

Coming full circle:

Non-Aboriginal teachers' narratives of their engagement in urban Aboriginal education

by

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Abstract

Current Aboriginal researchers address how Eurocentrism constructs and reinforces a set of normative and oppressive “educational” values that do not recognize or include Indigenous epistemologies. A few studies are emerging that focus on Euro-Canadian teacher educators’ attempts to examine their deeply rooted Eurocentrism in order to shift towards decolonizing their practices as well as assist their teacher candidates in doing the same. Little research, however, inquires into the authentic unstructured decolonization of non-Aboriginal in-service teachers. This thesis contributes to the existing body of literature by using narrative inquiry to examine the central research question: **How do effective urban non-Aboriginal teachers examine their decolonization as they reflect on teaching Aboriginal students?** Teacher narratives are presented using a locally developed Medicine Wheel of 4 questions: What do teachers need to understand? What do teachers need to do?, What do teachers need to honour?, and What do teachers need to know? Results indicate that non-Aboriginal teachers’ decolonization involves an understanding of relationships, enacting culturally responsive pedagogies, honouring Aboriginal culture and communities, and knowing about Aboriginal worldviews, histories and issues. These findings represent a positive step towards transforming educational relationships between non-Aboriginal teachers and Aboriginal students by making education more responsive, inclusive, and equitable to Aboriginal students and their families.

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Chi'' Miigwetch to my Aboriginal mentors as well as those knowledge holders that have gracefully guided the teachers with whom I worked for this project. Your collaboration is pivotal as we work to embrace a new identity as reconciling Canadians.

To my 7 committed, hardworking teacher participants who make a difference in the daily lives of Aboriginal students, thank you for sharing your stories. It has been an honour to learn from and grow alongside each of you throughout this process.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

I begin this chapter with a series of personal narratives that act to position myself within the field of urban Aboriginal education (UAE) and decolonizing research involving non-Aboriginal teachers. Throughout this thesis, I utilize the term Aboriginal education (AE) to refer jointly to the process of educating Aboriginal¹ youth and acknowledging and honouring Indigenous knowledge (IK) and culturally responsive (CR) pedagogies for all youth. Urban Aboriginal education (UAE) refers to Aboriginal education (AE) that occurs “off-reserve” and falls under provincial jurisdiction. While I recognize that not all non-Aboriginal teachers are White², in this thesis I use the term non-Aboriginal to refer to the vast majority of teachers (80-90%) in Canada who are of Euro-Canadian heritage (Kanu, 2005). This positional piece is followed by a framing of my study which includes the central research question as well as the purpose and significance of the study.

For Aboriginal students, the effects of an educational system that constructs and reinforces a set of normative and oppressive “educational” values that do not recognize or include Indigenous ontologies and epistemologies have been well documented. This is expressed quantitatively by a considerable gap in achievement at both the secondary and post-secondary levels between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students (Statistics Canada, 2006) and qualitatively by negative schooling experiences for Aboriginal students (Battiste, 1998, 2005; Kanu, 2002, 2006). Many scholars (Castagno & Brayboy, 2008; Kanu, 2002, 2006; see also Barnhardt & Kawagley, 2008; Cajete, 1999) have claimed that these problems are not ones of

¹ I use the term Aboriginal to refer to Indigenous people in Canada: First Nation, Métis and Inuit (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007).

² Like Lopes and Thomas (2006), I capitalize “White to interrupt the privilege of having Whiteness go unnamed” (p. 272), or unnoticed.

Aboriginal student capacity for achievement, but rather manifest as the result of the centering of culturally inappropriate Eurocentric curriculum and Western pedagogies in provincial school systems that clash with the communication and learning styles of Aboriginal students.

As a result of this inappropriate curriculum and pedagogy, there is an urgent need for non-Aboriginal teachers, such as myself, to undertake critical self-reflexive work upon their own culture and Eurocentrism in order to shift their perceptions of Aboriginal education (AE) and transform their teaching practices to make them culturally appropriate for Aboriginal students. Blaut (1993) explains that Eurocentrism is a “label for all the beliefs that postulate past or present superiority of Europeans over non-Europeans (and over minority people of non-European descent)...[and] includes a set of beliefs that are statements about empirical reality, statements educated and usually unprejudiced [sic] Europeans accept as true, as propositions supported by the „facts“” (p. 8-9). The purpose of doing this work with non-Aboriginal teachers is to transform their current educational values to include, recognize, and honour Indigenous epistemologies in order to make education more accessible and equitable for Aboriginal students and their families (Belczewski, 2009; Dion, 2007, 2009; Oberg, Blades, & Thom, 2007; Rasmussen, 2002; Strong-Wilson, 2007; Tompkins, 2002). This work also aligns with the global project of decolonization by and for Indigenous peoples by challenging, resisting and reshaping the colonizing tendencies of Western schooling.

Positional Piece

The stories I have chosen to share, which include excerpts from my ongoing autoethnographic journal (Jones, 2005), demonstrate my commitment to decolonization as an ongoing “critical self-reflexive political process in which one”s colonized beliefs are explicitly

pinpointed, challenged and countered by Indigenous worldviews and perspectives” (Korteweg, Gonzalez, & Guillet, 2010, p. 331) and will serve to situate myself as researcher within this project. The critical decolonizing moments I present below serve to act as landmarks intended to guide the reader through the landscapes in which I have travelled and continue to travel as a non-Aboriginal educator of Aboriginal students and a non-Aboriginal qualitative researcher working within the field of urban Aboriginal education (UAE).

My cultural background. I am a fourth generation Canadian, non-Aboriginal, born to a mother with German and French heritage and a father with Irish heritage. I was raised in Tecumseh, a small town east of Windsor, Ontario located on the traditional territory of the Caldwell First Nation who are also known as the Chippewas of Point Pelee (CBC News, 2010). Despite growing up in a place rich in historical significance within a town named after the famous Shawnee chief who allied with the British to defend Canada, I do not remember feeling connected to Indigenous knowledge (IK) or Aboriginal history in my youth. Instead, I recall a strong francophone presence in my town that materialized in street names that I had difficulty pronouncing, bi-monthly bilingual mass and local festivals that served delicious *crêpes* or *tire Ste-Catherine*.

Teaching and travelling abroad. My passion for Aboriginal education (AE) is significantly tied to the personal growth I experienced while teaching and travelling abroad after completing an undergraduate degree in Science and a Bachelor of Education. After completing a year of teaching English in South Korea and subsequently travelling as a volunteer teacher in India, Indonesia and various countries in Asia, my outlook on life shifted. I was becoming increasingly concerned with human rights issues, the relationship between consumption and environmental degradation and hegemonic control of mass media. The opportunity to live with,

and teach, females from rural communities that, in most cases, had very little access to formal education opened my eyes to the injustices endured by a large portion of the world's population.

Conversations with my students and their parents about my experience as a student and teacher in Canada evoked images of pressed uniforms, White faces, stocked chemistry labs and pep rallies. Logically I knew that this was not the experience for all Canadian students, but perhaps naively, my experiences with oppression in the Canadian education system were very limited. I began to explore the educational statistics of the province I had received all of my formal education in, Ontario, and was alarmed to discover the disturbing truth about the state of provincial education for Aboriginal students: 38% of the Aboriginal population aged fifteen years and over has *less* than a high school diploma compared with 22% of non-Aboriginals of the same age (Statistics Canada, 2007). My curiosity drove me to purchase several non-fiction novels that focussed on Aboriginal issues, notably *The Circle Game: Shadows and Substance in the Indian Residential School Experience in Canada* (Chrisjohn, 2006). As I began to learn about the systematic effort of the colonists to assimilate the first people of the land we now call Canada, I became angry that my formal education had left me with little to no historical knowledge about the founding of my country or an accurate account of how my lineage, and succeeding privilege, was established and proclaimed "normal". I decided then that it was my duty as an educator of Canadian students and my responsibility as a treaty partner (Bishop, 1996) to embark upon a journey towards more culturally responsive (CR) teaching practices. Culturally responsive (CR) pedagogy is defined as:

...using the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits for teaching them more effectively. It is based on the assumption that when academic knowledge and skills are situated within the lived

experiences and frames of reference of students, they are more personally meaningful, have higher interest appeal, and are learned more easily and thoroughly. (Gay, 2002, p. 106)

Room 17. In the fall of 2007, I arranged to spend six weeks as a volunteer science tutor at a district high school in a small Northern Ontario town (population: approximately 5,500), working exclusively with Aboriginal “fly-in” students. Such students are registered “remote” and live in a remote First Nation community but attend provincially funded schools under a tuition agreement between their First Nation or the federal government (INAC) and a school board. A space, referred to informally as Room 17, was created for “remote” students at the high school to use before and after school hours and/or during class time if they required one-on-one help. Room 17 was the first alternative classroom I had ever worked in. The actual physical space is what struck me as most unusual when I first arrived:

The desks that usually resemble an army of soldiers in a traditional classroom have been replaced by vintage velour couches and large wooden tables sprinkled with community newspapers, National Geographic magazines and discarded love letters. Two large walls are covered with the beginnings of a colourful mural in which warrior profiles float amongst graffiti and syllabics. Tattered photographs of the students’ smiling faces are pinned on detailed maps of the North. The coffee maker hums in the corner 8 hours a day. (November 16, 2007)

During my time volunteering in this high school, I worked closely with three teachers who were challenging the conventional status quo definitions of what education should be in terms of the physical structure of the classroom as well as their roles as teachers. I became aware of how the arrangement of material space can influence power relations (Gumperz, 1982) or prompt teachers and students to “recognize, enact and engage classroom space...and conform to a particular arrangement” (Hirst and Vadeboncoeur, 2006, p. 205). The Aboriginal students I was working with seemed eager to leave their other conventional classrooms to work in Room 17

where, instead of occupying a position of authority, the teachers entered into personal relationships with the students founded in compassion. These observations are consistent with the literature that concludes that Aboriginal students' learning is enhanced when personal warmth and authentic connections are exhibited by their teacher(s) (Berger, 2007; Collier, 1993; Haig-Brown, Hodgson-Smith, Regnier, & Archibald, 1997; Kanu, 2002). I also witnessed students achieving tremendous personal and academic growth when learning in a democratic classroom that reflected and valued their cultures and identities (Banks, 2009; Kanu, 2006). I left this small Northern Ontario town committed to pursuing graduate studies to learn how I could assist in making education more accessible to Aboriginal students and their families, while teaching all students the importance of honouring Indigenous knowledge, history, and culture as a pillar of Canadian heritage (Saul, 2008).

Lakehead University. I chose to enrol in the Master of Education program at Lakehead University, located on the traditional territory of the Fort William First Nation, because of the critical mass and the variety of passionate professors, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal alike, working at the university within the field of AE. I was pleased to find out early on in my first year that AE was no longer a tokenized topic in courses offered, as it had been in my Bachelor of Education, but a multi-faceted issue that was woven into the foundation of the curriculum.

Like Root (2009), I was introduced to the concept of decolonization and its discourse during a course entitled *Aboriginal Peoples and the Politics of De-Colonizing*. The course was taught online by Dr. Judy Iseke, Canada Research Chair in Indigenous Education, and examined two sources of colonization from an Indigenous perspective: one force from outside that is directed at Indigenous peoples and another force of oppression which is from within (internalized colonialism) (Iseke-Barnes, 2009).

While the information I learned from the course was invaluable in terms of developing my understanding of decolonization theories by and for Indigenous people, I often struggled to participate in discussion forums that tackled topics such as navigating between a home life deeply rooted in Aboriginal culture and a professional life in Western academia. I quickly realized that while I shared a common goal and vision of my Aboriginal classmates, to unmask and deconstruct Eurocentrism, as a non-Aboriginal educator of Euro-Canadian heritage, my story was not one that included struggle and survival, nor cultural and linguistic revitalization:

The weeks passed and my frustration only increased with the course content, as I felt continually uninvited and underrepresented as a non-Aboriginal researcher, teacher, and member of society. I yearned to delve into class dialogues about how it felt to be a victim of racism, my own culture, and my spiritual encounters with nature but was rendered voiceless because I felt like I had little to offer when it came to these topics. I pressed on, and continued with class assignments; I offered insight when I identified a parallel between students' stories and my life. In truth, I was just treading water, while doubt in my future success as a researcher was growing.

Many weeks later after reflecting critically on my initial feelings about the course, I was able to identify some of my own assumptions concerning education, including identifying with the course materials. I realized that what I experienced was but a small glimpse into the challenges that Aboriginal students face daily in a Eurocentric education system that undervalues their culture and either rewrites or ignores the history of their land and people, rendering them genuinely voiceless. I now question how I could have believed that using a Medicine Wheel as a graphic organizer was enough to make it possible for Aboriginal students to succeed. The index finger that conveys blame is clearly pointing inwards. (December 5, 2009)

I began to contemplate if there was in fact any role or place for non-Aboriginal, Euro-Canadian teachers like myself within the decolonization project as defined by Indigenous scholars such as Smith (1999), Graveline (1998), and Iseke-Barnes (2008) and what those roles might entail. I knew that I needed to explore my biography carefully in order to critically interrogate my own Eurocentric ideas, prejudices, assumptions, actions, and privileges along the

way (Belczewski, 2009; Dion, 2007, 2009; Oberg, Blades, & Thom, 2007; Rasmussen, 2002; Strong-Wilson, 2007; Tompkins, 2002) before I could engage in the type of “dialogue” described by Denzin (2005):

As a non-Indigenous scholar seeking a dialogue with Indigenous scholars, I must construct stories that are embedded in the landscapes I travel through. These will be dialogic counternarratives, stories of resistance, of struggle, of hope, stories that create spaces for multicultural conversations, stories embedded in the critical democratic imagination. (p. 937)

I adopted and adapted decolonizing methodologies for non-Aboriginal teachers as presented by Dion (2007) and Strong-Wilson (2007) to serve as autoethnographic writing prompts in order to investigate my ever-evolving relationship with Aboriginal peoples. It is concepts that I explored in this autoethnographic journal coupled with the work that I did on the Urban Aboriginal Education Project (UAEP) as a research assistant that have acted as the building blocks upon which I have developed this research project.

The Urban Aboriginal Education Project. The Urban Aboriginal Education Project (UAEP) is an Ontario Ministry of Education funded initiative that is being piloted at three school board sites, including the Northern Ontario School Board (NOSB) that eventually became the focus of this master’s thesis project. The UAEP is intended to provide school boards the opportunity to develop innovative models and strategies to support Aboriginal students’ needs and achievement as outlined in the Ontario Ministry of Education’s First Nation, Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework (2007). District wide, grade-based professional development (PD) workshops for non-Aboriginal teachers were the most significant component and budget priority of the Northern Ontario School Board’s (NOSB) UAEP with which I worked (Korteweg et al.,

2010).

I was asked to join the UAEP Research Team in November 2009 in the capacity of a research assistant responsible for recording ethnographic notes, transcribing audio data from focus groups, coding data in ATLAS.ti. (qualitative data analysis software (QDAS)), analyzing stakeholder group data, and writing a section of the final report. The UAEP research team, a team of Lakehead professors and graduate students led by principal investigator Lisa Korteweg, was responsible for reporting how various stakeholder groups (school board/administration, elementary teachers, secondary teachers, Aboriginal students, non-Aboriginal students, Aboriginal parents and community members) are engaging in AE within a Northern Ontario School Board (NOSB) (Korteweg et al., 2010).

Almost immediately, I found myself captivated by the diverse landscape occupied by non-Aboriginal teachers at various stages of engagement in AE. I felt particularly drawn to those teachers who were actively working towards decolonizing their perceptions and practices because their effort to utilize CR pedagogies in their classrooms mirrored my own efforts to become a respectful researcher. While witnessing and listening to them tell their stories, I began to feel alive with the passion for social justice that set me on my educational pathway years before. This exemplary group of teachers were not only effecting change in the lives of their students, but they also had the power to inspire their peers to do the same. This realization informed the question that guided this study: **How do effective urban non-Aboriginal teachers narrate and explore their personal decolonization and use of culturally responsive teaching approaches as they engage in/reflect on teaching Aboriginal students?**

Overview of Aboriginal Education

In this section, I begin with a presentation of statistical data concerning the current situation of increasing populations of urban Aboriginal Canadians and, more specifically, the urban Aboriginal population in the city where this research was conducted. Educational achievement statistics of Aboriginal students in Ontario are then discussed in order to establish the importance of research that seeks to improve education for Aboriginal students, their families, and their communities. The overarching question driving my research is then presented and a summary of the purpose and goal of this thesis project explained.

Statistics Canada (2006) census data³ reports that a total of 1,172,790 people in Canada identified themselves as Aboriginal, representing 3.8 percent of the Canadian population. The term Aboriginal refers to Indigenous people in Canada: First Nation, Métis and Inuit (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007). Since 1996, the Aboriginal population has increased by 47% compared to an increase of 8% in the non-Aboriginal population. Aboriginal Canadians are the fastest growing population in Canada with 48% of people under the age of 25 years old (31% for the non-Aboriginal population). Further, a migration of Aboriginal peoples from reserve communities into urban areas in Ontario and the four Western provinces is occurring. As of 2006, over half of Aboriginal people in Canada resided in urban centres including large cities or census metropolitan areas and smaller urban centres (Statistics Canada, 2006).

Between 2001 and 2006, the Aboriginal population in the city where this research was conducted grew by approximately 20%, from approximately 8,000 to 10,000 people, making up

³ I acknowledge that First Nation, Metis, and Inuit demographic and educational achievement statistics derived from census data are not entirely accurate, these are currently the only statistics available to inform the reader about the Aboriginal identity population.

approximately 8% of the city's total population. By way of comparison, the largest Aboriginal population of any city in Ontario is found in Toronto (26, 575 people), and Kenora had the largest concentration of Aboriginal people of any city in Ontario (16%) (Statistics Canada, 2006).

Non-Aboriginal teachers are charged with the task of adapting their teaching practices, curriculum materials, and classroom spaces to provide CR education to Aboriginal students despite documented failure of the current education system to deliver a high level of Aboriginal student achievement: 38% of the Aboriginal population in Ontario aged fifteen years and over has less than a high school diploma compared with 22% of non-Aboriginals of the same age (Statistics Canada, 2007). Further, nationally, the Aboriginal population with a university degree has increased slightly from 7% to 9%, however, they still lag far behind the non-Aboriginal population (26%) and the gap between the two populations (for all levels of educational achievement) continued to widen between 2001 and 2006 (Statistics Canada, 2007).

In response to the educational achievement figures presented above, Canadian research and government commissions have advised that in order to make significant improvements in AE, IK systems must occupy a central position in education policy, curriculum, and pedagogy (Association of Canadian Deans of Education, 2010). Efforts at the national (Association of Canadian Deans of Education, 2010; Canadian Council on Learning, 2007), provincial (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007), and local (Lakehead University Aboriginal Education Programs Department, 2009; Korteweg et al., 2010) level are being made to generate such improvements.

In November of 2009, conversation circles were held at the Nourishing the Teaching Spirit Conference by the Aboriginal Education Department at Lakehead University to support the development, design, and delivery of Additional Qualification (AQ) courses for the professional

development of teachers by the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT). To summarize the conference and guide the OCT, a model was designed with the guiding principles of how to successfully teach teachers to teach First Nations students. This heuristic model was developed by J. Flett & E. Gardner (personal communication, November 4, 2009) to help steer the consultation process and guide new policies (and Additional Qualification courses):

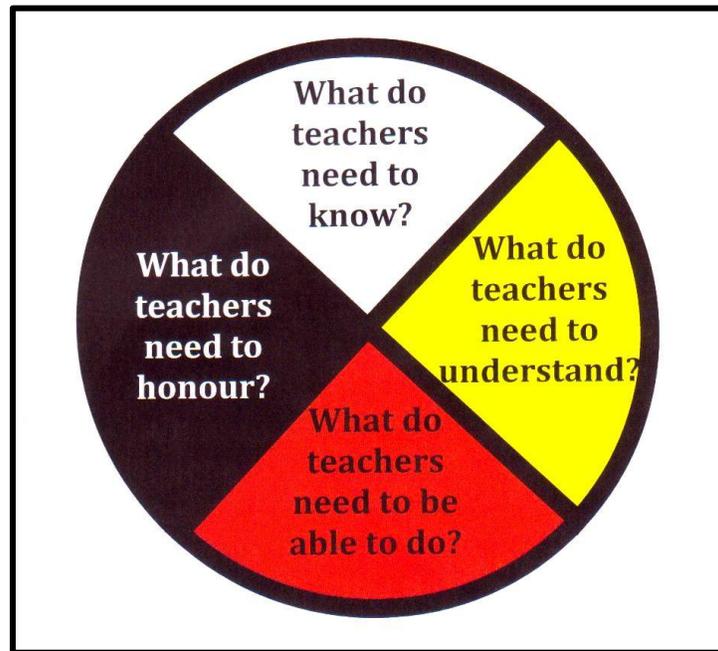


Figure 1: Heuristic Model for Teaching Teachers to Teach First Nation Students

The heuristic model is organized as a Medicine Wheel in order to emphasize wholism and is respectful and representative of First Nations. Beginning in the East quadrant, “What do teachers need to understand?”, the focus is on teachers’ understanding of the impacts of residential schooling and the consequential cultural and social challenges faced by Aboriginal students. It also refers to teachers’ understanding of the breadth of diversity amongst Aboriginal learners as a result of linguistic, community, and cultural uniqueness. In the South quadrant, “What do teachers need to be able to do?”, there is a description of how teachers should act in

the classroom and work to engage the Aboriginal community in supporting Aboriginal learners. In the West quadrant, “What do teachers need to honour?”, there is an identification of Indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) such as treaties, culture, and language, as well as Indigenous knowledge holders such as Elders that need to be valued in schools. Finally in the North quadrant, “What do teachers need to know?”, there is a focus on teachers’ learning and content knowledge about Aboriginal history, demographics, worldviews and cultures as well as their own backgrounds and subsequently determining how these areas are interconnected (J. Flett & E. Gardner, personal communication, November 4, 2009).

The four quadrants of this Medicine Wheel represent the four guiding questions that non-Aboriginal teachers must attend to when engaging in Aboriginal education (AE), decolonizing their perceptions, and shifting their teaching practices to become more culturally responsive (CR). This research study was designed in response to both a personal interest and a need (as a result of limited research conducted in this area) to further study non-Aboriginal teacher decolonization and use of CR pedagogy. All teacher-participants in this study are teachers who participated in the UAEP and the UAEP Research Study of the NOSB.

My Research

The purpose of this thesis is to explore the decolonizing stories of seven non-Aboriginal teachers who are in the process of addressing the four directions as outlined in the heuristic model for teaching teachers to teach First Nations students (Figure 1). This study follows teachers’ narratives as they revisit learning about aspects of Indigeneity, interrogating their own culture and Eurocentrism, understanding complex relationships between Aboriginal and non-

Aboriginal peoples, participating in UAEP-delivered PD and programs, and adapting their teaching philosophy and practices to make them more CR to urban Aboriginal students.

This study is significant because it presents non-Aboriginal teacher narratives of successful engagement in AE through decolonization and the use of CR pedagogy. It is my hope that in reading the stories of what non-Aboriginal teacher participants are understanding, doing, honouring, and knowing in their classrooms, other non-Aboriginal teachers, administrators, and teacher educators can resist colonizing tendencies of Western schooling and embrace a new chapter of education as reconciling Canadians (Saul, 2008); one that is working to transform K-12 urban Ontario education to make it more responsive, inclusive, and equitable for Aboriginal students and families while honouring their languages, cultures, and worldviews.

Chapter 2: The Literature Review

Much Aboriginal education (AE) research refers to census data (Statistics Canada, 2006) that continues to indicate a considerable achievement gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students. Poor achievement statistics are used to assert that the current state of AE is dire and requires urgent attention (Dion, 2007; Kanu, 2002, 2005; Tompkins 2002). In Chapter One of this thesis, I reviewed these claims as well as listed examples of national, provincial, and local efforts to generate improvements in AE.

Building on the call for drastic improvements in AE, in this chapter, I review literature and studies that focus on how teacher educators, guided by national, provincial, and local initiatives, are working to engage non-Aboriginal teachers in AE. Teacher education is able to provide a set of strategies to address colonial practices and relations of structural domination for the non-Aboriginal teacher (Strong-Wilson, 2007). This set of strategies is required to make teacher education a site of transformation (Lopez, 2010); one that is responsive, inclusive, and equitable for Aboriginal students and their families while honouring their languages, cultures, and epistemologies. This review of the literature focuses on two main issues: (1) Eurocentrism and its impact on the non-Aboriginal educator, and (2) linking decolonization projects for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples. Each issue subdivides into multiple layers of complex issues.

Eurocentrism and non-Aboriginal teachers' inabilities to engage with or teach their Aboriginal students are deeply intertwined. To explore this issue, the first part of this literature review begins by presenting non-Aboriginal teachers' perceptions of the difficulties they face when a) teaching Aboriginal students; b) integrating IK and Aboriginal culture and perspectives in their classrooms and, c) exploring the impacts of colonization on AE. It is crucial to

understand the link between the (perceived) challenges of non-Aboriginal teachers and their constructs of educational values which are culturally anchored in Euro-Canadian culture. Critical researchers discuss how Eurocentrism has constructed and reinforced a set of normative and oppressive “educational” values and assumptions that do not recognize or include Indigenous ontologies and epistemologies (Chomsky in Meyer & Alvarado, 2010; Kirkness, 1999; Rassmussen 2002). In acknowledging and addressing how inherited or deeply rooted/fixed Eurocentric worldviews shape their teaching, non-Aboriginal teachers are capable of opening up to the possibility of “tak[ing] up alternative ways of knowing, imagin[ing] new relationships and think[ing] about how they might want to work toward transforming their practice” (Dion, 2007, p. 330).

Indigenous peoples and researchers have long been involved in a project of decolonization through the reclamation of their education systems, their knowledge, and their cultures through political processes of self-determination as well as deeper examinations of their own internalized colonization. The term and work of decolonization by Indigenous scholars is well underway and strongly developed by Indigenous peoples in Canada and worldwide (Battiste, 1998, 2005; Graveline, 1998; Iseke-Barnes, 2009; Smith, 1999; Steinhauer; 2002).

The decolonizing work that non-Aboriginal educators need to begin to undertake (Strong-Wilson, 2007) is intensely connected with the project of decolonization described above. In the second part of the literature review, the specific similarities and significant differences between the non-Aboriginal project of decolonization and the decolonizing project that was conceived by and for Indigenous peoples are identified. Current conceptualizations of decolonization for non-Aboriginal teachers by Aboriginal teacher educators (Dion, 2007; Williams in Tanaka et al., 2007) and non-Aboriginal teacher educators (Strong-Wilson, 2007; Tompkins, 2002) are then

connected, contrasted, and critiqued. The review of the literature concludes by articulating the need for a new type of research to be done with non-Aboriginal teachers working to decolonize their perceptions and practices.

Non-Aboriginal Teachers' Perceptions of Difficulties

The following section explores the views of non-Aboriginal teachers concerning the challenges they face when teaching Aboriginal students, incorporating IK and Aboriginal culture and perspectives in their classrooms, and linking the concepts of colonization and the current achievement/graduation rates of Aboriginal students. This section concludes by presenting a profile of a typical non-Aboriginal educator.

Teaching Aboriginal students. Very few educational studies have set out to explore the challenges of teaching Aboriginal students compared to non-Aboriginal students most likely because researchers realize that such a research question would generate a range of racist responses that would perpetuate Aboriginal stereotypes. It is common, however, for such responses to surface during research with teachers that focuses, more broadly, on AE (Kanu, 2005; Korteweg et al., 2010). Elementary and secondary teachers report absenteeism, lateness, and incomplete classroom work; a lack of sleep and proper nutrition; as well as poor/no educational values amongst Aboriginal students as challenges to teaching. Remarkably, non-Aboriginal teachers rarely take any responsibility for Aboriginal students' attendance issues and/or social issues (Kanu, 2005; Korteweg et al., 2010). Consider the following statement made by an elementary teacher during an UAEP focus group:

It's unrealistic, it's a disservice [to put pressure to succeed academically] to Aboriginal kids whose attendance is poor. But, I can't fight years of the fact that

these kids" parents maybe didn"t put a lot of stock in education. Or, you know, don"t seem to be too concerned that their child gets to school each day. (Korteweg et al, 2010, p. 24)

Tompkins (2002) states that "in the worst case scenario, the [W]hite educators in the school do not "see" that there is any issue of inequity to be addressed. When they are made aware of the situation, they often adopt a "blame the victim" approach which locates the problem of underachievement outside their individual or collective sphere of influence" (p. 406). Such a "blame the victim" approach results in a transference of responsibility for learning from teacher to Aboriginal student/family and acts as barrier to non-Aboriginal teacher engagement in AE (Korteweg et al., 2010).

Integrating Indigenous knowledge and Aboriginal culture and perspectives in the classroom. Non-Aboriginal teachers identify a lack of knowledge of Aboriginal history, worldviews, cultural ceremonies, and/or current issues as a significant barrier to integration of IK and Aboriginal culture and perspectives in the classroom (Agbo, 2004; Dion, 2007; Kanu, 2005; Korteweg et al., 2010; Menzies & Smith, 2004). Moreover, teachers rarely take ownership for their ignorance of Aboriginal culture and often place blame on insufficient education or preparation/training received at the post-secondary level and the lack of support for integration by school administrators (through the lack of active role-modeling by principals, PD opportunities, and availability of Aboriginal mentors and classroom resources) (Agbo, 2004; Kanu, 2005; Korteweg et al., 2010). This lack of knowledge results in a lack of self confidence in one"s ability to teach IK and Aboriginal culture and perspectives as the teachers in Kanu"s (2005) study exemplified: "„Who am I to be teaching Aboriginal culture to Aboriginal kids?"

(Nick); „I feel like a fraud“ (Ted); „Do I have the right to be teaching about these issues? Perhaps as a teacher, yes; but as a non-Aboriginal person, I'm not sure“ (Doug)” (p. 59).

Dion (2007) has labelled this stance, which is easily and often claimed by non-Aboriginal teachers and people, “the perfect stranger” (p. 330). She explains, “it is informed simultaneously by what teachers know, what they do not know, and what they refuse to know. It is, for many, a response to recognising that what they know is premised on a range of experiences with stereotypical representations” (p. 331). “The perfect stranger” offers a seemingly neutral moral position from which non-Aboriginal teachers can continue to “rely on dominant discourses to give structure to their approach to teaching without recognizing the inadequacy nor questioning the effects of those discourses” (p. 332). The ease with which teachers occupy this stance is particularly disturbing because from the position of “the perfect stranger”, they do not feel obligated to transform their practices to make them more culturally responsive. Yet concurrently, the majority of AE research clearly points to culture as the place where education must begin for Aboriginal children and youth (Antone, 2003; Castellano, Davis, & Lahache, 2000; Kanu, 2002, 2007).

Exploring the effect of Colonization on Aboriginal education (AE). Non-Aboriginal teachers often seem reluctant to explore the relevance of colonization when seeking a deeper understanding of the issues faced by Aboriginal peoples and the subsequent effects these challenges have on education (Kanu, 2005; Korteweg et al. 2010). Colonization, “the imposition of a common language, a common culture, a common allegiance to a national entity ... achieved through centuries of violence and destruction” (Chomsky in Meyer & Alvarado, 2010, p. 42) is often viewed as past history; however, it is important to note that the colonizers have not left and colonialism to this day is very present in the legacies of the colonizers (Adams, 2000; Battiste,

1998, 2005; Smith, 1999). Kanu (2005) reports that, possibly as active resistance to confronting difficult knowledge, non-Aboriginal teachers often propose a proactive approach to engaging in AE that leaves issues of colonization unexamined, thereby “undercutting the specific historical and cultural struggle that should be a part of any particular life in the present” (p. 60).

Investigation of non-Aboriginal teachers’ perceptions of difficulties they face when engaging in AE illustrates the profile of a typical non-Aboriginal teacher as one that:

- 1) Utilizes a “blame the victim” approach to justify the shift of responsibility for student learning from teacher/school to Aboriginal student/family/community;
- 2) Occupies the position of “the perfect stranger” towards Aboriginal peoples in order to remain morally neutral while resisting responsibility for learning about IK and Aboriginal culture and perspectives and transforming their teaching practices to make them more culturally responsive;
- 3) Actively opposes difficult knowledge of colonization in order to avoid realizing their participation in neo-colonialism.

Eurocentrism and Non-Aboriginal Teachers

The next section begins by exploring the historical consequences of Eurocentrism; “the idea that Western European cultures are superior and a standard against which other cultures should be judged” (Lewis & Aikenhead, 2000, p. 53). The construct of education and the perpetuation of the profile of non-Aboriginal teachers presented above are then discussed in relation to this claim of supremacy and normalcy. Finally, a process is reviewed by which non-Aboriginal teachers can begin to critically question their pre-existing assumptions and views of

Aboriginal peoples (including students) and the conceptualization of non-Aboriginal educators' roles as teachers of Aboriginal students is introduced.

Eurocentrism: A problematic dominant worldview. “Western”, “Eurocentric”, “White”, “Anglo-centric” and “colonial” are all terms used in the discourses of Indigenous Research, Indigenous Education, Native Studies and Decolonization to describe the problematic dominant worldview that claims universality (Adams, 2000; Battiste, 1998, 2005; Belczweski, 2009; Mazzocci, 2006; Rasmussen, 2002; Smith, 1999; Strong-Wilson, 2007). Building on the concept of Eurocentrism introduced in Chapter One, I utilize the term “Eurocentric” to refer to European ethnocentrism, which separates or divides the world into two categories (Blaut, 1993; Willinsky, 1998). One category, a European centre, is the location of historical events and progresses where knowledge (particularly scientific and technological progress) is thought to have originated from; the other category of peoples/civilization is a non-European periphery, ahistorical and unchanging and receives progressive innovations by diffusion from Europe (Blaut, 1993, Willinsky, 1998).

“Eurocentric thought has always claimed to be universal” (Battiste, 2005, p. 124). Eurocentric thinkers have often used this claim of objectivity to project their expectations and norms onto other cultures that possess different worldviews or localized knowledge. Differences of the dominated are then constructed as inferior and negative and those of the dominators as superior and positive (Battiste, 1998; 2005). Battiste (1998) explains that in the context of Indigenous research, Eurocentrism assumes the superiority of Europeans and their descendants over Indigenous peoples based on a false polarity between “civilized” and “savage”, resulting in, as Tompkins (2002) argues, racism and an unequal distribution of power and privilege.

School systems as instruments of colonization. Early schooling systems were utilized as an instrument of colonization and as a vehicle to propagate the Eurocentric worldviews of colonizers (Meyer & Alvarado, 2010; Kirkness, 1999; Rasmussen, 2002). In the early 17th century, government-funded day or mission schools were established throughout Canada by European missionaries in an attempt to impart “knowledge” on Aboriginal peoples to promote their “civilization”. By the late 1800s, the day school concept was largely abandoned in favour of residential (boarding) schools as a means of isolating Aboriginal children from their parents and their communities. The residential school legacy is one of neglect, abuse, and death⁴, as well as cultural, historical, and linguistic erasure. As a whole, the effects of the weakening of Aboriginal society as a result of 100+ years of residential schools can still be seen today. Cultural conflict, alienation, poor self-concept and lack of preparation for family and daily life can be attributed to this educational program. Most residential schools were phased out in the 1960s⁵ and replaced with federally controlled day schools on reserves. At the same time, a policy of integration, which remains in effect today, was initiated which allowed for Aboriginal students to attend public schools. No measures, in terms of preparing teachers to teach students of another culture or modifying curriculum to ensure it was culturally relevant, were taken to accommodate Aboriginal students who attended public schools (Kirkness, 1999).

Modern Eurocentric school systems. The current Canadian educational system is one that is intrinsically Eurocentric in terms of the structural model of schools, the pedagogical methods employed within schools, and the privileging of European languages over Aboriginal languages in curriculum. Modern school systems continue to function on the principle of the

⁴ The national death rate in 1907 of Aboriginal children in residential schools, including those that died at home where they were sent when they became critically ill, was forty-two percent (Fournier and Crey, 2006).

⁵ The last federally run residential school, the Gordon Residential School, was closed in Saskatchewan in 1996 (Assembly of First Nations, n.d.).

conduit metaphor, a Eurocentric notion that assumes that learning requires a conduit, a *school* to distil, decipher, and deliver pure, subjugated knowledge to the recipient, the *student* (Reddy, 1993). Bista, a Yupik (Indigenous inhabitant of southwestern Alaska and the eastern tip of Chukotka), situates traditional learning in an Indigenous context:

Before the erection of school houses and the introduction of professional teachers to whom Western civilization entrusts the minds of their children ... we did not worry about relating learning to life, because learning came naturally as a part of living ... [from] the father, mother, grandmother, grandfather, brother, sister, uncles, aunts, cousins, and friends ... [and from] the weather, the sea, the fish, the animals, and the land The coming of Western civilization broke this unity and living Today we have entrusted the minds of our young to professional teachers who seemingly know all there is to know. They are teaching a child how to read, write, repair a car, and weld two pipes together. But they are not teaching the child the most important thing. Who he is: an Inuk or Indian with a history full of folklore, music, great men, medicine, a philosophy, complete with poets Now this culture and subsistence way of life are being swept away by books, patents, money and corporations. (as cited in Darnell and Hoem, 1996, p. 254)

In addition to operating within a Eurocentric structural model, Kanu (2005) reported three incompatibilities between pedagogical methods employed in school and Aboriginal cultural values/practices:

- (a) incompatibility between schools' rigid approach to dealing with time and Aboriginal people's more flexible view of time; (b) incompatibility between

schools' large classes and Aboriginal teaching methods such as the talking circle; and (c) incompatibility between the regimentation of the classroom experience and Aboriginal people's cultural value of noninterference in childrearing practices in some Aboriginal communities (noninterference means refraining from directly criticizing an individual or attempting to control the behaviour of others by direct intervention). (p. 61)

Finally, modern school systems privilege European (English and French) languages over Native languages. On its website, the Ontario Ministry of Education states that “standard Canadian English is the primary language of communication” and that “students in Ontario's publicly funded English-language schools are required to study French ... because French is one of Canada's two official languages” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010); however, a school board must decide if they *want* to offer a Native Language Program at both the elementary and secondary levels (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2001).

Moreover, the Native Language Program curriculum (2001) includes only seven of the fifty Aboriginal languages spoken in Canada (Natural Resources Canada, 2009). Battiste (1998) explains the vital role of language within Aboriginal societies:

Aboriginal languages are sacred to Aboriginal people. They are a central source of survival for the people, as well as the critical link to knowledge given to us by our Creator who blessed us with our languages and in them gave instructions for our development and survival Aboriginal languages are the repository of vital instructions, lessons, and guidance given to our Elders in visions, dreams, and life experience. (p. 17-18)

In summary, in looking at the current Canadian educational system as structurally, pedagogically and linguistically Eurocentric, it is easy to see that we have *all* been marinated in Eurocentrism (Battiste, 2005) making it extremely difficult to identify, decipher, and work to respond to other cultures:

Eurocentrism is not like a prejudice from which informed peoples can elevate themselves. In schools and universities, traditional academic studies support and reinforce the Eurocentric contexts consequences, ignoring Indigenous world views, knowledge and thought, while claiming to have superior grounding in Eurocentric history, literature and philosophy. (p. 22)

The following section offers a means by which non-Aboriginal teachers can begin to realize the presence of deeply rooted Eurocentrism in their lives and, specifically, in their classroom. The transformational possibilities that accompany this realization are also discussed.

Moving Horizons

“Part of the challenge of doing anti-racist work with [W]hite educators is the task of leading people to see what they have, up to this point in their lives, been unable to see” (Tompkins, 2002, p. 409). Alcoff (2006), drawing on Gadamer's (1975/1998) hermeneutic notion of “horizon”, argues that as human subjects we see what is within our range of vision, our horizon, which is shaped consciously and unconsciously by “social identities of race and gender” (p.102), leading to the development of “orientation[s] to the world” (p. 127). Dyer (as cited in Byrne, 2006) contends that “[W]hiteness as power is maintained by being unseen” (p. 24). Consequently, “„[W]hite teacher” has become virtually synonymous with resistance; resistance to acknowledging the significance of constructions of race to identity formation and of perceiving

themselves as [W]hite and therefore implicated in systems of domination” (Strong-Wilson, 2007, p. 115).

A challenge is thus presented: that of engaging non-Aboriginal teachers in seeing their deeply rooted Eurocentric ideas, prejudices, assumptions, actions, and privilege in order to “move their horizons” (Strong-Wilson, 2007) or “disrupt their molded images” (Dion, 2007). Strong-Wilson (2007) labels this challenge a decolonizing education for non-Aboriginal teachers and Dion (2007) asserts that “the construction of this ethical awareness among teachers is a promising way to transform relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in Canada” (p. 329).

In the following section, the Indigenous research agenda and one of its four components, decolonization by and for Indigenous people, is introduced before linking this component with the decolonizing education for non-Aboriginal teachers as described by Strong-Wilson (2007).

Decolonization by and for Indigenous Peoples and Decolonization of Non-Aboriginal Teachers

Renowned Indigenous scholar, Linda Tuhiwai Smith’s (1999) representation of an Indigenous research agenda (see Appendix A) identifies four components: decolonization, transformation, mobilization and healing. These represent processes that can be incorporated into Indigenous research practices and methodologies. Smith is careful to specify that these processes are not goals or ends in themselves, rather they are to be utilized to bring local, regional and global communities together to combat common tensions through information and transparency. The four major states of being in the chart: survival, recovery, development, and self-determination, represent the circumstances through which Indigenous communities are currently moving.

Smith's frequently cited work *Decolonizing Methodologies Research and Indigenous Peoples* sets out to begin "transforming the institution of research, the deep underlying structures and taken for granted ways of organizing, conducting, and disseminating research and knowledge" (Smith, 2005, p.88). *Decolonizing Methodologies Research and Indigenous Peoples* is organized into two parts. The first section deconstructs the historical and philosophical foundation of Western research, while the second section offers researchers struggling to conduct Indigenous research within Western paradigms, a framework for setting an agenda for planning and implementing respectful research. Smith (as cited in Battiste, Bell and Findlay, 2002) explains her impetus for writing this book:

I do want to create a resource that expands people's ideas of what the recipe is for research because too often it is seen as a recipe rather than a conceptual framework and I think that the conceptual framework that you work in is more important than the methodologies and tools that you use. You've got to have the conceptual stuff first. (p. 174)

Within the Indigenous research agenda, Smith (2005) describes what she views as the multiple purposes of decolonization:

The decolonization project involves the unmasking and deconstruction of imperialism, and its aspects of colonialism, in its old and new formations alongside a search for sovereignty; for reclamation of knowledge, language and culture; and for the social transformation of the colonial relations between the native and the settler. (p. 88)

While Smith's conceptualization of the decolonization project speaks to Indigenous peoples, she does point somewhat toward the role of non-Indigenous peoples as allies (Bishop, 2002) within the Indigenous research agenda; "The Indigenous movement involves a focus on strategic relations and alliances with non-Indigenous groups The movement has developed a shared international language or discourse which enables Indigenous activists to talk to each other across their cultural differences." (Smith, 1999, p. 110)

Similarly, Graveline (1998) regards decolonization as a reclamation project specific to Indigenous peoples and identifies how their raised, validated voices offer non-Aboriginal teachers working within a Eurocentric school system a counter-perspective to disrupt their Western worldviews:

Decolonization requires and allows reclamation of voice ... Through voice we speak/write of our acts of resistance, the healing and empowering values of our Traditions and the role of the European colonizers in the destruction of our communities. Through voice we are gaining our own sense of conscious reality and providing another lens through which Eurocentric educators may view themselves. Once our voices become heard in the struggle, the ground shifts.
(p.41)

Strong-Wilson (2007) argues that decolonization for non-Aboriginal people differs from the project of reclamation described by Smith (1999) and Graveline (1998) although it shares with it the overarching goal of social change. "Decolonization of the [W]hite subject is thus best seen as a subset of a larger project of decolonization" (Strong-Wilson, 2007, p. 117). Strong-Wilson (2007) clearly defines a decolonizing education for non-Aboriginal teachers as one that

“involves „bringing forward“ the storied history presently subsumed within their teaching but in relation to post-colonial or counter-stories for the purpose of provoking a different story that can open and shift their horizon” (p. 119). From this new vantage point, non-Aboriginal teachers can challenge, resist, and reshape Western schooling by acknowledging and honouring other meanings of education.

The Similarities and Differences between Decolonization for Indigenous Peoples and Decolonization of Non-Aboriginal Teachers

This section discusses „revisiting history“ and „negotiating new relationships“ (Smith, 1999) as similar themes between non-Aboriginal teacher decolonization and the larger project of decolonization by and for Indigenous people, as described by current research. “Investigating [W]hite privilege” (McIntosh, 1990; Tompkins, 2002) is identified as a task unique to non-Aboriginal teachers.

Revisiting history. The purpose of revisiting history for a non-Aboriginal educator differs significantly from the project of recovery being undertaken by Aboriginal peoples. Non-Aboriginal teachers need to investigate their history from a critical standpoint to learn about their own culture and how it has interplayed with other cultures over time to shape contemporary relationships (Dion, 2007; Sleeter, 2000; Strong-Wilson, 2007; Tompkins, 2002). Sleeter (2000) explains that it is also important for teachers to ensure that students revisit history within their classrooms:

From the perspective of Indigenous people, the real story has been one of genocide and of taking land away. It’s important for kids to understand that story If kids today really want to understand relationships between [W]hites and

Indigenous peoples, we need to understand that within an accurate historical context. (p.3)

Revisiting history from a critical standpoint also offers the opportunity to be free from “existential illiteracy” (Saul, 2008, p. xv). Wasting no time in the introduction to *A Fair Country*, John Ralston Saul (2008) writes about how Canadians can work to embrace an identity that honours their true heritage:

We [Canadians] are a people of Aboriginal inspiration organized around a concept of peace, fairness and good government. This is what lies at the heart of our story, at the heart of Canadian mythology, whether Francophone or Anglophone. If we can embrace a language that expresses that story, we will feel a great release. We will discover a remarkable power to *act* and *do* so in such a way that we will feel we are true to ourselves. (p. xvi, emphasis added)

Lastly, non-Aboriginal teachers must revisit their history in order to shift their horizons but also to incorporate the narratives of Aboriginal peoples that have been silenced for far too long into their classrooms. Strong-Wilson (2007) identifies “touchstone stories” as those that “become significant markers within the formation of personal identity and are not easily dislodged from an individual’s personal repertoire or „world“” (p. 121). She contends that it is simply not enough for non-Aboriginal teachers to identify their “touchstone stories”. In order to decolonize their perceptions, she argues, teachers need to replace their “touchstone stories” with “counter-stories” that challenge them with an alternative perspective. Strong-Wilson (2007) explains that a counter-story “is not simply an alternate version of a story; it is told from the point of view of the colonized” (p. 124).

Negotiating new relationships with both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal

colleagues. Non-Aboriginal teachers can work towards facilitating effective and respectful decolonization through negotiating new relationships with both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal colleagues to ensure that they are continually interrogating their own innate Eurocentric perceptions and practices (Dion, 2007; Tanaka et al., 2007; Oberg, Blades & Thom, 2007). Non-Aboriginal educators, operating within a Eurocentric educational system, often risk the possibility of simply “(re)colonizing” as explained by non-Aboriginal scholar, Haig-Brown (2001):

I want to tell the world, I want to open the Trojan horse in our midst in the hope of redressing the poverty of too many of academe’s knowledge production games. For too long, our understandings have been based in limited views of the world based in social Darwinist notions of European (read [W]hite) superiority. And this brings me to the final question. Is there a Trojan horse involved or am I contributing to more and better opportunities to (re)colonize? Is formal education an irredeemably Eurocentric institution or does it entail real possibilities of serving social justice? (p. 27)

Oberg, Blades, and Thom (2007) represent three non-Aboriginal teacher educators/educational researchers that work together in a unique way to challenge their inherited/deeply rooted Eurocentrism and expose the possibility that they may be (re)colonizing through their teaching practices. In *Untying a Dreamcatcher: Coming to Understand Possibilities for Teaching Students of Aboriginal Inheritance*, they present a summary of their informal discussions centred on the topic of how to deliver courses that incorporate IK, Aboriginal perspectives, and Aboriginal issues into the curriculum as well as utilize culturally

responsive pedagogies within university curricula that have been developed without consideration of the traditional epistemologies of Aboriginal peoples. The researchers detail how their relationships with each other⁶ aided all three non-Aboriginal teacher educators in making various critical shifts from a place of initial resistance to a reconsideration of their Eurocentric perspectives and teaching practices:

As we grappled with the theoretical, professional, and practical dimensions of these questions, we noticed differences in our own epistemologies and methodologies related to differences in our cultural backgrounds and subject matter specializations As we talked, however, our differences submerged and shared understandings grew. (p. 112)

Similarly, non-Aboriginal pre-service teachers Benoit, Duggan, Moir and Scarrow (2007) detail how their relationship with their Aboriginal teacher educator, Williams, and mentor carver/educator, Dick, helped them to understand the Indigenous concept of *Celhcelh*⁷ – the development of a sense of responsibility for personal learning within the context of a learning community:

As new members of this learning community, we were looking for our teachers to intervene in a way that would guide or direct us. We were used to typical Western educational structures that encourage an over-dependence on the transmission of information and direction. It gradually dawned on us that this was not the intent of the instructors in this unusual course. (p. 103)

⁶ I acknowledge that it may be difficult, or even impossible, for the dominant to be critical of the modes by which they exhibit and maintain dominance (Lather, 2007).

⁷ *Celhcelh* is a term from the Lil'wat ancestral language spoken in the coastal and plateau regions of southern British Columbia, Canada (Tanaka et al, 2007).

These two British Columbian studies have shown that despite academe being an institution founded on Eurocentric constructs of knowledge which all too often works to support and perpetuate the status quo, the negotiation of new relationships between Aboriginal peoples and allies in AE aids in decolonizing the non-Aboriginal educator, realizing Haig-Brown's hope that formal education entails real possibilities of serving social justice.

Investigating privilege. Contrary to Aboriginal peoples, who are struggling to succeed within a Eurocentric framework of education (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007), non-Aboriginal educators need to question how their race and culture affords them privilege in terms of access to quality education as well as in easier daily educational interactions (i.e. reduced tensions/smooth relations). McIntosh (1990) explains the difficulty in identifying White privilege:

I think [W]hites are carefully taught not to recognize [W]hite privilege, as males are taught not to recognize male privilege. So I have begun in an untutored way to ask what it is like to have [W]hite privilege. I have come to see [W]hite privilege as an invisible package of unearned assets that I can count on cashing in each day, but about which I was "meant" to remain oblivious. White privilege is like an invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions, maps, passports, codebooks, visas, clothes, tools, and blank checks. (p. 1)

When teachers begin to recognize "that schools are entrenched in larger systems that privilege certain students, knowledge and ways of being" (Tompkins, 2002), they can begin to develop new pedagogical practices that work to transform education to make it more socially just and equitable.

A decolonizing education for non-Aboriginal teachers is distinct and involves critical analysis of Eurocentric history and the development of partnerships with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal colleagues to facilitate personal growth. Moreover, this unique decolonizing education requires an investigation into the unequal distribution of privilege within the educational system and society as a whole as well as an investigation into how teachers, largely unconsciously, participate in this ongoing neo-colonialism. In the final section of this literature review, I will discuss how four Canadian teacher educators (Dion, 2007; Strong-Wilson, 2007; Tompkins, 2002; Williams in Tanaka et al., 2007) are working towards decolonizing the perceptions of non-Aboriginal teachers.

Decolonizing Work Being Done for Non-Aboriginal Teachers

In this section, I describe how Aboriginal scholars (Dion, 2007; Williams in Tanaka et al., 2007) and non-Aboriginal Scholars (Strong-Wilson, 2007; Tompkins, 2002) are working towards decolonizing the perceptions of non-Aboriginal teachers using various methods. The importance of their work is highlighted and their conceptualizations critiqued against the currently proposed themes of a decolonizing education for non-Aboriginal teachers: revisiting history, negotiating new relationships with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal colleagues, and investigating privilege.

Decolonization for non-Aboriginal teachers: Conceptualizations by Aboriginal peoples. Although Williams (2007) does not specifically identify decolonization as the purpose of her work, it is extremely useful to include in this section because she offers students the opportunity to learn in an environment that is founded on and grounded in an Indigenous epistemology. Williams (as cited in Tanaka et al., 2007), “identified a sense of urgency for

teacher education programs to provide pre-service teachers with concrete and practical experiences in Indigenous ways of teaching and learning” (p. 100). Subsequently, she developed a pre-service teacher education course entitled *Thunderbird/Whale Protection and Welcoming Pole: Learning and Teaching in an Indigenous World* based on a community-based, wholistic, and dialogic approach.

A combination of 36 undergraduate students, graduate students, and faculty members from the University of Victoria worked for an entire semester with an artist-in-residence and mentor carver/educator, Dick, to construct and install the Thunderbird/Whale pole. In addition to carving and positioning the pole, students were asked to select and join one of the following five student project groups: film, print, web site, ceremonies or education (Tanaka et al., 2007). The print group produced the article *Transforming Pedagogies: Pre-Service Reflections on Learning* which details, through student narratives, how the students developed a deep understanding of the following four Indigenous concepts⁸:

Celhcelh – the development of a sense of responsibility for personal learning within the context of a learning community; *Kat“il“a-* the act of becoming still - slowing down, despite an ingrained and urgent need to know and desire for busyness; *Cwelelep* – the discomfort and value of being in a place of dissonance, urgency and anticipation; and *Kamucwkalha* – the energy current that indicates the emergence of a communal sense of purpose. (Tanaka et al., 2007, p. 99)

This course highlights how learning from Aboriginal educators is an extremely effective method for enhancing the understanding of IK and Aboriginal culture and perspectives in pre-

⁸ The Indigenous concepts presented are written in the Lil‘wat ancestral language which is spoken in the coastal and plateau regions of southern British Columbia, Canada (Tanaka et al, 2007).

service teachers. Participants in Williams' course were given the opportunity to critically reflect on their previous educational experiences in comparison to their experience in Williams' course. In addition, this opportunity provided students with an authentic teaching experience from which they could draw on to transform their teaching approach to offer both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students a richer classroom experience. A pre-service teacher participant details how she grew as an educator as a result of her critical decolonizing experience:

I believe that I have learned that our Western way of forcing understanding upon a student may work to destroy meaning and kill motivation. I believe that this approach to learning will only result in a superficial understanding of a concept, and may result in the student walking away with nothing. However, presenting a concept and letting the student approach it on their own will give the learner responsibility of their learning. Although it may be a slower process than we are used to in our fast-paced society, the student will be more likely to seek out opportunities to discover answers for what they want to learn with more passion and enthusiasm than seeking out answers for what we want them to learn. This is a concept taught in university classrooms, but has had very little meaning for me until now. (Tanaka et al., 2007, p. 108)

Related to Williams' motivation for developing a university course, Dion (2007), at York University, recognized the need to disrupt the "dominant discourses that inform our understanding" (Dion, 2007, p. 330). In *Disrupting Molded Images: Identities, Responsibilities and Relationships. Teachers and Indigenous Subject Material*, Dion (2007) presents the method she uses with graduate students to initiate a critical pedagogy of remembrance that allows teachers to derive understanding from investigating the biography of their relationship with

Aboriginal peoples and disrupt their “molded images”. Dion documents, through samples of students’ work, how she employs her method in graduate education classes by explaining the progression from teachers’ reflections on their relationship with Aboriginal people, to critique of these reflections, to the major course project entitled “File of (un)certainities”. In the file, Dion (2007) asks her students to:

position images (either in visual, aural, or written form) from their past alongside content from the course readings or work by Aboriginal artists creating stereoscopic images ... which allows students to see the position they occupy, in relation to, and with, Aboriginal people and importantly, how it is they came to occupy those positions. (p. 334)

Dion’s (2007) student narratives illustrate that, through this process of disrupting molded images, non-Aboriginal teachers are able to move beyond the position of “the perfect stranger”:

Harrington’s black and white images capture various daily activities carried out by Inuit families. While observing the photographs, I recognized individuals hanging clothes to dry, men and women cutting and carving stone, children playing and dogs sleeping. Furthermore, as I observed those pictures I realized that the daily tasks that the Inuit carried out compared to chores that my own family carried out. In other words, their day-to-day activities resembled my own My education experiences instilled stereotypic images of Aboriginal life, within me. His work moved me, aided me in identifying with Indigenous humanity. (p. 336)

Dion's model clearly demonstrates that, with guidance and support from their non-Aboriginal peers and Aboriginal artists and teacher, ethical awareness can be raised in non-Aboriginal teachers. By challenging existing "truths" they hold about Aboriginal peoples and culture, they are able to begin transforming the relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians that have been negatively shaped by colonization.

Although Dion's method clearly requires non-Aboriginal teachers to examine their own Eurocentrism, the fact that Dion's data results from work produced by her own graduate students during a required assignment leaves her method open to critique. Dion's bias, that is, she believes her method for initiating a critical pedagogy of remembrance is effective, and may have interfered with selecting a random and/or representative sample of students' works to include in the article. Further, one might argue that students would have been aware of Dion's opinion of the effectiveness of her method when they created their "Files of (un)certainties" and produced entries that aligned with their instructor's beliefs. Some interesting, and perhaps less biased, ways I have seen instructors utilize data that resulted from their classroom instruction and/or assignments are allowing students to write the article about their experience (Tanaka et al., 2007) or conduct follow-up interviews after the course is over (James, 2004) that focus on the effectiveness of course methods in the classroom.

Decolonization for non-Aboriginal teachers: Conceptualizations by non-Aboriginal people. Perhaps the best example of a conception of decolonization for non-Aboriginal teachers is that of Strong-Wilson (2007) in *Moving Horizons: Exploring the Role of Stories in Decolonizing the Literacy Education of White Teachers* because she explicitly situates her work within the greater Indigenous research agenda. Working within this conceptual framework allows her to directly address aspects of decolonization as stated by Smith (2005).

Strong-Wilson's interest in critical self-examination beyond autobiographical narratives, led her to work with a group of eighteen teachers, "twelve [of which] were predominantly of (European or Euro-Canadian) ancestry while six were Indigenous" (p. 114). Strong-Wilson guided the group in examining the role their "touchstone stories" played in their literacy formation, thus perpetuating colonialism in their classrooms, as well as the role "counter-stories" (Smith, 1999; Thomas, 2005) can play in decolonizing literacy formation. Strong-Wilson's (2007) model involves teachers working in literature circles (i.e. a forum for discussing books) to recall their favourite childhood stories as well as those that they are inclined to teach, "which are then juxtaposed with stories that bear similarities in plot or subject matter but come from a different [Aboriginal] perspective" (p. 119), completing a literacy autobiography and participating in a series of interviews. Strong-Wilson (2007) reports that her model, "continually brought teachers back to the particularity of their own storied horizon, for the purposes of recognizing their colonial formations as well as moving their horizons through a deepening consciousness" (p. 120).

Strong-Wilson's model is extremely useful because it requires Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal teachers to work together to investigate Eurocentrism and how the resultant inequitable distribution of privilege has shaped their educational autobiographies and pedagogy. Moreover, it offers teachers samples of counter-narratives which they can utilize to make their teaching practices more culturally responsive.

Tompkins (2002), a White teacher educator and researcher, describes the process of her own and her predominantly White students' struggles to understand their own positions as White teachers within society and how their resultant power and privilege contributes to the marginalization of Aboriginal students. Utilizing her ethnographic notes, data collected from

interviews with participating teachers, and course evaluations, Tompkins “documents, describes and evaluates the processes used to deconstruct and transform their educational thinking around Indigenous education in the racial context of rural Nova Scotia” (p. 408). Tompkins details how she includes the following three major areas in her graduate courses: 1) Establishing ways of working in the course to compensate for issues of power and privilege that may be present; 2) Working with teachers to identify their power and privilege by critically examining their own stories; and 3) Creating an environment in which Mi’kmaw and African voices are heard.

Tompkins claims (2002) that “the primary work of the course is to decolonize the thinking of [W]hite educators” (p. 417); however, I feel that her work strongly focuses on the interrogation of [W]hite privilege which, as I see it, is a component of decolonizing for non-Aboriginal teachers but not synonymous with non-Aboriginal teacher decolonization. In my opinion, Tompkins’ work would contribute more to the decolonizing agenda if she focused on the interrelations between her anti-racism work and colonial history and the resultant dominance of a Eurocentric epistemology in current education systems.

In conclusion, valuable work is being done by both Aboriginal (Dion, 2007; Tanaka et al., 2007) and non-Aboriginal scholars (Strong-Wilson, 2007; Tompkins; 2002) to decolonize the perceptions of non-Aboriginal teachers but a review of the literature suggests the need for more research to be conducted in the area of decolonizing non-Aboriginal teachers.

Coming Full Circle

Non-Aboriginal teachers are still the overwhelming majority and face of education for Aboriginal students and, as a result, remain at the centre of AE. In order to shift school systems and improve AE, teacher educators and educational researchers need to pay attention to non-

Aboriginal teacher decolonization, at all levels. Recent efforts of teacher educators and teacher-researchers to examine themselves and their efforts to address AE and the integration of Aboriginal perspectives or IK in the curriculum are well documented (Belczewski, 2009; Dion, 2007; Korteweg & Nicol, 2010; Oberg, Blades, & Thom, 2007; Strong-Wilson, 2007; Tanaka et al., 2007; Tompkins, 2002). More attention, however, needs to be placed upon case studies of non-Aboriginal in-service teachers who are already striving to decolonize their teaching and/or employ culturally responsive pedagogies, outside formal university courses or teacher institutes. The experiences that support unstructured, authentic non-Aboriginal teacher decolonization need to be studied.

This thesis follows seven effective non-Aboriginal in-service teachers as they narrate their engagement in Aboriginal education (AE) and explore their personal decolonization stories of teaching Aboriginal students in an urban context. In Chapter Three, *The Research Design*, the methodology used to obtain, analyze, and present teacher narratives is detailed. In Chapter Four, *Participant Profiles*, each teacher is introduced by highlighting key aspects of their educational autobiography, identifying how they view themselves as non-Aboriginal teachers of Aboriginal students and representing one or two of their critical decolonizing moments. In Chapter Five, *Teacher Narratives*, the stories of the teacher participants are shared in order to illustrate to the reader what teachers are understanding, doing, honouring, and learning in order to improve education for their urban Aboriginal students.

Chapter 3: The Research Design

Chapter Three, *The Research Design*, identifies the methodological approach to inquiry utilized in this study, the unique role that I occupy as primary researcher within this project, the method that was employed to collect data and the transcription and analysis procedures that I have followed in my research.

The Narrative Research Design

This study is guided by narrative inquiry, a qualitative methodology, that focuses on biographical details as narrated through either oral or written communication by the person who lives them (Chase, 2005). This section reviews the disciplinary origin of narrative inquiry, its application within the field of educational research and the suitability of life story, a form of narrative inquiry, as the approach to inquiry for this study.

Narrative inquiry has a longstanding record as an established qualitative research methodology rooted in research conducted by the Chicago School sociologists who studied the life stories of juvenile delinquents and criminals in the early 1920's and 1930s (Denzin, 1970). It was also employed by anthropologists studying American Indian cultures in the early 20th century (Langness & Frank, 1981). The evolution of narrative inquiry has been largely influenced in terms of the types of stories studied by the liberation movements of the 1960s and 1970s (Rawick, 1972), the work of Labov and Waletzky (1967) who argued that the oral narratives of average women and men concerning daily experiences were worthy of study in themselves, and the second wave of the women's movement (Personal Narratives Group, 1989).

Within the field of narrative inquiry, different types of narratives exist and their use depends on the person being studied, the story being told, and the way in which a story is being

communicated, analyzed and disseminated (Chase, 2005). A life story methodological approach was used to direct this research study because it is an appropriate method to detail how effective, urban non-Aboriginal teachers narrate and explore their personal decolonization and CR approaches as they engage in and/or reflect on teaching Aboriginal students. Life story is an autobiographical narrative about significant aspects of one's life (Chase, 2005) and may also concentrate on epiphanal events (Denzin, 1989) or turning points (McAdams, Josselson & Lieblich, 2001) in one's life.

Connelly and Clandinin (1990) maintain that narrative inquiry is an appropriate methodology for conducting educational research because:

Humans are storytelling organisms who, individually and socially, lead storied lives. The study of narrative, therefore, is the study of the ways humans experience the world. This general notion translates into the view that education is the construction and reconstruction of personal and social stories; teachers and learners are storytellers and characters in their own and other's stories. (p. 2)

Drawing from this explanation, I have chosen to position my research within this methodological framework to present teachers' critical decolonizing stories in a format that can encourage non-Aboriginal teachers, administrators, and teacher educators to engage in decolonization and incorporate the use of CR pedagogies in their classrooms. Decolonizing narratives have the power to serve as models of decolonization for non-Aboriginal teachers because narrative is a way of understanding your own actions and the actions of others, sequencing items and events into a significant whole, and of linking and seeing the effects of actions over a period of time (Clandinin, 2006; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Hinchman & Hinchman, 2001; Johnson, 2007).

The Researcher's Role

This section comments on the steps taken to obtain permission from the Research Ethics Board (REB) to protect the rights of teacher participants, the connections between myself, the researcher, and the participants and how a life story methodological approach shaped the types of questions I asked during interviews.

I submitted a research application for ethical review, along with a copy of an information summary letter (See Appendix B1) and a consent form (see appendix B2) to the Lakehead REB on May 6th, 2010. My research application demonstrated an in-depth understanding of my field of study (the decolonization of non-Aboriginal teachers of Aboriginal students) and my methodological approach (narrative inquiry) and, most importantly, sensitivity and awareness of possible emergent ethical issues that may occur as research proceeds through interviewing, transcribing and analyzing (Tilley, Powick-Kumar & Ratkovic, 2009).

Due to the nature of my methodological approach, participants often shared stories of a deeply personal nature that included sensitive topics such as dissatisfaction with school administration, racism amongst teaching staffs, and private conversations that took place with their students. Accordingly, I take my responsibility as guardian of data very seriously and have taken all measures available to ensure that data is kept confidential and secure and participant identities remain private.

The information summary letter (See Appendix B1) describes the purpose and parameters of my research, an explanation of the foreseeable risks or harm associated with participation in the study and both my supervisor's and my contact information. The consent form details the terms of agreement between participant and researcher and reiterated the rights of the teacher

participant, such as the right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty and the right to not answer any question asked as part of the research, should they choose to take part in my study. My study received ethical approval from the Lakehead REB on May 28th, 2010.

Before creating interview questions, I worked to make a conceptual shift from the conventional stance that interviewees have a reactive role during interviews (they answer questions asked by the researcher) toward the notion that interviewees are narrators with stories to tell and voices of their own (Chase, 2005). Chase (2005) explains “that the stories people tell constitute the empirical material that interviewers need if they are to understand how people create meanings out of events in their lives” (p. 660). Accordingly, in addition to shifting from interviewer towards listener, I produced interview questions that invited stories (see Appendix C) and, prior to meeting, sent my participants the central research question guiding my thesis project: How do effective urban non-Aboriginal teachers narrate and explore their personal decolonization and use of culturally responsive teaching approaches as they engage in/reflect on teaching Aboriginal students? It is also important to note at this time that I agree with Chase’s (2005) contention that “conceiving of an interviewee as a narrator is not an interest in the other’s “authentic” self or unmediated voice but rather an interest in the other as a narrator of his or her particular biographical experiences as she or he understands them” (p. 661).

Data Collection Strategy/Method

The research participants. As previously stated, this thesis focussed on the life stories of effective urban non-Aboriginal teachers. For the purposes of this research, the term “effective” refers to teachers who were able to increase the school success of their Aboriginal students (Kanu, 2006, 2007) by incorporating IK or Aboriginal issues and

perspectives into their course content and/or using CR pedagogies in their classrooms (Battiste 1998, 2005).

During data collection for the UAEP research study, the UAEP research team created a teacher landscape⁹ that described how teachers were engaging or not engaging in UAE. This landscape included a record of effective teachers that was produced by investigating teachers' own comments during focus groups that indicated they were working towards awareness, decolonizing their perceptions, and utilizing CR teaching practices. We also considered administrators' and students' identification of successful or "effective" teachers who they understood as effectively engaging in UAE and making a difference in Aboriginal student achievement. Finally, we worked with supporting documents (e.g. newspaper articles, nominations for teaching awards) to help us identify these exemplar teachers. With input from the study's principal investigator (PI) Lisa Korteweg, who is also my thesis supervisor, I selected nine effective non-Aboriginal teachers as potential research participants and contacted them via electronic mail. Seven out of nine teachers I contacted agreed to take part in my study. Participants included three elementary teachers and four secondary teachers, six females and one male. All teachers were non-Aboriginal.

The research setting. All interviews were conducted between June 1st, 2010 and June 18th, 2010 in one-to-one, in-person settings, in either the participants' classrooms after school hours or in a private interview room at Lakehead University. While the design of the study as submitted to the Lakehead REB afforded the possibility of second and third interviews with

⁹ The term "teacher landscape" refers to a cross-cut view of the school board data, focusing on the teacher data collected during the focus groups. We considered grade levels, subjects, schools, and Aboriginal student populations in mapping out teacher responses to Aboriginal Education.

participants, the average length (approximately 90 to 120 minutes) and depth of the first interviews led to the decision that subsequent interviews would not be necessary to fulfill the purpose of the study.

The research events. Prior to the commencement of the interviews, participants were provided with the REB information summary letter and consent form which they were asked to read and then sign if they agreed to participate in the study. I indicated (and informed) the participants of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty and that they may choose not to answer any question asked as part of the research. Data was not gathered prior to obtaining the written consent of each participant. Semi-structured interviews were then conducted with participants that concentrated on four main themes: their educational autobiography, the biography of their relationship with Aboriginal peoples (Dion, 2007), critical decolonizing moments (Strong-Wilson, 2007), and their experiences as a non-Aboriginal teacher of urban Aboriginal students (Kanu, 2005).

The process. The directions the interviews took and the resultant responses or dialogic story I was able to engage in with my participants were varied and heavily shaped by the stories the participants selected to share. The teacher-participants were given the option to further discuss interview topics through electronic mail or telephone following the interviews.

Data Recording Procedures

Prior to each interview, I recorded ethnographic notes that included demographic information about the time, place and date of the field setting and, when interviews were conducted in participants' classrooms, descriptive notes of the physical site. Immediately following each interview, I recorded reflective ethnographic notes that focussed on my personal

thoughts about the interview that included elements such as my “speculations, feelings, problems, ideas, hunches, impressions and prejudices” (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p. 121).

Each interview was recorded using an audio recorder and video camcorder. Interviews were recorded as audio files to enable me to later play the audio files on my computer for use in the transcription process. Videotape was used to observe participants’ body language as they recounted their life stories or emphasized particular moments/experiences. Such visual data also records information about the interview location and possible environmental or setting constraints such as “background noise, and institutional restrictions” (Shrum, Duque and Brown, 2005, p. 2).

Three participants chose to further discuss issues that emerged during the interview process on five separate occasions via electronic mail. These messages were collected as part of the ongoing narrative record (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990) and were used during the analysis and interpretation phases.

Data Analysis Procedures

Data was analyzed during the production of transcripts, within each narrator’s story using the narrative positioning technique as described by Bamberg (1997) and by locating themes across interviews to develop a coding list. The codes utilized to sort data in ATLAS.ti (qualitative data analysis software (QDAS)) will be presented and the benefits of using QDAS for the purposes of coding, sorting and analyzing data are also explained.

All interviews were transcribed by myself and careful attention was paid to include additional contextual information collected on tape, including tone and emotional responses (e.g., laughter), hesitations and silences by both the participants and myself as researcher. This

decision to include contextual information is reflective of my concern to meaningfully „re“-present (Green, Franquiz, and Dixon, 1997) the life stories of my participants. Initial investigation of data began during the transcription process because

Analysis takes place and understandings are derived through the process of constructing a transcript by listening and re-listening, viewing and re-viewing. . . . Transcription facilitates the close attention and the interpretive thinking that is needed to make sense of the data. (Lapadat & Lindsay, 1999, p. 82)

The transcription process not only aided in initial analysis of the data but, by being in charge of transcription decisions, a product (the transcript) resulted that had been shaped by my interpretive, analytical, and theoretical awareness and ultimately influenced further analysis of data (Tilley, 2003). As eloquently argued by Tilley (2003), “similar to the discovery of fingerprints, through dusting at the crime scene, a transcriber’s interpretive/analytical/theoretical prints become visible on close examination of the transcription process and the texts constructed” (Tilley, 2003, p. 3).

Each participant was sent their transcript via electronic mail and asked to review it and also if there was anything that they would like to remove from or add to their transcript. In some cases, comments were made on the transcripts that asked follow-up questions intended to clarify a comment(s) made during the interviews. Participants were asked to address such comments via electronic mail or telephone. Four out of seven teachers reviewed their transcript and in two cases participants added information to their transcript. Participants did not ask to have any information removed from their transcripts. Additional information and answers to follow-up questions were added to the transcripts for inclusion in the coding, sorting, and analysis phases of the research.

The interpretation of the narratives began by listening to the voices within each story and interview (Chase, 2005) and noting distinct emergent themes. When analyzing the transcripts, video data, and documents, I first employed Bamberg's (1997) method of narrative positioning that focuses on the narrator through three lenses:

How narrators position self and others (e.g., as protagonist, as antagonist, as victims, as perpetrators), how narrators position self in relation to the audience, and how narrators position themselves to themselves, that is construct an answer to the question „Who am I?“ (p. 337)

Following analysis *within* each narrative, I reviewed transcripts and video data in order to locate as many distinct emergent themes as possible that occurred *across* interviews. These initial themes, 73 in total, were then organized into groups that were utilized to generate the following master code list:

Master Code List

- 1. Knowledge of Indigeneity** – Teacher exhibits knowledge of Aboriginal worldviews, Aboriginal culture, Aboriginal history (national and local), and/or current Aboriginal issues and their relationship to demographic and educational achievement statistics. This category includes evidence of teacher exhibiting compassion as a result of knowledge of Aboriginal issues.
- 2. Personal Cultural Knowledge** – Teacher is aware of their own personal cultural background and is able to recognize their cultural position in society and the impact that this position has on his/her daily interactions

3. Understanding Relationships between Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal People –

Teacher understands the complex and shifting relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in terms of:

3.1 Colonization and Decolonization

3.2 Power Imbalances in Schools

3.3 Aboriginal Education vs. Multiculturalism

3.4 Racism

4. Understanding Impact of Residential Schools – Teacher understands the impact of residential schools on Aboriginal students, their families, and/or the greater Aboriginal community. This category also includes mention of specific strategies aimed at making the school a more welcoming environment for Aboriginal students and their families as well as healing that is occurring in schools as a direct (cultural and linguistic erasure, cultural conflict, poor self-concept) or indirect (abuse, lack of preparation for family and daily life) result of residential schools.

5. Understanding Aboriginal Cultural and Community Uniqueness – Teacher recognizes the diversity amongst Aboriginal students due to cultural and community differences. This category includes distinctions between urban Aboriginal students and Aboriginal students from remote communities, newly transitioning Aboriginal students and those students from remote communities that have been studying in Thunder Bay for over 1 year, and Aboriginal students from different communities. “Understanding Aboriginal Cultural and Community Uniqueness” also includes an understanding of issues that are specific to transition students (e.g. boarding in homes that are not

supportive of transition students, “culture shock” that accompanies living in an urban area, visiting community for a variety of reasons including funerals, harvest season)

6. Culturally Responsive Pedagogy¹⁰ – This category includes:

6.1 Finding out about students’ community and what they are interested in and

6.2 Utilizing this information to teach in a CR manner, despite often referring incorrectly to these teaching practices as “Aboriginal pedagogy” and/or “modified pedagogy for Aboriginal students”. Culturally responsive pedagogy is defined as education that uses:

...cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits for teaching them more effectively. It is based on the assumption that when academic knowledge and skills are situated within the lived experiences and frames of reference of students, they are more personally meaningful, have higher interest appeal, and are learned more easily and thoroughly. (Gay, 2002, p. 106)

7. Indigenous Knowledge (IK)/Aboriginal Issues/Aboriginal Perspectives in the classroom – Teacher incorporates IK/Aboriginal Issues/Aboriginal Perspectives into their lessons, despite often referring incorrectly to this knowledge as “culturally explicit content”. Examples include but are not limited to residential schools, treaty rights with a specific focus on land rights, and taxation. This category also includes teachers’ beliefs about the importance of incorporating IK/Aboriginal Issues/Aboriginal Perspectives for *all* students’ learning.

¹⁰ Teacher does not have to, and often does not, exhibit both 6.1 and 6.2.

- 8. Honouring Aboriginal Culture in Schools** – Teacher builds on/extends utilizing CR pedagogy and incorporating IK/Aboriginal Issues/Aboriginal Perspectives in their classroom by participating in rich learning projects that honour Aboriginal culture in their classrooms. Such tasks take place over an extended period of time and involve the teacher learning alongside/from their Aboriginal students. Examples include but are not limited to organizing a Pow Wow ceremony, conducting healing circles on an as-needed basis, and conducting weekly sharing circles to make important decisions about classroom dynamics/development.
- 9. Honouring Aboriginal Community in Schools** - Teacher builds on/extends utilizing CR pedagogy and incorporating IK/Aboriginal Issues/Aboriginal Perspectives in their classroom by inviting Aboriginal families and/or Elders in their classroom to share their knowledge with students. Examples include but are not limited to inviting Elders into the school to instruct students on the traditional procedure for conducting a Pow Wow ceremony, inviting Elders to open and close school ceremonies, inviting an Aboriginal parent in to the classroom to give a teaching on how band councils often elect members, and inviting recent Aboriginal graduates to mentor current Aboriginal students in career selection.
- 10. Urban Aboriginal Education Project (UAEP) Initiative(s)** - Teacher refers to an UAEP initiative(s) as instrumental in his/her engagement in UAE and personal decolonization. Initiatives include PD, Aboriginal resources in the school and special assignment teachers (SATs).
- 11. Challenges in Engaging in Aboriginal Education** – Teacher identifies a challenge(s) they face in engaging in UAE. Challenges include but are not limited to isolation they

face from their peers because of their beliefs and actions surrounding AE, motivating other teachers to engage in AE by following their examples, and limits to their engagement in AE as a result of standardized curriculum and the status quo definition of what a classroom should be in terms of their roles as teachers and traditional classroom structure.

Transcripts, additional information, and participants' answers to follow-up questions were then inputted into ATLAS.ti and coded by myself using the master code list. During the coding phase, I used the comment feature available in ATLAS.ti to comment on coded text (objects). These comments were eventually outputted together with the object they belonged to for use during the analysis and writing phases.

After coding was complete, outputs were generated by code across all seven transcripts. Frequency of codes can be determined by document, word frequency, list of variables and distribution per documents. This feature was used to analyze what each teacher discussed most often as well as which codes were most frequently used. ATLAS.ti allows for codes to be grouped together into code families which can be used to visualize coding schema (ATLAS.ti, n.d.). Utilizing this feature, I organized the 11 codes from the master code list into four code families that responded to the wholistic diagram for teaching teachers to teach First Nations Students (Figure 1) introduced in Chapter One: "What do teachers need to understand?", "What do teachers need to do?", "What do teachers need to honour?", and "What do teachers need to know?". These four code families were used to organize the presentation of teachers' stories in Chapter Five, Teachers' Narratives.

The Narratives

Selecting the narratives. Narratives selected for inclusion in Chapter 4, *Participant Profiles*, and Chapter 5, *Teachers' Narratives*, were chosen on the basis that they demonstrated evidence of deep awareness, sensitization and teacher decolonization. Teacher decolonization here includes perceptual shifts in teachers' thinking and awareness and/or decolonized actions that were demonstrable in teachers' stories. It is important to note that teacher decolonization does not have to, and in practice often did not, include a critical reflection or articulation of one's decolonized actions as the means of challenging systemic racism against Aboriginal peoples, often present in urban schools as a result of Eurocentrism.

Presenting the narratives. In this section, the intersubjectivity between the researcher's and narrators' voices that occurs when presenting narratives is briefly discussed. A supportive narrative researcher's voice is defined and the choice to utilize this narrative strategy as the medium to present my study's findings is explained.

Narrative researchers face complex challenges in their research as they become, through inviting and listening to their participants' narratives, uniquely woven into the foundation of the narrative process and the resultant life stories that are shared (Chase, 2005; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). In addition to participating in shared narrative construction, narrative researchers are also responsible for reconstructing an evolving life story that can be viewed as "a socially situated interactive performance – as produced in [a] particular setting, for [a] particular audience, for ... particular purposes" (Chase, 2005, p.657). Connelly and Clandinin (1990) identify narrative inquiry as a living, evolving, embodied process in which:

We are continually trying to give an account of the multiple levels (which are temporally continuous and socially interactive) at which the inquiry proceeds. The central task is evident when it is grasped that people are both living their stories in an ongoing experiential text and telling their stories in words as they reflect upon life and explain themselves to others. For the researcher, this is a portion of the complexity of narrative, because a life is also a matter of growth toward an imagined future and, therefore, involves retelling stories and attempts at reliving stories. A person is, at once, engaged in living, telling, retelling, and reliving stories (p. 4).

My research is grounded in a decolonizing framework (Mohanty, 2003; Smith, 1999) because decolonization of the non-Aboriginal subject is best understood as a subset of the global Indigenous project of decolonization focused on reclamation (Strong-Wilson, 2007). Decolonization is able to provide a set of strategies to address colonial practices and relations of structural domination for the non-Aboriginal teacher (Strong-Wilson, 2007). This set of strategies is required to make teacher education a site of transformation (Lopez, 2010). In an attempt to decolonize my research, I am choosing to present the life stories of seven non-Aboriginal teachers' engagement in AE by using a muted, supportive narrative voice. The goal of this type of narrative strategy is to bring the narrators' stories to the public by pushing the narrators' voice into the limelight (Chase, 2005). Although I acknowledge that the choices about how to transcribe the narrators' stories, which stories and parts of stories to include in this thesis, and how to edit and organize narratives into a text were made by me, the decision to include my participants in the transcription process and feature participants' voices in Chapter Five is a

deliberate act representative of my commitment to decolonizing the act of research itself by lessening the privilege and power I hold as researcher.

Chapter 4 – Participant Profiles

In this section, each participant is introduced by detailing highlights of their educational autobiography. Teachers' educational autobiographies included a variety of teaching experiences including volunteering as an educator in a third world country, teaching in remote "fly-in" Aboriginal communities (on-reserve) in Ontario and additional provinces, and teaching in rural "drive-in" Aboriginal communities (on-reserve) in Ontario. The impact that educational autobiographies had on preparing teachers to work with Aboriginal students in an urban environment was discussed in detail during all the interviews. Also in this section, I discuss how participants viewed themselves as teachers of urban Aboriginal students and the shifts in teachers' thinking and awareness of personal decolonization as they reflected on engaging in AE throughout their careers. As stated in Chapter One, I utilize the term decolonization to refer to the "critical self-reflexive political process in which one's colonized beliefs are explicitly pinpointed, challenged and countered by Indigenous worldviews and perspectives" (Korteweg, Gonzalez, & Guillet, 2010, p. 331).

John

John is a junior/intermediate teacher in the middle of his teaching career. After graduating from Carleton University, John pursued a career in acting and television broadcasting before coming to a career in teaching later in life. Following completion of a Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) degree at Lakehead University, John took a position as a grade 7/8 teacher in a remote, drive-in community in Northern Ontario. During our interview, John detailed some of the challenges he faced as a new teacher which resulted in him leaving his first teaching position half-way through the school year, "It was supposed to be a 7/8 class but it was really from SK

(senior kindergarten) to 8 in terms of their ability and what grade they were actually at. It was a lot of challenges and I think that sense of isolation, being away from my community, friends and family contributed [to my leaving].”

My time with John left me with the impression that he is a very humble man who is aware that he is part of a teaching community charged with working together to begin making changes to their practice; “I still feel I’m learning a lot [about AE]. At workshops there’s often presentations from teachers who have tried different things and that provides lots of really good resources and ideas. Things like that are really going to go a long way to help a teacher like myself who is in need of assistance.” Never once did I get the impression that John feels he is an expert or leader in AE. In fact, when I asked John to explain how he facilitates a Grade 5 classroom environment where students are engaged in learning about residential schools and also feel that they could grow, share, and discuss, he modestly answered,

I would say that the students here in this class or our school in general are fairly tolerant, open-minded, and have been with kids from other cultures. When I saw the way that they interact, that told me about their upbringing and their experience with the school system up until this grade.

John is also heavily involved in coaching at the schools as, “a [teacher/student] connection can be about things that they’re doing outside of school and I think that goes a long way for any teacher to ... have some awareness of what they do when they’re not in the school.”

John’s personal decolonization began during his first teaching position in a remote community. He admitted to me that prior to accepting that job, he had not thought a lot about how unusual it must be for Aboriginal students to learn about their culture from White teachers. John detailed how he relied on community support, particularly from Elders, to both ease his transition as a new teacher and to teach his students various cultural activities and traditions.

Community support and involvement is something that John continues to value in an urban setting. He spoke to me about how this support helps him introduce IK into his classroom despite not being an expert and move beyond a fear of discussing difficult topics (e.g. residential schools) with his students; “I feel comfortable in knowing that if I’m not really sure what to do, if I’m concerned what may come of something, I can talk about that first with colleagues or have a guest in. There are lots of resources available.” John identifies a recent transfer to an elementary school with a high Aboriginal population and attending PD workshops funded by the NOSB’s UAEP as pivotal events in his own ongoing decolonization.

Lindsay

Lindsay is an experienced, intermediate teacher who was raised in Toronto. She graduated with Honours in Psychology from the University of Waterloo, where her undergraduate work placed her in contact with elementary students. Enthused by the young students’ energy, she enrolled in teachers college at Nipissing University which she describes as “the goofiest experience in my life”. Fuelled by the discovery that her paternal grandmother was Métis (Lindsay adamantly self-identifies as non-Aboriginal), Lindsay took a teaching job in a remote fly-in Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) immediately after graduating from her B.Ed. program. After Lindsay’s third year of teaching in the far North community, she found herself at the crossroads of a major life decision. She shared with me questions that were running through her head,

Am I going to stay here in this very isolated place? Is this where my life is going to be taking me for a while? What am I doing here? I’m really identifying with this culture and the people very strongly and yet how long am I going to stay here?

Ultimately Lindsay decided to move to Thunder Bay and secured employment with a NOSB where she continues to work today.

Lindsay is passionately committed to social justice and tries to live all aspects of her life according to her beliefs. When I first contacted Lindsay, she expressed interest in meeting with me but informed me of her limited availability because she was organizing a charity walk for the poor and hungry children of Malawi at her school. She arrived for our interview and joked about having “helmet-head” from riding her bicycle and politely refused my offer of a drink and snack, citing that she was a vegetarian and had brought her own water in a reusable bottle. She is also the only participant in my research that questioned my criteria for selecting her to take part in my study. Throughout our communication, Lindsay exhibited the ability to be self-reflexive and openly and honestly shared with me mistakes that she has made along the way. In discussing with me her reasons for taking a teaching position in the North she stated:

I was driven to know more about this [Aboriginal culture and communities] and it seemed romantic and cool. Just like being a little kid again, it was an adventurous thing to do. I was going to go play at being „Indian“. I think in my mind in some way, that"s what I was going to do.

During her time as a teacher in the fly-in NAN community, Lindsay grew tremendously as a person and a teacher of Aboriginal students. In addition to gaining a deep respect for Aboriginal worldviews such as the concept of non-interference, Lindsay began to understand some of the issues facing Aboriginal communities such as the politics involved in education:

It seemed the Ministry [of Education] didn"t trust the community"s own district school board, so there was a middle man, a thing called the Umfraville District School Board that oversaw several communities that were out there in the North ... it seemed to me that the power ended up being concentrated there and that the school board had more limited powers than a school board would anywhere else ... So right from the start it became kind of clear that there was different treatment

of this school and this school board and the only reason that I can see for that is that it was Anishnawbe.

Lindsay, a fair woman with blond hair and blue eyes, was one of the few White people living in the remote NAN community during her tenure as an intermediate teacher. During this time, she experienced racism and sexual harassment as a result of, according to Lindsay, the colour of her skin. Lindsay explained how these experiences remain with her and continue to help her grow as an educator and person:

When I came back out of that community and I heard racist comments about Native people, I just became so much more aware of how much racism was in Thunder Bay...I had huge empathy because I thought that the [First Nation] kids and the adults in Thunder Bay must experience this all the time and even if it's not said outright to them, it's what people are thinking when they're dealing with them. So that for me was a big step. I am never going to treat the Aboriginal kids in my class like I think they're less than They are always going to be treated with respect.

Katie

Katie is an experienced secondary teacher who has taught a variety of subjects including science, social science, geography, English and history. She has also worked extensively in special education classrooms. Recently, Katie took on a new role as a Special Assignment Teacher (SAT) for one period of each school day. Katie told me that because she has never received a job description for the SAT position, she just does "what's best for the kids" and as a result "sometimes steps on the wrong toes." She detailed some of the ways she supports the Aboriginal students at her high school:

Sometimes it's a bus pass. Sometimes they want to tell you what's going on at home. I run a recreation night here every month and we have an after school program that I've set up through the Friendship Center. Most of the kids know that they can come and find me for food because I applied for grants and funding

for food and I just keep it stashed in different places ... They know that someone is on their side, on their team.

After graduating from Lakehead University with degrees in bio-medical anthropology and art history, Katie completed a B.Ed. program. Katie also took her first teaching position in a Northern fly-in community, Little Grand Rapids, Manitoba, where she lived and worked for 2 years before returning to Thunder Bay.

Having travelled extensively during high school, Katie developed an adaptable personality and ability to learn from her surroundings which enables her to thrive in new teaching situations. Katie explained how she got involved in community activities in the remote Aboriginal community and the response of her students:

The teachers that I was working with were all fairly laid back. We all lived together ... and we appreciated going out into the wilderness and the kids saw us trekking, fishing, and camping and they would follow along for a while ... I had great experiences. A lot of people hate living on the reserves but that was never the case for me. The only reason my husband and I moved back to Thunder Bay was because I was pregnant and there is nowhere to live if you don't have a job.

Katie's compassion towards her students is evident from the way she interacted with students in the hallway before our interviews and also from the stories that she shared during our meeting. Katie, affectionately known as "The Creeper" because of her omnipresence and monitoring of student activity, was nominated for a teaching award by her Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students. Katie organized an Aboriginal student focus group for the UAEP research study that included well over a dozen Aboriginal students, many of whom had already graduated but were willing to return to discuss how Katie had helped to engage them in schooling and learning.

Katie's decolonizing venture began during her time in the remote Aboriginal community. She narrated what she described as her "first big eye opener" when she delivered students' report

cards to their home. “I realized you can’t send kids home to do homework. They don’t have a table. There’s a row of mattresses because there’s no furniture. So don’t complain. Understand they come [to class and], they do what they can.” Katie explained how her early teaching experiences continue to affect her perceptions and practice:

When I’m talking to kids about their communities, I know...I don’t think very many teachers understand their reality...Like last week, there was a suicide and we happen to have 14 kids from the community here. So when kids tell me, “I’m going home for a funeral,” I get it, it’s just the way it has to go. Even if they weren’t close, that’s not the issue. A lot of the embedded values of the culture, I can see. I think that kids understand that I understand, so they are comfortable sharing that stuff with me rather than just skipping class.

Stephanie

Stephanie was born in the South Eastern United States. She attended public high school in Georgia and graduated with a degree in business from Georgia State University. Before moving to Canada and earning a B.Ed. from Lakehead University, Stephanie worked in federal law enforcement for 10 years. Stephanie, a primary, junior, and intermediate teacher relatively early into her teaching career, has recently begun a new administrative position within a NOSB. She is closely involved in the development and organization of UAEP-funded PD workshops focussed on engaging teachers in AE.

During our interview, Stephanie stated, “Education had always been important to me. I see it as a necessity for life, whether it’s a ticket up or out. I really firmly believe in it.” Her belief in education and commitment to life-long learning is evident in reviewing her educational autobiography. Stephanie is a specialist in Special Education and was also working on her Master of Education (M.Ed.) at the time of our interview. Since meeting with Stephanie she has completed her M.Ed. with a portfolio on CR assessment practices for Aboriginal students.

Stephanie credits M.Ed. courses and assignments for pushing her to investigate her early images of American Indians and how those images have molded her perceptions of Aboriginal peoples in Thunder Bay. In speaking about her first impressions of racism towards Aboriginal people in Thunder Bay, she stated,

I always found them [Indigenous peoples] interesting, artistic, and fascinating, that romanticised view, and I was surprised to discover that wasn't the way things were here [Thunder Bay]. So it was a big education curve for me to figure out why that was. I wanted to understand that better.

Stephanie also spoke to me about how AE teacher PD helped her to replace some of her personal touchstone stories. She vividly described a personal shift in understanding Aboriginal history in North America:

Sitting in the UAEP PD and just getting a history lesson was a really good start because my history lesson about Aboriginal people or American Indians was pretty much: the settlers came, the Indians and the settlers fought, the settlers won, the Indians got a reserve, they didn't treat them very well and now we love them and they have casinos. To come and hear another story was the first step to replace that history with a true background. It also helped me recognize some places where there were parallels that are glossed over in my own history of Aboriginal peoples. The idea that they were here for 10,000-12,000 years, those were replacement pieces that helped me think about ideas of original inhabitant and that sort of social construct. It wasn't the American Indian history but it was a real historical story and I was able to understand the treatment [of Aboriginal peoples], what happened, and how we got where we are.

Cheryl

Cheryl is an experienced, intermediate/senior teacher with practice teaching a variety of subjects in both elementary and secondary schools. After graduating from the B.Ed. program at Lakehead University, Cheryl's undergraduate work as a teaching assistant to children with special needs secured her a position as a special education teacher at a provincial high school located on Red Rock First Nation. In this role, Cheryl was responsible for helping students from a variety of communities, including Nipigon, Red Rock, Dorion, Hurkett, Rocky Bay, Lake

Helen and McDermott, transition from the elementary to secondary school system. Cheryl continued to work in Red Rock for 5 years as a special education and English teacher before taking a position as an English teacher with the NOSB.

During her term with the NOSB Cheryl has worked extensively with Aboriginal students in a variety of teaching roles including: teacher to students in Northern communities through distance education, teacher of locally developed English courses for secondary students who are achieving at a grade 4-6 English level, and, most recently, as the teacher facilitator for the pre-workplace program (PWP). As the teacher facilitator for the PWP, Cheryl teaches required courses to secondary students functioning at a grade 2-4 level, develops and manages their special education programs, and offers support services to other classroom teachers. Cheryl is extremely committed to supporting her students which is not only evidenced by reviewing her educational autobiography, but also by the fact that while working full-time she completed her specialist in special education and her M.Ed. with a focus on First Nations literature. Her passion was obvious when she spoke about planning a locally developed English course:

The transition was happening and no one had really spent any time on it. I said I wanted to do it and they were like, "Go for it!" I was very lucky to get to select the books and the resources and develop my own program from there.

Cheryl told me that she was fortunate enough to recognize early on in her career, as a result of her first teaching experience in Red Rock, that AE was an issue that she would need to address in her classroom. She identifies PD through the UAEP as the main recent support of her continued growth as a teacher of Aboriginal students. Cheryl explained how a knowledge component of a PD session helped her to clarify the difference between multicultural education and AE:

I learned not to treat Aboriginal education as an aspect of multiculturalism because it's not a culture that has come to Canada with immigrants. It's knowledge that you have, but this year I just really thought of it differently. It's about bringing in the foundation of Canada's culture. We don't really have that foundation in place. So when you look at what you're doing in a classroom, you can bring in all these neat strategies, all these resources but you have to have that value shift and that societal shift, "This is our culture! This is what it means to have a Canadian culture!"

Jane

Jane is a beginner secondary teacher who teaches a variety of social science courses including philosophy and geography. While studying political science with a focus on third world revolutions at McGill University, Jane took a job babysitting an 8-year old girl which ultimately changed the direction she was heading with her activism. Jane described how this interaction pushed her into teaching, "I just thought it was such a meaningful dialogue and that I could potentially effect a lot more change in the role of a teacher working with kids than in this silo of information. I needed to feel like I was doing something."

Jane self identifies as an anti-oppressive educator and clearly articulated her teaching philosophy, which is driven by the desire to teach students to think critically, during our interview:

My goals for teaching were always rooted in social justice and trying to poke critically at what needs to be challenged in this world. I feel like I was ripe for a teacher to turn my mind on to social justice issues and global issues but it never happened. When I went to McGill as an undergrad, all these people were exposed to all these ideas and I felt like I was from like the backwoods, like this small town bumpkin! So part of my motivation was also that I wanted to do a better job [for future students].

Jane values and attempts to incorporate IK and Aboriginal perspectives and issues in all of her courses, despite low Aboriginal enrolment in some courses such as philosophy:

I still try to bring Aboriginal teachings into my teaching as much as I can. I present my own decolonizing journey to my students to make sure that Aboriginal

perspectives and values are honoured in my classroom even in the absence, especially in the absence, of Aboriginal students.

Jane, a part-time M.Ed. student with a thesis focus on queer youth, credits graduate courses for pushing her to begin and continue her personal decolonization:

There was a lot of hard work that I had to do during the first year of my masters to come to terms with the fact that I am part of an institution that is oppressive for a lot of people, particularly Aboriginal youth. I remember this moment in a course where we were discussing if our schools had actually changed much from residential schools and I had a really emotional response. As a critical person, I can see how elements of that institution exist but to hear people that weren't working in schools saying, "Yeah our schools are very much like residential schools," hurt.

*I was just thinking, "Oh my god. I don't want to be a part of that." I had to pull apart that those elements **can and do** exist but I **can** choose to not be part of them. That has to do with me negotiating my own identity as a teacher. I had to learn to be part of a community and also be myself, which is someone that is critical.*

When I asked Jane how she negotiated her identity as a teacher teaching in a Eurocentric framework and an activist committed to social justice, she explained:

It requires being rigorously self-reflexive. You have to be willing to ask yourself tough questions. It basically results in me thinking a lot about small details and also thinking about ways that I can present or organize my own resistance to things.

Brenda

Brenda's 30 minute interview took place in her classroom during her lunch break. Due to limited time, I focussed on interview prompts that encouraged Brenda to speak about her interactions with her Aboriginal students in the classroom. Accordingly, I know very few details about Brenda's educational autobiography or personal decolonization.

Brenda is an experienced secondary teacher that teaches both social science and art courses. She was born and raised in Thunder Bay and completed both her undergraduate degree and B.Ed. from Lakehead University. Brenda spoke about how an increase in Aboriginal student population coupled with a focus on AE by the NOSB has helped shift her teaching practice despite being near the end of her career:

I'm learning about developing lessons from AE resources and utilizing those lessons to encourage and embrace Aboriginal culture. Civics and Career Studies are two areas where I've been able to utilize these pedagogical skills. They [Aboriginal students] are beginning to open up and talk about things that they have encountered and would like to see themselves participate in, in their communities.

In this chapter, each participant has been introduced with a focus on key educational and life experiences that have helped, and continue to help, shape each teacher both personally and professionally. In Chapter Five, Teachers' Narratives, teachers recount their stories of engaging in urban Aboriginal education. Narratives are presented according to the Anishnawbe-informed heuristic model (Figure 1): "What do teachers need to understand?", "What do teachers need to do?", "What do teachers need to honour?", and "What do teachers need to know?,".

Chapter 5: Teachers' Narratives

What Do Teachers Need to Understand?

Decolonization of the non-Aboriginal teacher involves multiple understandings of the complex relationships, historical, cultural, and political, between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples. During initial coding, I tried to organize non-Aboriginal teacher decolonization into a linear relationship that began with an understanding of one's own culture and developed into the ability to comprehend and confront complex issues such as racism and the privileging of Eurocentric thought and Western pedagogies in urban school systems. I reasoned that decolonization had to start with the individual because one must first understand their own perceptual horizon or worldview and how it has been shaped in order to identify their biases, prejudices, and racism when analyzing the interactions of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples.

In listening to the voices of the teacher-participants, I realized that decolonization of the non-Aboriginal teacher does not always start by looking at one's own culture and biography of relationships with Aboriginal peoples. Authentic, unstructured decolonization is a series of personal shifts that do not occur in a specific order. Rather, the teachers' life experiences presented them with lessons that changed their own perceptions of Aboriginal peoples. These experiences and consequential shifts in understanding should be viewed as simply that. The teachers I spoke to often referred to recent experiences that caused them to reflect on multiple aspects of their life. Decolonization is fluid; teachers move back and forth between new experiences and revisiting past encounters. Furthermore, when an aspect of a relationship (e.g. disconnect between remote and urban Aboriginal students as a result of some urban Aboriginal

students rejecting their Aboriginal culture) is observed/acknowledged, it does not necessarily mean the issue itself is understood (i.e. understanding of relationships between remote and urban Aboriginal students), nor does it mean a stage in decolonization has been completed by the non-Aboriginal teacher.

The teachers I interviewed have helped me realize that decolonization of the non-Aboriginal teacher is not a “project” with a marked end; it is a re-learning of one’s history, a reshaping of one’s touchstone stories (Strong-Wilson, 2007), the capacity to culturally respond by shifting their teaching identity, and the ability to re-image a future as a reconciling Canadian. Below, I present the stories of teachers exploring their relationships with Aboriginal peoples during their formative years, grappling with a power-imbalance that disadvantages Aboriginal students in urban school systems, understanding how racism towards Aboriginal peoples is perpetuated in Thunder Bay, beginning to recognize how negative effects of residential schools affect the students in their classroom, and identifying diversity amongst Aboriginal students based on their community and culture. These categories are not presented by order of importance and each story could fit into more than one category, including categories not mentioned in this thesis. The intention of this next section is to detail how non-Aboriginal teachers understand the processes of colonization and how their own worldview has been colonized.

Understanding biographies of relationships with Aboriginal peoples during formative years. Several teachers had reflected on their biography with Aboriginal peoples while paying particular attention to their formative years in order to seek an explanation for particular life choices they had made in the past as well as explain social phenomena. Lindsay received a gift from a friend who had saved, organized, and bound all of the e-mail messages she wrote him while she was teaching in a remote community. Of the messages in the book, Lindsay

said, “some of these [messages] make me cringe when I look back at them. I say, “Listen to me. I sound like such a jerk!” but it’s very authentic too.” Receiving this gift made Lindsay question why she was drawn to teach in an Aboriginal community. She was able to identify feelings of adventure associated with Aboriginal peoples stemming from childhood memories that may have propelled her to seek out a unique teaching experience:

The favourite game when we were kids was to pretend that we were Indians. That seemed very adventurous. We got our images of what Indians did through very stereotypical storybooks and television shows like Peter Pan. It seemed kind of romantic and dangerous and fun. Playing at being Indians meant that we could be free; that we could break free from any of the constraints of adult supervision.

I grew up thinking I didn’t know or hadn’t seen any real Indian people in Toronto. Now that’s impossible if I was living at Yonge and St. Clair. I had seen Native people but I just didn’t recognize them as such because they weren’t wearing feathers and banging tom toms. (Lindsay)

Similarly, Stephanie spoke of the presence of an “imaginary Indian” (Francis, 1992) during her childhood, an image that is still widely disseminated in pop culture today:

I don’t think I had contact with any of them [Indigenous people] directly. I think that some of my earliest experiences were with cowboys and Indians. Tonto was one of my favourite characters in The Lone Ranger. I found that growing up, American Indians were rather celebrated it seemed in our culture. They were a lot like the pirate figure with a sort of mythical attachment to them...To say that they figured in my regular psyche, they didn’t, they weren’t there. (Stephanie)

Vizenor (1998) explains that “The [I]ndians are the romantic absence of Natives...The [I]ndian is a simulation and loan word of dominance ... the [I]ndian is ... the other in a vast mirror” (p. 14, 35, 37). The “imaginary Indian” is appealing to non-Aboriginal people because it allows them access to an exotic world that does not require them to confront difficult colonial legacies or question their participation in neo-colonialism. I found the discourse used by both women in the statements above of particular interest. When both women were speaking about the “imaginary Indian” that figured during their formative years, they used the highly contested word “Indian”.

When connecting this image to their current thinking, however, more respectful terminology was used to describe Indigenous peoples such as Native people and American Indians.

Stephanie, an American-born woman, was perplexed by the racism she witnessed towards Aboriginal people when she first moved to Thunder Bay. As cited in her participant profile, Stephanie had grown up with the romantic perception of American Indians as artistic and mesmerizing and, consequently, did not associate the racism and marginalization she witnessed towards African Americans in her Southern home state with Aboriginal people. She had to look at the history of Indigenous people in the United States and how that history influenced her perception of Native Americans to make sense of her observations in Canada:

They [US government] were very effective at what they did. The reserves they placed American Indians on kept them very localized. You won't see Native Americans in a general population unless they've moved there and left behind their Native American status; out of sight, out of mind.

Once they leave the reserve, they don't have any special status and so there's not that inherent conflict in power or resources. They've contained them and kept them then from being a challenge to the colonial power structure.

And then you have the Indian Gaming Act which empowered them to place casinos on their property because it's federal property. From this they gained a measure of wealth in most communities and so and that wealth brought more wealth to the surrounding communities so they're seen as an asset, rather than a problem, an issue, a burden, or a conflict.

They [Indian reservations] have many of the systemic problems our Northern reserves [in Canada] have, but we just don't hear about it. It's just not part of our collective psyche as Americans. They're not present except in that Hollywood vision or in a gaming casino and then we don't have that internal conflict.
(Stephanie)

Jane, a native of Thunder Bay, offered an alternative story of growing up with a proximity to Aboriginal peoples as a result of her father's positive relationships with Aboriginal colleagues. She detailed how an awareness of Aboriginal people in her early life shaped the

values she continues to uphold as an anti-oppressive educator:

My dad was a forester and he used to run tree-planting camps in the North-West so my very first interactions with Aboriginal people were at tree-planting camps. When I would be out with my dad in the community, driving around, running errands, we would run into his tree-planters downtown and he would give them a ride.

I remember as a little girl feeling a bit strange that my dad was just grabbing these strangers and bringing them into the truck with us but he was certainly a very supportive person of the Aboriginal people that he knew...so I had proximity and awareness of Aboriginal people.

Along with that [awareness of Aboriginal people] came an awareness of racism, even when I didn't understand how those [racist] jokes were so damaging. I recall being with some cousins and one cousin was leading up to some kind of racist joke [about Aboriginal peoples] and my dad shut him down and I remember thinking, "We don't make those kinds of jokes. That's not okay" (Jane)

Revisiting their biographies with Aboriginal peoples, particularly during formative years, allowed the non-Aboriginal teachers I spoke with to attend to and learn from the biography of their relationship with Aboriginal people as suggested by Dion (2007). Unlike Dion's (2007) method for initiating a critical pedagogy of remembrance or Strong-Wilson's (2007) method for moving horizons, my participants did not use specific works from Aboriginal artists or counter-narratives, respectively, to juxtapose their memories. My participants did not actually require external sources to grasp the experiences of Aboriginal peoples; they only needed to look to their classrooms, their school, and their city.

Having drawn from their personal observations to develop a counter-story, I argue, better positioned the teacher- participants to avoid creating another type of imagined "Indian": one that attended a residential school in the past, or participates in a traditional ceremony in a far-off community. For example, in an email I received from Lindsay some months after our interview, she was able to immediately critique Dion's (2007) article that I had sent her, by identifying a fundamental flaw in her method:

Dion's idea of using artists to create a temporary "community" in order to access some Indigenous knowledge or perspectives is an interesting one, and perhaps the only practical one for her purposes, and I don't discount it as it seems to have led to some valuable insights for her students, but in some ways, it encourages another stereotype that is arising in our society - that of the Indian as gifted visual artist. "Real" Indians make moccasins, or do beadwork, or make necklaces, or paint, or carve.

If the only Native people worth paying attention to are the artists - the Pow Wow dancers, the painters, the singers, etc., then what of all the rest?

By focussing on the issues their Aboriginal students are dealing with in an urban setting (“the rest” as Lindsay refers to them) my teacher-participants are able to situate themselves inside the counter-story. They are able to imagine how they work towards resolving issues of racism and a systemic power imbalance in their schools that disadvantages Aboriginal students. These specific actions are discussed in the following section.

Understanding relationships: Power imbalance in schools. In the literature review, schools as larger systems that privilege students of Euro-Canadian heritage through favouring Eurocentric knowledge and pedagogies were discussed at length. The resultant power imbalance that disadvantages Aboriginal students who often communicate and learn in Indigenous ways and schools’ inability to honour that IK learning/communication style were observed and recognized by the teacher participants I interviewed. Stephanie spoke about her primary responsibility to attend to the structural and pedagogical Eurocentrism in her classroom:

As teachers, we really have to think about what the current power structure is and how it's inherent in everything that we do: how Eurocentrism is inherent in the way we line up, the way we structure a classroom, and the way in which we talk in a classroom. Those things really became important for me, to start paying attention to, because those are the keys.

We can put pictures up of Aboriginal people in our room and we can have Aboriginal art and we can have a book with Aboriginal kids in it but that's not where the underlying issue is. It's everything we say, our language, our images, the way we conduct ourselves, the way we socialize and teach. These become

issues because they are part of a system that's been this way for hundreds of years. We don't even recognize it anymore. (Stephanie)

Along the same lines, Jane spoke about her responsibility to acknowledge her privilege as a White educator and discussed the reflexive questions she asks herself, "to work to diminish that privilege and thereby work in respectful spaces and places" (Tompkins, 2002):

As a teacher, you need to think critically about who you are and the space you occupy in a room. How do you interact with people? How do you represent yourself? What do you appreciate as important? What do you value? How do you reflect those values to people?

I'm specifically thinking about the interactions I have as a White person of privilege with a position of power in a social institution, with Aboriginal students, their parents and their communities. Those interactions are here and if you're not thinking about them, then you don't see it. I hear other teachers say, "They're just sitting there with their hoods up and they're not talking," It's like, "No! That's not what it's about." (Jane)

Lindsay supports preferential hiring of Aboriginal teachers as a solution to decentralizing Western knowledge and pedagogies in urban school systems:

If we had Anishnawbe teachers in the school, we'd start modeling ourselves after them too. I think the only way to get this to break down is to get more Anishnawbe people involved in this [schooling] system and in all systems. That is what is going to break down these power structures. Get them in there and let it piss off White people for a while. (Lindsay)

Her comment speaks to the type of White resistance specific to affirmative action explained by Schick (2000), "White people in Canada are generally unaware of instances in which they may be rejected because of their Whiteness and find their rejection especially unfair if...they have made some effort to make themselves knowledgeable about race issues" (p. 93).

For teachers working towards modifying their practices, acknowledging the presence of a power imbalance in schools and understanding how this imbalance is perpetuated through Eurocentrism, White privilege, and structural elements such as hiring practices is a positive step.

Such an understanding is instrumental in actively diminishing privilege in their classrooms and advocating for change on a systemic level.

Understanding relationships: Racism. The effective non-Aboriginal teachers of Aboriginal students that I interviewed were able to identify instances of racism against Aboriginal peoples in Thunder Bay as well as understand the complexity that surrounds this issue. Jane spoke about the ability people possess to sympathize with victims of racism that occurs in places other than Thunder Bay and the ease with which people pass judgement on the perpetrators of such crimes:

It [racism in Thunder Bay] breaks my heart. I just want so much more for this place than that. It's hugdy segregated...I want to encourage kids to have a global awareness but I feel like it's a lot easier for pøple to have empathy for minoritized or racialized communities in places other than in our own because on the ground it's ugly

*On the ground, it's getting beat up at the end of the school day, that's what it looks like. In my opinion that's what's happening everywhere but some people are able to romanticize those problems by looking elsewhere and saying, "Oh my God, how could that ever happen?" Well if somebody looked at us, they would say, "How can **that** happen?" (Jane)*

Katie shared with me the resistance she was met with from White students when she showed a film in class that documented an anti-racism workshop held in Saskatchewan:

*It is hard [to address issues of race in the classroom]. I even struggled last week. In my grade 11 Native Studies course, I have quite a few students who are non-Native and we were watching *Indecently Exposed!* which highlights racism in Canada against Aboriginal people. Many of the students were very agitated because of the movie. It kind of ticked me off a bit because I find when the non-Native kids get more vocal, the Native kids will get less vocal. The non-Native kids were like, "Well you're just picking on White people in this movie." And I was like, "You're not getting it." (Katie)*

Katie's White students, like Schick's (2000) pre-service teacher participants, expressed surprise and annoyance when they experienced feelings of guilt because of their skin colour.

Schick (2000) explains that “they are indignant that their guilt comes from being [W]hite, and they suggest that such associations between skin colour and complicity are statements of discriminations based on racialisation” (p. 92). Katie’s frustration arose from the fact that as a result of such indignation, the lesson’s focus shifted away from presenting students with a perspective that is often disregarded in the classroom (i.e. the stories of Aboriginal peoples’ experiences with racism in Canada) and halted an important learning opportunity for White students to consider privilege/prejudice in their daily lives and Aboriginal students (and/or members of other marginalized groups) to share their personal experiences with discrimination.

Similar to acknowledging the presence of a power imbalance in schools, acknowledging that racism is also occurring in schools and understanding how non-Aboriginal people resist their implicit roles in demonstrating and perpetuating racism against Aboriginal peoples are key to effective educators structuring their teaching to combat racism in schools.

Understanding current impacts of residential schools. Kirkness (1999) declares that the residential school legacy “is a dark period in the history of Indian education, the repercussions of which continue to be felt today. The weakening of Indian society as a whole can be attributed to boarding schools” (p. 16). Far too often in urban schools, colonization and residential schools are distanced/relegated as past history and not part of the present. Indigenous scholars (Adams, 2000; Battiste, 1998, 2005; Smith, 1999) remind us that it is crucial to remember that neo-colonialism to this day is very present and active in the legacies and current actions of the colonizers. The teachers I spoke with heeded this alert and understood that their students’ families have probably been impacted by residential schools and, accordingly, special care should be taken by teachers and school administration to make schools a more welcoming environment:

I am more aware of that [making a connection with students] now with Aboriginal students. Trying to make a connection goes a long way with an Aboriginal student, or any student for the most part, but particularly with Aboriginal students because I know about the background that many Aboriginal students come from in terms of their relatives and ancestors for whom school hasn't been a pleasant experience for very many reasons. (John)

Similarly, Jane spoke about a discussion that occurred in her classroom that left her shocked by the proximity of the residential school legacy to the Aboriginal students she was responsible for teaching:

When the reparation payments came out for residential schools a couple of years ago, a student in my class came in and said, "I got this sweet new iPod!" I responded, "Oh yeah, how?" The student said, "My grandpa got it for me cause he got his residential school cheque." Another kid piped up and said, "Oh what is that?" And he said, "Oh well my grandmas and my grandpas and my aunties all went there [residential school] and they got raped and beat up and stuff so they get this money."

And that's an amazing thing to say, that he was so blunt. I don't understand how people in education can hang onto that prejudice [the denial of current impacts of residential schools on Aboriginal students and their families] because it is so near to us and we have the opportunity to do something about it. (Jane)

Moreover, these teachers understood that for far too long education has been a negative experience for a large proportion of Aboriginal students. They were clear in stating the immediate need for dramatic change in how we deliver education to Aboriginal students:

If you[teacher] mess up [a student] in grade 1, you can mess up a child's life for good. I can point to residential schools and say, "There's a perfect example." If you mess this [teaching] up from the beginning, you can never get it back. Statistics will tell you the stories.

I knew that I had to get it right and there was a sense of urgency. I knew it was the teacher that cared that turned all those lives around. I thought if this [caring] is the first step then I can do that. I wasn't satisfied with what I was doing. If I mess up then I'm responsible in the end and I just didn't want to be. (Stephanie)

In understanding that residential schools are very much a part of Canada's present schooling, teachers can begin to recognize how the consequences of this educational travesty

continue to affect their students and live on in schools. This acknowledgement is a constructive step in teachers enacting changes that make their classroom and school a more positive learning space and welcoming place for Aboriginal students and for their families to support them in their schooling.

Understanding Aboriginal cultural and community uniqueness. Often, Indigenous education strategies group all Aboriginal students together and present a framework and set of goals that do not account for differences in history, culture, language and demographics of Aboriginal peoples in Canada (Association of Canadian Deans of Education, 2010; Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007). The heuristic model for teaching teachers to teach First Nations students (Figure 1) reminds teachers to take into account the breadth of diversity amongst Aboriginal learners as a result of community and cultural uniqueness.

Out of the seven teachers I interviewed, Cheryl, in particular, articulated distinctions between her Aboriginal students based on the communities they call home and the languages and cultures specific to those communities. She reasoned that her ability to identify such differences between Aboriginal students is because of the close relationship she has with students from remote communities that are often placed in the pre-workplace program (PWP) that she teaches. These “remote” students provide Cheryl the motivation and rewards of honing her teaching talents:

I'm kind of good with the underdog. I've taught your athletes. I've taught your academics. And I've never really felt super successful with those students because they're demotivated. They're going to be successful. A lot of the students I teach, they're hard to teach sometimes, other people don't want to teach them sometimes because it really challenges your skills. A lot of the kids that I teach, the fact that they're there every day is a sign of success. (Cheryl)

Cheryl discussed the enormous transition that students from Northern communities must make when they move from their small, remote communities to an urban area in order to pursue secondary education. She explained that these Aboriginal students, often informally referred to as “transitional” students, when ready, were more likely to share information about their Aboriginal culture than urban Aboriginal students:

I find that I can go to the “transitional” students easier and ask them questions to understand things. They’re more willing to take the time and share ideas and they won’t necessarily do it as part of a large class but if I talk to them one-on-one they will share...Once that door has been opened, it’s a much stronger relationship that you have with that student. There’s less of that teenage attitude. It’s easier to get to know those students once they’re ready to share that information. (Cheryl)

Cheryl also noted that “transition” students tended to be more mature than other students their age as a result of leaving home to attend school in their early teens:

And [there’s] a different maturity level. I think when you’re coming hundreds of miles from your own community that forces you to grow up. Some end up in very supportive environments and then you hear others aren’t in very supportive homes and will end up looking after younger siblings or younger cousins. So there’s a different maturity and a different awareness of the world around them. (Cheryl)

Cheryl spoke about what she identified as a negative relationship between Aboriginal students from remote communities and urban Aboriginal students:

In some ways, there’s a different degree of confidence with the urban Aboriginal students. They know their way around town. For the students that are coming to Thunder Bay from remote communities, it takes much longer for them to be comfortable talking, sharing things. They tend to be a much more separate group I find. They keep to themselves and stay close with family members or friends from the community. Even if you try to do group work within a class, they won’t They’ll just remain separate. Where for the other [urban] Aboriginal students, it’s not necessarily that big of a deal. They’ll voice their opinions a bit more.

I don’t necessarily see a lot of interaction between them [remote Aboriginal students and urban Aboriginal students]. I have had a few [remote Aboriginal] students that have

come up and said, "I don't want to work with this student," and they're identifying urban students because they feel disconnected to them. With some of the urban Aboriginal students, there's less of a desire to be recognized as Aboriginal. Some [remote Aboriginal students] are like, "Learn about it [your culture]," where others [remote Aboriginal students] don't want to be associated with those [urban] students, sort of a, "Well why are you embarrassed? Why don't you want to know?" (Cheryl)

Cheryl also noted that not all Aboriginal students want to be involved in their culture which is a common misconception held by non-Aboriginal teachers of Aboriginal students (Korteweg et al, 2010):

There's also different degrees of how involved Aboriginal students want to be with their culture because I've seen some that have been very, very involved and very proud of it and others it's just "I'm a teenager and I don't necessarily want to be involved in these activities." They don't seem to have that same kind of connection. (Cheryl)

Cheryl's stories clearly point to the need for teachers to be aware of Aboriginal student uniqueness based on their community and the language and culture specific to that community. In accounting for distinctions between Aboriginal students, non-Aboriginal teachers can better position themselves to assist students in dealing with daily issues/challenges, structure their lessons/classrooms, and learn from their students about their communities and what their Indigeneity means to them.

Section summary. In this section, effective non-Aboriginal teacher understandings of the complex relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people have been explored in terms of focussing on teacher perceptions of Aboriginal peoples shaped during formative years, systemic power and privilege (or lack thereof) in urban education, racism against Aboriginal people, the effects of the residential school legacy on Aboriginal students and their families felt today, and understanding distinctions between groups of Aboriginal peoples. It is important to highlight that the teacher-participants did not all understand the same aspects of the relationships presented above, nor did they necessarily understand all aspects of a relationship or all

relationships. Authentic, unstructured decolonization of the non-Aboriginal teacher is a series of shifts in understanding that result in the non-Aboriginal teacher being able to see the various ways colonization has shaped, and continues to shape, their perceptual horizon. By seeking out knowledge of Indigeneity and understanding aspects of relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, teachers become prepared to make changes in their classrooms that make education more equitable and accessible for Aboriginal students and their families, which will be discussed in the next section, “What do teachers need to do?”.

What Do Teachers Need to Do?

In the previous section, “What do teachers need to understand?”, the concept of teachers inserting themselves into the counter-narrative (Strong-Wilson, 2007) was introduced. This concept builds on the processes suggested by Dion (2007) and Strong-Wilson (2007), who work to shift the horizons of non-Aboriginal teachers by exposing them to “temporary” communities of Aboriginal peoples through art and literature, respectively. The teachers in this study were observing and writing their own counter-narratives inspired by their personal and professional interactions with Aboriginal peoples.

In this section, “What do teachers need to do?”, I argue that non-Aboriginal teacher decolonization should not stop once the “molded images” or “touchstones” of non-Aboriginal teachers have been replaced with counter-stories, regardless of the proximity of the counter-stories to their lives. This replacement, in itself, is not a sufficient condition for decolonization. Menzies (2004) states that, “a commitment to truly decolonized research must be more than fine words: it must be an act and demonstrable in practice” (p. 17). In this study, teacher commitment was demonstrable in educational practice. Non-Aboriginal teacher decolonization needs to reach a level of action; teachers must resist Eurocentrism and the systemic racism of schools against

Aboriginal students in order to achieve the goals of the global Indigenous project of decolonization to be considered a subset.

Smith (2005) describes the larger project of decolonization by and for Indigenous people as one that, “involves the unmasking and deconstruction of imperialism, and its aspects of colonialism, in its old and new formations alongside a search for sovereignty; for reclamation of knowledge, language and culture; and for the social transformation of the colonial relations between the native and the settler” (p. 88). The non-Aboriginal participants of this study are attending to some of the multiple goals described by Smith through incorporating IK, Aboriginal perspectives, and Aboriginal issues into their classroom and by teaching in an approach that is CR.

In this section, I explore accounts of my participants striving to transform urban education to make it more responsive, inclusive, and equitable to Aboriginal students and families.

Do: Indigenous knowledge (IK)/Aboriginal issues/Aboriginal perspectives in the classroom. All teachers I spoke with worked hard to include IK, Aboriginal issues, and Aboriginal perspectives in the classroom because they believed that this knowledge was important for *all* students to learn. Stephanie, however, beautifully articulates the significance of incorporating this knowledge for Aboriginal students:

Our very structure of schooling is set up to marginalize certain populations and it's not only Indigenous people, but they're one of the largest sufferers. There is certainly no end to the value in people seeing themselves reflected in what they're taught. When they see themselves, their models, their writing, then they understand that their culture, their heritage, their history, their language has value. You can't replace that.

In fact, if you look at any colonization efforts the first thing they do is get rid of

the literature and the art. They get rid of the language. That's really important to kill those pieces because you can't have the power if those continue. So bringing those back [is crucial] so that students know that are valued in our curriculum, that they are seen in our schools. (Stephanie)

Teachers talked about the importance of finding resources with which they were comfortable for introducing and integrating IK, Aboriginal issues, and Aboriginal perspectives into their classrooms. Lindsay uses film to introduce the topic of residential schools in her intermediate classroom and spoke about the film's ability to reach non-Aboriginal students and Aboriginal students in different ways:

The movie "Where the Spirit Lives" is very helpful for that [discussing residential schools in the classroom] because the White kids have a lot of sympathy and empathy and understanding when they see that movie. They're like, "Whoa, this really happened?" I say, "Yeah for generations."

It must be hard for the Anishnawbe kids to watch that and yet they respond really well to it, like they are riveted, they are really interested in this. They're heard about residential schools and they want to know more but sometimes their parents and grandparents don't want to talk about it. So that issue doesn't scare me anymore because I found a tool that works. But for others [Aboriginal issues], I'm still working on and trying to find out what works, what doesn't, what won't offend, what won't result in hurtful comments being made. (Lindsay)

Cheryl made it very clear that she works hard to appreciate different elements of IK and a variety of Aboriginal issues and Aboriginal perspectives in her lessons. Accordingly, she seeks out resources that contain less obvious elements of Indigeneity (compared with topics such as residential school, land rights and/or taxation for example) to enable her to present this knowledge in her classroom more organically. Moreover, she has found that students are better able to learn about Indigeneity when they do not have predetermined opinions about a topic:

When I'm looking at pieces of literature, I'm looking for philosophical teachings in the books. One of the novels I did this year was "Touching Spirit Bear". There are two characters, Garvey and Edwin. Edwin's an Elder and Garvey is a probation officer. And we were able to talk about the two characters and what has shaped them and how this experience of participating in circle justice has

influenced them. So we talked about it from the standpoint, "If you were a victim of a crime, would you want to participate in a process like circle justice?" A lot of initial responses were, "No. If you commit a crime you deserve to be punished."

So we did some research on where the idea of circle justice came from, what shaped it, why the circle is important. And then, we went back after the main character had been through his process and a lot of the feelings about circle justice had changed because the students understood better what the process was trying to do. So, it's finding pieces that can bring that type of rich discussion in. We were able to discuss it [circle justice] without people bringing pre-conceived ideas about the process to the table. (Cheryl)

Similarly, Cheryl uses literature that allows students to juxtapose non-Aboriginal people and European cultural elements with Aboriginal peoples and Aboriginal cultural elements. Her aim is that students, non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal alike, can view similarities, much in the way that Dion (2007) assists her graduate students in doing the same:

In a grade 11 class, we did Keeper "n Me [featuring an Ojibway protagonist] and Crabbe. They both have male protagonists that are about the same age, going through the final stage of adolescence into adulthood. Both are dealing with challenges that are cultural. I was able to say, "These are just 2 teenagers going through adolescence. Look at what has affected them. Look at what has shaped them." In English class it's easy to do some of that cause you can make some of those humanitarian comparisons. (Cheryl)

Lindsay told a story of how she framed a political discussion about racism in her classroom to give students the opportunity to "re-conceptualize themselves as citizens," by stating "important social and political issues that affect their lives" (Giroux, 1998, p. 31):

One day, the former mayor made a public statement, saying that our city didn't have a problem with racism. I had a class with several Anishnawbe students in it and I put it [the article] up on the overhead, and asked "Do you think he's right?"

...And it [stories of racism] just started coming out...and I said, "So overall, do we agree or disagree with this statement made by the mayor?" And they disagreed, so they decided to write letters to the mayor.

They got into it and they all wrote letters to the mayor and they described, some of the girls in particular, really described their experiences. And they wrote that they didn't like that he said there was no racism. The language can be really simple.

Anyway, every kid got a response but it was a form letter. He wrote one letter and the same letter came to each kid. So, we talked about why people might use a form letter and whether they felt that they'd bēn listened to with this letter. And they didn't really. (Lindsay)

Lindsay's willingness to embrace the students' decision to write letters to the mayor and flexibility in adapting her lesson to include a discussion about form letters is representative of a pedagogy that is CR; one that uses "the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits for teaching them more effectively" (Gay, 2002, p. 106). Examples of additional CR methods of teaching delivered by research participants are discussed in the following sub-section.

Do: Culturally responsive pedagogy. Through acquiring knowledge of Indigeneity and understanding aspects of the complex relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students, effective non-Aboriginal teachers of Aboriginal students are modifying their pedagogy to include the lived experiences and frames of reference of their Aboriginal students. Lindsay recounted how she uses a sharing circle, a traditional Indigenous model, weekly with her students to assist them in navigating various challenges:

Students need to have some feeling of, "This is our space and this is how we want to be in it and how can we affect that in positive ways?" So we have class meetings every week and we sit in a circle and it's for discussing, suggesting or dealing with problems. Everyone is listened to equally and nobody's opinion necessarily has more weight than another's, including mine.

I take the role of secretary and the kids take the role of leading the class meeting. I still find a lot of the decision making they want to fall to me. They are used to that so they direct a lot of things to me. Unless I actually sit back and refuse to say anything and look at the class meeting leader, it just naturally falls to me. That's tough for me to do, to just sit back and say nothing, but that's a little step and thing that I can do. (Lindsay)

Upon discovering she was not reaching some of her Aboriginal students by using a

Eurocentric teaching model based on the conduit metaphor¹¹ (Reddy, 1993), Stephanie began incorporating modeling into her lessons and reported great success as a result of this shift in her mode of delivery:

I started to understand that the stand up and deliver wasn't going to work [with some of my Aboriginal students] so I became a huge fan of modeling, I do, I do, I do, and then maybe we'll do together and then if you need me, I'll do some more.

I find my Aboriginal boys particularly need to have a place to start. I had some of my Aboriginal girls in particular who had great oral skills. They could talk and tell you what they were doing but when it came to the writing piece, it just fell apart. What would happen was they just wouldn't do it.

So I started giving them that model and saying, "If you just fill in the word here..." and then they have something. That to me was a direct targeting of my Aboriginal children, modeling. It works for everybody though, it's good teaching practices. (Stephanie)

Similarly, Stephanie realized that tests were not aiding in assessing students' growth nor were they acting as a motivator. Accordingly, she developed a completely new model for assessing students based on transparency and communication that was able to reach her Aboriginal students and their families:

I almost never give tests which freaks parents out at the beginning of the year. It's not a guessing game though. That's a construct of Western education. Parents say, "What do you mean? Why didn't my kid have a math test?" and I respond "Because we worked through a unit problem and let me show you where your child is. This is how far they got or this is the strategy that they used in the unit problem and this is the strategy the curriculum expectations expect."

I did not want children to get that piece of paper back and say, "Oh look, I got another 1+," [and see the comment] "Try harder next time," anymore. I wanted it [assessment] to be useful so I had to step out of the grade model, the rubric model and communicate to them the specific things they needed to do.

There's a model on the wall of the expectations, everybody's got it in their book and I talk about it with them. And then when they give me their piece of work, we work together. We workshop it. I give feedback, "Have we looked at this

¹¹ The conduit metaphor assumes that learning requires a conduit, a school to distill, decipher, and deliver pure, subjugated knowledge to the recipient, the student (Reddy, 1993).

expectation? Here's where we need to go next."

*I knew that it was really important that kids understood that everybody starts somewhere. We all are moving and we're just moving at different paces. I didn't want them to quit because they keep getting the same message [of failure].
(Stephanie)*

After working closely with Aboriginal students with special needs, Cheryl began to notice that asking some Aboriginal students questions "on the spot" was causing tremendous anxiety in her classroom. She also noted that some Aboriginal students' ideas were not transferring well from an oral to written medium. Cheryl shared the modifications she utilizes in her classroom to make education more accessible to the Aboriginal students struggling with these two difficulties or gaps:

I allow choice. I make it known to a class that if they don't want to participate orally or whatever, they have that choice. I had a student that raised his hand recently for the first time all semester and I asked him what he wanted to share and he shook his head no. So I went over and he discussed with me and then I reported to the class what it was he wanted the class to know.

I also give mini homework assignments. I'll say, "Tomorrow we're retalking about this. I want you to go home and think about it because tomorrow I am going to expect 4 or 5 ideas." It seems to reduce anxiety a lot.

You need to be flexible with timelines and criteria for assignments. Sometimes I'll say, "You do the thinking and the talking and I'll write." Then I write down their ideas point-form to prompt them through the thought process and then say, "Okay now you need to turn it into the sentences and the sentences into paragraphs." That's one of things that we've talked about a lot at my school, how much do you accommodate the writing? A lot of the times the ideas are there and they're advanced but in transferring it to paper, it's not the same. (Cheryl)

Section summary. By incorporating IK, Aboriginal perspectives, and Aboriginal issues as well as delivering education that is CR, the non-Aboriginal teachers I interviewed are focusing on achieving some of the goals of the global Indigenous project of decolonization as described by Smith (1999; 2005). These goals include breaking down aspects of colonialism in the school system, presenting opportunities for Aboriginal students to reclaim their knowledge and working

to transform relations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people that have been corrupted as a result of colonial relations. The following section will focus on how these same teachers are working towards reclamation for Aboriginal students by honouring aspects of Aboriginal culture and Aboriginal communities in schools.

What Do Teachers Need to Honour?

Analogous to the previous section, “What do teachers need to do?”, this segment of the research findings will focus on how teacher participants are working towards honouring a variety of aspects of Aboriginal cultures and Aboriginal communities in their schools. “What do teachers need to honour?” will not be divided into subcategories because it was communicated as a wholistic approach where categorizing the honouring would not express the full circle. These actions also focus on achieving some of the goals of decolonization as specified by Smith (2005) in the previous section, namely presenting Aboriginal students with an opportunity to reclaim their knowledge, language and culture as well as facilitating positive relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples.

Brenda spoke to me about a unique CR unit she has developed for use in her Career Studies course that not only involves Aboriginal students in working to improve their own communities, but also in creating exemplars that can be used in years to come to mentor and inspire future Aboriginal students:

Working one-on-one, we gather pertinent information about their lives and their communities that will further aid in producing relevant materials they can utilize. They do not hesitate to share their aspirations and goals for themselves and their communities.

For his final project in Civics, a student wrote his letter of concern about a local issue in his own community. He wanted to implement a plan to help the children in his own community by leading various types of events for students and providing them with an opportunity for community involvement. He believed this would help improve his living conditions back home. Having exemplars such as

*this for future Aboriginal students to build on their own ideas is a positive step.
(Brenda)*

Similarly, Katie discussed how she honours Aboriginal culture in school by learning from her students, which she views as a valuable, and often underrated, resource from which to learn about aspects of Indigeneity:

We went to the Anishnawbe art gallery and I was talking to the [non-Aboriginal] teacher as we were walking and I gave her a tobacco tie and she said, "Well, what do I have to do with it?" And I said, "I don't know. We're surrounded by Native kids, let's ask them." The First Nations students are the experts in their culture.

So the teacher asked the students and the kids lectured her and then they quizzed her the whole way and it was a learning opportunity for them. They got into their own little squabbles about, "In my community, we do this," and "In my community, we do this." That's learning and I'd like to see more of that happen; where, as teachers, we're not so unwilling to learn from each other or unwilling to learn from the kids. (Katie)

John discussed the many ways that Aboriginal cultures and peoples are honoured in his school, including offering an extra-curricular activity that highlights Aboriginal culture as an alternative to conventional sporting and academic extra-curricular activities:

Through the UAS¹², there's a woman that works out of our school and she's doing an after school program and she's also available during the day. After school, we have a drumming group once a week that comes in and they're [Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students] learning drumming. So, in addition to just the traditional sports and things like that, there's other things available to the students so I think that's helpful.

It's a small school and there is a sense of community. A lot of the community members do come to our school for various functions [John later mentioned a Pow Wow and several traditional feasts]. So, having had a chance to connect with them, sometimes it's just on an informal basis, is important. In one case, I had a parent come in and speak to the class about his experiences and do a little activity with the students. So some things are more available at our school than in some of the other schools that I have taught at. I know the current principal that we

¹² Urban Aboriginal Strategy which focuses on improving the lives of Aboriginal peoples living in urban centres (Thunder Bay Urban Aboriginal Strategy, n.d.)

have has done a lot in terms of building that sense of community and making those contacts. (John)

Katie shared her initial hesitation, as a result of being non-Aboriginal, to organize a Pow Wow and, accordingly, how she reached out to the Aboriginal community, who embraced the project. She also recognized how the Aboriginal community welcomed her into their community and guided her through her own learning journey of what is respectful of protocol and IK in schools:

Last year the kids wanted a Pow Wow in terms of an activity and I was very concerned about doing things wrong. I told the kids "If we're not doing things 100% right, we're not doing it." So we had the Elders into the classroom and they talked about the ceremony. My student's dad is a Pow Wow organizer so he came in and walked us through the protocol and showed us where things should be.

So then when I had it in my mind what things should look like, I had 2 Elders that helped. I asked them, "Are we doing it right? And am I missing anything?" I think that they respected that I asked rather than just forged on ahead and dealt with the consequences [of not following traditional protocol] later on.

I think it went fabulous; the kids did such an amazing job on it. I had my own learning journey to go through and the kids knew that too. A lot of those kids had never been on any sort of Pow Wow committee. They'd bæn to a Pow Wow but had never been on a committee. We were learning together and I think that they respected that. (Katie)

An article was recently written in a local newspaper about how Jane included and honoured voices of Aboriginal peoples in her history and civics classes by inviting an Aboriginal guest speaker to speak with her students. In the article, the guest speaker explained that younger generations probably heard about conflicts like Ipperwash, Oka, and Caledonia, but did not understand why First Nation peoples are involved in fighting with non-Aboriginal governments and communities. His presentation focussed on how First Nation peoples have asserted their right to self-governance.

Jane explained her commitment to incorporating different viewpoints in her classroom, "I

try to teach my courses by looking at many different perspectives so they can understand the world, politics, government and history. We need to understand all those different narratives and perspectives, and guest speakers enrich our understanding of Canadian history.”

Section summary. In honouring aspects of Aboriginal cultures and Aboriginal community members in schools, teachers and students enter into mutual exchanges with the numerous people and beings with whom they share the Earth. At the heart of these exchanges, Castellano (2004) explains, is the Aboriginal ethic that “all aspects of the world we know have life and spirit that humans have an obligation to learn the rules of relating to with respect” (p. 104). Teachers and students have the opportunity to learn through experience that an exchange “confirms a relationship that continues beyond the time and place of the exchange” in honouring. By acknowledging the contribution of IK and IK knowledge holders in the curriculum, these teachers were honouring the principal that, “knowledge is not a commodity that can be purchased and exploited at will” (p. 104.). In the following section, these authentic ways that teachers were able to collect knowledge of Indigeneity will be explored.

What Do Teachers Need to Know?

In this section, teacher narratives will be used to illustrate some of the knowledge of Indigeneity possessed by effective non-Aboriginal teachers of Aboriginal students. Knowledge of Indigeneity will be presented in four categories drawn from the heuristic model for teaching teachers to teach First Nations students (Figure 1): Knowledge of Aboriginal Worldviews, Knowledge of Aboriginal Cultures, Knowledge of Aboriginal History and Knowledge of Aboriginal Issues. It is not my intention to consolidate the diverse and interconnected worldviews, cultures, histories, and issues of Indigenous peoples into fixed categories, rather, I am presenting the knowledge of my participants as they communicated it to me at the time of the

interview. I acknowledge that, as non-Aboriginal teachers, it may be impossible for participants to fully grasp knowledge of Indigeneity. Similarly, as a non-Aboriginal researcher, it may be difficult for me to present knowledge of Indigeneity in a manner that honours all Indigenous peoples.

The non-Aboriginal teacher participants' knowledge of Indigeneity is largely derived from close relationships with Aboriginal peoples that developed in a variety of situations. Four out of seven (4/7) non-Aboriginal teachers interviewed have lived and worked in Northern communities for extended periods of time (6 months – 5 years). Moreover, five out of seven (5/7) participants were born and raised in Thunder Bay which has an Aboriginal population of approximately 8% (Statistics Canada, 2006). Finally, all teachers have more than average experience working with Aboriginal youth, the fastest growing population in Thunder Bay (Statistics Canada, 2006). Though these non-Aboriginal teachers are not “members” of an IK network, they are open and receptive when developing closer relations with Aboriginal students and their families. Battiste (2005) explains that it is these types of experiences that can facilitate close relationships which are necessary to lead to knowledge of Indigeneity:

Books and vicarious experiences, especially when these experiences unfold in non-Indigenous languages, externalize Indigenous knowledge, but Indigenous knowledge is an intimate relationship. One comes to know only through extended conversations, enriched experiences, and awareness of particular ecologies.

Elders humbly understand the depth of Indigenous knowledge when they reject being described as experts. (p. 130)

Participants also discussed how district wide, grade-based PD workshops, the most significant component of the NOSB's Urban Aboriginal Education Project (UAEP), act to support their learning about Indigeneity:

I probably went a full 4 or 5 years before it [AE] was even brought to my attention. The schools that I had taught in had not been predominantly Aboriginal. They were middle class White schools.

Then I got to participate in the first year of UAEP PD and that was really my first large scale exposure to Aboriginal culture in North-Western Ontario, despite that I had taught an Aboriginal Peoples unit in my Grade 6 class. I could tell you about history but culture or some of the underlying issues weren't apparent to me until 4 or 5 sessions in. I thoroughly enjoyed that and it actually prepared me for a move to a school with a large urban Aboriginal population. (Stephanie)

Teachers reported that UAEP initiatives were responsible for a general awareness of the boards' focus on AE that serves to remind teachers of the types of knowledge that should be delivered in their lessons. PD topics also caused teachers that worked in Northern communities to reflect on their teaching experiences in those communities. Interestingly, all teachers that commented on this topic noted that they possessed very little knowledge of Indigeneity during their time in Northern communities and cited that they would be much better prepared to do the same job at the time of the interview.

Knowledge of Aboriginal worldviews. Teachers shared with me a variety of stories that culminated in the teacher having an epiphany after spending a period of time engaging with Aboriginal peoples. Whether or not these teachers' epiphanies occurred as a result of the teachers comprehending an Aboriginal worldview, I cannot claim but what I can state with confidence is that these stories represent teachers gaining a better understanding of their own worldview; the type of extension in horizon sought by Strong-Wilson (2007) and Dion (2007) with their teacher candidates. Through connecting with and learning from the Aboriginal community, non-

Aboriginal teacher candidates were able to see beyond both their conscious and unconscious range of perception in order to understand a new way of viewing the world. This ability placed teachers in a unique position from which they were able to see and, more importantly, critique their Eurocentric ideas about the conduct of schooling/teaching and the role of a parent in a child's life.

Stephanie spoke of how she attempted to lead a meeting with 4 Aboriginal people (2 Elders, another teacher and her Aboriginal principal) aimed at developing a literacy strategy for a group of junior Aboriginal boys that were identified as still needing reading assistance:

I started to talk and I could see everyone looking at me explain what it was I thought I wanted to happen. Then they looked back at my [Aboriginal] principal who started talking and then they all started talking. I realized that at some point I needed to just shut up [as a White person] and so I did. I found out that they were trying to have a discussion about how they were connected to each other. It had nothing to do with the topic and I kept thinking, "We have an agenda," but I sat on my hands and I listened.

They talked about hunting and trapping. They talked about aunts and uncles and kookums. They talked and they talked and I finally realized what was happening. They were looking for entry points so they could have a relationship before they started business. It was fascinating to watch and I'm glad I did it because it really helped me to replace a huge piece of my understanding that [in AE] you can't just bring the pieces in.

There's a whole system, language, thought, and process in place. I was also able to put myself in my students place because they sit in a place that has a White woman in the front and predominantly White children around them. There is a language and a thing going on around them and it's, "Here we are. This is what we're going to do today. This is how we're going to do it and let's get started and then this will end up here. Now you're going to do this." I knew what it felt like to see something happening without them. (Stephanie)

Similarly, Lindsay shared with me how she was able to initially observe and eventually admire the concept of non-interference in parenting amongst Aboriginal families:

It [hierarchical power structure] runs through everything in our society and I don't think it runs through Native culture as much. I observed a culture in which children had a lot more freedom. It was almost as if, "Once you can zip up your own pants, you're a free human being and you can make your own decisions. Guidance is here for you. So is love, care, and the provision of things necessary until you're old enough to get them yourself but you are free to make your own decisions and live with the consequences of those decisions."

There's not a lot of top down, "You'll do it because I said so," or "You'll go to school today because that's the way we do it." I saw if the children were young and in a dangerous situation they [Aboriginal parents] do restrict physically. They'll just move them or take them away but there are no big lectures, there's not a lot of verbal admonishment or warning. There is so much respect for the individual and that extends to parenting. (Lindsay)

These stories clearly illustrate how non-Aboriginal teachers were able to learn to see the world from a point of view that differed from their own, resulting in the ability to critique the ways in which Eurocentrism shapes their horizons.

Knowledge of Aboriginal cultures. Early on during interviews, it was obvious to me that the teachers I was speaking with had been exposed to various aspects of Aboriginal cultures including cultural events such as Fall Harvest and Pow Wows, language through participation in an Ojibway workshop and interaction with members of the community, and the making of traditional technologies/artefacts such as moccasins. The particular feature of Aboriginal cultures that was mentioned most often by the non-Aboriginal teachers I interviewed is the central part community plays in all aspects of Aboriginal cultures. Given the regularity of this comment, it seems clear that Aboriginal community in partnership with schools was the most pivotal element to affect these teachers' understanding of CR schooling. John detailed the consistent role community played in the school:

It [school in remote community] had a full lunch program for the kids and there was a real sense of community at that school. Different Elders would come into classes and speak and there would be fish-fry dinners quite often right at the school. There were a lot of community functions and so I really liked that part of it. (John)

Another teacher spoke about the unconditional support provided by the Aboriginal community to their youth:

As a White community, we have so much to learn from Aboriginal people in how they support their youth in that regard [teen pregnancy]. We're so judgemental of teens that get pregnant but in the Aboriginal community it is a beautiful thing. We can learn from that because family is important and community is important and you can kick and scream and be pissed that your 15 year old is going to have a baby or you could just support them.

...and I don't want a 15 year old to have a baby...but if that's not what happens then let's not shame anybody. I know now that the fact that I don't want that is because I'm White, it's because I'm from a European background that I see that as something bad. (Jane)

Teachers' narratives clearly showed that the teachers I interviewed have moved beyond simply listing aspects of Aboriginal cultures they are aware of. Instead, these teachers are beginning to make deeper connections about the values common to, and exhibited through, Aboriginal cultures, namely Aboriginal communities coming together to fully support all members of the group on their various life paths.

Knowledge of Aboriginal history. A greater knowledge of, and curiosity about, Aboriginal history was exhibited by the teacher participants. Teachers expressed general knowledge of global colonization and the resultant effects on Indigenous peoples including genocide, land theft, cultural and linguistic erasure, and erosion of a traditional lifestyle. Detailed knowledge of the residential school system in Canada was expressed by participants as well as an awareness of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of Canada and the TRC initiatives that seek truth, healing, and reconciliation in connection to the residential school legacy.

Participants demonstrated an impressive amount of knowledge about the traditional territory on which they live and work, including information about the Fort William First Nation;

Anishnawbe, the Native language that is spoken in the Thunder Bay region; and the Robinson Superior treaty of 1850 of which they are partners.

These Teachers also recognized that “we [Canadians] are a people of Aboriginal inspiration” (Saul, 2008, p. xvi):

What we identify as Canadian and so much of who we are, what we do, where our cities and towns are in this country and what resources we use and for what...has so much to do with the ties that the first Europeans formed with the Aboriginal people here. I think there is a special indebtedness to that culture and perhaps that culture does deserve treatment different from more recent immigrant cultures that have come into Canada. (Lindsay)

Knowledge of Aboriginal issues. As a result of working closely with Aboriginal students, teacher participants were well informed about a range of Aboriginal issues. Teachers mentioned the types of Aboriginal issues that Kirkness (1999) argues are directly linked to the residential school legacy, including poor self-concept and a lack of preparation for family and daily life. Brenda explained the problems she sees in the classroom resulting from turmoil in the home:

What I don't like to see is when they are having problems at home and it is beyond their choice. That is really sad, that is a big distraction for them when it comes to learning. Establishing a positive climate is important, but getting them to move forward is equally important. There needs to be a balance between over-regulating their lives and being able to survive. We need teachings applicable to both. (Brenda)

Teachers also mentioned numerous Aboriginal issues facing Northern communities including a lack of funds from the federal government to meet basic human needs, environmental exploitation by corporations and ongoing and increasing addictions. Katie was appalled by the drive Canadians have to reach out to other nations in need while ignoring domestic problems of similar magnitude:

The community I worked in had just got running water, safe drinking water for the community. They never had that before. Those kinds of things stand out and it

kind of pisses me off when I see all these people fundraising to do all these things in Africa and I'm like, "Do you know how many Canadians don't have drinking water?" I just feel that that is something that we overlook. Many of our communities within an hour's flight of here don't have access to clean drinking and we're sending money to Africa. (Katie)

Teachers shared numerous stories about the challenges specifically faced by Aboriginal youth from Northern communities who are attending school in Thunder Bay. These stories, in particular, were told with a great compassion for Aboriginal students struggling to learn while coping with a multitude of negative, synergistic factors such as boarding in an emotionally unsupportive home, a history of inadequate academic preparation, racism, and exposure to drugs, alcohol, and crime in an urban area. Stephanie spoke about the mixed emotions she felt when a student confided in her about a family issue involving drugs:

I had one kid come to me because his father who he'd just gone to visit for the first time in a year decided they should do drugs together and this child is in grade 6. That he felt safe and comfortable to come to me was devastating and rewarding. (Stephanie)

Cheryl experienced comparable inner turmoil and found herself questioning her personal ethics when she was asked by a student for help to get out of a gang:

I had another student that came up to me at one point and said, "How do I get out of a gang because I've been doing deliveries? I just started doing it to make some extra money because I can't get a part time job. Nobody will hire me. What do I do to get out?"

So I started to get these types of issues that students would talk to me about. I had a couple of times where parents would say, "What do I do to help my son? Where do I go for help?"

Not having a lot of other resources, good or bad, I contacted our school police officer who put me in contact with an officer from the gang unit. They're [police officers] also interested in other types of information in terms of the gang activity, who's involved, etc. So there's a fine line of wanting to be able to help the students and not giving away stuff that's going to get them in trouble. I've had a number of students that have just gone home because it's gotten too uncomfortable. (Cheryl)

The teachers that I interviewed embrace the many roles they play in their Aboriginal students' lives. They see themselves not only as teachers but role models, confidants, advocates, and learners. Working closely with Aboriginal students has resulted in my participants renegotiating their teaching identities to best support their students to cope with various issues. As Stephanie explained, this is a very difficult task to accomplish for a lot of teachers that view the transmission of knowledge as their primary or sole responsibility in their teaching identity:

I can't emphasize enough the rewards and the engagement you get out of building a relationship with your children. But that's difficult and that's been my recognition in trying to transmit that to teachers; for some people that's a very scary place to be. They really want those set agendas and they want those set deadlines and that linear thinking. I think a lot of it has to do with dealing with change and fluidity and being able to adapt. (Stephanie)

Section summary. In conclusion, to be effective teachers of Aboriginal students, non-Aboriginal teachers need to make it a priority to learn about Aboriginal worldviews; Aboriginal cultures; the global, national and local plight of Aboriginal peoples throughout history and current issues facing Aboriginal peoples today. Armed with this knowledge, non-Aboriginal teachers are better able to make connections between their personal cultural background and their biography with Aboriginal peoples which brings us back to the beginning of the circle, the East quadrant, "What do teachers need to understand?".

Chapter 6: Conclusion

Revisiting the Research Question

All in all it's just another brick in the wall.

All in all you're just another brick in the wall. (Pink Floyd, 1979)

Once you've seen the writing on the wall, you can't be just another brick in the wall. You're a sledgehammer trying to destroy the story that's been written. You need to rebuild. (November 18, 2010)

The above excerpt is taken from the autoethnographic journal I have kept throughout this research project. It is the tool I use when I need to step away from directly addressing the research or as a break from copying and pasting, spell checking, or using a thesaurus. It's where I go for a flow of consciousness, a medium where I write like no one is reading. In leafing through this journal for inspiration, this passage jumped out at me because, in the final three sentences, it summarizes how I see the teacher participants that I worked with for this research project.

Each of these seven teacher participants, through a combination of educational experiences and relationships with their Aboriginal students and their families, has seen the writing on the wall. These teachers understand that the schooling experience for the majority of Aboriginal students will continue to be overwhelmingly negative and marked by poor educational attainment, should the current system carry on upholding the set of normative and oppressive "educational" values that do not recognize, role-model or include IK nor IK holders. Moreover, they understand the continuing damage that is done to Aboriginal students by utilizing curriculum and classroom materials that reference Aboriginal peoples only from the perspective of the colonizer.

Once these teacher participants understood the inadequacy of the education system for Aboriginal students and came to recognize the value of IK and IK holders in the classroom, not only for Aboriginal students, but for all Canadians, they set out on a path to become reconciling Canadians. Saul (2008) states, “If we misrepresent what we are, we cannot think about ourselves in a useful way. What is a useful reflection of self? One that creates the context and the self-confidence for further reflection and action” (p. 45). In viewing themselves as reconciling Canadians responsible for students’ learning, teacher participants were able to uncover an extraordinary ability to act in a useful way and to do so in a manner that reduces neo-colonial damage, challenges the larger colonizing culture of Western schooling, and that they also felt was true to themselves as non-Aboriginal Canadians (Saul, 2008).

During data collection for the UAEP research project, I was enthused by accounts of how these select teachers were engaging in UAE in “useful” (Saul, 2008) or decolonizing ways. I formed the research question that inspired this thesis project: **How do effective urban non-Aboriginal teachers narrate and explore their personal decolonization and use of culturally responsive teaching approaches as they engage in/reflect on teaching Aboriginal students?** As a new researcher embarking on my first independent project, I was certainly not prepared for the magnitude and complexity of the narratives I was about to be entrusted with to share with the education and research communities.

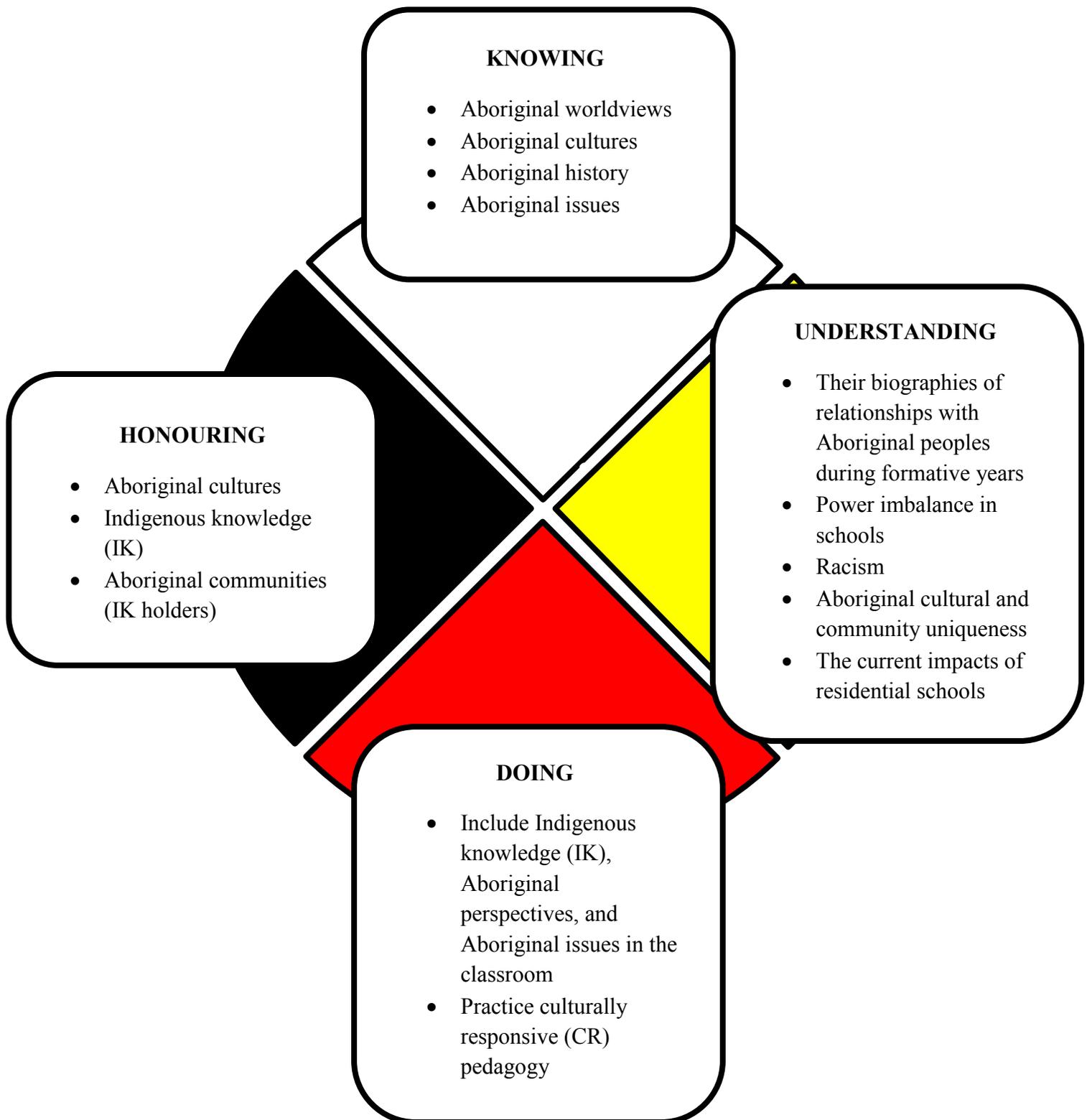
As I experimented with several different dissemination models to present the teachers’ narratives, I kept returning to the heuristic model for teaching teachers to teach First Nations students (Figure 1). The serendipitous nature of the fact that effective teachers in a NOSB were attending to the guiding principles of an Anishnawbe-inspired model that they had no prior knowledge of amazed me. I resolved to follow in the footsteps of my teacher participants who

had inspired me so many months before by considering alternative ways of thinking and representation. I attempted to shift my deeply ingrained linear and categorical mode of thinking, to embrace an approach for navigating and retelling teacher narratives that emphasizes wholism and is respectful and representative of First Nations.

Building upon the original work of J. Flett & E. Gardner (personal communication, November 4, 2009), I produced a Medicine Wheel (Figure 2) that is representative of non-Aboriginal teacher decolonization. The four quadrants in the Medicine Wheel: Understanding, Doing, Honouring, and Knowing represent the actions of effective non-Aboriginal teachers as they enact elements or processes of decolonization. Teacher participants often shared stories of teaching Aboriginal youth that illustrate their involvement in more than one action (understanding, doing, honouring, knowing) at a time. Furthermore, I acknowledge the possibility that these teachers may have been involved in additional activities (quadrants) not mentioned in this thesis.

Within each quadrant, I have grouped the stories that teachers shared into themes that emerged from the data coding and analysis phases of my research. If I were to list all of the themes in this conclusion, the result would be a condensed catalogue that is not representative of the depth of the narratives presented in Chapter Five. I encourage the reader to consult the Medicine Wheel presented below that represents the actions of non-Aboriginal teacher decolonization (Figure 2) for an overview of this research and refer to Chapter Five for detailed narratives that describe what effective non-Aboriginal teachers are understanding, doing, honouring, and knowing as they engage in/reflect on teaching urban Aboriginal students.

Figure 2: The Actions of Non-Aboriginal Teacher Decolonization.



This research was a critical decolonizing experience for me as both a teacher and a researcher. I am now able to recognize that the research question that I set out to answer, and have used up to this point in this thesis, was in itself problematic. In preparing my guiding questions, and later when developing narrative prompts for participant interviews, I viewed non-Aboriginal teacher decolonization as a shift in thinking, a perceptual movement in one's horizon (Strong-Wilson, 2007), that gave way to an ability to utilize CR pedagogies. Therefore, in the early stages of my research, I took great care to distinguish between, and address both, internal growth and external action.

After listening to and analyzing these teachers' narratives, I realized that stories of the non-Aboriginal teachers who were effectively engaging in urban Aboriginal education did not fit the (admittedly Eurocentric) categories that I had structured my research around: personal decolonization and use of CR teaching approaches. Instead, their stories involved combinations of understanding, doing, honouring, and knowing: the teachers did not distinguish between internal growth and external action.

Consider my choice to address my original research question as evidence of my commitment to decolonizing (Korteweg, Gonzalez, & Guillet, 2010) the act of research by explicitly pinpointing my colonized beliefs: non-Aboriginal teacher decolonization should fit into the Eurocentric categories I devised; challenging such beliefs: teachers' narratives did not fit well into the categories I developed; and countering such beliefs using Indigenous worldviews and perspectives: the Anishnawbe-inspired wholistic heuristic was the most suitable mode of presenting non-Aboriginal teacher decolonization. In retrospect, the research question should have read: **How do effective urban non-Aboriginal teachers examine and narrate their decolonization as they reflect on teaching Aboriginal students?**

Contribution of Findings to Non-Aboriginal Teacher Decolonization

Model of actions of non-Aboriginal teacher decolonization. This study contributes to the existing body of literature on non-Aboriginal teacher decolonization by presenting a Medicine Wheel that depicts the four quadrants or actions through which non-Aboriginal teachers are continuing as they participate in decolonization: understanding, doing, honouring and knowing (Figure 2). The model also summarizes key themes in each quadrant that highlight issues and methods that non-Aboriginal teachers in an urban NOSB are attending to.

Although I was initially amazed that the issues that effective teachers were addressing in practice mirrored those that local IK holders were proposing as the guiding principles of successfully teaching First Nations students, I now recognize that this was not a random convergence. Rather, non-Aboriginal teacher participants were able to effectively engage in decolonization because they were listening to and learning from the Anishnawbe people who inspired the original heuristic model for teaching teachers to teach First Nations students (Figure 1).

The work that these teachers are doing fit so well into the locally developed heuristic model for teaching teachers to teach First Nations students (Figure 1) because teacher participants were able to open their hearts and minds to the voices, desires, and needs of the Aboriginal peoples with whom they live, work, and learn. Such a complement is an example of the positive outcomes that result when teachers ensure that three (or more) Rs - Respect, Reciprocity, and Relationality (Weber-Pillwax, 1999) guide their practice. In this manner, teachers were able to teach in a way that is culturally responsive, specifically Anishnawbe-responsive.

The complement of theory and practice introduced in the previous paragraph suggests that community and the impact community has on shaping relationships and identities play an important role in non-Aboriginal teacher decolonization. Consequently, the Medicine Wheel (Figure 2) I produced may only be representative of the actions of non-Aboriginal teacher decolonization in NOSBs. It also points to the fact that non-Aboriginal teacher decolonization should not be viewed as a uniform field that is impervious to community issues such as land rights/disputes, land use/misuse, culture, language, history, and demographics.

An alternative counter-story. The important work of Strong-Wilson (2007) aims to open and shift teachers' perceptual horizons by guiding teachers to elicit their touchstone stories "invisibly shaping their perceptions of self and other" (p. 116) and confront these stories with post-colonial or counter-stories that contest the master narrative implicit in their touchstones. Strong-Wilson argues that her method produces a new kind of story: "For teachers to genuinely appropriate the learning process as their own and instigate change/decolonization, they need to produce a "story of confrontation," which is a story about their confrontation of their storied past" (p. 124).

Similarly, Dion (2007) instructs her graduate students to juxtapose objects from their past that reflect their relationship with Aboriginal people alongside the work of contemporary Aboriginal artists (storytellers, poets, filmmakers, and visual artists). She then directs students in drawing these two sets of artefacts together to gain understanding of themselves in relationship with Aboriginal people. Dion defends her choice to utilize Aboriginal art as a, metaphorically speaking, counter-story:

The course is not about simply consuming the work of the artists. Students are called upon to engage with and position themselves in relationship to the work.

Engaging the work of Aboriginal artists provides a decolonising practice challenging the ahistorical memories of Canada's colonial past, it offers a way to challenge the hegemony of western regimes of knowledge and representation. (p. 333)

Using literature and art respectively, both Strong-Wilson (2007) and Dion (2007) presented research participants with a counter-story. By creating a "temporary" representative community of Aboriginal peoples, the researchers made it possible for teachers and graduate students to begin to understand their biographies with Aboriginal peoples and the issues that shaped these biographies. This understanding, "opens the possibility for teachers to take up alternative ways of knowing, to imagine new relationships, and to think about how they might want to work toward transforming their practice" (Dion, 2007, p. 330). While I recognize the significant contributions both methods have made to non-Aboriginal teacher decolonization research, the findings of this master's study point to the need to attend to a new notion of decolonization for non-Aboriginal teachers that places the responsibility for seeking out a counter-story onto the teachers themselves and entails a component of action. Lopez (2010) advocates for a grass-roots approach to Indigenous education that decentralizes the role of academe:

In order to bring about an improvement in [I]ndigenous education, it is necessary to transform teachers as well as the teaching profession... What is needed is not only professionals, but also organic intellectuals aligned with the cause and with the social emancipation of their peoples. (p. 206)

Teachers-participants' narratives in this study revealed that their capacity to shift their perceptual horizons did not result from accessing a counter-story produced by a "temporary" or

representative Aboriginal community. Instead, these teacher-participants reached out to members of their community and formed tangible relationships structured around concepts of respect, reciprocity and relationality (Weber-Pillwax, 1999) with Aboriginal students, families, Elders, and colleagues. Authentic, rich daily interactions with real Aboriginal people resulted in the type of deep understandings and perceptual shifts discussed by both Strong-Wilson (2007) and Dion (2007) as theories, but which were evidenced in practice by these teachers' narratives in Chapter Five.

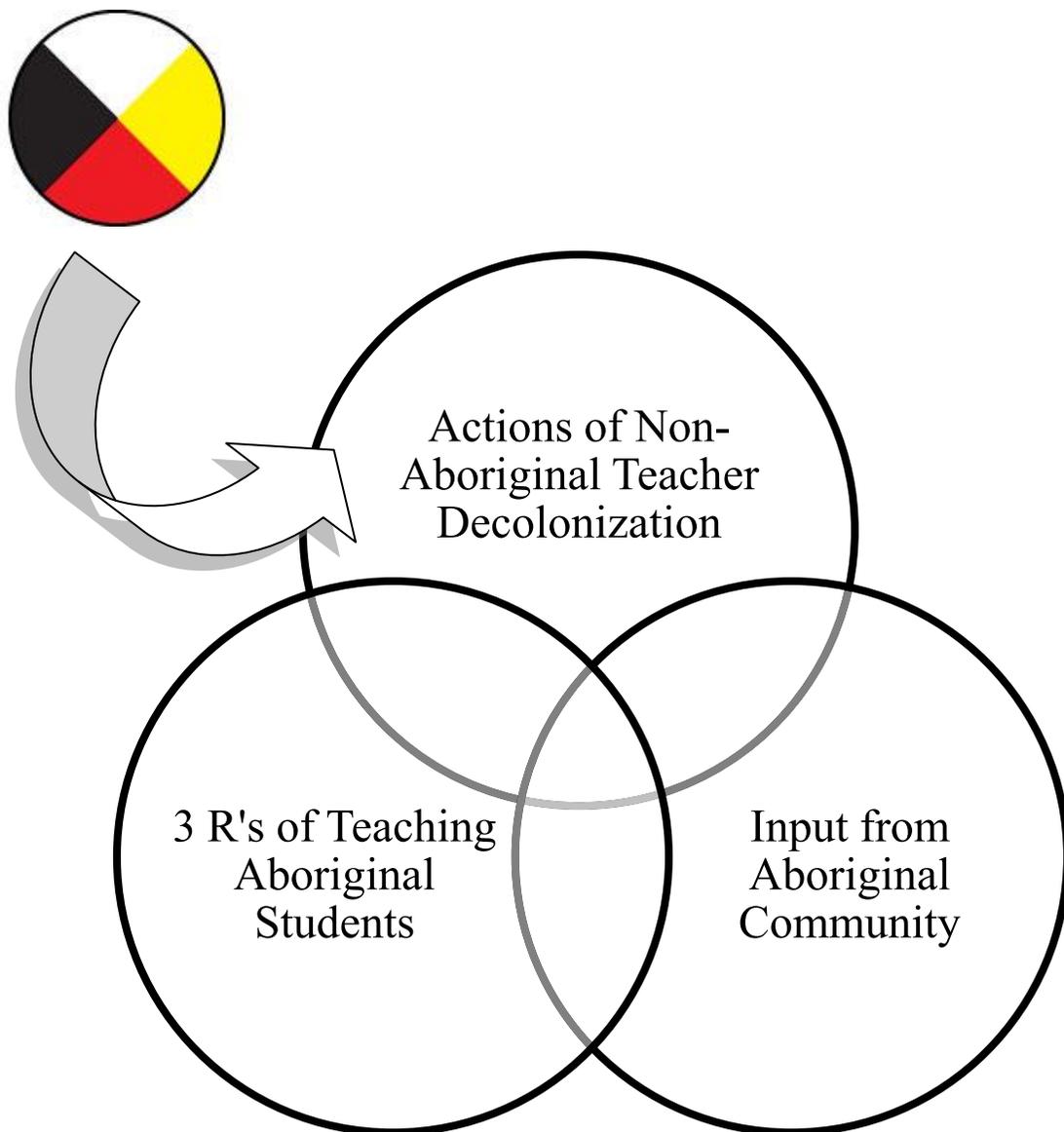
Furthermore, these teacher participants' counter-stories were inspired by their own local Aboriginal community (classrooms, schools, neighbourhoods) rather than a select group of representative Aboriginal artists. Their own Aboriginal students and school families allowed the non-Aboriginal teachers to place and see themselves inside that story by re-imagining and then enacting the role(s) they could occupy as the teacher of Aboriginal students. Accordingly, these urban non-Aboriginal teachers were well positioned to do and honour in a manner that impacted the daily needs and experiences of the Aboriginal community. As the narratives of the participants demonstrate, action was a vital component of these non-Aboriginal teachers' decolonization because action and critical self-reflexivity were often intertwined in a positive feedback loop.

In order to further the work of this important field, we need to extend our conceptions of non-Aboriginal teacher decolonization to include shifting the perceptual horizons of our cultural imaginations in convergence concurrence with daily realities of Aboriginal families, observations of Aboriginal cultures, and our own actions.

Looking Forward

I have created a diagram (Figure 3) that is representative of the factors contributing to decolonization for non-Aboriginal teachers which include the actions of non-Aboriginal teacher decolonization (understanding, doing, honouring, knowing); input from the Aboriginal community; and the three R's of teaching Aboriginal students: Respect, Reciprocity, and Relationality:

Figure 3: The Factors Contributing to Decolonization for Non-Aboriginal Teachers



This diagram, and the knowledge that it represents, is capable of serving as a guide to developing teacher education modules and professional development workshops that are focussed on, or include a component of non-Aboriginal teacher decolonization. Considering the current state of education for Aboriginal students and the typical profile of a non-Aboriginal teacher, the urgency and importance of this type of teacher education to be included in both pre-service and in-service programs cannot be overstated.

hooks (2003) elegantly articulates the goal that drives my research; “part of the work to be done is making a place, with others, where my and our voices, can stand clear of the background noise and voice our concerns as part of a larger song” (p. 147). As a non-Aboriginal Euro-Canadian teacher, my on-going quest to find a decolonized approach and respectful research voice requires deeply challenging, profoundly moving, and often isolating work. Throughout this research, I was able to learn from and grow alongside a critical mass of non-Aboriginal teachers stumbling along a path similar to mine, and for that, I am eternally grateful. It is my hope that in sharing these teachers’ stories, and the knowledge passed on by their Aboriginal mentors who have gracefully guided them along the way, that I can lead other non-Aboriginal teachers in embracing a new story as reconciling Canadians; “We are a people of Aboriginal inspiration organized around a concept of peace, fairness and good government” (Saul, 2008, xvi).

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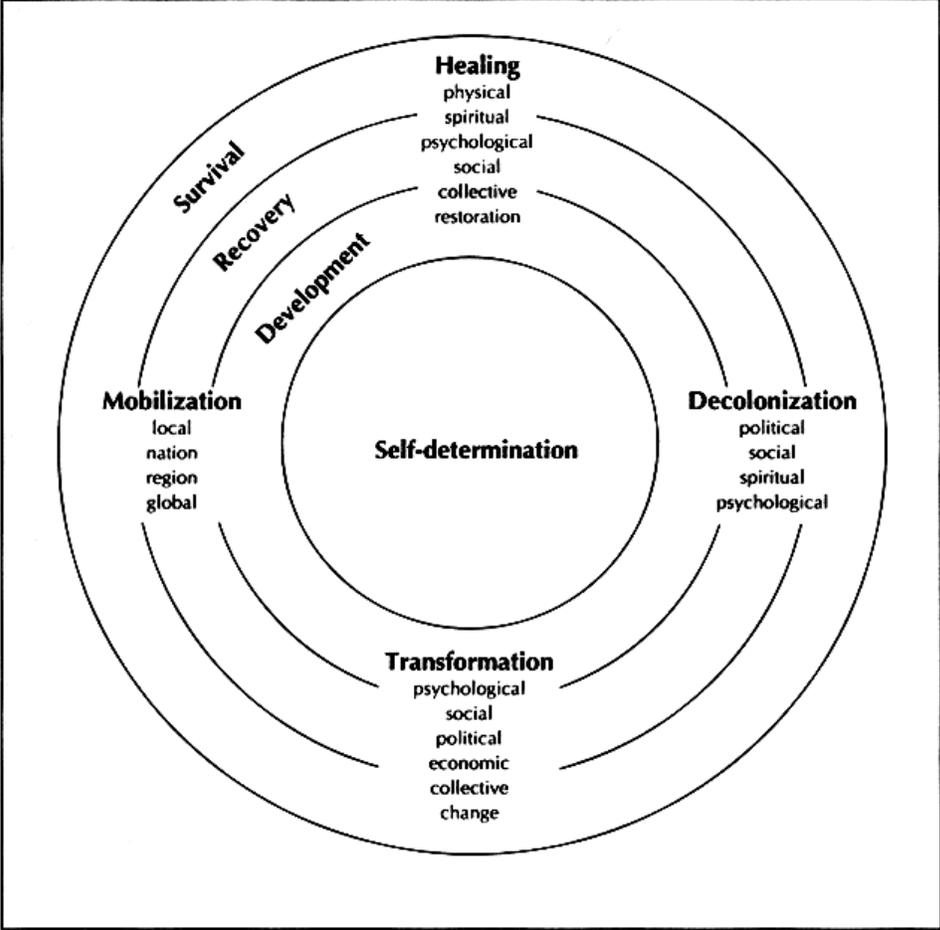
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Appendix A: The Indigenous Research Agenda (Smith, 1999, p. 117)



Appendix B1: Information Summary Letter

Dear Potential Teacher Participant,

You are invited to participate in a qualitative study entitled, *“Looking East: Exploring the Decolonizing Journeys of Teachers Involved in the Lakehead District School Board Urban Aboriginal Education Project”*. The purpose of this study is to explore the personal decolonizing narratives of non-Aboriginal teachers involved in the Urban Aboriginal Education Project (UAEP) as they contemplate their personal views on Aboriginal education, take part and reflect upon professional development workshops and programs in urban Aboriginal education designed by the LDSB and modify their teaching philosophy and approaches to provide quality education to all students in a city of changing demographics. In addition to gaining insight into the decolonizing journey, the research process itself is intended to serve as an experience that will further examine your own teaching and Western worldview. You have been selected as a participant because of the contributions you made during focus groups conducted for the UAEP Research Study as well as your stated interest in continuing a conversation about your views on urban Aboriginal education.

The study will be conducted by myself, Brooke Costello. I am a Master of Education student at Lakehead University and have been involved in the UAEP Research Study since November 2009 in the capacity of Research Assistant. The project will be supervised by Dr. Lisa Korteweg, professor at the Faculty of Education (Lakehead University) and Principal Investigator for the UAEP Research Study. Should you choose to participate in the study, your participation would be entirely voluntary. You may **refuse** to participate in any part of the study and you may **withdraw** from the study at any time without penalty.

During the study you will be asked to:

- Participate in 1-2 individual interviews, during which you will describe and reflect upon your experiences as a participant in the UAEP. We will engage in conversation about your own personal decolonizing journey, how it has unfolded and the impact it has had on engaging with Aboriginal students. (These interviews will last approximately 1-3 hours in length and will take place in person, at a convenient location and time of your choice.)
- Assemble a relevant “artifact” (e.g. email, journal entry, object, photo) that elicits and reflects a critical or memorable experience you have had as a teacher of Aboriginal students. (This may require approximately 1 hour of your time.)
- Participate in a focus group with 1-3 fellow LDSB teachers also selected for this study. During the focus group, themes that emerged from the UAEP Research Study will be discussed as well as how, both as a group and individually, you might begin to transition into an Aboriginal education leadership role within your respective schools and the school board. (This focus group will last approximately 1-3 hours in length and will take place in person at a convenient location and time of the group’s choice.)

All data will be collected between June 2010 and October 2010. If you consent, data for individual interviews and the focus group may be recorded by video, audio and/or written notes by the researcher.

There is no foreseeable risk or harm associated with participating in the individual interviews. Should you choose to participate in the focus group, please understand that the degree to which I can protect your confidentiality is limited as your identities and comments will be known to the other participants in the study. You will not be identified in any recorded data or publicly disseminated information. Pseudonyms or reference to your role/membership in the project (e.g., a teacher) will be used in all transcripts and written findings. Video-data will only be used for the purposes of enhancing the transcription process to include body language, intonation, etc.

All information and text that you provide will remain confidential and securely stored for five years. All electronic or multimedia data will be downloaded and stored on a secured hard-drive (not connected to the Internet). After the 5-year period, all multimedia data (electronic, notes, or tape) will be destroyed. The findings and analysis of this project will be made available to you at your request upon the completion of the project.

You can contact the Lakehead University Research Ethics Board (807-343-8283) if you have any questions concerning the ethical nature of this study or the ethical conduct of the researchers.

I sincerely look forward to your participation in this respectful and important research study. If you have any questions concerning this study, I can be reached through email: bcostell@lakeheadu.ca. My supervisor, Dr. Lisa Korteweg can also be reached through email: lkortewe@lakeheadu.ca or at her office by phone: (807) 343-8174.

Thank you for considering participation in this study.

Brooke Costello

Appendix B2: Consent Form

I, _____ have read and understood the covering letter of the study entitled, “*Looking East: Exploring the Decolonizing Journeys of Teachers Involved in the Lakehead District School Board Urban Aboriginal Education Project*”, by Brooke Costello. I do agree to participate in this research project and I understand that I will be involved in the following procedures:

- Participate in 1-2 individual interviews, during which you will be asked to reflect on your experience as a participant in the UAEP as well as detail how your own personal decolonizing journey has unfolded and the impact it has had on engaging with Aboriginal students. (These interviews will last approximately 1-3 hours in length and will take place in person at a convenient location and time of your choice.)
- Assemble a relevant “artifact” (e.g. email, journal entry, object) that reflects an experience you have had as a teacher of Aboriginal students and that will aid in eliciting memories of a critical decolonizing experience. (This will require approximately 1 hour of your time.)
- Participate in a focus group with 1-3 additional LDSB teachers selected for this study. During the focus group, themes that emerged from the UAEP Research Study will be discussed as well as how, both as a group and individually, you might begin to transition into an Aboriginal education leadership role within your respective schools and faculties. (This focus group will last approximately 1-3 hours in length and will take place in person at a convenient location and time of the group’s choice.)

I understand that I can contact the Lakehead University Research Ethics Board (807-343-8283) if I have any questions or concerns regarding the ethical conduct of the researchers and/or the ethical design of the study. I also understand that all raw data will be destroyed after a 5-year period.

I understand that I can refuse to answer a question at any time and that my participation is voluntary. I also understand that I may withdraw at any time from participating in this research project, even after signing this form. Any information that is collected about me during this study will be kept confidential, and if the results are published, I will not be identified in any way. I understand that by agreeing to participate in the focus group my identity and comments will be known to the other participants in the study and thus my confidentiality limited. I have discussed these details and issues of respectful research with the student investigator of the study, Brooke Costello.

Signature of Participant

Date

I have explained the nature and parameters of this study (as both an academic and respectful study) to the participant and believe they have understood.

Signature of Student Investigator

Date

Appendix C: Interview Questions

1. Tell me a little bit about your educational autobiography (lifelong learner?).
2. Tell me a little bit about your biography with Aboriginal peoples.
3. When you reflect on your biography with Aboriginal people, can you identify any powerful moments where you began to recognize your own worldview as a Euro-Canadian differed significantly from the worldview of Aboriginal peoples?
4. What does the term “colonization” mean to you and how do you think contemporary education plays a role in that process?
5. What does the term “decolonization” mean to you and how do you think you are or could participate in that process as a teacher of Aboriginal children?
6. Describe your interactions with Aboriginal students and their families.
7. Can you describe an event that made you realize that urban Aboriginal education was an issue that you would need to actively address in your classroom?
8. Can you describe what kind of teacher of Aboriginal students you are? (If successful/effective is mentioned – what about your teaching philosophy makes you a successful/effective teacher of Aboriginal students? Do you understand your own culture/negotiate your culture with students?)
9. What kind of strategies do you employ with Aboriginal students?
10. Is there anything distinct about the strategies you employ with Aboriginal students compared to non-Aboriginal students?
11. How do you see yourself progressing and changing as a teacher of urban Aboriginal students?
12. What supports are aiding you in making these shifts? Describe partnerships you have formed with Aboriginal parents or colleagues? How have these partnerships impacted your practice?