, and I think that the majority of her friends are, I don't know, I mean she's mentioned some things about being Aboriginal, but she doesn't seem to have a lot of negative comments about it. Things are just, but then again, I don't know. She wasn't here, but even if she was there, they would have said all those things. They're comfortable with her, you know, but after we did that exercise I said to them, "If there were half a dozen Aboriginal kids in here, would you have written these things?" And they said no. (18-12-06)

Andrea did not appear to be concerned over the only Aboriginal students in class feeling safe for three reasons: 1) the Aboriginal student was not in attendance that day; 2) Andrea assumed she was assimilated because of her choice of friends; and, 3) because the students in class are comfortable with her. But Andrea remained troubled by the myths that had been perpetuated and how someone might dispel them for students:

> So, I would like to demystify some of these myths that they, you know, I think that even people in my generation are, I mean I don't know what my thoughts are on Aboriginal culture/races [sic]. I'm uneducated. So I'd like somebody to come in and be able to handle a discussion where these kids would say things without, like, this is the reality and if they don't feel that they can say it to somebody then they're not going to change. They need somebody to come in and say, "Why do you say that? Where did you get that information?" Really, not everybody gets a truck when they

graduate, you know, stuff like that. You don't see white people standing in line at Wal-Mart buying five Listerines. All of those, I'm like, I don't know what to say. I just don't know what to say. (18-12-06, interview)

Andrea recognized that she is unable to deal with the complexity of cultural racism, stating "I just don't know what to say," without her explicit knowledge of cultural racism or naming it as such. Andrea also elaborated on a solution proposed by the Board representatives:

> [Name], that came in with [name] last Friday, I don't, I think they, I don't know if they got that. I don't know [name] wants to come in with the Aboriginal kids from here that have had some difficulty and that are now getting their life on track. I think she maybe wants to do some drumming, which I think is great. But, I don't know if that going to, sort of, I don't know. (18-12-06, interview)

Andrea sensed that she did not want a cultural solution to the racialized incident that had occurred in her classroom. The solution from the Board representatives ignored the misinformation of cultural racism in favour of a cultural/sensitivity-training approach. Their approach did not address the issue of students' racist attitudes and beliefs that Andrea wanted addressed. Andrea was left with a situation that she recognized as problematic; but she did not have the training and/or tools to address it within her classroom and with the students. She felt that the alternatives presented by the Board representatives were unsatisfactory. Scholars (Dion, 2005; St. Denis & Hampton, 2002) address teacher training in areas of anti-racism. St. Denis and Hampton note that because racism does not receive attention in schools, teachers do not receive training on recognizing, understanding, and counteracting racism in schools.

It was not only teacher/administrator participants who reproduced racialized cultural discourses. Students may also have internalized the dominant discourses on Aboriginal peoples, and especially urban Aboriginal peoples in cities and institutions. In an interview

Isabel stated: "Life is different outside of school and there are different things that I learn."

When I asked Isabel if she could provide an example, she did. Contrasting living in the city

with cultural knowledge, she said, "Well, my culture I learned it outside of school. And I

learned to be civil by living here in the city every day. And just common stuff" (08-02-07).

In this quotation Isabel demonstrated how historical racialized discourses are reproduced by

Aboriginal peoples as well. This civilized/uncivilized discursive binary set up non-urban

dwellers as uncivilized and the dominant society as civilized. Once the colonial discourse of

White civilization and Aboriginal as uncivilized was established, it was used to justify many

inequities such as taking away land, establishing residential schools, and sending

missionaries to reserves to 'civilize' the people there (Adams, 1999; Smith, 1999).

Residential schools were a direct attempt to civilize Aboriginal peoples in Canada and other

colonized countries through an educational system based in the tenets of cognitive

imperialism (Adams, 1999; Smith, 1999).

Cognitive imperialism continues to intersect with cultural racism within the context

of education and within schools. Robert described a racialized situation within the school that

happened several years ago. He introduced the incident and then he described the

institutional response to overcome the racism that had occurred:

> Yeah, originally, that goes back about two years ago. Now, how that was ignited, that
> one, we had a situation here that we thought was kind of being a racial item between
> the Native students we had here, a couple of students, and some of our white students
> here. So, we had a conference between the parents, and also we brought in some
> support people from the Aboriginal community and then we talked about it. You
> know, how can we help our native students who are here? So, then we were also in
> contact with [name of organization] and they were bringing speakers into our civics
> classes. We did those kinds of things to talk to our kids here about some of the
> Aboriginal kids. Our kids didn't understand some of their background, some of their
> needs so it's important that way. (12-01-07, interview)

Robert showed concern, brought in community contacts, and addressed a racial situation. The school supports offered for all students were provided by speakers from an urban Aboriginal organization. Unintentionally, school officials established the problem of racism as one for 'the Other' to address by bringing in an Aboriginal organization rather than demonstrating leadership and building capacity among teacher/administrators. He also perceived that students who experience racism may need ongoing supports to deal with the impacts of the experience. Robert explained that the after-school program was established originally to support the Aboriginal students who experienced racism (12-01-07, interview). I asked Robert if the racism that had triggered that incident still existed in unexpressed ways. He said

> Well, I think there is a divide. Any school is made up of different kind of cliques, different kinds of groups. But, I think with the strength of [name of high school], is that those groups are able to function within the building without having a lot of issues, a lot of different issues between the groups. It's going to happen. It happens, but sometimes if it's between two specific groups, people will always say well, it's that group against this group, whether it's the Natives against the tech kids, or the tech kids against the jocks, whatever it happens to be. I don't see a lot of that at this school. (12-01-07, interview)

Similar to his response to the voluntary self-identification policy (in Chapter 4), Robert minimized any potential racial divide within the school by comparing it to naturally occurring cliques of students within the school. His statement thus makes race a natural divide between students, echoing the earlier discourse of biological race (James, 2003; Yon, 2000) concurrently with the newer cultural racism discourse of naturalized differences (Henry & Tator, 2006; Yon, 2000). Again, as he did previously, Robert negated the presence of racism within the school, contradicting his opening statement in which he acknowledged a divide between 'Natives' and non-Native students.

In the City

Teacher participant, Kelly, a Co-op teacher, illustrated incidents of institutional and cultural racism that existed in finding placements for Aboriginal students with employers in the city:

> Kelly: Well, for Aboriginal students those are the two highly requested ones [employer placements], but it doesn't necessarily mean that you end up there. They can't take everybody so, we've used, [name of employer] has been very good with Aboriginal students. We know that we face some prejudices and some discrimination. We try, we work very closely with our employers and we kind of know who will be accepting and understanding. [Name of employer again] being one of them, and they know that it is good to have Aboriginal people working in a place where Aboriginal people are also shopping. They're quite, they're smart that way, and so, is [name of employer]. [Name again] is another place that, they're very accepting and very willing to work with the Aboriginal students. We work very closely with the employers and we try not to send a student where I'm sure that they will not be accepted. It's devastating for the student and we don't want to set them up for that kind of failure to begin with.

> Leisa: Do you have employers who say straight out I don't want any Aboriginal students?

> Kelly: Not straight out because I think that would open up a whole other, I think, can of worms, but you can kind of sense [their resistance to taking on Aboriginal co-op students in their workplace]. (22-01-07, interview)

Kelly's sense of employers who would not accept an Aboriginal student for a co-op placement in their workplace reflected her awareness that racism existed in the city and with employers. She noted that in her ten years as the co-op teacher she had noticed that there were fewer and fewer employers who explicitly or implicitly communicated that they did not take Aboriginal students for placements (22-01-07, interview).

Kelly softened employers' institutional and cultural racism, noting that the school (and Aboriginal students) faced "some prejudice and some discrimination" in their

placements. In her softening of the persistence of racism that set up a binary between

Aboriginal and White students, Kelly exemplified the marinade of racism that makes it

invisible (Battiste, n/d) and thus harder to dispel from mainstream consciousness (Adams,

1995). She described the racism as not 'straight out' (i.e. overt), but that she 'can kind of

sense [it]'. This example illustrates cultural racism (that never mentions the term race or

employs racist statements) that Kelly could sense, intersecting with institutional racism. In

this example the institutional racism is occurring within workplaces in the city.

Kelly's description of the institutional racism is both ideological and an objective

condition for students (Adams, 1998; Icart et al., 2005; Omi & Winart, 2005). Earlier in the

chapter I described how teacher/administrator participant, Emily, signalled the streaming of

Aboriginal students into non-university paths through her observation of having no

Aboriginal students in Grade 12 academic courses. Streaming as an objective condition was

compounded in this study with the objective condition of employers who did not accept

Aboriginal students for placements. The co-op placement teacher, Kelly, worked to ensure

that Aboriginal co-op placement students were sent to an employer where they would be

accepted. Her inaction with other employers made her complicit with their practices.

Cognitive Imperialism

Cognitive imperialism has three characteristics: 1) it is particular to colonial states,

such as Canada; 2) it perpetuates inequality; and, 3) it is contextualized within education.

Thus, cognitive imperialism is a precursor to racism in colonial states (Battiste, n/d; Smith,

1999), at the same time that it continues to exist conterminously with institutional dimensions

of racism, and historically, socially, and politically ground all dimensions of racism. This

ideological form of racialization was demonstrated historically and overtly in Canada

through the Indian Residential Schools period (discussed in Chapter 2). Although ideological

in design, the cognitive imperialism of Residential Schools resulted in long-term socio-

economic impacts (or inequities) such as health, education, and employment for First Nations

and Métis peoples. Thus, cognitive imperialism may be considered the precursor of three

forms of racism (interpersonal, institutional, and cultural) directed against Indigenous

peoples in schools. Cognitive imperialism incorporates both institutional and cultural racism

particularly contextualized within education. Battiste (1998) explains that

> Cognitive imperialism is a form of cognitive manipulation used to discredit other knowledge bases and values and seeks to validate one source of knowledge and empower it through public education (Battiste, 1986). It has been the means by which the rich diversity of peoples have been denied inclusion in public education while only a privileged group have defined themselves as inclusive, normative, and ideal. Cognitive imperialism denies many groups of people their language and cultural integrity and maintains the legitimacy of only one language, one culture, and one frame of reference. This has been singularly achieved through education. (p. 20)

In relation to Figure 2, cognitive imperialism is the penultimate turn. It combines

socially-constructed valuing of racialization with the power relations of systemic racism.

Cognitive imperialism also focuses on how racialization has been implemented in institutions

through the power to define whose knowledge and values are prioritized. Cognitive

imperialism is perpetuated not only through prioritizing, but by asserting dominant

knowledge and values as the only available epistemology and ontology. Cognitive

imperialism impacts Indigenous peoples through schooling in multiple ways. I illustrate

cognitive imperialism with examples from the study below.

In the School

Emily came in near the end of a group session. Two student participants, Ella and

Isabel, were the only students remaining. Emily asked the students "Are you proud of your

Aboriginal heritage?" (28-11-06, group discussion) Isabel's response demonstrated how

cognitive imperialism has existed in the past and how it continues to work today. She replied

"Mostly yes, but one thing I don't like is that Aboriginal people are in the corner more than

in the centre. I'd like to see them more in places like in parliament, or as doctors, nurses,

teachers, and movie stars" (28-11-06, group discussion). Isabel's response illustrated the

invisibility of Aboriginal peoples in occupations and in public life. Isabel's notion of centre

and corner demonstrated the marginalization of Aboriginal peoples by mainstream society

(Smith, 1999). Marginalization also occurs through academic disciplines. When there is only

one, Eurocentric, way of knowing there can be difficulties with finding spaces for Indigenous

knowledge as well as conflicts between world views related to disciplinary knowledge, as the

following example demonstrates.

Science. When Isabel described her resistance to dissections in class, she was agitated

and upset, having just come from science class:

Isabel: It's more about, more about nature, I don't know. Today, playing around
            with the rat, I felt wrong doing it. Because it's disrespecting an animal. I
            didn't want to sit there and do it, cause that one of the things I care about.
            What this world has.

Leisa: What did you do about that? Did you put that aside and do the assignment
            or how did you resolve it?

Isabel: Yeah I just put it aside and we were asked to take turns to skin the rat but I
            didn't want to, but I watched. Yeah I just put it aside as part of my
            science. I don't… (13-12-06, interview)

This conflict of disrespecting an animal was clearly problematic for Isabel. She needed this

science credit to fulfill her dream of studying Environmental Science at university. She also

had to compromise her sense of right and wrong to participate in the science class. In the end,

Isabel made a compromise (watching the dissection) that was unresolved; she 'just put it

aside as part of my science'.

Lorraine was also doing dissections as part of the science course. She dealt with the dissection class in a different way. As we were talking about Lorraine's role at school of getting friends to go to their classes, she mentioned that she never skips, except for this biology class.

> Lorraine: But I didn't want to go to my biology class I don't know 'cause I was like I was feeling kinda tired and I wanted to go home. I didn't have a lunch and I was feeling hungry too. So I went home for period four [biology] and then I came back for period 5. And I was dissecting rats too and I don't like that.
>
> Leisa: Is that why you wanted to miss it too?
>
> Lorraine: Yes that was in Biology. And I wanted to go to school to do something, to do this project for cooking. And my friend [name] wasn't there to help me, 'cause she was my group partner with me. (14-12-06, interview)

In my co-researched study with Elder/educator, Muk Kee Qweh (Frog Lady), she told me stories of her life history. She spoke about her schooling and she related to me her resistance to dissecting frogs in high school:

> I was in grade 11 and I discovered that they dissect frogs in high school and I just couldn't bear the thought of dissecting frogs, or any kind of animal. So I used to phone in sick and they didn't put 2 and 2 together, the teachers, say "Why isn't she here during dissecting times"? Because it was against my personal religion to dissect frogs. Now had they made me go do a research project on frogs, you know, drawing the parts and naming them and stuff, maybe I would have done that. But nobody cared and I barely passed. I got a 51% in Biology, and 50 was a pass. (Desmoulins & Wawia, 2004)

Muk Kee Qweh's, Isabel's and Lorraine's discussions of dissections brought in respect, as Isabel mentions. Isabel's talk of valuing life relates to respect for all life forms. A world view difference existed that was not acknowledged in the science curriculum. The issue of Indigenous world views as inconsistent with the western use of dissections in science is not a

localized issue. Aboriginal scholars have written about the use of simulated, computerized dissections in science classes to understand anatomy and respect Aboriginal ontologies. Cajete (1999), writing about the Western scientific paradigm, states that "…there have always been and probably always will be realities which directly contradict and are anomalous to what modern science *contends* is so. These realities derive from other cultural systems of scientific thought which have evolved from unique perceptual orientations of natural reality" (p. 37, emphasis added). Although scholars acknowledge Indigenous scientific orientations, schools continue to teach science from a Western orientation as the only discourse and knowledge base available (Aikenhead, 2002; Cajete, 1999).

Teacher participant, Jennifer, taught science. She talked about her teaching experiences and successes in a remote First Nations community. She also mentioned the structural changes to scheduling and schooling that she believed, based on her experiences, would assist Aboriginal students to succeed in secondary school, especially students coming from remote communities (09-01-07, interview). She had no awareness of the cognitive imperialism of the science curriculum mentioned by the two student participants, Isabel and Lorraine, above and by Muk Kee Qweh in her schooling experiences with science curriculum, and scholars writing about science curriculum. Cognitive imperialism occurs because Western reality become reified and comes to represent the only reality available (Smith, 1999, p. 48).

Cajete (1999) notes several elements that constrain Indigenous students' experiences with the science curriculum. First and foremost, the cognitive imperialism of one, North American education model does not incorporate nor is it relevant to the world views of Indigenous students (p. 8). The notion of relevance is germane to Indigenous research as well

as education. Cajete asserts that another barrier for Indigenous students and science relates to border crossing. To move from the identity contexts of self in relation to family and community, to the science curriculum of the school currently requires students to assimilate an incongruent world view. Scholars (Aikenhead, 2002; Cajete, 1999) provide alternative models that extend beyond this discussion. Aikenhead (2002) and Cajete's (1999) science arguments can be applied to other courses in public schooling that ignore Indigenous world views, orientations, and even existence, such as the history examples that student participants provided in Chapter 4 (Smith, 1999). Cognitive imperialism co-exists with and interacts with the three dimensions of racism (interpersonal, institutional and cultural) in schools.

Thus, in this chapter participants provided incidents and examples of all three forms of racism as well as cognitive imperialism within the contexts of the school and the city. I summarize participants' discourses related to each form of racism and cognitive imperialism below.

Student participants did not experience a lot of interpersonal racism within the school. Students' discourses demonstrated different levels of awareness of racism, different responses to racism, and different experiences with the forms of racism within the school and within the city. Teacher participant, Mary, showed an awareness of and provided examples of interpersonal racism in the school. All of the student participants had experienced incidents of interpersonal racism within the city. Their experiences were predominantly with drive-by racism on the streets around the city.

Within the context of the school, institutionalized racism emerged through the teacher/administrators' discourses that were framed through five racialized issues: 1) engaging Aboriginal parents with schools; 2) streaming Aboriginal students into non-

university programs; 3) externally-imposed identities; 4) the juxtaposition of the board's

Aboriginal initiatives with their socio-cultural institutional policies and their implementation

within the school; and, 5) the relationship between integration and racialized spaces within

the school building, classrooms, and curricula.

As well, racism came through teacher/administrators' responses to systemic forms of

racism. Teacher/administrators, Andrea and Emily, did not have the training to address the

cultural racism that emerged through a student presentation in Andrea's classroom. In their

review of the racism literature St. Denis and Hampton (2002) noted that pre-service teachers

do not receive training to address racism amongst students, within classrooms, and within

schools. Their research supports Andrea and Emily's situation of not responding to a

racialized situation in the classroom because they did not have the skills or knowledge to

address it. As a result, racialized situations within the school remained unaddressed and

tacitly supported through teachers' inactions and silences.

Teacher/administrators' discourses of institutionalized racism also intersected with

student participants' discourses. Students' discourses intersected with the examples that they

provided of physical, racialized spacialization, institutionalized racism within the curricula,

and Indigenous identities which were represented as fraudulent identities in the history

curriculum. For each example that teacher/administrator participants labeled as 'issues' of

Aboriginal students and/or their families, scholars provide an analysis of the 'issues' through

lenses of institutionalized racism, and schools' failures of Aboriginal learners.

The teacher/ administrator participants' examples illuminated the unintended

racialized practice of Battiste's (n/d) assertion that racism acts as a marinade on everyone,

like the air we breathe, it is unseen and taken for granted. It becomes normalized. As well,

racism can also be un-named and/or framed culturally as teacher/administrator participants, Andrea and Robert, demonstrated through examples.

Two teacher/administrator participants, Robert and Andrea, resisted mentioning race while talking about race. Robert engaged race through the Aboriginal Voluntary Self-identification. Simultaneously he resisted race in talking about interpersonal racism towards Aboriginal students and the racialized incident that had led to the after-school group for Aboriginal students, the board's integration policy, and special initiatives. He did not name race explicitly in either example. Andrea engaged in race through the social issue on 'Aboriginals' as part of her course. She named students' discourses as racist, but she chose not to respond to the students' expressed racism through racialized responses. Andrea invoked her own ignorance as a rational to avoid dealing with the racialized situation in her classroom. She abdicated her teaching responsibilities to correct students' factual information that had been presented as part of her course, even though she knew the information to be incorrect and racist. These participants illustrated scholars' assertions (Dion, 2005; Schick & St. Denis, 2001) of teachers' reluctance to engage in issues of racial and ethnic relations.

In teacher/administrator participants' examples they elected to bring in expertise from the Aboriginal community to address racialized situations. This resolution is problematic. Teacher/administrators knew to engage the Aboriginal community for assistance in developing solutions. Yet, by bringing in Aboriginal community members to implement/redress the situation, teacher/administrators perpetuated perceptions for teachers, staff, and students within the school that racialized interactions were Aboriginal peoples' problems to resolve. Where did teacher/administrators' perceive their responsibilities to lie? When and how do students from Andrea's class learn to take responsibility for their

racialized discourses and perpetuation of cultural racism?

Extending the situation in Andrea's classroom, she rejected the cultural responses to a racialized situation offered by Aboriginal community members. She rejected these solutions in favour of inaction on the student presenters' and class participants' discourses. She allowed the situation to remain unresolved and eventually fade until it was forgotten and a resolution unnecessary.

In many situations within the school the response to racialized situations were cultural. In the case provided by Robert, the response addressed both cultural (providing a segregated, cultural space for Aboriginal students through an after-school program) and racial aspects of the situation (community people coming in to classrooms to address racism). In Andrea's situation, board-level resource staff recommended drumming sessions (i.e. a cultural response) to address a racial incident. She chose not to respond.

Participants experienced institutional racism within the school and within the city as spacialized. Within the school, many student participants photographed and/or named spaces that they had claimed as Indigenous spaces. Student participants were unable to claim any curricular spaces within the classrooms and course work. Jade resisted over-surveillance within the classroom just as she, Isabel, Lorraine, and Ella resisted surveillance or spacialized racism at the mall and its stores within the city. For the student participants, spacialized racism was gendered. Only the female participants spoke to racial profiling at the mall.

These examples of institutional racism within the city and the school differ significantly in scope. Institutional racism in the city was manifested one-dimensionally through over-surveillance and the racial profiling, related to essentialized representations by those in power towards Aboriginal youth. Within the school teacher participants also

provided essentialized representations of Aboriginal students. Institutional racism within the school also included three additional dimensions: 1) discourses of family deficits and cultural difference; 2) policies, such as streaming, which demonstrated racism as ideological as well as an objective condition by limiting Aboriginal students future economic outcomes; and, 3) integration policies which were incongruent with other board-level Aboriginal success initiatives. The integration policies also led students to seek out their own spaces within the institution. Within the school curricula, institutional racism also extended into the city.

Teacher/administrator participant, Kelly, acknowledged racism within the co-op program but chose not to act on it with employers. Kelly illustrated how cultural racism within the school intersected with cultural racism within the city through her work as a co-op teacher. Her experiences, with employers not wanting Aboriginal students for co-op placements and how she could sense their resistance, echoed Isabel's and Jade's abilities to sense cultural racism in their interactions with teachers and staff within the school. Yet, similar to the teacher/administrator participants, Isabel could recognize racism while at the same time reproducing cultural racism within her discourse. Her binary of the city equating civilized living demonstrated how she had embraced the binary despite her resistance to paintbrushing of her by others.

Finally, teacher and student participants illuminated cognitive imperialism within the context of the school, particularly through curricula. Although Jennifer had taught for a year in a First Nations school, she was unaware of the cognitive imperialism inherent in the science curriculum that she taught. Like Muk Kee Qweh years earlier, student participants, Amber and Isabel, responded to the cognitive imperialism of science curricula and the conflicts that it had caused within them. Muk Kee Qweh, Amber, and Isabel all resisted

dissections through non-participation. Through the school curricula, these students were forced to choose between Indigenous world views and success in their science courses.

Thus, teacher/administrator and student participants provided concrete examples of racialization within the school and the city, and how their discourses supported and/or resisted ongoing, unequal relationships within these racialized spaces. Students and teacher/administrators resisted racism in various yet distinct ways. Some participants, Andrea, Isabel, and Amber, framed their resistances passively as inaction. The forms of racism and cognitive imperialism that occurred in the school and within the city impacted on students' identities, identifying, and well being.

Bordered spaces and sites of racialization that serve to maintain unequal social relationships

Thus, borders in the school were racial, spacial, political, pedagogical (knowledge and power based), and colonial. The students' discourses (showing the practices) of interpersonal racism, drive-by racism, and racial profiling illustrated that public spaces within the city were also racialized and bordered. These two contexts, city and school, are the milieu of racialized public spaces and racialized institutional spaces respectively (Giroux, 2005). These are contact zones for historical and ongoing colonial relations (Dion, 2005; Lawrence, 2003; Smith, 1999) as well as racialized social relations (Brah, Hickman, & Mac en Ghaill, 1999) of the study participants. The participants' discourses illustrate Deyhle and Swisher's (1997) statement that

> …understanding the cultural context is not enough. The structure of school and society that harbors institutional racism and an assimilationist educational model limits both educational and economic opportunities and must be analyzed as a critical problem to be addressed in the education of American Indian youth. (p. 139)

The final chapter engages the intersection of students' identities, well being and schooling and racism.

CHAPTER 6: DISCURSIVE INTERSECTIONS

Introduction

I begin this final chapter with a summary of the study. Next, I present a model illuminating the intersection of the identity and racialization models from Chapters 4 and 5 respectively. The model demonstrates the intersections of identity, identifying relationally and performatively, culture, class, and race that emerged through the discursive intersections. It provides a lens through which to view the performative identity of Aboriginal youths within the context of the school and the city. Performative identity is "produced within specific historical and institutional sites, within specific discursive formations and practices, and by specific enunciative strategies" Hall, 1996, p. 4). Performative contexts highlight and make explicit existing power relations and the relations of race and culture to identity, identifying, and agency within social locations. This final, integrative model illuminates the participants' discourses and how they articulated identity with culture, class, and with race.

The conclusions section returns to the original research questions posed: 1) how do Aboriginal youths negotiate their identities within the school, within the discourses, and within the complexities of categories such as race, class, and gender; and, 2) how do they identify with, engage and/or disengage with schooling? The conclusions respond to these questions for this research study. Finally, I outline how the findings of this study carry implications for policy and practice for multiple stakeholders: youth, teachers, schools and boards. In this final section I consider implications for further study.

Summary of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore how youth negotiate their identities and

identify with schooling and how these identifications confront and complement others'

representations as they are negotiated within the school and the city. I examined and

discussed cultural and racial theories and practices of education, through discourses within

the literature and through participants, to determine how they shape thinking about

Aboriginal youth and schools. The research problem was articulated through consultation

with Aboriginal leaders of agencies within the city. It also evolved from previous local

studies (Haluza-Delay, 2002; McCaskill et al., 2007) which did not fully engage youth

participants in the research. The methodology used to conduct the research combined

critical/alternative theoretical approaches that informed the methods. This methodology was

based on an extensive review of Aboriginal researchers' discussions of methodologies

sensitive to Aboriginal research and world views. The framework was informed by

decolonizing methodologies (Battiste, 2002; Graveline, 1999; Smith, 1999). Decolonizing

methodologies consider theoretical and practical space to re-think colonial education for

everyone within schools. Three theoretical/methodological strands were used:

1)   Aboriginal research protocols

Castellano's (2004) definition of Aboriginal research illuminated the study's

guiding principles of respect, reciprocity, relevance, and responsibility. Smith's

(1999) 10 ethical questions for non-Indigenous researchers doing cross-cultural

research with Indigenous peoples also guided my work.

2)   Decolonized public education

Battiste's (2002) construct of decolonized public education theorizes

deconstruction and reconstruction of educational sites (such as knowledge through

curriculum, space, and representation). Battiste also views the primary goal of

education as Indigenous students knowing themselves as Indigenous and as students. This involved bringing together and deconstructing disparate discourses within specific locations; and, using Indigenous scholars' conceptualizations of identity, race, and culture to illuminate youths' identifications with school.

3)   Borders and contact zones

Rosaldo's (1993) border theory places borders as central sites of inquiry for researchers. To contextualize the site of schooling, Giroux's (2005) border pedagogy examines the school as an institution as well as its policies and practices, hidden and overt curricula. These borders represent contact zones between Canada and First Nations (Haig Brown & Archibald, 1996) that challenge existing theories, methodologies, and discourses to examine social relations marked by power and structured through racialization and difference (Giroux & Asgharzedeh, 2001).

These three conceptual strands informed the theoretical and methodological research frame as well as the research process. The research process involved the collection of data over four months with Aboriginal youth and teacher/administrators within a public high school. Methods included multiple data sources: student photography, interviewing, group discussions, letters; and, teacher/administrator interviews and discussions. These methods provided polyvocality of respondents to address the research questions.

To facilitate the analysis of data in ways that illuminated Aboriginal youths' identity and identifying and the intersections of identity with culture, race, and cultural and racialized discourses, I developed two models drawing on the conceptual work of Graveline (1998) and race scholars (e.g. Battiste et al., 2002; Fanon, 1967; James, 2003; Miles, 1989; Omi & Winart, St. Denis & Hampton, 2002).

The identity model that I used to present data findings and discussion in Chapter 4, privileges relational (self, family, and communities) and contextual dimensions (school, city, home communities) of identity. It allowed for polyvocality of voice. At the same time the identity model that I used based on participants' discourses did not illuminate identity and identifying as performative (Hall, 1996).

The racialization model that I used to present data findings and discussion in Chapter 5 also had conceptual limitations. Absolon and Winchester (1994) noted, with respect to cultural identity for Aboriginal peoples in cities, the interconnection of colonization and racism to identity. Other Indigenous scholars argue for these interconnections as well (Adams, 1999; Lawrence, 2003; Restoule, 2004; Smith, 1999; St. Denis, 2002). Community members also supported the concept of performative identity by suggesting that I discuss and analyze identity, culture, class, and/or race as integrated. Thus, a model of identity, based on the participants' discourses is incomplete if it subverts the material and structural forces of inequality and discrimination (Saukko, 2003).

Articulation is the name for bringing together identity, culture, class, gender, and race. In this study, articulation refers to the coming together of many elements including: discourses, participants' and schools' practices, power relations, and participants' diverse forms of resistance at the same time as living and interacting within these discursive spaces (Saukko, 2003).

The findings that emerged from the study were complex and multi-layered, thus necessitating the development of a conceptual framework for illuminating the articulation of identity, identifying, culture, class, and race within specific sites as performative identity. The overlapping dimensions, of the Identity model (figure 1) and the racialization model

(Figure 2), are critical for conceptualizing the relationship between identity and racialization within these dimensions/contexts and within this study. I illustrate these intersections, through an integration of the models used previously, as Figure 3 below.

Study participants demonstrated how identity, culture, and race interact and how racism works within the school and the city.
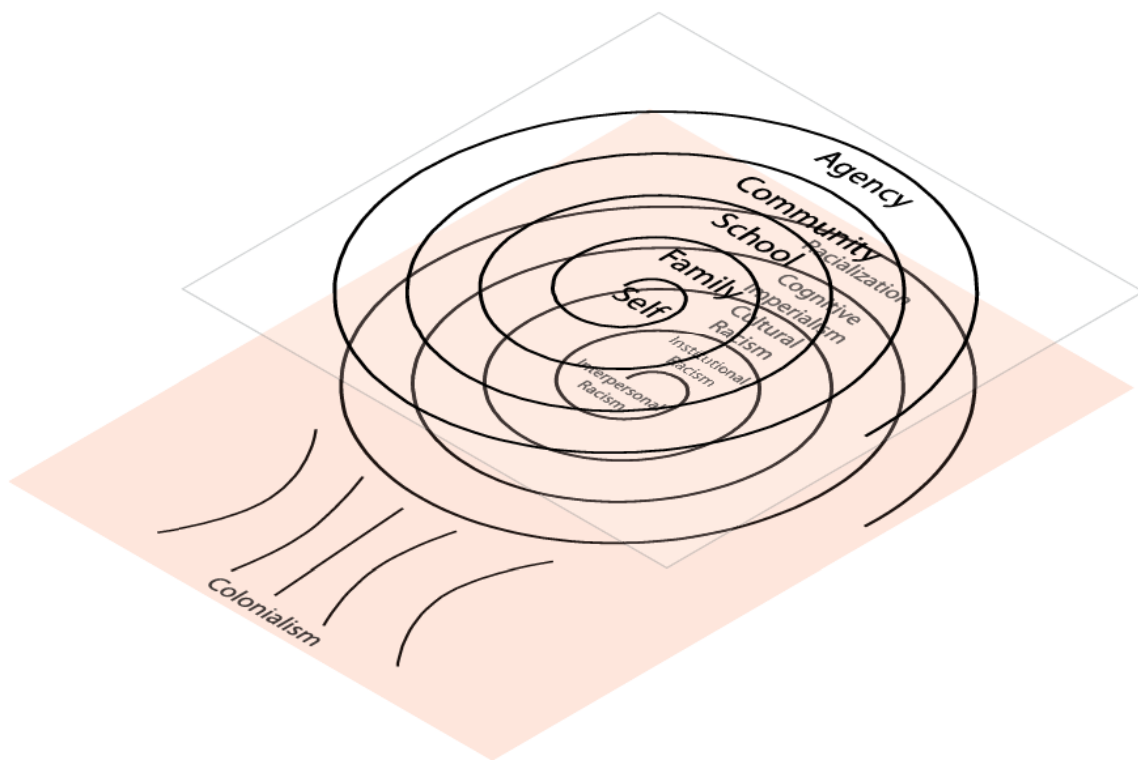
Figure 3: Discursive intersections of identity, culture, and race in the school and the city.

Conclusions

Through the research I sought to illuminate how youth seek and form their own identifications as they are embedded within representations and discourses at the same time that these youth create identifications contradicting or outside of the existing discourses.

Youth participants demonstrated relational identity connections with family and community. But youth also expressed and negotiated their identities contextually, through many of Absolon and Winchester's (1994) identity dimensions. Thus, youth in the study demonstrated contextual identities. These contextual dimensions included: spirituality, language, education, healing, colonization, and racism.

For students' the dimensions of education, colonization, and racism were performative contexts that highlighted and made explicit existing power relations and the relations of race to identity, identifying, and agency within school. For many students, identifying with school (i.e. belonging as a student) entailed excluding an Aboriginal student identity. Restoule (2000) asserts that identifying has meanings and consequences depending on the context in which one identifies and the representations that may be implied (p. 106). For youth in the study these representations of Aboriginal student identities may have contributed to their identities and identifying within the school. Throughout the study, teacher/administrators reproduced negative representations of Aboriginal students. Several youth participants resisted the consequences of identifying as an Aboriginal student, but most elected to exclude an Aboriginal student identity, in favour of a student identity, for themselves within the context of the school. At the same time they engaged with schooling through claimed spaces outside the curricula.

To theorize how youth negotiate their identities and identify with schooling it is necessary to move away from the binary of cultural difference or racism. In this study the discourses of students and teacher/administrators reproduced cultural discourses. Students who disengaged, or ceased identifying, with schooling often gave relational reasons for their disengagement. All of them had also re-engaged with school. Students returned to school in

spite of the lack of supports or initiatives for Aboriginal students available within the school. Those students who returned to school after disengaging contradicted teacher/administrator participants' beliefs and perceptions of Aboriginal students not engaging with schooling. They also contradicted teacher/administrator discourses of families being a deterrent, again through cultural difference, to students' school engagement. Through this process of re-engagement student participants' agency and identifying with high school emerged as strengthened. Agency is not considered in either the cultural difference or the racism discourses. Agency is a dimension of relational identity. In this study, youths' agency proved fundamental to re-engagement with schooling.

Cultural discourses remain prevalent. Both teachers and students invoked cultural discourses related to identifying with schooling. While teacher/administrators generally maintained the cultural difference discourse, students maintained a relational, cultural support discourse. There is a place for a cultural discourse, but the cultural difference discourse is insufficient to explain Aboriginal students' identity and identifying with school. Difference for the student participants related to class and race as well.

Most of the students crossed 'borders' between communities regularly and drew support from maintaining socio-cultural connections to both communities. They contradicted discourses that create reserve/urban Aboriginal binaries. Some students spoke to the difficulties they experienced in moving back and forth between communities because of relational and cultural ties to their home communities. These same students also experienced racialization in the bordered zones of the school and the city.

Student and teacher/administrator participants identified racialization through their discourses of schooling. This racism was often not acknowledged or not acted upon directly

by school personnel. Teacher/administrator participants who responded to racialization within the school always involved a third party from urban Aboriginal organizations in the city. The response to racialization was always mediated, which created further borders between teacher/administrators and Aboriginal students within the school.

Thus, the city and the school's spaces were bordered for Aboriginal students. The school as an institutional site differs from the city and its malls and public spaces in four significant ways: 1) its scope within the institution and its ontology and epistemology; 2) the articulation of schooling with identity and identifying, culture, class, and race for Aboriginal students; 3) the overlapping of institutional racism with other forms of racism, cognitive imperialism and interlocking oppressions; and, 4) the objective conditions for students.

Thus, the site of schooling and its staff offer considerable scope for maintaining unequal racial and social power relations. The limitations noted above for Aboriginal students' negotiation of identity and identifying require a decolonizing response from schools as institutions to redress historical and existing unequal racial and social and power relations. A many-sided response to youth identity and identifying with schooling connects to culture, race, class, and pedagogy. It also engages youths' subjectivity and agency.

Implications and Recommendations

The above conclusions reveal how the articulations of race, culture, class, operate within the school and the city, shape identities and identifying, and reproduce systemic racism through cultural difference for Aboriginal youth. As well, schools produce their own forms of institutional and knowledge-based racialization.

The findings of this study carry implications for Aboriginal students, teachers, and schools. Although the context for the study was a secondary school, there are also

implications for both pre-service teacher education programs and teachers' continuing professional development.

I discuss the implications in three areas -- youth, school, and the city and integrate the recommendations in these sections. The implications for future research are then outlined.

Youth

There were few supports for Aboriginal students within the school. These youth sought ways to better connect with the school as a place and in its curricular offerings/ content. Many student participants spoke to the need for spaces where they could identify with school as a site and to learning within the curriculum. These spaces did not currently exist in a school-sanctioned sense for the students. Students had created their own spaces and celebrated spaces that existed (the gym area, the Ojibwe course, the after-school program, and other Aboriginal students). The lack of spaces within the building, the institution, and the curriculum relates to systemic forms of racism and cognitive imperialism, which persist within education. These interactions weakened students' identifications with schooling.

Thus, it is important that schools and boards engage in a dialogue with Aboriginal youth, families, boarding parents, and stakeholders in the urban Aboriginal and reserve communities to discuss school as a place to which Aboriginal students can engage and belong. As well, students may be willing to lead discussions about strategies which will support Aboriginal youth both in transition from home communities and in transition from elementary to secondary school within the city.

Recommendation 1: Boards in concert with other stakeholders should organize a forum led by Aboriginal youth in public secondary schools and those who are attending the local college and university to develop transitional supports for Aboriginal secondary school

students. Such a plan may include workshops for newcomers in August, meeting two to three times a year for social supports, workshops through the Indian Friendship Centre, and peer mentoring.

School/Board

The findings indicate that there are four foci which need to be addressed to promote Aboriginal students' success in completing their secondary education. These include the following: 1) space; 2) curriculum offerings; 3) professional development; and, 4) practices related to self-identification.

The participants engaged with the Ojibwe Language and Culture course that was being piloted as well as the after-school program. These strengths should be maintained as core elements of the school's offerings and indications of Aboriginal student success. The course and the program created Indigenous spaces within the school. The school administration and staff need to be aware of and address strategies to enable Aboriginal students to connect in personal ways to the school as a physical space that is welcoming.

Recommendation 2: Create welcoming spaces where Aboriginal students can feel belonging by designating spaces as well as making the overall site as space where Aboriginal students connect to and identify with the school building.

The participants noted that curriculum offerings did not include Aboriginal content (for example, in history courses) and did not respect Indigenous world views (for example, in science courses). History and social studies courses, in fact all courses, must critically address historical colonization and the consequences to Aboriginal peoples such as the residential school system. As well, science courses that negate Aboriginal world views will continue to exclude Aboriginal students from studying within the natural sciences.

Aboriginal scholars have long held a holistic view of the natural world that can inform the science classroom (Barnhardt & Kawagley, 2008; Cajete, 1999). Indigenous scholars promote alternative models of science learning (Cajete, 1999; Sutherland & Dennick, 2002). Similarly, welcoming curriculum extends to all courses. Aboriginal authors of picture books, novels, and poetry might be introduced in English courses. For example, the works of Tomson Highway, Thomas King, and George Littlechild are widely recognized. Local Anishinabe author, Ruby Slipperjack, sets stories and develops themes that are contextualized within Northern Ontario and Anishnabe cultures and world views.

Within the school and the board level, it is important that educators conduct a curriculum gap analysis and begin to address the inclusion of Aboriginal content and world views into courses across the curricula at all grade levels. This inclusion would be beneficial both to Aboriginal youth and to the non-Aboriginal student population, and might offset, for example, the assumptions and myths perpetuated by students such as those in Andrea's class. It would also assist teachers' understandings.

The teachers' indicated a binary (between reserve and urban students) that was not supported by students' lived experiences. Schools and its staff need to understand the historical relationships with Aboriginal peoples within Canada and within cities. As well, racism and racial profiling that exist within cities is replicated in institutions such as schools. **Recommendation 3**: Schools and boards should conduct a gap analysis to address the inclusion of Aboriginal content in courses throughout the high school curricula.

The teachers indicated that they did not have the professional development they needed to support Aboriginal student learning and success. Professional development sessions, over time, should be available to teachers. The sessions should incorporate racial

analyses of schooling, schools, and curriculum. For forty years the cultural discourse has failed to change schools, teaching, and success outcomes for Aboriginal students. The discourse of cultural difference has only served to codify Aboriginal students and their families as deficient or make accommodations to learning styles and teaching. It has not addressed the larger structural issues inherent in historical relationships, and the ways of knowing and world views that are perpetuated through schools as the right and only way. The objective conditions of Aboriginal students scholastic achievement in public schooling remains the proof that discourses of cultural difference and schools' adherence to cultural difference has not narrowed the gap between Aboriginal students and their non-Aboriginal peers' graduation rates. Professional development and in-service teacher education must begin to challenge educators' assumptions and beliefs about what knowledge is privileged and taught in the schools, and the positions from which they teach.

Recommendation 4: Schools and boards should develop, in collaboration with Aboriginal stakeholders and other boards that have implemented anti-racism/anti-oppression training, a series of training sessions for teachers and staff within schools.

The board needs to clarify its rationale for its Aboriginal student self-identification policy. If the policy serves only to distinguish and track Aboriginal students' progress, is this practice racial profiling? If its intent is to support students' learning and/or measure the progress of institutional change initiatives, interventions which grow from the policy should be transparent and assessed to determine their efficacy for student learning.

Recommendation 5: Plan, at the board level and in collaboration with stakeholders, annual success initiatives for schools and for students. Use the data collected from Aboriginal student self-identifications to set a benchmark for schools' progress on implementing policies

that redress systemic discrimination within schools for Aboriginal and other racialized students and to report out annually to stakeholders their progress with institutional change initiatives and student success.

Recommendation 6: Support and promote Aboriginal students engagement and success with schooling.

Schools and educators need to take responsibility, via school and classroom discourses and practices, for Aboriginal student success. They need to find ways to connect with students to better understand and build upon the experiential knowledge of Aboriginal students who are engaged with schooling, and support their continued school success.

University

Although this study did not focus on the university as a site, teacher/administrator participants illuminated the need for more training in the areas of anti-racism and anti-oppression (AR/AO) education. Universities also have a responsibility, as noted by St. Denis and Hampton (2002) to provide education around racialization, racism, and colonization to pre-service teachers.

Courses would aid teachers' understanding of performative identity and their representations of identity for racialized and other oppressed students. As well, AR/AO courses could aid teachers' abilities to add content related to/from racialized and other oppressed peoples within the curriculum.

Recommendation 7: All faculties of education need to develop courses in pre-service education programs on anti-racism and anti-oppression education for pre-service teachers.

City

All student participants had been racialized within the city: all of them provided

experiences of racism within public spaces. Racialization, racism, and particularly racial profiling, provide a commonality around which schools and cities can collaborate to redress these historical relationships. Work in this area may be slow and will need to be ongoing. Steps have been taken (e.g. the Diversity in Policing initiative of the Thunder Bay Police Services, the City signing on to the Canadian Coalition for Municipalities Against Racism), but participants demonstrated that issues of racialization persist.

Recommendation 7: City council and its administrative staff within the Corporation need to work with schools, other related sectors such as employment, other socio-cultural institutions within the city, and racialized peoples and groups to plan an education/awareness strategy or media campaign to combat racism within the city.

<div align="center">Recommendations for Further Research</div>

This research study resisted the dominant discourse of Aboriginal student failure by engaging Aboriginal students' success with schooling. At the same time, the discourses of racism and cultural difference failed to illuminate Aboriginal students' identity and identifying with schooling.

In this study, teacher/administrator participants articulated frustration in knowing how to connect with and teach Aboriginal students well. They also articulated their challenges in acknowledging and redressing racism. At the same time, teacher/administrator participants did not assume any responsibility for Aboriginal students' historical and current failures within the public education system, or their own school. They were unaware of the ways that systemic racism operated within the institution for the Aboriginal student participants.

This study set out to investigate Aboriginal students' negotiation of identities and identifying with schooling. One of the significant limitations that emerged through the study

was the gap between Aboriginal students' agency and identifying with schooling, and their actual secondary school completion. One student completed high school shortly after the study ended. The purpose and design of this study was not to investigate what happens for Aboriginal students between agency/engagement and graduation and/or disengagement within the racialized spaces of schooling. Investigation into this gap from teacher/ administrator and student perspectives could potentially provide significant insight into decolonizing public education.

Given this limitation, the study has implications for preparing pre-service teacher candidates and in-service teachers to recognize racism in their discursive practices so they may begin to redress the current situation for Aboriginal and other marginalized students in classrooms and schools through their teaching practices. Three recommendations emerge:

Recommendation 8: The research problem and model used in this study should be extended at other school sites to work more closely with teacher/administrator participants so that theorizing about institutional change through practices to engage decolonized schooling may be developed.

Recommendation 9: Boards should conduct evaluation research of the processes and products involved in any new initiatives and policies implemented and intended to support Aboriginal students' learning.

Recommendation 10: Longitudinal studies of pre-service teaching and in-service professional development should be undertaken to describe and assess the substance of workshops and/or courses and the evolution of participants' beliefs and practices of decolonized models of education and teaching.

This study and its final recommendations addressed stakeholders related to

Aboriginal youth and schooling in cities -- youth, schools and boards, teachers and administrators, faculties of education that prepare pre-service teachers, City Council and its administrative staff, employers, and researchers. In returning full circle to the Introduction in Chapter 1, if the classroom is the space where models of diversity will determine our socio-economic well-being, how do we collectively assume responsibility for that model of diversity?

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APENDICES

Appendix A: Letter and Consent Form: Teachers

Dear Teacher:

I am a doctoral student in the Faculty of Education, Lakehead University, where I am focusing on Aboriginal students in public education. I am conducting a study in your school to investigate how urban Aboriginal youths identify and how they negotiate their identities within the school setting. The students will be in Grades 9 to 12. I invite you to participate in the study.

The study will take approximately six to eight weeks. I would like to interview some of the teachers of the Aboriginal youth. Interviews would take approximately 20 minutes and will be tape-recorded.

If you agree to participate, it is important that you understand the following ethical guidelines based on Lakehead University *Ethics Procedures and Guidelines for Research Involving Humans*:
- There are no risks involved to you or the students.
- You have the right to withdraw your consent at any time.
- Your anonymity and confidentiality will be protected.
- The data will be securely stored for seven years at Lakehead University by my supervisor, Dr. Mary Clare Courtland; and,
- The results of the study will be disseminated through community and conference presentations and publications.

The educational benefit of this research is that it will help the board and other Aboriginal community initiatives to understand more about urban Aboriginal youths' cultural identity and identifying and their relationships to schooling. A personal benefit to you is a unique opportunity to consider your role as an educator in urban Aboriginal youths' identity negotiation at school.

I shall provide a summary of the findings to you upon completion of the data analysis and interpretation phase of the research. If you have any questions, please contact me at (807) 766-7192 or via email at ldesmoul@lakeheadu.ca. Alternately, you can contact my supervisor, Mary Clare Courtland, at (807) 345-4695 or via email at mccourtl@tbaytel.net.

Sincerely

Leisa Desmoulins

CONSENT FORM

I have read the letter informing me of Leisa Desmoulins' research study. Should I give my permission to participate, I understand the following:

- There are no risks to me or to the students

- I have the right to withdraw at any time

- My anonymity and confidentiality will be protected

- The data will be stored securely at Lakehead University for seven years

- The findings will be disseminated through community or conference presentations and publications.

I _____ consent/ do not consent

(CIRCLE ONE) to participate in the study.

_____

Signature

_____

Date

Appendix B: Verbal Explanation to Students

My name is Leisa Desmoulins and I'm interested in what it's like to be an urban Aboriginal student in a mainstream high school. I want to find out how Aboriginal students identify themselves with different groups and then how their identity is lived and dealt with at school. I am doing this study through Lakehead University and I will be at your high school during this study in the fall of 2006.

If you are an Aboriginal student here, I invite you to participate in this study. If you agree to participate, you have the right to withdraw or to not participate in one or any of the research activities. I will ask you to take pictures on a disposal camera that I will provide and then talk to me one-on-one about your photos, your thoughts about school and family, friends, classes, after-school activities, teachers, other students, and peer groups at school. We will also talk as a group or circle with other Aboriginal students about life at high school. These interviews will be tape recorded. I may ask you for examples of your school work. Should you agree to participate, you will be invited to choose a name to be used when I am talking to anyone else about the research and when I write about these research activities (anonymity). I will take out any personal details about your real identity, like your name (confidentiality). I will keep all of the information securely stored at Lakehead University for seven years.

There are several benefits of this research. Firstly, it will contribute to our understanding of what it's like to be an Aboriginal student in a public high school. Secondly, it will help researchers and teachers understand more about different ways to improve schooling for Aboriginal youth. The board may use this information in planning new initiatives.

I will give you a letter explaining this research. If you are under 18, you will need your parent's permission to participate. Please bring the letter home to your parents. If you are 18 or older and you want to participate, please sign the form. If they have any questions, my phone number is on the form. Please return the form to your teacher.

Appendix C: Letter to Parents for Students Under 18 Years and Consent Form

Dear parent or guardian:

My name is Leisa Desmoulins and I am a doctoral student in Education at Lakehead University. I am doing a study on how Aboriginal youths identify themselves and their relationships to school. The students will be in Grades 9 to 12. I invite your son/daughter to participate in the study. If he/she is under 18, you need to sign the form attached to this letter. S/he will need to sign it too.

The study will last for six to eight weeks. During this time I'll ask your son/daughter to take pictures of how they see themselves at school on a disposable camera that I will provide to him/her. Then I'll ask him/her to talk to me about the photos. I'll ask and tape record his/her thoughts about family and friends, school life, and teachers. I will tape record Aboriginal students talking about life at high school. I'll ask for examples of his/her school work. I will also observe school spaces and extra-curricular activities. If your son or daughter agrees to participate, he or she will be invited to choose a name to be used when I write about the research (anonymity). His/her real identity, like their name will not be used (confidentiality). All of the information will be securely stored at Lakehead University for seven years. If you do not give your permission, I will not involve your son/daughter in this study.

If you give your consent, it is important that you understand the following ethics guidelines from Lakehead University's *Ethics Procedures and Guidelines for Research Involving Humans*:
- There are no risks involved to the students.
- The student has the right to withdraw his/her involvement at any time.
- The student's anonymity and confidentiality will be protected.
- The data will be securely stored securely at Lakehead University for seven years.
- The results of the study will be discussed in community and conference presentations and publications.

The benefit of this research is that it will help the board and the Aboriginal community to better understand urban Aboriginal youths' cultural identity and their relationships to schooling.

At the end of the study, I will invite your family to a community forum to discuss the study. I have described this study to the students. Please sign the attached form with them. If you have any questions, please contact me at (807) 766-7192 or via email at ldesmoul@lakeheadu.ca. Or you can contact my supervisor, Mary Clare Courtland, at (807) 345-4695 or via email at mccourtl@tbaytel.net.

Sincerely

Leisa Desmoulins

CONSENT FORM

I have read the letter about Leisa Desmoulins' research study. If I give my permission for my son/daughter to participate, I understand that:

- There are no risks to me or to my son/daughter

- She/he has the right to withdraw at any time

- His/her anonymity and confidentiality will be protected

- The data will be stored for seven years at Lakehead University by my supervisor, Dr. Mary Clare Courtland

- The findings will be discussed at community forums and/or conference presentations and publications.

My son/daughter _____

(**NAME**)

may participate/ may not participate (**CIRCLE ONE**) in the study.

_____

Signature of parent/guardian

_____

Signature of student

Appendix D: Letter to Students 18 Years and Over and Consent Form

Dear student:

My name is Leisa Desmoulins and I am a doctoral student in Education at Lakehead University. I am doing a study on how Aboriginal youths identify themselves and their relationships to school. The students will be in Grades 9 to 12. I invite you to participate in the study. If you agree to participate, please sign the letter attached.

The study will last for six to eight weeks. During this time I'll ask you to take pictures of how you see yourself at school on a disposable camera that I will provide. Then I'll ask you to talk to me about your photos. I'll ask your thoughts about family and friends, school life, and teachers. We will talk as a group of Aboriginal students about life at high school. These interviews will be tape recorded. I'll ask for examples of your school work. I will also observe school spaces and extra-curricular activities. If you agree to participate, you can choose a name to be used when I write about the research (anonymity). Your real identity, like your name will not be used (confidentiality). All of the information will be securely stored at Lakehead University for seven years. If you do not give your permission, I will not involve you in this study.

If you give your consent, it is important that you understand the following ethics guidelines from Lakehead University's *Ethics Procedures and Guidelines for Research Involving Humans*:
- There are no risks involved to you.
- You have the right to withdraw your involvement at any time.
- Your anonymity and confidentiality will be protected.
- The data will be securely stored securely at Lakehead University for seven years.
- The results of the study will be discussed in community and conference presentations and publications.

The benefit of this research is that it will help the board and the Aboriginal community to better understand urban Aboriginal youths' cultural identity and their relationships to schooling.

At the end of the study, I'll invite you to a community forum to discuss the study. Please sign the form to take part in the study. If you have any questions, please contact me at (807) 766-7192 or via email at ldesmoul@lakeheadu.ca. Or you can contact my supervisor, Mary Clare Courtland, at (807) 345-4695 or via email at mccourtl@tbaytel.net.

Sincerely

Leisa Desmoulins

CONSENT FORM

I have read the letter informing me of Leisa Desmoulins' research study. If I give my

permission to participate, I understand that:

- There are no risks to me.

- I have the right to withdraw at any time.

- My anonymity and confidentiality will be protected.

- The data will be stored securely by my supervisor Mary Clare Courtland at Lakehead

  University for seven years.

- The findings will be discussed in community or conference presentations and

  publications.

I, _____ consent/do not consent

                    (**NAME**)

to participate (**CIRCLE ONE**) in the study.

                    _____

                    Signature of student

Appendix E: Letter to Administrators and Consent Form

Dear Administrator:

I am a doctoral student in the Faculty of Education, Lakehead University, where I am focusing on Aboriginal students in public education. I am conducting a study in your school to investigate how urban Aboriginal youths identify and how they negotiate their identities within the school setting. The students will be in Grades 9 to 12. I invite you to participate in the study.

The study will take approximately six to eight weeks. I would like to interview some of the administrators of the Aboriginal youth. Interviews would take approximately 20 minutes and will be tape-recorded.

If you agree to participate, it is important that you understand the following ethical guidelines based on Lakehead University *Ethics Procedures and Guidelines for Research Involving Humans*:
- There are no risks involved to you or the students.
- You have the right to withdraw your consent at any time.
- Your anonymity and confidentiality will be protected.
- The data will be securely stored for seven years at Lakehead University by my supervisor, Dr. Mary Clare Courtland; and,
- The results of the study will be disseminated through community and conference presentations and publications.

The educational benefit of this research is that it will help the board and other Aboriginal community initiatives to understand more about urban Aboriginal youths' cultural identity and their relationships to schooling. A personal benefit to you is a unique opportunity to consider your role as an educator in urban Aboriginal youths' identity negotiation at school.

I shall provide a summary of the findings to you upon completion of the data analysis and interpretation phase of the research. If you have any questions, please contact me at (807) 766-7192 or via email at ldesmoul@lakeheadu.ca. Alternately, you can contact my supervisor, Mary Clare Courtland, at (807) 345-4695 or via email at mccourtl@tbaytel.net.

Sincerely

Leisa Desmoulins

CONSENT FORM

I have read the letter informing me of Leisa Desmoulins' research study. Should I give my permission to participate, I understand the following:

- There are no risks to me or to the students

- I have the right to withdraw at any time

- My anonymity and confidentiality will be protected

- The data will be stored securely at Lakehead University for seven years

- The findings will be disseminated through community or conference presentations and publications.

I _____ consent/ do not consent

(CIRCLE ONE) to participate in the study.

_____

Signature

_____

Date

Appendix F—Lakehead Schools Voluntary Aboriginal Student Self-identification Brochure

Why?

Why does Lakehead Public Schools want to know this information?

There is a gap in education attainment between Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal students.

In Thunder Bay, 42.7% of Aboriginal adults do not have a high school diploma (Urban Aboriginal Task Force, 2007).

Lakehead Public Schools wants to improve the education outcomes for Aboriginal students.

The Ontario government is creating a better future for Aboriginal children and youth by making Aboriginal Education one of its key priorities.

What will be achieved for Aboriginal students?

Improved literacy and numeracy skills

Increased retention of students in school

Increased number of graduates

Contact your School Principal for more information, or visit us at www.lakeheadschools.ca

Definitions

Aboriginal Peoples - As stated in the Constitution Act, 1982, Section 35(2): "Aboriginal peoples of Canada include Indian, Inuit, and Métis peoples of Canada".

First Nations People - "First Nation" peoples include both status and non-status peoples.

Status: refers to peoples registered under the Indian Act of Indian and Northern Affairs of Canada (INAC), holding certain rights and benefits and possessing a registry number with INAC.

Non-Status: refers to peoples who can identify where their ancestral lands are (First Nation or reserve community), who are not registered under the Indian Act of Indian and Northern Affairs of Canada due to ineligibility registry requirements or who have not applied for their status.

Inuit - is a distinct group of Aboriginal people who have ancestral ties to Northern Canada (Nunavut, Northwest Territories, Northern Quebec, and Northern Labrador).

Métis - The term Métis means a person who self-identifies as Métis, is distinct from other Aboriginal peoples and is of historic Métis Nation ancestry and is accepted by the Métis Nation.

Yes!

I am an Aboriginal Person.

Voluntary Aboriginal Student Self-identification

Lakehead Public Schools
Connecting For Success!
Aboriginal Education Advisory Committee

What?

What is Voluntary Aboriginal Student Self-Identification?

It is a way for parents and guardians to let Lakehead Public Schools know if a student is of Aboriginal ancestry.

What will the Voluntary Aboriginal Student Self-Identification information provide?

It will provide accurate and reliable information on enrolment, literacy, numeracy, graduation rates, and course completion results.

It will allow us to assess our progress and focus our efforts and resources to develop, implement, and enhance supportive programs to improve Aboriginal student achievement.

How?

How will the information be collected?

All parents and guardians will be presented with the question on our student registration and update forms beginning in September 2007.

The voluntary, self-identification question will be shown as:

Do you wish to voluntarily identify this student of Aboriginal ancestry?

☐ Yes   ☐ No

If Yes, is he/she: (check (✓) one)

☐ First Nation (Status, Non-Status)

☐ Métis

☐ Inuit

This information will be collected by Lakehead Public Schools. Individual data will not be shared and will be kept confidential. Overall data will be shared provincially for the measurement of student achievement.

An example of sample data may be as follows: "Percentage of Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal students at or above standards (Level 3 or 4) in reading, writing, and mathematics."

Who Benefits?

All students will benefit.

Some of the ways that all students may benefit include:

- Expanded Native Language programming
- New language development programs
- Additional artistic and cultural learning experiences
- Ability to purchase additional resources and materials to meet student learning needs