ON BEING A "SAMA7" TEACHER:
REFLECTING ON COLONIZATION, WHITE IDENTITY, RELATIONSHIPS, AND
RESPONSIBILITY IN INDIGENOUS CONTEXTS

by

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ABSTRACT

Since the majority of teachers of Indigenous students in Canada are non-Indigenous, the current efforts to decolonize Canadian schools are largely dependent on these teachers' understandings of Indigenous education, as well as their approaches and accountability to decolonization. As a white teacher of Indigenous students, this thesis represents critical self-study of a teacher's role in decolonization in particular educational contexts. The research considers being a dominant-culture teacher with Indigenous students in terms of the teacher's relationships, professional identity, and pedagogy. Further, this body of work inquires into the effects of (neo-)colonialism on the above, as well as on educational policy and curriculum in Indigenous contexts.

Inasmuch as it is manuscript-based, the thesis reads differently from those written as single studies. Chapters Three and Four are essays based on my first and third-year teaching experiences in two distinct Indigenous communities, and each focus on different aspects of those locations and circumstances. For example, the third chapter is an analysis of the multi-levelled policy setting of a northern Québec school, and the fourth chapter employs a hermeneutical lens to examine my pilot of a culturally responsive curriculum in rural British Columbia. The introduction and literature review (Chapter Two) provide the context for both of these analyses, while the concluding chapter connects the two manuscripts with reference to current literature and my present teaching position.

As a whole, my study offers an understanding of the challenges and responsibilities for dominant-culture teachers in decolonizing their classrooms and schools through policies, pedagogies, and relationships. While it does not address the entirety of the experience of being a

dominant-culture educator and ally working with Indigenous students, it confronts and inquires into several pivotal and interrelated areas in teaching for social justice. In considering different aspects of my experiences, this study speaks to broader themes of (neo-)colonialism and decolonization, culturally responsive curricula and pedagogies, educational policy, and cross-cultural relationships. Individually, these critical reflections on my practice have yielded intimate, yet significant portraits of teacher identity, and as a whole, they offer rich insights and multiple perspectives on some of the most pressing issues in educational politics today.

PREFACE

All names of people, schools, and places contained within this thesis are pseudonyms to protect the identities of my co-workers, students, and friends.

Additionally, the research chapters contained herein have both been submitted for publication. A version of Chapter Three was submitted for publication under the title: "Pushed out and locked out: A teacher's participation in the neo-colonial project." A version of Chapter Four was submitted for publication under the title: "Toward a pedagogy of relationality: Interpreting the intimate encounters of English 12 First Peoples."

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Downwind from Bla Bla's

I've heard it said that memory is intimately connected to the olfactory system. Whether or not this is true, my memories of residing downwind from *Café Chez Bla Bla* for eighteen months are still, six years later, quite vivid and burgeoning. *Downwind from Bla Bla's* was also the proposed title of our book about our perceptions and reflections on realities we experienced in our time living and teaching in a small northern Québec community. *Bla Bla's* was the local greasy spoon where we once brought our own linens, candles, and glassware to create the opportunity for ourselves to enjoy a fancy dinner out. Shauna, my colleague, friend, and fellow down-winder, and I also had chapter titles ready to go (e.g., "Poutine, Pizzaghetti, and Other Unsettling Settler Delicacies"), each one imbued with questions, romanticism, and wit about specific local processes, phenomena, and paradoxes. Through our conceptions of this book, we were able to speak about the challenges and triumphs of teaching across culture, language, and place; its imagined pages contained our frustrations, fears, joys, and learning around our own identities as teachers, and especially as first-year, non-local, non-Indigenous teachers in an isolated First Nations reserve just fifty kilometres from the tree line. Indeed, having long considered and scrutinized my impressions of this time, I have come to understand that the book was equally our journal, our support system, and our ongoing conversation about colonialism, teaching, policy, and the purposes of education.

It comes as no surprise then, that my experiences should become the impetus for several scholarly inquiries during my graduate studies. Throughout my Master of Arts degree in the

Society, Culture and Politics in Education (SCPE) program at UBC, I have focused on gaining a broader understanding of the issues involved in teaching for social justice, as well as for decolonization. Due in part to thought-provoking courses in educational policy, First Nations education, and philosophical research methods, I have had the opportunity to deepen my awareness of both the tensions and possibilities that arise in the context of my own practice as a white teacher in First Nations schools.

Having since taken up secondary teaching positions in two First Nations communities in British Columbia (the first in a First Nation-run school and the second in a public school), my initial questions of the *Bla Bla's* era evolved into pressing concerns regarding teachers' roles in the project of decolonizing Canadian schools. My experiences teaching in these various contexts precipitated the initial questions that informed earlier versions of my two research chapters; however, as these chapters became part of my Master's thesis project, I employed an iterative process to consider the more general questions that motivate my study as a whole, and reconsider how these relate to the more specific questions of the research chapters. The more general questions that form the common thread of the research are:

1. How can the experience of being a dominant-culture teacher with Indigenous students be described in terms of the teacher's *relationships* to students, colleagues, policy, curriculum, and pedagogy?

2. What are some of the effects of (neo-)colonialism on school policy, curriculum and pedagogy, cross-cultural relationships, and teacher identity in Indigenous contexts or for Indigenous students?

3. How can non-Indigenous practitioners provide culturally responsive and responsible education (i.e., in terms of curriculum, pedagogy, and policy) for their students considering their own histories of colonization and colonial experiences in education?

For me, the answers to these questions are not static, and moreover, nor are the questions themselves. With each experience, my perspectives of the questions and their possible answers have the potential to shift, such that my conceptions of education, social justice, and my own identity as a teacher are constantly changing. The importance, as well as the cyclic nature of this "meaning-making" process is described succinctly by Maxine Greene (1995):

> Reflecting on our life histories, our projects, we may … gain a perspective on … our own desires for withdrawal and for harmony. Made aware of ourselves as questioners, as meaning makers, as persons engaged in constructing realities with those around us, we may communicate … the notion that reality is multiple perspectives and that the construction of it is never complete, that there is always more. (p. 131)

Reflective pedagogy is consequently an on-going personal learning experience, but also a publically pertinent one. Therefore, it has been beneficial to explore these questions not only for my own development and position as a white educator in the struggle to decolonize education, but for others as well. My central questions, their subsequent considerations and quandaries are not singular. There are thousands of practitioners working in similar contexts, who face comparable challenges to those I describe and scrutinize. Additionally, this work is applicable and relevant to other scholars in education, especially teacher-educators, as they engage in preparing new teachers to join in the project.

Language Entanglements

Evidently, these questions and their eventual answers cannot be understood without clear acknowledgement and discussion of what is signified in this thesis by the terms "Indigenous," "decolonization," and "culturally responsive education," as well as other terms that arise from these. Negotiating complex and variable labels in academic research is "tricky ground," as Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2008, p. 113) asserts. So difficult, in fact, that the term "research" itself is fraught with a discourse of colonial conquest and imperial agendas (Smith, 1999, 2008; Grande, 2008), as it has "been implicated in the worst excesses of colonialism" and "remains a powerful remembered history for many of the world's colonized peoples" (Smith, 1999, p. 1). With regard for this history, as well as for Indigenous peoples' struggles to define ethical research methodologies, I have chosen the language of this thesis with utmost caution.

"Indigenous peoples" is a term that, according to Smith (1999), surfaced from political struggles of the 1970s, most notably those of the American Indian Movement and the Canadian Indian Brotherhood. She outlines how the term works tactically on an international level to bring together the voices of the distinct peoples who have been subject to the colonization of their lands and cultures by settler societies, while also recognizing the diversity of Indigenous peoples and cultures the world over. In this thesis, I have used and capitalized the term Indigenous as a means to recognize the various political and cultural identities of the Indigenous peoples with whom I work and have worked in Canada. In trying to protect the identities of those peoples discussed in this study, as is required for academic writing, I have in places employed the term in place of the name of a specific Nation, although my Indigenous friends have told me that the latter is preferable. I have also chosen "Indigenous" over "First Nations" (where appropriate), as the term First Nations refers only to some Indigenous peoples of Canada, specifically those

peoples who belong to a particular First Nation. Further, I have avoided the use of the term

"Aboriginal," since it is a government construct that is "instrumental to the state's attempt to

gradually subsume Indigenous existences into its own constitutional system and body politic"

(Alfred & Corntassel, 2005, p. 598). Finally, my use of the term also recognizes the need to

highlight the ongoing forces of colonialism, for without these, the term would not be required.

Wilmer (1993) explains this relationship thus: "indigenous peoples represent the unfinished

business of decolonization" (p. 5).

In order to explore what is meant by "decolonization" however, there must be a concern

for colonization, particularly as it applies to research on Indigenous issues. Although there are

extensive differences among the world's Indigenous peoples, they are all involved in the struggle

to maintain and regain their cultures, languages, traditions, and their lands from the settler

societies that have colonized—and are still colonizing—them (Alfred & Corntassel, 2005; Smith,

1999). According to Alfred and Corntassel (2005), in contemporary settler societies, colonialism

has been reinvented to take a subtler approach to domination (as opposed to earlier policies

involving the military and churches). Throughout this thesis, I have referred to this period of

imperialism, in its cunning use of educational policies and curriculum, as "neo-colonialism."

Although this term has been used for decades, it is my position that there has been little change

to colonizers' attempts at and methods of subjugation in this time.

Decolonization then, is the goal of the struggle against imperial forces. My use of this

term is congruent with how Alfred and Corntassel (2005) described its objective as being

realized through "the re-strengthening of [Indigenous] people as individuals so that…[they are]

living authentic lives" (p. 605). Further, decolonization is not conceived of as an institutional act,

but as something that begins on the level of individual identity. By means of linking the

processes of decolonization and regeneration, Alfred and Corntassel outline how decolonization involves changes in thought and action that stem from the self and that, over time, become organized into large-scale protests against colonial governments and agencies. Of course, as with many words, "decolonization" is not without its share of controversy. Graham Hingangaroa Smith (2003) describes how the term "de-colonization" continues to place the colonizer at the centre of the discussion, while Freire's (1970) "conscientization" brings Indigenous peoples into focus (or, in the case of his research, the Maori). Although the specific words chosen by these two scholars are divergent, I submit that their goals are very compatible. As such, I stress that my frequent use of "decolonization" herein should be understood to encompass the objectives set out by Indigenous scholars: to re-strengthen Indigenous identities and challenge Western discourses and practices of power (Grande, 2008; Smith, 2003; Smith, 1999; Alfred & Corntassel, 2005). In order to highlight and support Smith's (2003) concerns, I have strategically employed "conscientization" in instances where the distinction is appropriate.

As it has already been stated, Indigenous identity is not singular, but refers to the multiplicity of identities of distinct peoples around the globe (Alfred & Corntassel, 2005; Smith, 1999). Some of these peoples are living on their traditional territories, while others live in urban areas where Indigenous populations are very diverse (and, in some cases, struggling with dislocation from their homelands). Therefore, Indigenous "cultures" should be accepted as being equally varied and inclusive of the multitude of individual and collective identities worldwide. Obviously, there are tensions around what constitutes "culture," most of which emanate from Western research methods, as described above. Grande (2008) identifies how "whole nations get trans- or (dis)figured when articulated through Western frames of knowing" (p. 234). It is with an awareness of this discourse that I apply the terms "culturally responsive" and "culturally

responsible" to various facets of education throughout my study. Except in cases where I am discussing a specific scholar's work, my use of "culture" refers to a specific culture or cultures (for example, in a classroom or community), and not to all cultures or all Indigenous cultures. Such an approach would essentialize Indigenous culture as an "Other" to the dominant culture in education; consequently, it is precisely this dehumanization that I endeavour to avoid. Hence, "culturally responsive" and "culturally responsible" should be interpreted as referring to education, curriculum, or pedagogy that is responsive and/or responsible to a particular people or peoples and, in most cases, those with whom I have worked directly.

Swimming Upriver

A very long way from *Bla Bla's,* between 2007 and 2011 I resided in the Salmon-rich interior of southern B.C. The surroundings may have been thousands of miles apart, yet I found myself alongside the Sockeye, still swimming upriver against the neo-colonial currents of public education in the desire for renewal and change. Living in sub-arctic Québec, I reflected on how educational policy affects teaching and learning in a First Nations context. In my subsequent professional milieu, I contemplated how my own life and educational histories affect my praxis and my students. While the wind of northern Québec and rivers of southern British Columbia represent very different facets of my questions about decolonization, curriculum, teachers' identities and pedagogy, both have been worth exploring.

As a result of my experiences, both as a graduate student and secondary teacher, I have written two essays (now chapters) that specifically address my research questions in the context of my teaching experiences both in Québec and British Columbia. The first piece, "Pushed Out and Locked Out: Participating in the Neo-colonial Project" was written in 2007 after my first

year and a half of teaching. It is an analysis of and critical reflection on how my experiences, as well as the students' experiences, in a public school on a First Peoples' reserve in northern Québec were shaped by the multi-levelled neo-colonial policies under which the school and its classrooms functioned. Building on Berger, Epp, and Møller's (2006) analysis of southern-Canadian modeled schools in Nunavut, I discuss how the specific behavioural and pedagogical policies of my former school, its school board, and the provincial Ministry of Education oppress and subjugate the students and community. Tracing my participation in the policies governing the school, I reflect on the challenges and responsibilities for dominant-culture educators in decolonizing their classrooms and schools.

The second research chapter, "Toward a Pedagogy of Relationality: Interpreting Indigenous Curricula," was written in 2009 during my third year of teaching. It seeks to contextualize my experiences as a white teacher within the multiple interpretive processes involved in teaching the new British Columbia Ministry of Education and First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC) course, English 12 First Peoples, to a small group of First Nations students in rural BC. More specifically, I attempt to understand these processes, where possible, through Hans-Georg Gadamer's work on hermeneutics, as well as David Heath Justice's and Niigonwedon James Sinclair's writings on Indigenous literary theory. This interpretation includes my reading of the *English 12 First Peoples* curriculum and accompanying teacher's guide, the course texts, as well as my students, as "texts" themselves, in their roles in this course. Viewing the course and its participants through the above-cited theoretical lenses provides insights into the challenges and responsibilities for educators teaching the *English 12 First Peoples* curriculum, and suggests pedagogical approaches which could strengthen its interpretive processes and the possibilities for meaning among its various readers and texts.

Given that the two essays described above make up the research chapters, this thesis reads differently than one written as a single study. Though the pieces were originally intended to stand alone, for the purposes of my research, I have reworked them slightly so that they speak more meaningfully to my questions. Within the thesis as a whole, which spans five years of study, these chapters represent moments in time, in distinct geographical locations, and in my development as a new teacher. And while the two topics do not address the entirety of the experience of being a dominant-culture educator and ally working with Indigenous students, they do confront and inquire into several pivotal and interrelated areas in teaching for social justice. In considering different aspects of my experiences, both texts speak to broader themes of colonialism, neo-colonialism and decolonization, ethnocentric and culturally responsive education, policy, and cross-cultural relationships and communication. The literature review (Chapter Two) provides the context for both of my research chapters by attending to the above-mentioned themes that shape aspects of my research questions. The concluding chapter connects the two manuscripts with specific reference to current literature on these issues, and sets the understandings within my present teaching context (new as of last summer). My analyses, both historical and current, comprise topical educational issues and considerations that deserve the attention of practicing and pre-service educators (at all levels of education), scholars, and policy-makers. Individually, these reflections on my practice have yielded intimate, yet significant portraits of teacher identity, and together, they offer rich insights and multiple perspectives on some of the most pressing issues in educational politics today.

From Ebb to Flood and Back Again

A few months ago, my partner and I moved north once again, this time to an isolated coastal community in British Columbia. I no longer teach English Language Arts, and I no longer work exclusively (although still predominantly) with Indigenous students. Riding the currents of substantial personal and professional changes, I have continued to reflect on policies, pedagogies, and identity in the context of a public school, teaching different subject content, and the particular Indigenous territory in which I now live and work. This recent relocation has once again represented several shifts for me, as well as yielded new and broader insights into—and prompted a recommitment to—the ongoing development of my professional identity as a "sama7"[1] educator in Indigenous contexts.

Although it has only been a few months, living and working in this new environment has borne both similar and additional questions and ideas to those that arose previously in Québec and southern British Columbia. In spite of the fact that the legacies of colonialism are ever-present in this and my previous communities of residence, so are this nation's resistances and efforts towards conscientization. Like the tides that lap the adjacent shores, I am beginning to consider how—as with my own questions and reflections on my contexts and roles—individual, community and organizational relationships to each other, as well as to colonization and neo-colonialism are constantly, though at times quite predictably, changing.

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[1] "Sama7" is an Interior Salish word meaning "white person." In my former school, the word was most commonly used in a derogatory manner, calling attention to the Nation's relationship with the colonizer/settler society. As such, many of my former students argued that I, as well as several other dominant-culture teachers, was actually not "sama7." This suggests that students felt that there was a need for another, more neutral word in their language for "white person." I contend through this thesis that, it is not possible to be neutral as a white, dominant-culture teacher.

While the tide is forever advancing toward or withdrawing from the local beaches, each day the timing and baggage of the tide is distinctly influenced by a number of factors. Likewise, the effects of colonization and the forces of resistance and change create a discernable rhythm in my new surroundings. Neo-colonial actions of government, school districts and other authorities bring about new injustice and ensuing resistance, all the while stirring up painful memories of the last few centuries. An example is the hard-won battle by the local First Nation's education council for an employment equity policy in the school district. The education council has argued that in a district of predominantly Indigenous students, the teaching staff should be more reflective of that population in order to assist in creating an educational experience that is responsive to the local cultures and epistemologies. Unfortunately, this goal has been undermined by both the policy's implementation and the policy text itself. The policy was established in 2010, but it has only a five-year exemption clause for hiring. Given that we are already two years in and have only increased our local staff by 1% in that time, this time limit severely restricts the process of change. Further, the policy's language allows the school district administration to interpret what constitutes "merit" in hiring. Therefore, although the policy states that it is intended to create fair and equitable representation in a district where about 65% of students are Indigenous, less than 10% of its teachers are members of the local First Nation. Thankfully however, community members and the local teachers' union are currently revisiting this issue and hope to compel the board to change the policy's wording. With each swell of activism and agency for cultural revitalization and culturally responsive education, it seems there is an equally powerful colonial undertow that sweeps away many of the programs and supports for new initiatives. My early reflections in my new home have left me swirling amidst all of

these forces, questioning in which direction I should be swimming as an educator, desperately trying to catch a glimpse of the bigger picture.

Arriving in this new context has also allowed me to recognize some of the limitations of my approach to my research questions, as well as shortcomings of the questions themselves. With some distance from my former community, I have begun to realize how a similar cadence of agency and resistance existed there as well. Moreover, due to the limitations in my frame of reference, I was not able to recognize the ebb and flow of change, nor the agency of the communities and sub-communities with whom I have previously lived and worked. My approach to my research questions from my own specific position as a white secondary English teacher in a couple of very distinct Indigenous communities further restricted my vision of the larger systems of schooling, education, and colonialism at play in my former communities, and their applicability to another context. Further, the focus of my research on teachers' roles and agency in the decolonization of Canadian education inevitably lacks understanding of the systems across all stakeholders and participants.

Naturally, the bigger picture of Indigenous education is of utmost importance to this author and study, especially as it relates to past and current policies, curricula, and teachers of Indigenous students. However, writing from my own experience is comparably valuable as an offering of a non-Indigenous practitioner's voice in the conversation regarding the decolonization of Canadian schools. Ultimately, individual educators' understandings of their roles in this process, as well as their approach to curricula, pedagogy, and relationships in schools will have a considerable effect on any effort to decolonize schools. The legacies and emergent manifestations of colonial encounters affect students through the daily interactions that transpire in schools and between the participants and elements of schooling (i.e., relationships,

curricula, pedagogies, and policies). As such, any change to the status quo must have its origins in the thoughts and actions of those involved most intimately in those interactions. In the concluding chapter of this thesis, I take up the strengths of this study, as well as the challenges posed by its limitations, and suggest directions for further research.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Current research on dominant-culture teachers' experiences in Indigenous contexts or with Indigenous students is decidedly limited. For this literature review, I was only able to find ten articles and chapters that addressed the topic as a primary concern. A few others investigated related topics such as curriculum, pedagogy, and experiences of other non-Indigenous professionals working with Indigenous peoples. To round out the literature on the broader themes of my study, I included articles and chapters which specifically consider educational policy in Indigenous contexts (or that impacts Indigenous students), decolonizing approaches to education, white teachers in other non-dominant settings, as well as cross-cultural relationships in education and teacher identity more generally. The scarcity of research on the experiences of dominant-culture educators working with Indigenous students is significant because as many as 94% of teachers of Indigenous students in Canada are members of the dominant culture (Kanu, 2005). Still, the literature puts forward valuable insights into being a dominant-culture educator and ally working with Indigenous students; furthermore, it illustrates the perspective this thesis adds to the body of literature that exists on the topic.

The ensuing review first considers the influences of colonialism in Indigenous educational contexts both past and present through the use of structures, policy, and curriculum. Next, I examine what the literature observes regarding the effects of Canadian policy on Indigenous education, both on national and school levels. These first two discussions also offer suggestions for the necessary elements for decolonizing education and educational policy. Third, I review the current prevalence and impacts of Western and ethnocentric curriculum and

pedagogy in Canadian schools, and especially in educational institutions in Indigenous contexts. Fourth, I discuss the agency of Indigenous peoples and governments in the struggle for control over education. Fifth, I consider teacher identity, its relevance, influences, and development, as well as specific frameworks for dominant-culture teacher identities. In this section, I further outline the importance of and possibilities for teacher agency and education in the process of identity construction. Sixth, I review what has already been documented about dominant-culture teachers in Indigenous contexts, both the challenges they face and pose within the context of Indigenous schooling, a well as recommendations for teacher training and reflection. Seventh, I offer an overview of the literature on cross-cultural relationships in education. This section addresses the need for relationships, ethics of and challenges to cross-cultural relationships, and practical implications for cultivating relationships in educational contexts. Finally, I discuss culturally responsive education, its curricular and pedagogical components, as well as associated implications for policymaking and teacher training.

Throughout my analysis, I remain focused on how each of these themes relates to the experience of being a white teacher, and the implications for school structures, policies, and most importantly, the further education and preparation of teachers to be accountable to Indigenous communities through their identity work, their relationships, and their pedagogies. I suggest through this review the need for more educators to reflect on and share their experiences and practices in Indigenous contexts and/or with Indigenous students. Since the vast majority of teachers of Indigenous students are non-Indigenous, the current efforts to decolonize Canadian schools are largely dependent on these teachers' understandings of Indigenous education, as well as their approaches and accountability to decolonization.

Colonialism Past and Present

Colonialism is a major concern in the study of Indigenous education, most especially when considering the current roles of dominant-culture educators in that education. Colonization of Indigenous education in Canada is widely accepted as having begun with policies for assimilation and the establishment of residential schools in the latter part of the 19th century. Nevertheless, the colonization of Indigenous education by European colonists arguably began the moment the settlers arrived; after all, it was in this historical moment that the definitions of knowledge, truth, and education in North America became bound up with the colonial mission.

Under colonial rule, members of the dominant, colonizing society have always controlled Indigenous education. Government policies for assimilation and control have stripped Indigenous peoples of their traditions and languages, and those historical actions have continued to subjugate through their powerful legacies. According to Battiste (1998), "through ill-conceived federal government policies Aboriginal peoples have been subjected to a combination of unquestionably powerful but profoundly debilitating forces of assimilation and colonization" (p. 19). Goulet (2001) adds that these "ill-conceived policies" were based on the colonial belief that Indigenous culture was inferior and impoverished. Battiste (1998) acknowledges this also, stating that these ideologies of inferiority were founded on manufactured Eurocentric[2] research. And while the policies themselves may have been legislated by the federal government, it was the dominant-culture teachers and administrators who, over the course of history, have been

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[2] I have used the term Eurocentric here, as it is the word chosen by the author. Wherever possible, I will use the term 'Western-centric' since these shortsighted and oppressive systems, although they may have roots in Europe, are perpetuated in many non-European locations the world over. Although the underlying principle of both terms (i.e., focusing on the superiority of one culture and/or value system to the exclusion of others) is basically the same, I distinguish Western-centric from Eurocentric only in how it maintains that all of Western culture is regarded as preeminent and not only European culture.

responsible for implementing these policies in the education of Indigenous students (Harper, 2004). In order to make sense of the histories of these colonial policies, their policy actors, and Indigenous education, Aitken (2005) urges that we consider "what is valued, what counts as knowledge, and whose understandings are powerful and influential in educational institutions" (p. 23). It is only through acknowledging the sordid histories of colonization that we may come to understand their effects on the present realities for Indigenous students in educational institutions.

Berger et al. (2006) explain the history of colonialism in schools in the Canadian Arctic in depth beginning with the establishment of day and residential schools in the 1950s and 60s. These were introduced as part of a strategic move by the federal government to ensure sovereignty, and required the relocation of Inuit families from small, seasonal dwellings to larger permanent communities based on capitalism and Western consumer culture. Regardless of the reason for relocation and assimilation into Western culture, the effects of this move are muchlike those described by many authors regarding colonization of Indigenous peoples: discrimination, loss of culture and language, as well as associated social problems (Berger et al., 2006; see also Hewitt, 2000; Piquemal, 2004). Perhaps the single greatest consequence of the effects of colonization, however, is the destruction of Indigenous peoples' identities (Piquemal, 2004). Indeed, St. Denis (2007) describes the colonial traditions and institutions as not only the root of identity politics in Indigenous communities, but as having "shaped ideas and practices of determining who belongs and how one belongs to Aboriginal communities" (p. 1072).

Many scholars in this review describe our history of colonialism as an insurmountable force that, through continued justification and legitimation, dominates both the Canadian educational system as well as individual schools. Berger et al. (2006), Goddard (2002), and St. Denis (2007) all discuss how normalized notions of settler superiority, power, and privilege have

justified colonization of Indigenous peoples both historically and within current dominant

society. Rasmussen (2009) laments how the Inuit struggle for language and culture rights has

been repeatedly denied by colonial forces. The force and influence of colonialism is so

overwhelming, according to these authors, that there may not be any recourse: "the framework

of Canadian society in which schools function is so powerful that the possibility of developing

real alternatives may be limited" (Ryan, 1989 as cited in Berger et al., 2006, p. 200). Aitken

(2005) reminds educators and policy actors within this system of our limited ability to effect

meaningful gains on colonialism's powerful hold on education:

> We are silenced by something greater—by the recognition that our best intentions and
>
> our hopes to love and nurture our students, cannot overcome forces that are greater than
>
> our individual desire. Such are the forces of the continued and evolving consequences
>
> of colonization, the results of a history that is not of our making. (p. 282)

There is substantial evidence to support scholars' claims that colonialism continues to

reign in Canadian classrooms. An out-dated colonial framework affects the curriculum, policies,

and the very structures of Canadian schools. Indeed, the Canadian system of education

continues to oppress and assimilate Indigenous students (Berger, 2007; Berger et al., 2006;

Deer, 2008; Goddard & Foster, 2002; Harper, 2004; Mason, 2008; Piquemal, 2004). As Goulet

(2001) notes, the effects of colonization are still present in individualistic mainstream Canadian

classrooms. Specifically, Kanu (2005) found that Indigenous community members' knowledge

is disrespected in three Winnipeg high schools, and concluded that this suppression constitutes

epistemological racism. And Aitken (2005) observed that dominant-culture teachers in one

school in Northern Québec tended to see the Indigenous community as a homogeneous whole

with characteristics of deficiency that contrast with their own. In addition to this racism and

oppression, two schools in Indigenous contexts in northern Alberta routinely privilege outsider perspectives over community in creating school goals (Goddard & Foster, 2002), such that "for Indigenous peoples, our invisibility continues, while Eurocentric education perpetuates our psychic disequilibrium" (Battiste, 1998, p. 21).

Racism as a structuring factor for the on-going colonization of Indigenous peoples often lacks sufficient attention in the current literature on Indigenous youth's experiences of both schooling (Hare & Pigeon, 2011) and culturally responsive schooling (Castagno & Brayboy, 2008). However, racism is widespread in Indigenous students' experiences of formal education, and takes numerous forms, including prejudicial assumptions and stereotypes, verbal and psychological violence, policies, low expectations, and biased curricula (Castagno & Brayboy, 2008; Hare & Pigeon, 2011, Hickling-Hudson & Ahlquist, 2003). The results of racism for Indigenous students are as diverse as the students; however, among some common effects are early school leaving, low self-esteem, and negative relationships with peers and teachers (Hare & Pidgeon, 2011). Indeed, as discussed in the preceding paragraph, the neo-colonial agenda is performed in classrooms in countless ways, and any discussion of Indigenous education must be placed in the context of continuous racism and oppression.

Teachers, curricula, and pedagogy are at the heart of this discussion due to their abilities to influence (both positively and negatively) the experiences of Indigenous youth in schools. The social studies department heads in Orlowski's (2008) study employed two main racial discourses in articulating their views of Indigenous students. After Frankenberg (1993), he found that the majority of the teachers framed Indigenous students and their relationships to the students as either essentialist (i.e., as relating to a genetic differences or inferiorities) or colour-blind, which included discourses of cultural inferiority (i.e., notions of cultures' suitability to "modern

culture"). Additionally, Orlowski's findings concurred with Frankenberg that colour-blind is also power-blind, since the social studies teachers denied and dismissed the history of colonization as having anything to do with the imperialist assumption of Western superiority. The teachers he interviewed contended that, "because there had always been so much past suffering, it was best to wipe the educational slate clean and carry on as if these events had never occurred" (Orlowski, 2008, p. 124). This is just one example of how teachers perpetuate racism in the British Columbian public school system. Certainly, there are countless other illustrations of racist curricula and resources as well; however, individual teachers have the autonomy to control how these are interpreted in their classrooms.

Racism and oppression are still undeniably complicit in the contemporary colonial project. Innumerable Indigenous students in schools across North America have experienced the dynamics of racism and their devastating results (Castagno & Brayboy, 2008; Hare & Pidgeon, 2011). Broadly, says St. Denis (2007), through schools' ongoing "implicit and explicit designations of Aboriginal people and their use of the land as inferior to that of the colonizer/settler, the racialization of Aboriginal people justified and continues to justify the colonization of Aboriginal people and their lands" (pp. 1071-1072). It is therefore crucial that educators understand how racism and oppression work to continue to colonize Indigenous students in schools (Castagno & Brayboy, 2008; Hare & Pidgeon, 2011; St. Denis, 2007). Insufficient attention to racism will effectively impede any attempt to implement culturally responsive curricula or pedagogies in schools (Castagno & Brayboy, 2008; Cleary & Peacock, 1998).

Although much of the literature has outlined both the grim history of assimilation and the strength of the ongoing colonial mission in Canadian education system, there is also a substantial

amount of research on decolonizing education, and more specifically, what actions may be required, and which cautions should be heeded, in the process. Donald (2009) suggests that decolonization will not be possible until Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples work together to understand both our history and our possibilities for the future: "Decolonization in the Canadian context can only occur when Aboriginal peoples and Canadians face each other across historic divides, deconstruct their shared past, and engage critically with the realization that their present and future is similarly tied together" (p. 5).

Berger et al. (2006) and Deer (2008) agree with this proposal to work with Indigenous communities towards mutual understanding and to engage in shared decision-making practices. Others further define this understanding between Indigenous and dominant-culture peoples as more of an acknowledgment of the right for First Nations and Inuit communities to control their education in the interests of cultural revitalization (Deer, 2008; Harper, 2000; Rasmussen, 2009). However, St. Denis (2007) cautions that although cultural revitalization has many positive outcomes, it can also create divisions within Indigenous communities: "Revitalization can lead to disparaging notions of cultural authenticity – creating a hierarchy of 'real', 'traditional', and 'assimilated'" (p. 1081). Given the explicit and implicit colonization that continues to be sustained within education systems and schools across the country, it is worth questioning the practices that are maintaining hegemonic control over education (Hanssen, 1998; Harper, 2004; Kanu, 2005).

Educational Policy and Indigenous Education

Several scholars point to national policies as responsible for the ongoing colonization of Canadian classrooms. Orlowski (2008) cites Canada's policy of multiculturalism as perpetuating

hegemonic rule and meritocracy through its emphases on sameness (around the capacity to succeed) and difference (concerning tolerance). The policy's erasure of historical struggles and conflicts between peoples leave classrooms void of discussion of topics such as colonization, ironically perpetuating it in the process. In Nunavut, Rasmussen (2009) notes that the Education Minister overruled democracy and law to serve colonial interests. Not only did the federal government not honour the Inuit land claim agreements regarding preservation of language and culture through program and hiring policies, they actively withheld information from Inuit negotiators. Battiste (1998) describes how federal government policy "restricts First Nations schools to … curriculum bias," which sustains "the legacy of cultural and linguistic imperialism" (p. 23). All across the country, government spending speaks to what is considered valuable: arctic sovereignty, natural resources, and the preservation of English and French as Canada's dominant languages (Rasmussen, 2009). Indeed, Rasmussen (2009) contends that the entire practice of policymaking is colonial; through its continued denial of Indigenous communities' participation, even in contexts where the vast majority of the population identifies itself as Indigenous, the policymaking process perpetuates colonialism in Indigenous education. Government policy clearly works to protect its most precious commodity, Western culture.

Of course the provincial and school policies also support colonial ambitions since "schools are not culturally neutral or value-neutral arenas but rather reflect the dissonances of the wider society" (Goddard & Foster, 2002, p. 4). Battiste (1998) and Aitken (2005) both describe how provincial policies and local school boards make decisions around education for Indigenous students. These decisions include enforcing the use of standardized provincial curricula and assessments that limit Indigenous content and pedagogy in Indigenous schools (Battiste, 1998; Berger et al., 2006). Often the schools' principals (in northern Alberta, for exmple) are caught in

between these external policymakers and the Indigenous communities they serve (Goddard & Foster, 2002). Kanu (2005) further argues that high school administrators in Winnipeg usually fail to include Indigenous knowledge and languages in the curriculum due to a tension between government pressure to improve school completion of Indigenous students and the self-interests of the white majority who want to maintain control over education and curriculum. Through provincially imposed standards and policies, as well as incentives to attract non-local (and mostly dominant-culture) teachers and administrators to implement them, Indigenous education, especially in the north, is at the mercy of a larger system of colonialism (Rasmussen, 2009).

In a review of the literature related to culturally responsive schooling for Indigenous youth, Castagno and Brayboy (2008) problematize the standardization in education systems as not meeting the needs of students within Indigenous contexts and insist that scholars have "amassed enough supporting research to convince educational leaders, policy makers, and financial officers that [culturally responsive schooling] needs a serious and sustained commitment" (p. 982). Indeed, several scholars agree that education in Indigenous communities based on local culture and languages is necessary and only achievable through community-created goals, curriculum, resources, and professional development (Berger, 2007; Berger et al., 2006; Goddard & Foster, 2002; Hanssen, 1998; Kanu, 2005). With a view toward decolonizing Indigenous education, Kanu (2005) provides a detailed list of recommendations regarding mandated curriculum development, school and district leadership, professional development for non-Indigenous education professionals and paraprofessionals, Indigenous teacher training, cultural resource persons, and school structures. The recommendations have their origins in Kanu's Winnipeg study, but they are meant to be generally useful to stakeholders and policymakers, including Indigenous communities, school administrators, researchers, teacher

educators, teachers, and all levels of government. As Goddard and Foster (2002) assert, policies concerning Indigenous education "must attend not only to the voices of the professional and educational elite but also to the voices of those who are generally marginalized, dispossessed, and ignored" (p. 15).

Western-centric Curriculum and Pedagogy

Not only are Indigenous communities largely excluded from participation in policymaking and school decisions, but also are they often not consulted on curriculum and pedagogy. Indeed, it would appear that little has been done to decolonize curriculum in Canadian schools. Governments, administrators, and teachers continue to assimilate Indigenous students by ignoring Indigenous languages and knowledge while endorsing Western-centric curriculum and pedagogy (Battiste, 1998; Berger, 2007; Deer, 2008; Goddard & Foster, 2002, Mason, 2008; Orlowski, 2008). Specifically, Donald (2009) explains how colonial logic has "served to enforce epistemological and social conformity to Eurowestern standards" (p. 23), and consequently, how these standards have become policy in the form of curriculum documents. Since Indigenous identities are tied to language (Deer, 2008), and "little has been done to preserve, protect, and promote the rights and freedoms of Aboriginal people to use, practice, and develop Aboriginal languages and knowledge in Canada through education" (Battiste, 1998, p. 20), colonialism and oppression are perpetuated through the use of culturally biased curriculum, pedagogy and resources.

Hewitt (2000) defines Western education systems as age-specific, culture-specific, utilitarian, conditioning, and as only happening in institutions. He also describes learning within these systems as "the acquisition of knowledge in measurable chunks, which the student is

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required to absorb like a sponge and then regurgitate at stipulated times" (p. 112). Although Hewitt's definition may be true of the banking model of education, it is a generalization that certainly does not encompass all Western systems of education. Nevertheless, in British Columbia and Québec, among other Canadian provinces, many secondary courses still require provincially set—and corrected—exams. Berger (2007) argues that this kind of Western assessment furthers colonialism by the use of exams and other measurements that are culturally inappropriate and biased. Goddard (2002) adds that, not only are the assessments prejudicial, but they influence curriculum and content also. Mason (2008) would agree. In her discussion of the *BC First Nations Studies 12* course, Mason states that courses and curriculum that include a long list of Western-style, content-based learning objectives and an exam force such courses to focus on examinable content instead.

Further, Western methods of teaching and learning often present knowledge as impersonal, fragmented, non-situated, and text-based (Battiste, 1998; Mason, 2008), and rarely connect to students' lives, leading to boredom, alienation, frustration, and low self-esteem (Berger et al., 2006). As Goddard and Foster (2002) observe, Indigenous students' experiences of cultural conflict in two northern Alberta communities are exacerbated by schools' Western-centric curriculum, which "did not reflect the life of the communities in any meaningful way" (p. 13). Moreover, Western ideals of literacy that are imposed on Indigenous students through Western-centric teaching methods, cause what Battiste (1986) terms "cultural and cognitive assimilation" of Indigenous peoples (as cited in Deer, 2008, p. 72).

The prevalence of culturally inappropriate, Western-centric curriculum is ubiquitous in Canadian schools (Battiste, 1998; Berger et al., 2006; Deer, 2008; Donald, 2009; Goddard, 2002; Goddard & Foster, 2002; Mason, 2008). As Battiste (1998) notes, "traditional academic studies

support and reinforce the Eurocentric contexts and consequences, ignoring Indigenous world views, knowledge, and thought, while claiming to have superior grounding in Eurocentric history, literature, and philosophy" (p. 22). With their focus on Western knowledge and theories of learning, provincial curricula largely ignore Indigenous language and culture (Battiste, 1998; Goddard, 2002; Goddard & Foster, 2002). While Battiste (1998) focuses on the underlying ideologies—namely that Indigenous languages and knowledge are not valuable—Goddard (2002) considers how those beliefs are represented in actual educational contexts. For example, his study revealed that teacher assistants with few resources often teach language and culture classes as prep periods in far off classrooms, while trained teachers present Western knowledge in regular classrooms. In the Winnipeg schools that Kanu (2005) researched, what little Indigenous content and language is practiced in mainstream curricula only pays lip service to inclusion. Despite agreeing that integration of Indigenous content is crucial,

> non-dominant teachers' additive and contributions approaches to the integration of Aboriginal perspectives, limited use of Aboriginal-centered resources and activities that appeared to have no effect on how non-Aboriginal students' viewed Aboriginal students, and their reasons for not integrating Aboriginal perspectives more consistently are all indicators of a token commitment to integration. (p. 57)

Some of the literature reviewed here suggests that schools' refusal to integrate Indigenous knowledge, language and pedagogy is based on the perceived neutrality and/or invisibility of Western culture. Goddard (2002) remarks that the schools and principals in his study (in northern Saskatchewan and Alberta) are not interested in changing curriculum since they believe that all students are the same and they all need to pass provincial exams: "there is the inherent ethnocentric perception that the Euro-Canadian curriculum is sufficient and appropriate for all

children" (p. 128). He further proposed that "misguided" northern teachers might be satisfied with continuing the status quo of neo-colonialism due to their beliefs that "education is culturally and politically neutral" (p.128). Orlowski's (2008) study of veteran social studies teachers interviewed in Vancouver produced similar findings; most of the teachers interviewed view curriculum as politically neutral and don't see the possibility or the ethics of teaching it from another perspective (p. 125). Schools, administrators, and teachers that work under the assumption that publicly funded and legislated education is value-neutral are likely unconsciously participating in what Harris (1990) refers to as "the hidden curriculum" which "undermines Aboriginal values" by imparting or implying Western ideologies about time, knowledge, and power (as cited in Hewitt, 2000, p. 113).

One of the most common reasons for the perpetuation of Western-centric curriculum and pedagogy in Canadian schools is schools' and teachers' lack of knowledge and/or understanding of Indigenous peoples, worldviews, and histories. Scholars identified mainstream schools and dominant-culture teachers as having inadequate knowledge about Indigenous cultures, pedagogy and curriculum (Hewitt, 2000; Orlowski, 2008; Taylor, 1995). And as such, Goddard & Foster (2002) claim that mainstream schools in two northern Alberta Indigenous communities are ignorant of their roles and responsibilities vis-à-vis the culture clash often experienced by their students. However, according to Donald (2009), this lack of understanding is a widespread and pervasive issue, and as such there remains a need for change across all schools, teachers and curriculum:

> The stories told to children in schools about Aboriginal peoples have been largely based on a Eurowestern theory of primitivism that unilaterally places Indigenousness outside comprehension and acknowledgment. Even though times have changed and public policy

priorities have shifted, and Indigenous ways are gaining some prominence in Canada,

these exclusionary colonial practices are still replicated and perpetuated. (p. 18)

Indigenous Agency

In a discussion focused largely on the force, effects, and prevalence of colonialism, as

well as on its effects on Indigenous peoples, it is important to acknowledge that despite

colonialism's influence, Indigenous communities, scholars, and policymakers continue to

demonstrate considerable agency in the struggle for decolonization. From the National Indian

Brotherhood (1972) education committee to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of

Indigenous Peoples (2007), as well as countless initiatives in between, Indigenous peoples have

long and successfully fought for their rights to self-determination both in Canada and globally

(Battiste, 1998; Harper, 2004; Rasmussen, 2009). And it hasn't been for naught. First Nations,

Métis, and Inuit struggles for self-determination and self-government have led to significant

changes including the Nisga'a treaty, the creation of the Nunavik territory, and forestry

management in Saskatchewan (Goulet, 2001). The social and political landscape is shifting,

contends Harper (2000, 2004); current efforts continue to yield ever more Indigenous control

over lands, education, and language and culture rights.

Although many Indigenous scholars in the field of education understand that they "do not

have to be put under a Western lens to be legitimized" (Battiste, 1998, p. 24), there is a

dissonance between what is widely considered knowledge in schools (i.e., Western knowledge

and worldviews) and Indigenous knowledge, philosophies, and languages (Battiste, 1998; Mason,

2008). Therefore, Battiste (1998) states, Indigenous agents "must find ways to schools and texts.

We must be actively part of the transformation of knowledge" (p. 24). And they are; Indigenous

agency is responsible for many victories on the path to decolonization. Citing a long list of

leading scholars on the topic, Harper (2000) confirms that:

> The efforts of Indigenous communities have resulted in greater control over curriculum
>
> and school policy, in the ongoing development of alternative teaching and administrative
>
> strategies, in the documentation of current and historical experiences of schooling, and on
>
> recovering the history and traditional philosophy of Aboriginal education. (p. 144)

In local school contexts, however, the voices of parents and Indigenous community members are

as important as scholarly research by Indigenous authors and policies informed by Indigenous

governments (Harper, 2004). Kanu's (2005) project mentions that one mainstream Manitoba

school has an Indigenous parent council, and that community members and elders are routinely

invited to consult on integrating Indigenous traditions into the school. Unfortunately, these

consultations still sometimes result in suppression and marginalization. Indeed, change is a

lengthy process, and it requires both practical and discursive reorganization of Indigenous

education on the part of Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples alike (Battiste, 1998; Harper,

2000, 2004; Taylor, 1995).

Ideally, Indigenous individuals and groups will continue to have an impact on both

mainstream and independent education and schools by continuing to argue for the inclusion of

their voice in policymaking and curriculum decisions (Berger, 2007; Berger et al., 2006; Harper,

2004; Rasmussen, 2009; Taylor, 1995). Their voices, however, though vitally important to

determining goals and objectives for Indigenous education, continue to be silenced by discourse,

policy, curriculum, and non-Indigenous staff: "the faulty assumption is often shared by everyone

that lengthy and strongly asserted opinions by non-Native teachers must be more valid than

concise and often plainly stated opinions of Native colleagues" (Taylor, 1995, p. 234). So long as

systemic racism continues to permeate schooling, the effort to replace dominant-culture teachers with Indigenous ones must continue (Harper, 2000). In the meantime, Taylor (1995) proposes "hiring people who are suitable to cross-cultural teaching" (p. 241). This echoes Cardinal's (1977) suggestion, many years earlier, of community-led training workshops for non-Indigenous teachers to "learn the culture, language, and history of the local community" (as cited in Deer, 2008, p. 75). Since Indigenous peoples have the right to participate in the decision-making regarding their children's education (Battiste, 1998; United Nations, 2006 in Berger, 2007), education systems and schools should not only be open to community consultation on matters concerning Indigenous education, they should actively encourage Indigenous agency and adapt to the needs of local communities (Berger et al., 2006).

Teacher Identity

Identity is a massive topic of discussion in educational literature, and in socio-cultural scholarship more generally. The literature reviewed here considers identity as it relates to teachers, and in particular dominant-culture teachers' identities in Indigenous contexts. How the literature defines identity, its importance, as well as its influences is examined here as background to the more immediately relevant implications of these aspects in Indigenous contexts and for teacher education. Ultimately, the subject of identity is far more extensive than could be covered in any one literature review. This is possibly due to the complexity and vastness of the project of human identity as a whole.

Many scholars consider a person's identity to be an active and non-static construction based on social, cultural and historical experiences (Aitken, 2005; Clarke, 2009; Day, Kington, Stobart, & Sammons, 2006; Harper, 2004; MacLure, 1993; St. Denis, 2007). Therefore, as these

scholars understand it, identities are not fixed; they are, as Day and colleagues (2006) describe, "a shifting amalgam of personal biography, culture, social influence and institutional values which may change according to role and circumstance" (p. 613). They may be temporarily perceived as fixed in the context of lived experience (Aitken, 2005), but they are both a dynamic process of understanding, and a product of how a person understands her or his experiences (Clarke, 2009; Day et al., 2006; St. Denis, 2007). MacLure (1993) proposes that identity cannot be explained; rather, she describes it as an agentic position from which individuals and peoples interpret themselves:

> identity should not be seen as a stable entity—something that people have—but as something that they use, to justify, explain and make sense of themselves in relation to other people, and to the contexts in which they operate. In other words, identity is a form of argument. (p. 316)

Applied to teachers then, we can understand identity as a series of interconnected and simultaneous positions that are formed by and that form relationships with discourses, histories, other people, and the self over time (Cooper & Olson, 1996 in Day et al., 2006; Harper, 2004).

If identities are constantly being developed and redeveloped through social interaction, Clarke (2009) claims that inherent to this process is the "idea that identities are ethical and political" (p. 189). As ethical and political actions and reactions, teachers' identities are considered to be of paramount importance to how—and whether—they interpret and perform the duties of their profession (Clarke, 2009; Day et al., 2006). Indeed, Day et al. (2006) hold that, during the implementation of educational reforms, failures in teacher recruitment and retention are directly related to a lack of attention to teacher identity. In remote contexts where teacher retention is already difficult, ignoring teacher identity can be even more risky. The realities of

transient, non-local teachers perpetuating colonialism in two northern Ontario communities make exploring dominant-culture teacher identity in these contexts particularly crucial (Harper, 2004).

According to Day, et al. (2006), teachers' shifting identities over the course of their careers are the result of their responses to two aspects of their experiences:

> mobilisations occur in the space between the 'structure' (of the relations between power and status) and 'agency' (in the influence which we and others can have); and it is the interaction between these which influences how teachers see themselves, i.e. their personal and professional identities. (p. 613)

Citing Beijaard (1995), Day et al. (2006) state that, more specifically, it is the subjects they teach, their extra-curricular involvement, and their relationships with students, school culture, dynamics, and policies that inform teachers' identities. They also suggest that teacher emotions could have considerable impact on identity and recommend further research in this area. In contrast, Aitken (2005) claims that teacher professional identity is not necessarily *influenced by* the context in which teachers teach, but that identities are *negotiated with* the "social and psychological dynamics of the context" (p. 152) and that the effects differ dramatically between individuals. MacLure (1993), on the other hand, suggests that while context influences a teacher, the teacher also simultaneously creates that context in line with his/her "network of personal concerns, values and aspirations against which events are judged and decisions made" (p. 314). MacLure also found through her study of 69 teachers in England that teachers might be experiencing a "crisis of identity" (p. 311), as there appears to be a "narrowing down of the range of options as to what a person may be or become, into a small set of coercive identities" (p. 321). These restricted possibilities for teacher identity, she claims, include professional identities which "emphasise deeds and conduct outside as well as inside the classroom: the reflective practitioner;

the self-actualising professional; the extended professional" (p. 320). Among others (such as

Aitken's (2005) 'the worthy teacher' identity), these specific and prescriptive identities certainly

also influence the forming and reforming of teachers' identities.

Four studies in this review consider the identities of dominant-culture women

professionals working in and with Indigenous communities (see also Tomkins, 1998). Three

studies deal specifically with white women teachers in the Canadian north (Aitken, 2005; Harper

2000, 2004), while the other discusses identities of white women counsellors in northern schools

(Wihak & Merali, 2007). While Wihak and Merali's (2007) study found that their non-

Indigenous participants in Nunavut became more aware of their status as members of the

dominant Western society and its role in a history of colonization after spending time in various

Inuit communities, the rest of their findings relate to participants' having developed untroubled,

appropriated identities characterized by shifts in their perceptions and worldviews toward those

of the Indigenous peoples with whom they worked. Harper's (2000) study found that white

teachers in non-dominant settings in northern Ontario "were struggling to define their work and

themselves in relation to the political, social, and geographical context in which they found

themselves" (p. 154). Like Wihak and Merali's counsellors, these women displayed an increased

awareness of their racial difference, and their sense of identity tended to be connected to the

histories of colonialism and oppression in the north.

Both Aitken (2005) and Harper (2004) take a more critical approach to their analyses of

dominant-culture teacher identities. Aitken's (2005) analysis of teachers in a northern Québec

school suggests that not all white teachers are willing to accept the colonial identity in

Indigenous contexts. The teachers in her study distanced themselves from the colonial power and

privilege elements of white identity. Aitken discusses the teachers' steadfast reliance on the

invisibility of whiteness in the construction of their identities. Indeed, their expressions of identity of both their selves and others appear fixed: the whole homogenous other against the whole homogenous self. The teachers in Aitken's study don't explore the notion that their selves and other selves are overlapping, conflicting, and decentralized by gender, ethnicity, class, etc. She further reports on how the teachers framed themselves as victims—that is, as trapped by both the education system and by the curriculum they deemed non-negotiable.

Harper (2004), in a study of 25 women teachers in the two northern Ontario fly-in communities, discusses the identities of white, non-local women who work in remote communities, and considers how teachers in her study can be categorized as embodying one of two specific identities: the pilgrim and the tourist/nomad. Harper contends that, "historically and discursively white women who travel, particularly those who travel independently to 'less civilized lands,' have been positioned outside the bounds of feminine normality" (p. 212). Outside of "feminine normality" then, Harper found that women's identities in these two northern Ontario contexts could be described in terms of their similarity to the "Lady Bountiful" pilgrim identity, the tourist identity, or both. Harper describes the "Lady Bountiful" identity as "the lady missionary teacher who was charged with the duty of 'improving' her indigenous students" (p. 214). Harper's teachers, however, trouble this definition with their consideration of the position as undesirable, while at the same time articulating their desires to *help* the Indigenous community to grow toward Western norms and standards. Unlike Aitken's (2005) teachers in northern Québec, the resultant tension for some of Harpers' teachers made it very difficult for them to legitimize their identities in northern Indigenous contexts. They needed to further define themselves by their professional "freedom and autonomy," and as being "somebody," in order to make the north a "credible" place for teacher to travel to (p. 216). The

tourist identity is based on the idea of the north as an exotic locale, populated by exotic "others," that is wholly different from one's home reality. Indeed, as Harper (2004) attests, "similarities to one's own culture and home community in terms of gender organizations or experiences need to be suppressed within this discourse in order to experience and celebrate the exotic" (p. 219), and in order to relate these exciting journeys to family and friends back home. Harper also notes that the transient nature of this identity is invoked by teachers in an effort to avoid the risk of "going Native" and to "defuse the possibility of losing one's self to the north" (p. 219). Similar to the teachers in Aitken's (2005) study, the "tourist teachers" in Harper's study position themselves outside of historical colonial relationships with Indigenous peoples:

> the discursive framing of the teacher here as the mother–teacher, a 'somebody' who students can depend on, neglects the history and racial construction of the 'white' mother–teacher and her contemporary and historical relationship with Aboriginal students and their communities. (Harper, 2004, p. 220)

There are several reasons why educators need to be engaged in the process of exploring and constructing their identities. Day et al. (2006) claim that a "positive sense of identity […] is important to maintaining self-esteem or self-efficacy, commitment to and a passion for teaching" (p. 604). Clarke (2009), on the other hand, contends that since "our work as teachers shapes and is shaped by the very mode of our being, … thinking about the formation of our identities is crucial for all of us in education" (p. 186). He further maintains that teacher agency is bound up with committing to "identity work," and that therefore teachers' willingness to engage in this process is related to "their potential for development and growth" (p. 187). And Day et al. (2006) agree that agency is linked to how teachers are able to deal with contradictions and uncertainties in and between their personal and professional lives. The benefits of personal and professional

development aside, given the relationships between education and student learning, and between education and the perpetuation of colonialism, all educators have "an ethical obligation to reflect on our identities and to engage to some degree in 'identity work'" (Clarke, 2009, p. 187). Phillips et al. (2007), in a discussion of Indigenous Australian Standpoint, also hold that identity is entangled in one's practice, and as such, educators must recognize and articulate their subject positions. As Dion (2007) notes, teachers developing their self-awareness is "a promising way to progressively transform relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in the Canadian education system" (p. 340).

Of course, engaging in what Clarke (2009) terms "identity work" is easier said than done. In order for this work to be both worthwhile and sustainable, it will require certain conditions, objectives, and approaches. In terms of necessary conditions, Aitken (2005) and Day et al. (2006) suggest that supportive school environments, as well as developing relationships with students and community are essential for teachers to carry out the work of identity (re)construction. Clarke (2009) adds that teachers must first and foremost be open to the idea that identity is never fully developed—it is "always the process of becoming" (p. 187). More than this, it requires a person to understand her or his subjectivity—that is, "knowing how one is constituted as a subject, subjectivated by different economies of power, the processes and practices that constitute ones' [*sic*] self as an enculturated self ..." (Wain, 2007 as cited in Clarke, 2009, p. 196). All of these learning objectives can be met, proposes Clarke (2009), using a framework for "identity work" following Foucault's work on the relationship to oneself. However, Dion (2007) urges teachers, and especially those in Indigenous contexts, to engage with critical pedagogy and reflection that may allow them to ethically re-examine their experiences, participation, and relationships with Indigenous peoples. Dion (2004) echoes that,

in order to recognize the colonial experiences of Indigenous peoples, non-Indigenous Canadians must acknowledge our relationship with Indigenous peoples within the construction of our "histories and cultures in both national and individual identities" (p. 59). Ethical learning, as it is defined by Simon, Rosenberg, and Eppert (2000), should compel educators into "a confrontation and 'reckoning' not only with stories of the past but also with 'ourselves' as we 'are' (historically, existentially, ethically) in the present" (as cited in Dion, 2007, p. 337).

Dominant-culture Teachers in Indigenous Contexts

Although I have already discussed non-Indigenous teachers in Indigenous contexts in several other sections of this literature review, it is worthwhile to discuss the literature more explicitly through this lens of analysis, since it offers more specific insights into the particular issues and effects of dominant-culture teachers working in Indigenous communities. It also considers many suggestions for dominant-culture teachers' professional development. As already stated, most teachers of Indigenous students are non-Indigenous and belong to the dominant, southern culture (Harper, 2000; Kanu, 2005). Several difficulties arise from this reality. The first is that the teachers in isolated and/or northern settings are often transient. As, Harper (2004) notes of the two communities she studied, "one of the major difficulties, administratively and pedagogically, with teachers is considered to be their high rate of turnover" (p. 211). To exacerbate this situation, Taylor (1995) describes how the administration in the two First Nation-run schools where he taught (and in many others that he visited) in Western Canada often did not pay much attention to the roles it wanted dominant-culture teachers to play in the school, and if it did, these thoughts were not made explicit. Therefore, Taylor found major discrepancies between how students and teachers viewed teachers' roles in the schools he studied. This

misunderstanding, combined with teaching methods imbedded with Western values, and insufficient knowledge of local culture, can cause conflict, judgment, and disrespect (Berger, 2007), such that dominant-culture teachers are frequently unable to communicate with students in "culturally compatible ways" (Berger et al., 2006, p. 197). The teachers, for their part, often experience culture shock (Harper, 2000), frustration with students' punctuality, attendance and achievement (Berger et al., 2006), lack of support or direction for culturally appropriate methods (Berger et al., 2006; Taylor, 1995), and struggle with Western curriculum and structures of schooling (Aitken, 2005; Berger et al., 2006). The effects of these circumstances are widespread; many dominant-culture teachers contribute to the erosion of Indigenous culture in community schools (Rasmussen, 2009; Taylor, 1995).

The above issues can partially be attributed to dominant-culture teachers'—like the curriculum's—lack of understanding of Indigenous peoples and their colonial relationship with them (Battiste, 1998; Berger et al., 2006; Dion, 2007; Hewitt, 2000; Kanu, 2005). Most teachers, according to Dion (2007), have inadequate knowledge of Indigenous peoples—they know only the dominant *romantic* and *imaginary* discourses. And when they realize that their knowledge is limited to stereotypes, many teachers "claim the position of 'perfect stranger' to Aboriginal people" (p. 330). Consequently, they are apt to readily identify their deficiencies in terms of preparation, education, training, or resources (Berger et al., 2006; Harper, 2000). To be sure, "most teachers in public schools have neither taken courses about and from Indigenous peoples nor developed awareness of cross-cultural realities" (Battiste, 1998, p. 22).

Despite an admitted shortfall in terms of cultural awareness, dominant-culture teachers still travel to isolated communities to live and work with Indigenous peoples. Why? Perhaps the

previous discussion of identity already answers this question. Nevertheless, Harper

(2004) describes it succinctly:

> The intensity of the desire 'to be somebody' and the dream of a space open and
>
> available to fulfil such desires, as well as the fantasy of the 'return home' that highlight
>
> both the fear and desire for the First Nations 'other,' suggests that gender and racial
>
> organization continue to impact powerfully on the lives of women teachers and their
>
> students who live in the Canadian north and no doubt in others [*sic*] sites of minority or
>
> multicultural education. (p. 222)

According to Orlowski (2008), such attitudes of teachers make them "hegemonic agents" (p.111)

who consciously or unconsciously influence the learning and success of Indigenous students.

Dominant-culture teachers can address their lack of knowledge and the subsequent

effects of their ignorance through self-reflection and learning about and from the communities

in which they work. Just as teachers need to be actively engaged in the construction of their

identities, they are also obliged to reflect on themselves—that is, to explore their feelings,

assumptions, privileges, and prejudices (Berger, 2007). Moreover, within this reflection, Dion

(2004) asserts that they need to investigate their "involvement in, and desire to maintain, an

understanding of history that supports the 'forgetting' of conditions of injustice (both past and

continuing)" (p. 61). After all, the colonial identity is hinged on the denial of history, and there

are several dominant stories in order to help dominant-culture teachers to do so (Dion, 2004).

Berger (2007) argues that, if non-Inuit teachers are to care and be successful in Inuit

communities, it is essential that they have self-knowledge, understand cultural differences and

demonstrate a "high level of commitment, but also reflection, growth, advocacy, and

collaboration with Inuit" (p. 1). Beyond the goals of self-knowledge and caring, Harper (2000), Piquemal (2004), and Taylor (1995) caution dominant-culture teachers to reflect carefully on their motives for teaching in Indigenous contexts, and suggest that they avoid using them, for example, to gain experience.

Dominant-culture teachers working in Indigenous communities, or with Indigenous students, need to learn not only about culture, traditions, and languages, but also about colonialism and its legacies of oppression: "more powerful than [teachers'] knowledge of cultural difference is their knowledge of the big picture – the context of socioeconomic and cultural op-presssion [*sic*] of Native Americans" (Hermes, 2005 as cited in St. Denis, 2007, p. 1086). Berger (2007), Dion (2004, 2007), and Rasmussen (2009) agree. All three scholars note that dominant-culture teachers need to learn and respond to the historical, social and political relationships that exist between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. Harper (2000) suggests not only that non-local teachers should be required to learn about the shared colonial history, but that it is imperative that they define their work in accordance with the Indigenous community. In the effort to develop themselves as educators in conformity with Indigenous communities' culture and history, dominant-culture teachers should seek to learn culturally responsive teaching methods and traditional pedagogies from the local community (Berger, 2007; Berger et al., 2006; Harper, 2000; Wihak & Merali, 2007). Piquemal (2004) advocates that teachers in cross-cultural circumstances should learn how to teach in "culturally sensitive ways" from their students (p. 11).

Cross-cultural Relationships in Education

Relationships have been discussed here at length in terms of the need for dominant-culture teachers to understand the relationships between colonialism and Indigenous education,

and between colonialism and Indigenous peoples. Considering these relationships, this section highlights some of the literature on cultivating ethical cross-cultural relationships in education, specifically with respect to the relationships between Indigenous peoples and members of the dominant culture.

In order to understand the research on teacher relationships, however, we must first address what is meant by "relationality" in Indigenous contexts. Several scholars have explained this concept with clarity, including Cordova (2004), Richardson (2007), and Wilson (2004). Wilson (2004) describes the significance of relationship for Indigenous peoples as being the relationship itself, as opposed to an external perspective of being in relation to something. Identity for Indigenous peoples, he continues, is "grounded in their relationships to the land, with their ancestors who have returned to the land, and with future generations who will come into being on the land" (p. 155). In terms of relationships with ideas, Wilson states that knowledge is always situated in the connections formed with our surrounding environment, and that these relationships are as sacred as all other relationships in our daily lives.

Richardson (2007), in an essay about Vine Deloria Jr., similarly articulates that, traditionally for Indigenous peoples, the study of relationships is at the heart of all understandings of the world. Deloria's philosophy, in Richardson's interpretation, suggests that there is a cycle of maturation in the study of these connections that "dissolves the distinction between knowing and being" (p. 226) such as to experience developing in relation to the world, as well as the emotions associated with that development. Eventually, says Richardson of Delorian philosophy, there is maturation from the level of knowledge to the level of wisdom. Wisdom is defined here as being contingent on "the acceptance of responsibility to maintain the relationships necessary for sustaining life" (p. 227). This definition is not unlike Smith's (1999,

2008) and Grande's (2008) calls for relationship to be paramount in decolonizing research methodologies. Wilson's (2004) discussion of "relational accountability" in which researchers are accountable to their relationships across all levels of research is a further connection to this idea.

The fundamental difference between Western and Indigenous philosophy is the Indigenous philosopher's understanding that the definition of the collective is based on equality, an acknowledgement of human beings' dependence on the natural world, and the absence of hierarchy (Cordova, 2004). Cordova (2004) holds that this combination of understandings, when united with the recognition that human beings are but an element of a larger entity, leads to "a complete ethical system" (p.177). As with Richardson (2007) and Wilson's (2004) studies, Cordova's ethical system calls for the recognition of the consequences of one's actions. She calls this the "We-factor," and in her view, this would greatly improve Western ethical systems. She describes the connection between Indigenous relationships and accountability with the following image:

> If one imagines we in a circle of its own unity surrounded by circles maintaining their own unity, perhaps the concept of human action as a pebble dropped into a pond would have more meaning. No pebble can be dropped into a pond without its ripples encountering other ripples and those ripples having consequences through their encounters. (p. 181)

Piquemal (2004) maintains the view that teachers' relationships with students must be established before curriculum can be taught, but further, that teachers have a responsibility to create these relationships through what she calls "relational teaching" (p. 3). She argues that if teachers don't pay attention to the relational foundation of their role, students will suffer;

ethically, as Cordova (2004) similarly suggests, teachers must understand "teaching as a relational endeavour" (p. 8). Donald (2009) shares this urgent perspective. In his view, "the curricular and pedagogical enactment of ethical forms of relationality has become a matter of survival" (p. 19). For Donald, ethical relationality is about understanding how all human beings' pasts, presents and futures are intertwined and exist in relation to one another, and therefore, thinking and acting in ways that respect these relationships.

Piquemal's (2004) paper is based on her study of kindergarten students in a First Nation-operated school in Manitoba, and is also inspired by a colleague's work in Manitoba, Alberta, and Nevada. The article offers a specific framework for ethical cross-cultural relationships with Indigenous peoples in educational settings, and in particular, teacher-student relationships. Her position is based on four principles, which include

1) a commitment to difference, or to the "relational other," as defined by Lévinas (1981);

2) a respect for persons as defined by Kant (1956); 3) a commitment to reciprocity as defined by Buber (1970); and 4) a sense of care as defined by Noddings (1986). (p. 3)

Piquemal argues that these principles are to be used as a guide for actual lived encounters in diverse educational contexts. The relational position she promotes for educators involves "dialogic experiences" that "support the development of a caring, respectful, yet reflective and critical, learning community" (p. 15). In her view, relationships should be the most pressing and important issue for teachers in any context, but most especially in cross-cultural contexts.

If it is an ethical imperative to develop relational teaching, then it is important to note the barriers that were identified by scholars in this review. Forming relationships can be difficult to be sure, and Indigenous-dominant culture relationships come with a particular set of associated challenges. Indeed, as Berger (2007) points out, there is a singular risk of continuing colonialism

through these relationships. Piquemal (2004) reminds educators of the power relationship between students and teachers, and suggests that in Indigenous contexts especially, teachers must be aware of it, and create classroom spaces where this relation doesn't interfere with students' own identities and empowerment. In Harper's (2000) study, she discusses how teachers' struggles with their positions as women, as outsiders, as white, and as transient all affected their abilities to form relationships in these two northern Ontario communities. In Aitken's (2005) research in northern Québec, it wasn't teachers' preoccupations with their own difference that challenged relationship building, but their perceptions of rigid divisions between the Indigenous community and the white town where the teachers reside. According to Aitken, the white teachers "explore the broad strokes of divisions within the communities, however, behind the preoccupation with division, is the painful notion of the personal failure to connect" (p. 101). However, Taylor (1995) argues that dominant-culture teachers in the two First Nation-run schools where he taught actually isolated themselves from Indigenous communities, and in doing so, communicated a (perhaps unintended) message of rejection to students and the community.

Difficulties with communication also play a role in hindering connection. Harper's (2000) teachers reported finding it challenging to understand and negotiate with administration and administrative structures. These challenges could be explained by what Taylor (1995), based on his experiences in two Indigenous schools in Western Canada, concludes to be a cultural misunderstanding due to high and low-context cultures. In his view, when a set of understandings is common to a group of people in a particular place, little needs to be explained to members of the group; much of the knowledge about school functions and decisions is implicit in high-context cultures such as many Indigenous cultures. By contrast, dominant, Western-centric society is low-context, not associated with a particular place, and therefore

requires much greater attention to explaining school protocols and governance structures. In order for the cross-cultural relationships to work in Indigenous contexts, Harper (2000) advocates the need for schools to organize and clarify relationships in the school and the community.

Several scholars similarly espouse the responsibilities involved in relationship building. Not only are schools responsible for setting up conditions for developing effective relationships, but dominant-culture educators also have a duty to work in solidarity with Indigenous peoples to decolonize schools (Goulet, 2001; Orlowski, 2008; Piquemal, 2004). There are several key features of working in solidarity towards mutual and ethical relationships in schools. First and foremost, Piquemal (2004) promotes the requirements that non-Indigenous educators recognize and respect students' identities, and that they develop relationships on the basis of trust and reciprocity. Taylor (1995) agrees with Piquemal and states that without trust between students and teachers, learning cannot take place. Goulet (2001) adds that healthy and effective relationships between students and teachers have warmth, caring, sensitivity, humour, and trust, as well as high expectations. Involvement in the community, both in a physical and curricular sense, is also considered necessary for strong student-teacher relationships in the particular Indigenous contexts studied by Piquemal (2004) and Taylor (2005). In terms of collegial relationships, Piquemal (2004) suggests that dominant-culture teachers "adopt a 'reverse' deficit model, and view themselves as lacking the cultural knowledge that is necessary to successfully relate to, and thus successfully teach" (p. 10) Indigenous students. She further advocates that teachers become ethnographers of cross-cultural relationships in order to facilitate their learning. This would coincide with Richardson (2007) and Wilson's (2004) notions that the study of relationships is at the core of understanding. Undoubtedly dominant-culture teachers have much

work to do in order to adapt to a relational stance that promotes decolonization, and these teachers need help to do so (Hanssen, 1998). St. Denis (2007) urges teachers to work together to unpack histories of colonialism, dedicate themselves to anti-racist education, as well as to serve as role models for students.

Culturally Responsive Education

The ways in which policies, schools, and teachers continue to colonize Indigenous students in Canadian education have been extensively discussed. Likewise, some authors' ideas about the actions that can be taken in order to decolonize education have been presented in terms of policies, relationships, and teaching methods. Still, culturally relevant and/or responsive curricula and pedagogies remain the most discussed, and most researched areas of the suggested strategies for decolonization. It is therefore worth exploring the literature on these topics separately and in greater depth. This final section of the review examines culturally responsive curricula, describes elements of effective curricula and pedagogies for Indigenous students in specific contexts, and discusses the implications for teacher education/training and policymaking.

Some authors in this review describe culturally relevant knowledge for Indigenous education as incompatible with Western systems due to its immeasurability (according to Eurocentric traditions), its cooperative worldview (in contrast to a Western manipulative one), and its interconnectedness with land, history, animals, and the Creator (Deer, 2008; Hewitt, 2000). The assimilation and oppression of Indigenous worldviews, histories, traditions, and languages through Western-centric curricula and pedagogies have led to a movement to incorporate these missing elements into schools, a move which has been "an immense healing process for many Aboriginal people" (St. Denis, 2007). Indigenous groups and individuals have

promoted the need for culturally relevant and compatible curricula for years, and therefore, programming already exists in several areas in North America (Castagno & Brayboy, 2008; Goddard, 2002; Kanu, 2005; Mason, 2008).

However, culturally relevant curricula and pedagogies are still far from being part of mainstream schooling, and they also do not address the entirety of the disconnection of Indigenous youth from their educational institutions. One reason for the divide that exists between Indigenous and Western knowledge systems in northern Saskatchewan and Alberta schools is that, while many communities have developed ethnoculturally relevant curricula, few have shared their efforts outside of their immediate communities (Goddard, 2002). It is not clear whether this is an act of resistance, that is, an effort to prevent repeated misappropriation by colonial forces, or not (Goddard, 2002). I raise this possibility not without reason. Mason (2008) describes the unfortunate adaptation of the *First Nations Studies 12* course in British Columbia in an effort for the course to be deemed legitimate in the mainstream education system. The course was developed locally in several communities across BC and was initially culturally relevant and responsive. Once it became a standardized course, however, it focused solely on Indigenous content while employing Western pedagogy, structures, and assessments. Ultimately though, complete cultural integration into the curriculum will not confront the racism that exists for Indigenous students in mainstream schools and in broader society (St. Denis, 2007). St. Denis advocates for mainstream education to commit also to anti-racist education in order to attend to the colonization of Indigenous peoples through the education system.

Culturally responsive curricula and pedagogies have been characterized by a focus on specific teaching methods to ethically engage students (Aitken, 2005; Berger, 2007; Berger et al., 2006; Mason, 2008), Indigenous cultural traditions and languages (Battiste, 1998; Goulet, 2001;

Hewitt, 2000; Kanu, 2005), as well as necessary shifts in perspective on the part of teachers and administrators (Berger et al., 2006; Deer, 2008; Donald, 2009; Goulet, 2001; Mason, 2008), all of which need to occur with consideration for a particular context or contexts. Several authors agree that culturally responsive pedagogy should be focused on local cultural traditions, be cross-curricular, student-centred and driven, flexible and include opportunities for freedom and experiential learning, and above all, it should be integrated through structural change within a school or community, not as an add-on (Aitken, 2005; Berger et al., 2006; Goulet, 2001; Mason, 2008). Effective education based on Indigenous languages and cultural perspectives is also necessary for student learning, community-school relationships, and for decolonization (Battiste, 1998; Goulet, 2001; Hewitt, 2000; Kanu, 2005). In addition to teachers learning about new and appropriate methods and resources, addressing language and culture successfully involves incorporating the local traditional and contemporary culture(s), recognizing students' culture(s) as an asset and a strength, and preparing students for the contemporary world with their languages and cultural identities intact (Goulet, 2001). Moreover, cultural identities cannot be developed without education for Indigenous students addressing their specific histories and relationships of colonization and oppression (Berger et al., 2006; Donald, 2009; Goulet, 2001; Mason, 2008). Education for decolonization must be "framed in the complexity of colonization" (Goulet, 2001, p. 68) and work to dismantle "the privilege ascribed to Eurocentric ways of thinking and being" (Mason, 2008, p. 147). As such, Mason (2008) claims that culturally responsive teaching is not possible unless teachers shift their perspectives about the nature of knowledge: "In order to engage in decolonial teaching, educators must undergo a *decolonial epistemic shift* in their own classrooms by challenging Eurocentric conceptions of knowledge and learning" (p. 148, emphasis in original).

All of the abovementioned requirements can be quite overwhelming for dominant-culture educators. In fact, Aitken (2005) and Harper (2000) both found that white women teachers in northern Indigenous contexts felt unprepared for the curricular and pedagogical needs they were expected to address. Castagno & Brayboy (2008) and Kanu (2005) argue that teacher education and training in the area of culturally responsive schooling is fundamentally important if meaningful change is to occur for Indigenous students. Yet, as Aitken (2005) wonders, "what kind of preparation will help a teacher to deal with the lingering vibrations of our colonial past" (p. 301)?

According to Taylor (1995), this professional training needs to be addressed by teachers themselves, teacher education, and band administration. Harper (2004), Orlowski (2008), and Piquemal (2004) point first to the responsibilities of teacher education programs in this task. These programs should encourage pre-service teachers to examine their desires and fantasies (Harper, 2004), deconstruct colonial discourses of power (Orlowski, 2008), and discuss ethical issues and relationships in education (Piquemal, 2004). Once in professional environments, teachers should be required to actively learn local Indigenous languages (Battiste, 1998) and advocate for Indigenous rights to self-determination; neutrality is not an option (Berger, 2007). Additionally, dominant-culture teachers need to work at equalizing power relations in order to become an effective ally (Goulet, 2001; St. Denis, 2007). To do so, they will need to learn about colonization and learn how to recognize its ongoing effects, challenge discrimination and stereotypes, share power with students, and pursue community support and involvement in curricular and pedagogical decisions (Goulet, 2001). St. Denis (2007) argues that dominant-culture educators need to be accountable to the work of identifying how white identity is still

normalized as superior in public schools today, and form alliances to develop strategies for anti-racist education.

Teachers, Indigenous and dominant-culture alike, will need to be supported in their efforts to decolonize education for Indigenous students. Decolonization requires shifts in the perspectives of policymakers at the federal, provincial, and school levels, as well as of Indigenous communities. Battiste (1998) contends that a postcolonial framework is needed in this effort, and that this cannot be achieved without "Indigenous people's renewing and reconstructing the principles underlying their own world view, environment, languages, and how these construct our humanity" (p. 24). St. Denis (2007) addresses the necessary shifts more specifically. She maintains that cultural revitalization often perpetuates the colonial practice of blaming the victim:

> in the case of Abori-ginal [*sic*] students, failure was attributed to Aboriginal students who arrived at school with too much culture, especially culture that was incongruent with dominant school culture. More recently, Aboriginal student failure is attributed to students who do not have enough culture, or who have lost their culture. (p. 1080)

Along the same lines, several theorists ague that policymakers will need to transform structure, systems, as well as curriculum through widespread reform in order for culturally responsive and decolonizing education to become a reality (Berger, 2007; Harper, 2000; Kanu, 2005; Mason, 2008). Successful transformations will need to be developed and implemented from the ground up with pressure from local communities and educators, and in consultation with Indigenous stakeholders and elders (Berger, 2007; Harper, 2000; Mason, 2008). Reformed policies would allow teachers the freedom to adapt curriculum and pedagogy to local contexts

without a risk of censure (Berger, 2007) in order to further support full integration and infusion of cultural knowledge across the curriculum (Kanu, 2005).

Conclusion

While this literature discusses scholars' views on colonization, policy, dominant-culture identity, cross-cultural relationships, Indigenous agency, Western-centric and culturally responsive education at some length, much of what is presented illustrates a broad picture of dominant-culture teachers' experience in Indigenous contexts. Nevertheless, a number of implications can be derived from this literature for dominant-culture educators working in and with Indigenous communities. Of particular note are the roles and positions that dominant-culture teachers should take up in classrooms, schools, and communities. By working in Indigenous settings, they are ultimately responsible for committing to, and advocating for, decolonizing education through research, reflection, participation, relationship building, and professional development. Still, more studies are needed especially in the areas of teachers' perceptions of curriculum changes (Kanu, 2005), as well as current education models and practices in Indigenous communities (Castagno & Brayboy, 2008).

As a white teacher who has worked with Indigenous communities for over six years, my research is particularly relevant to the gaps identified by Castagno and Brayboy (2008) and Kanu (2005). My reflections examine the colonial and decolonizing policies, curriculum, pedagogies, and relationships that exist, and that should exist, in Indigenous community schools. These observations and assessments also explore dominant-culture teacher identity and perception of curriculum, as well as teachers' roles in decolonizing education. In addition, in approaching these topics from a first-person perspective, my experiences offer a primary account of a

dominant-culture teacher's perceptions of professional and ethical practice in Indigenous

contexts. Given that the vast majority of educators currently working with Indigenous students in

Canada are non-Indigenous and of the dominant culture, this point of view offers much support

for the limited research that has already been published on this topic. Moreover, it contributes

new insights to the most pressing issues in Indigenous education.

CHAPTER THREE

PUSHED OUT AND LOCKED OUT:
PARTICIPATING IN THE NEO-COLONIAL PROJECT

Prior to moving to British Columbia in 2007, I was a secondary English Language Arts
and Visual Arts teacher on an Innu reserve in northern Québec. Since I first stepped off the nine-
seater plane onto the subarctic terrain of the Innu people, the experience has continued to
represent major shifts in my self-awareness, as well as my understandings of colonization,
teachers' roles, and the purposes of education. In the years since I left the school, I have come to
recognize my time there as transformative. During my first year of graduate studies, I viewed the
school and its participants through a policy lens, a perspective that provided rich insights into the
experiences of my first year and half teaching. The analyses that I made at the time are intended
to present a historical perspective on my development as a new teacher. While the original essay
remains unchanged for the most part, I have incorporated some recent scholarship to strengthen
the research.

Mise en Scène

4:00 p.m.

here i sit,
staring out my blotchy window fingerprints and smears
patterned across the outer panes - remnants of evening visitors
not wanting to go home.

here i sit,
locked in by heavy chains
clanging against the doors - rejection echoes in silence:

entry denied.
we don't care where you are
after 4:00 p.m.

I wrote *4:00 p.m.* approximately six years ago, while I still lived and worked in northern Québec. And although I probably wouldn't choose to classify this poem and its particular realizations as transformative, I think it is a good example of a positional shift, the sequences and sums of which constitute the processes of change. In terms of working towards equity and justice in the world, this shift, when combined with many other moments of insight, can transform consciousness. At least that is how it has happened in my experience. This poem illustrates one particular shift in my awareness of my power as a teacher, a member of the dominant culture, a formally educated person, and as a policy actor. It moved me from an understanding of how privilege enables/disables me as an individual, to a small first-hand glimpse of the power of this privilege to colonize, to marginalize, and to deny entry to those defined as "Other," such as the students of Manaim Memorial School.[3]

Upon the completion of my final Bachelor of Education practicum at MMS, I was left with the very disappointing impression that the school was not meeting the needs of the community. Not a single student graduated the year I first arrived, and although that is unusual, the average number of graduates per year is only about three or four. Obviously, the system is failing its students in this context. One of the many reasons I accepted a position at the school upon my own graduation was that I believed I had something to contribute. At the time however, I did not give much thought to how I would go about determining the needs of the students. I am still not sure whether I could ever know definitively.

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[3] Manaim Memorial School' is a fictitious name in order to protect the identities of the school's staff and students. 'MMS' will be used as an acronym.

Reading policy theory has enabled me to contextualize the many questions I had emerging from my teaching experience in a policy framework. Several texts have each contributed to my analysis of MMS' policies and practices. Specifically, Berger, Epp, and Møller's (2006) article was the impetus for this chapter, as they describe the power of dominant society's policies and practices on Nunavut schools and students. Rasmussen (2009) takes up this discussion as well, but focuses particularly on the territory's Education Act as the policy that is denying Inuit rights to education. Holding that educational practice is complex, McNeil and Coppola (2006) consider the necessary components of good policy impact studies, stressing that these must address both the official, intended impacts, as well as unofficial impacts, which includes unequal power relations. Levinson, Sutton, and Winstead (2009) further consider a critical approach to practicing policy in their article, highlighting the concepts of appropriation and authorization in the practices of creating and implementing policy. Finally, Wotherspoon and Schissel (2001), along with Battiste, Bell, & Findlay (2002), describe how structures and policies in educational settings (not unlike the one I experienced) create barriers for Indigenous students through their adherence to colonial relationships.

These articles and chapters have allowed me to step back from the frustration I felt with the school and the system in order to understand how my experiences, as well as the students', were shaped by the multi-levelled policies under which the school and its classrooms functioned. I have come to understand that my former school was significantly influenced by several simultaneous policy settings, including: the school itself, the school board, this particular Innu Nation, the provincial Ministry of Education, Sport and Leisure, and Federal policies such as the Northeastern Québec Agreement. Despite these distinct multiple policy settings however, and with the acknowledgment that the settings surely influence each other, this chapter focuses

specifically on my experiences with the localized policies of the school and their participants.

Connecting Theory and Practice

While struggling to make sense of my frustration with my former school's policies that effectively pushed and literally locked students out of the school, one article in particular sparked an emotional response that catalyzed this reflective analysis. Berger et al.'s (2006) examination of Nunavut school policies provides evidence of how the specific culture clashes or, I hesitate to suggest, cultural ignorance and assimilationist practices of southern-Canadian modeled schools in northern Indigenous settings continue to fail not only students, but teachers as well. Based on an admittedly culturally inappropriate research project[4], Berger et al. (2006) describe the power of dominant society's norms and practices on the success of Nunavut schools. The authors describe in detail outsider frustrations with students' punctuality, attendance and achievement due to culture clash, inadequate curriculum and resources, lack of teacher training, and continued colonial practices. The imposition of 'standard' time, and standardized testing are two examples this article gives of how 'Qallunaat' (southern-Canadian modeled) schools are ignoring the cultural particularity and injustice of the values they hold as 'universal'.

The issues the authors describe are tragically familiar. My former school imposed time-regulating rules to both staff and students: the administrators required all (and only) Innu staff to sign in and out, and secondary students were refused entry to class if they were more than ten

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[4]   Berger et al. (2006) describe their research project as being culturally inappropriate, since it did not seek the counsel of the Inuit communities wherein the research was conducted. The authors recognize this, and speak from the perspective of non-Inuit 'outsiders' and teachers in the schools. Nevertheless, as Tuhiwai Smith (1999) writes, these types of research projects are "a significant site of struggle between the interests and ways of knowing of the West and the interests and ways of resisting the Other" (p. 2).

minutes late, or miss more than a certain number of classes. The school is also an ESL

environment where non-Innu teachers were given neither cultural orientation nor ESL training

and were told to use the culturally inappropriate curriculum and resources provided by the

southern school board and provincial Ministry of Education. Furthermore, the students' ability to

graduate from high school was contingent on passing a set of standardized provincial exams.

Consequently, the school's graduation rate was approximately 15%.[5] Although some non-Innu

teachers in the school strove to recognize the needs of their students within a rigid colonialist

framework, they were few, and nevertheless lacked the resources, training and support to do so

effectively.

As summarized above, the predictable challenges of 'Qallunaat' schools in Nunavut that

Berger et al. describe were particularly reminiscent of policies developed both by and for

Manaim Memorial. Upon coming on board at MMS as a full-fledged teacher, several other new

teachers and I were required to attend a two-hour meeting outlining MMS policies on lateness,

absenteeism, discipline and remediation. We were advised of the rationality of these policies

based on the community's and students' issues. The 4:00 p.m. lock-out policy was not even

mentioned, promoting an impression that it was considered 'common sense' by the school's

administration. McNeil and Coppola (2006) deconstruct assumptions of policy as inevitable and

rational in education by warning that policies are often tools to further "larger social, economic,

or political agendas" (p. 685). Although it can be argued that Manaim Memorial's policies were

most likely in response to non-Innu teachers' frustrations with students' punctuality, attendance

and achievement (Berger et al., 2006), McNeil and Coppola's caution suggests that a larger

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[5]   Average class size at MMS for each year of (K-11) schooling is 20 students; the
average graduating class is 3 to 4 students. This statistic, while not documented, and
therefore not 'accurate', is striking in comparison with the provincial graduation rate of
78.6% in 2003 (Statistics Canada, 2005).

project of control, assimilation and colonization underlies them.

McNeil and Coppola's statement is not unique in critical policy studies. Since policy studies often offer a myopic view of the ways in which policies are actually implemented and assessed, Levinson et al. (2011) argue that policies should instead be understood as social practices, particularly as "practices of power." Their analysis describes how "even in the most apparently democratic polity or institution, [policy] codifies and extends the interests of those who disproportionately wield power" (p. 769). They further contend that in considering policy as the practice of power, there are all sorts of discussions that emerge around resistance to the exertion of power and power inequalities. Levinson et al. attempt, therefore, to demonstrate why viewing policy as a sociocultural practice of power is necessary for democracy.

Of particular interest to my analysis is Levinson et al.'s (2011) proposal of the concept of "appropriation" in policy implementation. They discuss how policy actors interpret and internalize parts of policies, "thereby incorporating these discursive resources into their own schemes of interest, motivation, and action" (p. 779). As a result, official or "authorized" policies often incorporate these unofficial interactions of specific policy actors. Indeed, the administrative policies at Manaim Memorial could have been implemented following the school administrators' interpretations and internalizations of the policies, and thus taken on these actors' interests in rigid frameworks to cope with frustrations with student behaviours.

Policies for assimilation

Policies that mediated students' behaviours such as attendance, lateness, discipline, as well as the 4:00 p.m. lock-out, tended to escalate the targeted behavioural concerns in some students, while frustrating and disenchanting others. The attendance policy did not improve

turnout in my fall semester English class, especially when combined with a lateness policy that denied students entry to the class after ten minutes. It was not unusual to hear students express anger toward teachers who rigidly enforced the policies. More often than not, eighteen-year-old students sent to the office for being twelve minutes late would storm out of the school and not return for a couple of days, thereby missing another eight classes and exacerbating their attendance record. Apparently the students' responses to said policies were not all that predictable (Berger et al., 2006) to administrators who, beyond the initial development of the policies, continued to restrict their flexibility and implement harsher punishment for disobedience throughout the school year. These unofficial or unauthorized versions of the official district policies can be understood as resulting from the school's administration appropriation of these policies to suit their own purposes in this context (Levinson et al., 2011).

After losing a student permanently to the attendance policy, I decided that no amount of administrative hand-slapping was worth the guilt of refusing students access to school. I found that since English was scheduled at 8:30 a.m., flexibility on punctuality and allowing students to 'make up' classes after school was more effective in retaining students until the end of term. Since my students were nearing the end of their secondary education, they tended to be dedicated students who were determined to graduate, despite the challenges they faced both in and out of school. I readily did anything I could do to help them achieve this goal: from welcoming students at any time during the class, to welcoming assignments right up until the day before report cards were due, to assessing them only on their completed projects, to providing coffee and hot chocolate each morning. Whether this was ethical, or whether it was actually in the best interests of my students, I am still not sure. As a result of my experience, I have developed the attitude that 'professionalism' is highly dependent on the context. Sometimes teachers need to

circumvent policies that may be responsible for, or at least contribute to, high attrition. That is how I soothe my conscience, in any event.

My subversion of administrative discipline policies notwithstanding, I did not stage a revolution, or feel comfortable calling the policies into question in staff meetings full of strict dominant-culture teachers, determined to maintain control of the rapidly declining student population. My actions represent a resistance to policies that practiced colonial power in this context, and indeed an appropriation of the policies as well (Levinson et al., 2011). Since I interpreted the policies as furthering a neo-colonial agenda, I informally altered the policy to suit my motivations. Although these steps as an individual policy actor may have helped a few students, I was nevertheless complicit in the colonial project—a project that was so pervasive in the school, that it was rationalized through the use of said authorized policies. In defining one form of oppression as cultural imperialism, Young (1990) states that it "involves the universalization of a dominant group's experience and culture, and its establishment as the norm" (p. 59). Flexibility does not dismantle a system that continues to impose the dominant group's standards and perspectives of what constitutes education.

Curricula of concern

Curriculum, teaching methods and resources at Manaim Memorial effectively furthered the school's assimilationist practices, as well as its pushing out of students by ignoring the cultural context in which it exists. Although a curriculum for Innu language instruction in the primary grades was being developed, at the high school level an emphasis on southern culture and content remained across all subject areas. The school's library was full of books about white kids in California and New York, and History classes focused on the French experience of

settling in Québec. From the capitalist values promoted by the provincial curriculum's section on "Citizenship and Community Life," to Eurocentric and Christian definitions of "morality" in the chapter on "Moral and Religious Education," Innu traditions and culture continued to be both silenced and replaced by the dominant culture.

Furthermore, the teachers' delivery of this curriculum was negligent to the local epistemology. Marker (2006) puts this process succinctly:

> The mainstream culture of the classroom silences both the native voice and a deeper cross-cultural reflection. Because the schools privilege a form of knowledge that presumes the cultural neutrality of science and technology, indigenous ecological understandings are dismissed as exotic, but irrelevant, distraction. (p. 483)

Western-centric courses, as well as teachers, flown in from all over the southern reaches of the country, contributed to the erosion of local culture within the school. The situation is comparable to that in Nunavut where, Rasmussen (2009) notes, since a majority of teachers come from Newfoundland, they impart the culture of Newfoundland, thereby contributing to ongoing colonization and to the construction of "*Newfoundvut*" through education (p. 79).

Regrettably, even the strides of the local Innu Education Committee to counteract some of this supremacy have been severely hampered by the community's history of education. Although an Innu curriculum office has worked tirelessly to create an Innu language curriculum, for instance, the school is unable to hire enough instructors to teach it. According to the Cultural Liason at the school, since previous generations were educated in residential and off-reserve public schools, many Innus have lost the abilities both to speak fluently and to write syllabics (Daisy Noya, personal communication, November, 2006). Furthermore, similar to the Inuit struggle Rasmussen (2009) describes, the Innus' long struggle for language and culture has been

repeatedly denied by policies that continue to be developed both locally and afar without the participation of the community, thereby perpetuating colonization (p. 75). Lenore Keeshig-Tobias' *Of Hating, Hurting and Coming to Terms With the English Language* (2003) reminds me that recovery is long and painful project, especially when identity is inextricably linked to language.

For my part, I struggled to destabilize a curriculum that undermined cultural epistemology, traditions and values, while simultaneously preparing students to meet the requirements of the provincial English Language Arts exam which reinforces the values and perspectives of dominant society. As a European, Judeo-Christian descendant, this task represented a substantial internal conflict. I condemned several of my non-Innu colleagues for their blatant ignorance of the context in which we were working, and would routinely describe them as possessing inadequate awareness of its educational issues and history to teach in meaningful, non-culturally transformative ways. At the same time, I questioned on what authority I thought I should, or even could, act otherwise. In what position was I to make judgements about what was, or was not culturally relevant? Was it even possible for me to recognize the culturally transformative practices that were, as a result of the dominant culture by which I was educated, inherent in my teaching?

Redefining Success: Implications for Action

Despite the sickening feeling that I unwittingly played a part in MMS' colonial project, I still believe reflective resistance and action is preferable to complacency. However, in the case of MMS, "good intentions" won't cut it. The push-out rate is evidence enough that the provincial curriculum's "Success for All" tag does not include these students. The meaning of the phrase,

and methods of attaining said 'success' must be adapted to suit a multitude of purposes for education, most especially those marginalized by the system. The lasting effects of the policies on former students of the school, as well as future generations, represent an urgent need for the dominant culture's teachers and administrators to heed the ways in which they resist reforming, and actually perpetuate colonialist, assimilationist practices (Battiste, Bell, & Findlay, 2002) at Manaim Memorial School.

Having had the privilege of distance from the school and community to which I became quite attached, it appears to me that the school and community would benefit greatly by collectively imagining how the school could function otherwise (Greene, 1995). If high school teachers and administrators could release their needs for control over students, they may become sensitive to the fact that one of the community's goals for its education, in the opinion of an Innu elder and curriculum developer, is linguistic and cultural revitalization (Elsa Nancee[6], personal communication, March, 2007). The possibility of such revitalization, however, hinges on many more locally trained teachers, and therefore perhaps locally based teacher training should be considered. The community might examine, as Rasmussen (2009) does in Nunavut, the cost of the southern school board hiring non-local teachers with expensive incentives. In the context of northern Québec also, this money could surely provide the locally based teacher training that Rasmussen proposes (p. 78). Regardless of the community's current and future actions to support the revitalization of Innu language and culture however, it is necessary for current policy makers and actors to envision their positions as temporary; lasting only until enough Innu students graduate and continue on to become the teachers and administrators of the school.

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[6] "Elsa Nancee" is a pseudonym used to protect the identity of my former colleague. She has consented to her comments being used for the purposes of this thesis.

Until this future is realized however, the non-local staff of Manaim Memorial should work collaboratively with the community and students to effect major changes in the official policies, curriculum and methods they currently employ. Looking to First Nations and Inuit schools which abstain from enacting policies and frameworks of domination, and which instead encourage collaborative policymaking and the taking up of an approach which acknowledges Levinson et al.'s (2011) notion that policies are practices of power within a sociocultural context), may be a good place to start for the policy makers at MMS. The programs and practices proposed by Wotherspoon and Schissel (2001), such as peer mentorship, are other recommendations I would make to MMS' community members and current administrators. For teachers, developing their capacities to question and appreciate alternative ways of knowing and being without assimilating difference (Ellsworth, 1992) is key to beginning a dialogue in their currently monological, monocultural classrooms. Dominant-culture teachers striving to recognize their own cultural biases may find it exceedingly challenging to support students in resisting assimilation. To succeed in this project, they will not only need to be constantly engaged in reflection on their practices and classroom policies, it will be essential to seek counsel on cultural traditions, place-based pedagogies, and Innu epistemology from the community they serve.

Although I have no immediate plans to return to Manaim Memorial, the insights I have gained through my reading, analysis, and process of critical reflection have, and will undoubtedly continue to serve me in my educational practice. Not only do these new understandings allow me to glimpse the mechanisms by which schooling continues to colonize and assimilate Indigenous students, it represents yet another positional shift: from subverting the system, to actively endeavouring to break the chains that bind it in place. More than ever, I am

passionately committed to working in solidarity with Indigenous communities in the struggle to

decolonize Canadian schools.

CHAPTER FOUR

TOWARD A PEDAGOGY OF RELATIONALITY:
INTERPRETING INDIGENOUS CURRICULA

*"Through the study of First Peoples literature, all students—Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal—
can gain insight into the diverse factors that have shaped and continue to shape their identities."*
~ English 12 First Peoples Integrated Resource Package (2008, p. 11)

Recently, a number of culturally responsive curricula have been developed in Canadian

public education as a result of the agency of several Indigenous organizations, most notably

FNESC[7]. As a consequence of European settlement in Canada, the United States, Australia, New

Zealand, and Norway, among other countries, European values have dominated these societies'

ideologies and education systems for centuries. At the same time, the ongoing conscious and

unconscious attitudes of European superiority have oppressed and marginalized the Indigenous

populations of these countries through laws, customs, and curricula (Hickling-Hudson &

Ahlquist, 2003; Tahman, 2001). In resistance to the continued assimilation of Indigenous

peoples through the authoritative curricula in Canadian public schools, Indigenous communities,

supported by FNESC in British Columbia, began to develop their own curricula to respond to the

educational goals of their communities as early as the 1980s (Mason, 2008). Today, this agency

on the part of Indigenous communities has resulted in a changing landscape of Indigenous

education. New curricula, pedagogical guides, resources, and course requirements for pre-service

teacher candidates are all contributing to the decolonization of education in British Columbia.

Some curricula, such as a handful developed in British Columbia since 2006, have been created

in collaboration with provincial governments, have become part of the Ministry of Education's

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[7] First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC) is an organization committed
to improving schooling for Indigenous peoples of British Columbia, Canada.

examinable courses, and can be completed by students in the fulfillment of secondary school graduation requirements. English 12 First Peoples is one such curriculum.

While these curricula represent significant steps toward culturally responsive education for Indigenous peoples of British Columbia, they cannot, as documents in and of themselves, be successful in what Graham Hingangaroa Smith (2003), following Freire (1970), describes as "conscientization." Curricula are read, interpreted and enacted by teachers in innumerable ways, and students' experiences are dependent on the teachers' interpretations, the context in which they live and attend school, and the students' own interpretations. The influence of these particular curricula, as well as other similar culturally responsive courses offered elsewhere, will be largely determined by the teachers' professional self-reflection, their relationships to the texts and students, and the pedagogies they practice.

In September 2008, I accepted a position as a teacher in a First Nation-operated school in coastal British Columbia, Canada. Three weeks into the school year, I was asked to teach senior English. The course the school would like to offer, the principal advised me, was the British Columbia Ministry of Education and FNESC's new English 12 First Peoples. Since I first opened its teacher's guide, the experience of teaching this course has continued to represent major shifts in my awareness and construction of my identity, as well as my understandings of the purposes of education, teachers' roles, pedagogy and relationality.

This chapter is, like the preceding one, a historical document of my attempt to contextualize my experiences as a white teacher teaching this new, Indigenous-centred curriculum. More specifically, I attempt to understand the multiple ways in which I read and interpreted the curriculum hermeneutically, based on the work of Gadamer, and supplement those analyses with David Heath Justice's and Niigonwedon James Sinclair's writings on

Indigenous literary theory. This interpretation will include my reading of the English 12 First Peoples curriculum and accompanying teacher's guide, the course texts, as well as my students, as texts themselves, in their roles in this course. Viewing the course and its participants through a hermeneutical lens provides insights into the challenges and responsibilities for teachers in teaching Indigenous students and culturally responsive curricula nationally and internationally, as well as in working with the B.C. English 12 First Peoples curriculum particularly. Following Conle (1999) and Conle et al.'s (2000) arguments for the role of interpretation through teacher self-study, my analysis of my practice suggests pedagogical approaches that could strengthen secondary courses' interpretive processes, as well as the possibilities for meaning among their various readers and texts.

In seeking to gain a deeper understanding of my pedagogical situation, it has been infinitely useful to consider Gadamer's (2001) statement that "all understanding is already interpretation" (p. 37). The idea that the concepts of understanding and interpretation are inextricably linked informs the learning goals of many English Language Arts curricula in Canada, whereby students gain insight and understanding through the study and analysis of literature. Further, Gadamer's (1960/1989) claim that "understanding must be conceived as part of the event in which meaning occurs" (pp. 164-165) suggests that the relationship between the reader and text is central to the interpretive process, and that meaning occurs in the event of these encounters. Indeed, a self-professed 'key feature', or objective, of the English 12 First Peoples curriculum (2008) is exemplified in the quote: "through the study of First Peoples literature, all students—Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal—can gain insight into the diverse factors that have shaped and continue to shape their identities" (p. 11). As is suggested by several Indigenous scholars (e.g. Cordova, 2004; Richardson, 2007; Wilson, 2004), these factors, or relationships,

should be the central focus of all research, and therefore suggests that meaning takes place in meetings between readers (students) and texts (literature). A hermeneutical approach to the many simultaneous meanings arising from interpretation seems to befit a senior English course, which aims to enable students to interpret various literary texts.

Finding the best ideological fit to describe the hermeneutical processes occurring in my pedagogical position(s) also involves what Gadamer (1960/1989) terms *'horizons'*. As Gadamer points out, describing a situation entails "acquiring the right horizon of inquiry for the questions evoked by the encounter with tradition" (p. 302). A horizon is essentially the scene against which an event, or an encounter between reader and text, can be discerned and given meaning. So, readers do not simply "understand" a text, as is often assumed; rather, interpretation attends to the gaps that separate reader and text and which are made visible by the conversation between the two. Therefore, understanding is produced in the gap that divides the reader's context (i.e., her or his history, experiences, prejudices, values, and worldviews) from that of the text. Wilson (2004) identifies these "gaps" as the spaces in which relationships exist between the reader and elements of their environments. At the same time, he draws attention to the notion that space or place for many Indigenous peoples is more important than Western concepts of time. In Gadamer's (1960/1989) words, "the horizon of the present cannot be formed without the past. … *[U]nderstanding is always the fusion of these horizons supposedly existing by themselves"* (p. 306, emphasis in original).

Coming to understand the meaning produced by the fusion of horizons requires that a reader acknowledge the three aspects of hermeneutics. Firstly, according to Gadamer (2001), one must get one's head around the notion that language is representation: words are not themselves the objects they stand for; they are non-static carriers of meaning (p. 37). Hermeneutics is also,

as previously mentioned, the process of interpreting or translating a text, wherein meaning is produced. As Ricoeur (1970) similarly describes this process of interpretation, he also stretches the definition of text to include, "a group of signs that may be viewed as a text" (p. 8). In this case, the groups of signs that are interpreted also include visual language and the interactions between students. Gadamer (2001) credits Heidegger and Dilthey with the third 'moment' of hermeneutical inquiry, that of self-understanding, which he describes as the 'application' part of the process: "the hermeneutical process involves not only the moments of understanding and of interpretation but also the moment of application; that is to say, understanding *oneself* is a part of this process" (p. 37, emphasis added).

Teacher as Reader

The idea that the hermeneutical process involves an understanding of oneself is a good place to start my inquiry into my pedagogical situation. However, even attempting to understand my own context necessitates that it be viewed as a text, creating a distance between it and myself as reader. Thus, even self-understanding is, in and of itself, a hermeneutical process; a process that will never allow me to grasp myself-as-text entirely, or indeed inhabit the entire 'great horizon' of meaning. Only the fusion of my horizon with another horizon will produce meaning which is capable of being understood, and then, only in part: "no one knows himself or herself. We always already have a certain character; no one is a blank sheet of paper" (Gadamer, 2001, p. 43). Wilson (2004) describes identity as the relationship with one's surroundings, and Richardson (2007) states that in Delorian philosophy, this identity matures into being (understood as growing from knowing) the relationship. These concepts seem appropriately

included here, as they suggest alternative possibilities for the development of one's identity (i.e., with the ultimate goal of *being*, rather than *understanding*).

The horizon of the present, that is to say the background against which I attempt to understand myself in a given moment, is particular and fluid. As Gadamer (1960/1989) states, "a hermeneutical situation is determined by the prejudices that we bring with us. They constitute, then, the horizon of a particular present, for they represent that beyond which it is impossible to see" (p. 306). My interpretation then, is influenced by past interpretations and encounters which have changed my horizon. Moreover, it is limited by the fact that I cannot step outside of those experiences; I am limited by my horizon of the present. It is not, however, fixed; it is an on-going process of recognizing and evaluating these prejudices as they affect interpretations. However, it should be noted that the term "prejudice," different from its everyday usage, should be understood here as pre-judgments, which do not necessarily carry a negative connotation. "The horizon of the present is continually in the process of being formed because we are continually having to test all our prejudices" (p. 306). Moreover, this process is necessary since, as Sinclair and Eigenbrod (2009) contend, non-Indigenous interpretations of texts are only useful if these interpreters recognize their differences as:

> not only cultural illiteracy but also complicity in the history of colonialism. That difference means that they are aware of assumptions around cultural productions that are embedded in colonial ideologies and Eurowestern epistemologies and are expected to work on their gaps of knowledge of Indigenous frameworks. (p. 9)

In my own self-interpretation, then, I will look first to my past for a sense of the 'historicity' of my prejudices, that is, the historical effect of my experiences (including those with colonialism), beliefs, and values on my particular understanding of my context.

The most immediate pre-judgments that I bring to the hermeneutical situation of my classroom and teaching are the particular effects of my age, gender, racialized ethnicity, economic status, sexual orientation, educational experiences, as well as my religious, ontological, and epistemological beliefs which arise not only as conscious choices, but out of the colonial paradigms in which I have lived and been educated. My less accessible pre-judgments include the effects of these factors and histories on my interpretation of a curricular text, my students, or myself. As a young white woman, I must constantly remind myself of the depth of my ignorance vis-à-vis the Indigenous context in which I work. With this in mind, I can begin to understand how having grown up in a stable home, with parents who believed in the benefits of public education (and who are not residential school survivors), relatively isolated from extended family, and always having enough food to eat, as well as extras such as music lessons and an abundance of extra-curricular opportunities, has created a particular picture of a 'normal' self by which to compare others. This 'normal' would not be problematic if it were not for the implicit hierarchy of privilege contained within it. According to Cordova (2004), recognition of differences is ethical, but the classification of those differences as unequal human beings is not.

The extent to which I held up my particular context as truth was challenged when, at 16, I travelled to the former East Germany, which, at that time, had only recently been reunified with West Germany. There are moments in every education, where one encounters new knowledge, truths or perspectives that are incompatible with what one previously believed about the world. Having attended school in the Cold War-influenced 1980s, I had learned about the Iron Curtain and the so-called 'horrors of Communism.' When I encountered another understanding and experience of the Berlin Wall and all that it represented through my relationship with my host family, I was shocked into recognizing all that I did not know. Ann Diller (1998), with reference

the "torpedo-fish"[8]—a metaphor that as been used to describe Socrates' teaching method—

describes these instances as 'torpefying' experiences: shocking the learner into realizing that they

do not know what they thought they knew (p. 1). My experiences living with an East-German

family for six months 'torpefied' me; the revelation that there are multiple perspectives of any

given situation deepened my desire to question all that I had been taught.

In my Bachelor's degree I furthered this project through courses and assignments that

compelled me to face my 'invisible knapsack' of privilege (McIntosh, 1998). While this

questioning of experiences, values, beliefs, and assumptions did help me to identify the

prejudices I brought to my understanding of situations and processes, at the time I believed that it

was possible to uncover all my expectations. A dangerous position, to be sure. Imagining, or

pondering privileges did not cause me to confront my pre-judgments in an actual fusion of

horizons: it was only a hypothetical analysis performed at a safe distance within a university

library—the pinnacle of the context I was attempting to understand. Still, as Gadamer (2001)

attests, it is the characteristics resulting from an engagement with our contexts (socialization)

that make it possible for us to expand our horizons: "these characteristics imprinted on our minds

open up our horizons, and of course also limit them. But it is only through them that we have a

horizon at all and are able to encounter something that broadens our horizon" (p. 43). Consistent

with this philosophy, Wilson (2004) and Richardson (2007) would identify these experiences as

the study of our relationships to our surroundings, and as such, the source of knowledge.

It was not until I moved to and taught in a small community in northern Québec that I

became aware of the *event* of understanding in actual lived situations, as it pertained to my

encounters with the local histories, students, staff, policies, and curricula. Although I 'went

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[8] The "torpedo fish" is a type of electric ray that stuns those it contacts.

North' with the complete understanding that much would be unknown, and likely surprisingly so, I was once again shocked by the disturbance of knowledge I had taken for granted. I could not have predicted all the pre-judgments that became visible as I reflected on the meanings and purposes of education, schooling, community, and colonization in this small First Nations village where I lived and taught for almost two years. Examples of these disruptions to my knowledge, or *positional shifts*, include a deepening awareness of my power as a teacher, as a member of the dominant culture, as a formally educated person, and as a policy actor. It moved me from an understanding of how privilege enables/disables me as an individual, to a small first-hand glimpse of the power of this privilege to colonize, to marginalize, and to deny entry to those defined as 'other', such as the students of the small northern school. As the horizon shifted from tundra to alpine, and as I found myself in another small First Nations school in coastal B.C., the resultant insights I continued to glean from my experiences in the sub-arctic became the pre-judgments I brought to my next pedagogical context.

Interpreting the Curriculum

Having only previously taught in public schools in Québec, Canada, where the curriculum, teaching methods and resources effectively sustained the dominance of mainstream Western-centric capitalist worldviews and epistemologies, it has been both refreshing and humbling to work in a First Nation-run school where local culture and language learning and revitalization are not only recognized, but integrated into all aspects of school life. It seems fitting that this school would choose to pilot new curricular initiatives that honour Indigenous heritage, epistemologies, and worldviews, such as English 12 First Peoples.

However, engaging a white teacher to implement it would appear to limit the course's potential to reach the goals it espouses. The course curriculum states that students should have opportunities to both "discern the connections between particular texts and worldviews that are characteristically part of the outlook of many First Peoples," and to "experience (read, view, listen to, respond to, and write about) texts in ways that are consistent with First Peoples pedagogical approaches" (FNESC and British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2008, p. 12). As a member of the dominant culture who has not only been educated by the dominant school system for almost thirty years, but also been an educator in that same system, I have assimilated the teaching and learning principles of the dominant culture, not to mention its worldviews and pedagogies, even as I may simultaneously question and critique them. Is it even possible for me to recognize the colonizing pedagogies that are, as a result of the dominant culture by which I was educated, inherent in my teaching? Even as a reflective, considerate, and conscientious teacher attempting to guide students towards meeting the curricular requirements of the course, how can I possibly ensure that students are "experience[ing]…texts in ways that are consistent with First Peoples pedagogical approaches" without first having learned, practiced and internalized those approaches?

These are lenses of my experience that bring some of my (now visible) pre-judgments to bear on the reading of this curriculum. However, it is necessary to keep in mind Gadamer's (2001) claim that it is "possible for prejudgments to play a positive role in understanding" (p. 43), as well as Sinclair and Eigenbrod's (2009) contention that as a non-Indigenous researcher, I must heed my colonial histories and prejudices in order to ethically participate in research regarding Indigenous texts. Since my particular prejudices question my knowledge and abilities to practice what is outside my realm of experience, they are helpful cautions. Nevertheless, even with

consideration for the gap between my own context and the English 12 First Peoples curriculum, I have yet to come to a fusion of horizons, or to what Pappas and Cowling (2003) call a "genuine hermeneutic understanding" (p. 204). Such interpretation involves, as Georgia Warnke (1987) explains, "a transformation of the initial positions of both text and interpreter," such that "a consensus over meanings…reveals new dimensions of *die Sache* (the "matter at hand")" (p. 107).

Rather, to fully engage in the hermeneutical process of reading this curriculum, I must, as Gadamer (1979) suggests, "let what is alienated by the character of the written word or by the character of *being distantiated by cultural or historical distances* speak again" (p. 83). Therefore, while the curriculum does not necessarily prepare me to teach with First Peoples pedagogy described as "holistic, reflexive, reflective, experiential, and relational" (English 12 First Peoples Teacher Resource Guide, p. 11), it may suggest new directions and methods to consider in planning for, delivering, and assessing instruction. Indeed, as I understand it, this document proposes that the aforementioned processes themselves should be rethought in order to best reflect First Peoples principles of learning. For example, the curriculum states that one element of pedagogy often employed by First Peoples is "a recognition of the value of group process (for example, being especially sensitive to the time it takes for groups to come to consensus)" (FNESC and British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2008, p. 12). The implications (stated both here and elsewhere in the curriculum and teacher's guide) that learning takes patience and time and is non co-optive, are already at odds with immense pressures within the Canadian public school system to cover all the Prescribed Learning Outcomes within an academic year.[9]

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[9] According to a colleague who both teaches and is a secondary school department head in a neighboring public school district, in order to prepare students for provincial exams, there is no time in tightly-scheduled core academic courses for divergence from course content. "Divergence," in her opinion, would include many experiential and reflective approaches listed in the English 12 First Peoples curriculum as First Peoples principles of learning.

Further, both the school's supervisor of instruction and the district principal have expressed their disapproval of reading and writing assignments that involve students in decision- making with statements such as, "by the time they choose, they could have been finished already," and "you don't ask them, you tell them." Such comments about the time I dedicate to achieving consensus indicate that there could be a measure of discomfort among some educators and administrators with many of the ideas emerging from the English 12 First Peoples curriculum, or at least my interpretation and application of these. I have encountered particularly strong resistance to my application of the ideas that, (1) learning need not necessarily be planned linearly, (2) knowledge can be discovered by students' own learning processes, rather than imparted directly by the teacher, and (3) each person's voice within the learning environment, including the teacher's, is of equal value. This last point refers to Cordova's (2004) notion that Western systems perceive hierarchies between humans, and therefore also create power imbalances. However, my understanding and consequent actions with respect to the principles the curriculum promotes signals that I have interpreted these in terms of my background in a teacher education programme that was based on Constructivist Learning Theory (as conceived by Dewey, Piaget, and Vygotsky, among others), which supposes that learners actively construct meaning socially and independently within experiences and over time, and that teaching therefore, must be learner-centred (von Glasersfeld, 1989).

However much I may attempt to situate my understanding in my lived experiences, Gadamerian hermeneutics does not provide a platform for questioning or critiquing these interpretations within the gendered or political consequences of their application (Pappas & Cowling, 2003, p. 213). Given that I am not able to understand First Peoples pedagogical approaches and apply them as they would perhaps be employed in the local community, I should

also not essentialize these methods as constituting a static category. To dismiss the pedagogy and

principles contained within the document as wholly unknowable, also violently relegates these

ideas to the margins. Judith Butler (1993) proposes that to "ameliorate and rework this violence,

it is necessary to learn a double movement: to invoke the category, and, hence, provisionally to

institute an identity and at the same time to open the category as a site of permanent political

contest" (as cited in Pappas & Cowling, 2003, p. 215). Her advice is particularly relevant to

engaging in a category ('First Peoples English') constructed by the curriculum itself. For

instance, the *English 12 First Peoples Teacher Resource Guide* (2008) states that the class

should use talking circles for various purposes throughout the course (pp. 27-28). When

considering holding them in my classroom I reflected on both the value of this model for the

course's intended learning outcomes, and the risk that this would be an impertinent appropriation

of First Peoples cultural practice.[10]   Sinclair (2010) similarly argues for analyses of texts that

recognize their social and historical contexts. "*Indigenous literatures have specific spatial and*

historical relations, based in individual and collective Indigenous subjectivities, and these

should not be separated in any criticism that purports to interpret, explore, and/or describe them"

(pp. 27-28, emphasis in original). The text of the teacher's guide then, should be considered in

light of the particular community in which I practice. Ultimately, in attempting to honour the

pedagogy, while also recognizing the inherent power imbalance that prevents authentic dialogue

(Pappas & Cowling, 2003, p. 213), I adapted the lesson guide in order to account for my position

in these surroundings. Since many of my students are already familiar with circles as a method

of communication and conflict resolution, have used them extensively with local community

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[10]   As a non-Indigenous person, hosting a circle, which is a cultural practice specific to some
First Peoples communities, including the one in which I teach, would seem to ignore ethical
consequences of what Pappas & Cowling (2003) describe as "remain[ing] indifferent to the
social and political implications of hermeneutical practice" (p. 213).

members, and are adept at discerning under what circumstances talking circles are appropriate, I have asked them to take leadership roles in the implementation of this element of the curriculum.

As I continue to read and interpret the English 12 First Peoples curriculum and its accompanying teacher's guide, I remind myself that it is but an on-going conversation; as Warnke (1987) contends, "a constitutive act of communication that is both *partial* and *situated*" (p. 107). The meanings I derive from these texts are necessarily both mediated by my lived experiences, and fraught with the *power differentials* of my actions on their account. Letting the text "speak" therefore, as Gadamer recommends, would suggest that any application of the curriculum document (2008), which states that students should be able to "discern the connections between particular texts and worldviews that are characteristically part of the outlook of many First Peoples" (p. 12), must not only take the socio-political dimensions of First Peoples lived experiences into account, but make these the dynamic contextual lenses through which texts are interpreted and understood. The extent to which this is possible within my implementation of English 12 First Peoples will nonetheless depend upon my relationships and on-going reflexive conversations with the curriculum, its texts, my students, and the local community.

Conversing with First Peoples Texts and Students

Any text that represents an authentic First Peoples story and voice will deal with the lived experiences of First Peoples, and may contain language and images that are difficult to read or hear (e.g., consequences of colonialism including the residential school experience, violence and abuse, experiences of racism, substance abuse, criticisms of Christianity and church practices). In this connection, however, it must be noted that

many texts traditionally studied in secondary school English classes (e.g., various

Shakespeare works, *The Lord of the Flies*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *The Crucible*) contain

"sensitive" topics, including violence, racism, sexual content, and a critique of religious

beliefs. (*English 12 First Peoples Teacher Resource Guide*, 2008, p. 17)

Thus begins the list of recommended texts for English 12 First Peoples. In my initial response to

what I interpreted to be a rather defensive preface to the course's literature, I was disappointed,

yet not surprised. Having been critical of the canon of English literature and all that it represents

since an undergraduate course in youth literature, I was frustrated that even in a course such as

English 12 First Peoples (which I perceive as attempting to bring the margins squarely into

focus), the value of its texts were measured against these "classics." I also acknowledge that

curricula, like policies, are political documents, and that this being the case, this particular

curriculum may be trying both to engage and allay the fears of various people, especially veteran

dominant-culture teachers, by referencing what they are or have been using. Still, I was intrigued

by the use of the terms 'authentic,' 'connection,' and 'tradition' in the above excerpt, and will

use these as entry points to a hermeneutical inquiry into the continual and unfinished

conversations between the texts, my students, and myself.

The oral tradition

"For once a story is told, it cannot be called back. Once told, it is loose in the world. So you have to be careful with the stories you tell. And you have to watch out for the stories that you are told."

~ Thomas King, *The Truth About Stories* (p. 10)

Traditionally senior English courses have, as stated in the English 12 First Peoples

Teacher Resource Guide, employed "classics" such as Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, *Lord of the Flies*

and *To Kill a Mockingbird* in order to engage students in thinking about literature's merits,

devices, and multileveled meanings. Naturally, the canon of English literature, written for the most part by European or European-descended men, would be inappropriate to a course that studies First Peoples literature. Nevertheless, the choice of novels for secondary English classes is not arbitrary, and further, examining the concepts of 'classic' and 'tradition' may also serve to shed light on the selection and interpretation of authentic First Peoples texts.

In *Truth and Method* (1960/1989), Gadamer applies the concept of 'classical' to support his claim that the historicity of understanding should be considered a hermeneutic principle. His analysis is relevant as I revisit my first response to English 12 First Peoples' recommended resource list. Gadamer describes 'the classical' as a peak within a genre's history; a turning point: "the authors that are regarded as classical are, as we know, always representatives of particular literary genres. They were considered the culmination of the norm of that literary genre, an ideal that literary criticism makes plain in retrospect" (p. 289). Further, he notes, "[the classical] speaks in such a way that it is not a statement about what is past—documentary evidence that still needs to be interpreted—rather, it says something to the present as if it were said specifically to it" (pp. 289-290). If 'ideal' literary texts are those which 'speak' to the here and now, works that have something valuable to offer modern readers, then First Peoples literature must have its own classics: exemplary texts which provide their readers insight into the historicity of their identities.

Here again, Gadamer's example does little to address the power of 'the classical' to exclude and subjugate those whose histories are not represented, a point which may help to elucidate my own frustration with 'the canon'. Thomas King's (2003) words reflect my hesitation precisely, "you have to be careful with the stories you tell. And you have to watch out

for the stories that you are told" (p. 10). As Pappas & Cowling (2003) explain in their feminist analysis of Gadamer's work,

> the historicity of a subject (necessarily marked through history by her gender) accounts for her belonging to the traditional text of culture and assures her place on the margin of the 'horizon' Gadamer sketches, and the fact of her experience at the margins of this text does not secure her a voice that will be heard. (p. 217)

The aforementioned issue of power, of what stories *do* to authors and audiences, illuminates the choices of texts for English 12 First Peoples as being representative of voices, identities, and histories that have seldom been heard within traditional secondary school English classes. Moreover, these voices can be considered to include the echoes of students who would at last see themselves and their histories reflected in their readers. First Nations students' experience with Western 'classics' is often that they leave little room to identify with characters and their contexts. The experience is akin to what Adrienne Rich (1994) describes as 'psychic disequilibrium': "when someone with the authority of a teacher, say, describes the world and you are not in it, there is a moment of physic disequilibrium, as if you looked into a mirror and saw nothing" (p. 199). Consequently, Justice (2001) describes how Indigenous students often experience this disconnection from texts:

> Those of us who have not had the luxury of seeing ourselves in the literatures and media of the dominant order have had very little choice but to see the texts as the author gives them; whatever resistance and subversive readings we give to the pieces tend to be secondary. We have not typically had the option of simply dismissing the text altogether. (p. 259)

The English 12 First Peoples curriculum provides a different experience. In the words of Christine[11], a recent addition to my class, "I can read this; *finally* something I can read!"

Perhaps Christine is responding to stories that honour her worldview, her history, and/or her traditions. I am also not sure whether she would have resisted the text on a second read, or had she had numerous experiences of seeing herself reflected in English texts (Justice, 2001). Literature in its written form is relatively recent within First Peoples history; all didactic texts prior to European colonization were part of an oral tradition. This comprehensive tradition is described succinctly in Campbell et al.'s (2003) *B.C. First Nations Studies* course textbook:

> Before Europeans arrived in B.C., First Nations had oral cultures: their languages had no written form. The oral tradition was integrated into every facet of life and was the basis of the education system. The education system in an oral tradition is very precise and procedural: the information is taught to the next generation exactly as it was taught to the one before. Stories are used because they are easier to remember: you learn by listening closely and remembering. The oral tradition passed on the spiritual beliefs of the people and the lineage of families. It recorded ownership of property and territory, political issues, legal proceedings and survival skills. The oral tradition also mapped the geography of an area, and it recorded history. (p. 210)

Approaching the course texts with a view to this history as well as a history of colonization can help readers such as myself, who don't share this history, to contextualize the works; to connect them to First Peoples worldviews which include, according to the English 12 First Peoples curriculum (2008), "the importance of the oral tradition," and "the experience of colonization and decolonization (e.g., residential schools, the reserve system, land claims)" (p. 12).

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[11] "Christine" and all other students' names contained in this chapter are pseudonyms to protect the identities of my former students.

Indeed, the recommended resources for English 12 First Peoples include many literary texts that are either oral, or are written records of oral accounts. Often, these texts fulfill Gadamer's requirements for the 'classical,' in that they connect to their historicity in speaking to a modern audience. Jeannette Armstrong (1998), for example, acknowledges this tradition in *Speaking for the Generations*:

> Through my language I understand I am being spoken to, I'm not the one speaking. The words are coming from many tongues and mouths of Okanagan people and the land around them. I am a listener to the language's stories, and when my words form I am merely retelling the same stories in different patterns. (p. 181)

Her statement is strikingly similar to Gadamer's (1960/1989) own advice regarding the tradition and history represented by to language:

> I take care to tell my students: you must sharpen your ear, you must realize that when you take a word in your mouth, you have not taken up some arbitrary tool that can be thrown in a corner if it doesn't do the job, but you are committed to a line of thought that comes from afar and reaches on beyond you. (p. 547).

Hence, the new 'patterns' that Armstrong mentions and Gadamer's 'line of thought' create a horizon of inquiry for me, as I attempt to interpret First Peoples literature.

Storytelling

"I hate the oral tradition. All's we do is get told to sit down, shut up, and listen."
~ Brianne, English 12 First Peoples student

If each reader brings with them particular pre-judgments to a given text, then Brianne's pre-judgment (above) not only affects her interpretation of the course texts in this unit of study, but also my own. Knowing that some students in the class have had negative prior experiences

with a tradition that has been described as inextricably linked with First Peoples history (Campbell et al., 2003), left me torpefied and unable to continue as planned. After all, the Teacher Resource Guide (2008) touts an examination of traditional and contemporary texts as integral to "gain[ing] an understanding of why the oral tradition is important to humanity" (p. 34). Caught between my respect and deep appreciation for the tradition and the unit's recommended texts that I had heard previously, and my shock that this view did not necessarily correspond with those of my students, I listened to these texts a second time, this time with newly tuned ears.

Upon reencountering the stories of Thomas King and Beth Brant, among others, with my students, I began to realize how the stories of these authors are familiar to students in their context. For my students, the challenge of responding to the texts became about teasing out the stories they had heard before, yet told differently, perhaps more emotionally, or perhaps for different purposes (Sinclair, 2010), and understanding these stories as reflective of a common history of subjugation. As young people having grown up amid the stories of anger and injustice, amongst family members trying to heal, the stories of the course are an invitation to re-examine what they already *'know'*, as well as *how* they have come to know it. They are equally an opportunity to understand how stories have responsibilities for the intended listeners (those of the same cultural background), and therefore also begin to understand the relationships between their culture and its stories (Sinclair, 2010).

In Thomas King's (2003) Massey Lectures, *The Truth About Stories: A Native Narrative*, he describes a history of government legislation of First Peoples identity, while at the same time challenging the authority of dominant stories and paradigms:

What to do? What to do? Indians. You can't live with them. You can't shoot them. Well, not anymore. So it's just as well we have legislation. And legislation, in relation to Native

people, has had two basic goals. One, to relieve us of our land, and two, to legalize us out

of existence. (p. 130)

My attempt to interpret this text with students who are well acquainted with this history meant a

substantial shift in my own interpretation, from that of anger with the ongoing injustice of

governmental policies, to one which is now endeavouring to see the multifaceted impacts of

those policies on the lived experiences of my students, their families, and their community.

Although I will never be able to understand my students' horizons fully, just as I am only

ever partially discerning my own, one of the points at which those perspectives met was through

Beth Brant's *A Long Story*. Her story involves the juxtaposition of two narratives: one of a

mother who has had her children stolen and sent to residential school in 1890, the other of a

woman in the 1970s whose daughter is removed from her custody due to her identification as

lesbian. The parallel tales of injustice, of government legislation, and of the dominant 'self's'fear

of the 'other', allowed our horizons to fuse in that moment, as I became aware of sharing some

aspects of oppression with my students. As First Peoples, some mothers, all children and/or

grandchildren, nieces and nephews of residential school survivors, my students could connect to

the story of the woman in 1890. One student, Liam, described his understanding of the narrative

thus: "it's unjust; it's like the government is trying to control people because they're different."

In his recognition of colonialism's oppression of the woman, he pinpointed the hierarchy in

Western paradigms, and therefore also articulated the We ethic that Cordova (2004) espouses.

Indeed, some may also have connected to the mother in the 1970s, of that I am not certain. As a

woman in a same-sex partnership, this was, however, my entry point into an understanding of a

history of my own current context.

Reading Brant's story, as well as subsequent course texts with this lens now added to my understanding of my own horizon, has allowed me to begin to glimpse the experience of living in relation to a tradition which has both privileged me as a European-descended Canadian and oppressed me as a queer woman. Conversing with *A Long Story* while also encountering students' contexts through dialogue with this text has further enabled me to begin to understand the role of tradition in my interpretations. As Gadamer (2001) attests, history *conditions* understanding, and as such, tradition "is in play [or at work] in all understanding, as something that applies even in the present day. […] [P]eople who believe they have freed themselves from their interwovenness into their effective history [*Wirkungsgeschichte*] are simply mistaken" (p. 45). Recognizing this history in relation to my interpretations of myself as a teacher, of the English 12 First Peoples curriculum, its texts, and my students, is an ongoing, but worthwhile struggle for understanding.

Implications for Application

In *Truth and Method*, Gadamer (1960/1989) declares *application*, that is the action involved in generating a fusion of horizons, as "the central problem of hermeneutics" (p. 307). Understanding, he proposes, "always involves something like applying the text to be understood to the interpreter's present situation" (p. 308). The extent to which this is possible is of course still limited by the position and partial perspective of the interpreter, yet it also indicates possibilities for pedagogy that could provoke reflective and relational responses (as espoused by the teacher's guide) to the course on the parts of both teachers and students. If, as Pappas & Cowling (2003) suggest, a fusion of horizons entails an event that "transforms one's horizon of experience in such a way that one discovers new possibilities for action" (p. 216), then it is probable that, through the experience of fusion, subjects emerge with a newly developed

understanding of their own context in relation to a text. I propose that a pedagogy which would make these profound and transformative encounters possible, is what is needed for the students enrolled in secondary school courses to "gain insight into the diverse factors that have shaped and continue to shape their identities" (p. 11) as the English 12 First Peoples curriculum aspires to do.

A pedagogy that provides opportunities for horizons to fuse not only between the course texts and myself, but also between my students and the texts, would entail a thorough examination of, and engagement with, the idea of being-in-relationship. This idea, while it contends that Indigenous knowledge is founded in relationships (Richardson, 2007; Wilson, 2004), should also attend to the ethical responsibilities that we have as researchers to be accountable to the relationships and Indigenous communities with whom we work (Cordova, 2004; Justice, 2001; Richardson, 2007; Wilson, 2004). As with any pedagogy, such an endeavour requires a thorough and ongoing hermeneutical inquiry on the part of the teacher, so that the event of application can occur. Therefore, this process of inquiry would first involve teachers learning to see the lenses of their effective histories that act upon their interpretations and applications of them. Teachers will need to search for how they are simultaneously *in relation* to the histories, places, cultures, and times of various texts; how these texts and contexts are interpreted by their own past experiences and applied in their present situations. Further, pedagogues seeking to discover new understandings in their interpretations of curricula, recommended texts, and their own students in relation to Indigenous peoples, histories, and contexts, will have to become active participants in their own learning, or in Diller's (1998) words, "philosopher[s] of [their] own education" (p. 1), in order to encourage students to do the same.

Naturally, to risk torpefication, engagement with perhaps painful histories, and to continually reinterpret one's interpretations necessitates much effort, not to mention courage. Inspiring such a risk-taking ability and desire in students requires conditions that support their explorations, conditions which secure them time for reflection, as well as opportunities to see themselves in their multiple roles in relation to texts, and also their histories, families, and communities. In addition, if students are to engage in these processes of reflexive and relational inquiry, they will require a safe environment in which to do so. Developing honest and trusting relationships with students by listening, and creating space and time for questioning and dialogue will help to make possible conversations which provoke new understandings and insights. It is through these conscious dialogues with students that new understandings can become visible, and new alliances for philosophizing one's own learning can be formed. As Pappas and Cowling (2003) concur, "in the dialogue which produces understanding, both are transformed, their relative positions unfixed, and their relationship renegotiated" (p. 224). If we desire to galvanize students into action vis-à-vis their own education, as teachers we must commit to being perpetually engaged in these transformative conversations that allow us to reflect on our learning and to momentarily glimpse ourselves against our expanding horizons.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

As a white educator seeking to work in solidarity with Indigenous peoples and communities for the decolonization of education, I embarked on a lengthy self-study spanning several years living and working in two Indigenous contexts in Canada. Using existing research in the field, as well as my own analyses of my practice in each context, my study provides understandings of dominant-culture teachers' roles and responsibilities in the process of decolonizing education. The research contained in this thesis specifically examines the relationships of dominant-culture teachers in Indigenous contexts (or with Indigenous students) with regards to their identities, students, policy, curriculum, and pedagogy. In order to effectively consider these relationships, however, an analysis of the effects of colonialism past and present on school policy, curriculum and pedagogy, cross-cultural relationships, and teacher identity was also necessary. As an outcome of the research in these two areas, this study seeks to understand how dominant-culture practitioners provide culturally responsive and responsible education in specific Indigenous contexts or in particular contexts where they work with Indigenous students and communities. Overall, my research suggests that dominant-culture educators have great responsibility to act—through their relationships, professional development, advocacy, pedagogy, and their interpretations of curriculum—in ways that meaningfully contribute to the process of decolonization.

Considering the research study as a whole, this final chapter will first outline the general conclusions of the research while taking current research into account. In the subsequent sections, I interpret my research chapters to see how they respond to each of the overarching research questions I described in the introduction, and how these conclusions contribute to existing

scholarship on the topic. Finally, I discuss strengths and limitations of the study, offer

recommendations for the application of my research, and suggest directions for further research.

Research Findings

An analysis of the current research in the field revealed that there are several gaps around

the topic of dominant-culture teachers working in Indigenous contexts and/or with Indigenous

students. Despite the fact that as many as 94% of teachers of Indigenous students in Canada are

members of the dominant culture (Kanu, 2005), there are few research studies dedicated to the

issue of non-Indigenous teachers' roles and responsibilities in decolonizing education. While

admittedly, the direction and means towards decolonization must arise from the

"conscientization" (Freire, 1970) and agency of Indigenous communities, governments, and

boards of education (Harper, 2004; Kanu, 2005), redesigning the discourse and practice of

Indigenous education requires the efforts of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples

(Battiste, 1998; Harper, 2000, 2004; Taylor, 1995). As such, my research attends to the

suggestions of the literature as to the roles and positions that dominant-culture teachers should

take up in classrooms, schools, and communities. By analysing my work in Indigenous settings,

the study contributes a practitioner's voice to the goals identified by the research for dominant-

culture educators, namely to commit to, and advocate for, decolonizing education through

research, reflection, participation, relationship building, and professional development. Further,

this study adds to the body of literature on this topic by addressing some of the areas where

research is lacking, particularly teachers' perceptions of curriculum and pedagogy (Kanu, 2005),

as well as current education models and practices in Indigenous communities (Castagno &

Brayboy, 2008).

My engagement in this research project in and of itself represents a considerable commitment to research, reflect, and develop professionally in the area of decolonizing education. Through my initial analysis of my first-year teaching assignment in Northern Québec, I became aware of the massive struggle for decolonization, as well as my roles as a teacher and a policy-actor in that process. As a result of the conclusions of the analysis, I underwent a shift from avoiding or subverting the colonial polies and curriculum I could identify, to advocating for change. The research itself was a catalyst to my dedication to rethinking my perceptions, interpretations and pedagogies with respect to Indigenous education.

The findings of the first research chapter, *Pushed Out and Locked Out*, both support and extend existing literature in terms of what is required of dominant-culture teachers in the effort to decolonize education. Similar to what the literature recommends (e.g., Dion, 2007), my findings also suggest the need for teachers' research and reflection on their positions and approaches, as well as the neo-colonial policies and curriculum employed at the school. I also found that, like Taylor (1995) and Deer (2008), research and professional development are needed in order for teachers to become suitably informed of local cultural traditions and place-based pedagogies. In addition, my research highlighted the need for more than individual action. As Greene (1995) and St. Denis (2007) observe, teachers, administrators, and the community must endeavour to engage in a *collective* critique of existing practices, and a re-imagining of how a school could decolonize its models and practices, in order to participate in creating change for Indigenous students in that context.

Of course, any attempt to work collaboratively will require strong, trusting relationships to be built with regards to teachers' own identities, among their fellow educators, and between the school and the community. Further, in developing these relationships, particular attention

will need to be paid to the voice and agency of the Indigenous teachers and community members (Berger, Epp, & Møller, 2006; Taylor, 1995). With connections in place, the collective work promoted by my analysis would enable communities and educators to examine the community's goals for its education, and consider the school's current policies, curricula, and pedagogies in light of those objectives. My research suggests that some of the necessary changes could come at the policy and school board levels. Frameworks such as enacting participatory policy-making and curriculum-development programs, as well as supporting the training of local teachers instead of offering incentives to non-local ones (Rasmussen, 2009), will begin the work of reorganizing Indigenous education in their communities. These efforts would also support the notion that in such contexts, decolonizing education will need to be developed and implemented from the ground up with pressure from communities and educators, and with the participation of Indigenous stakeholders (Berger, 2007; Goddard & Foster, 2002; Harper, 2000; Mason, 2008).

In the meantime, there is no doubt that dominant-culture teachers need to be actively engaged in working to decolonize their curriculum and pedagogies. The second research chapter, *Toward a Pedagogy of Relationality,* traces my perceptions and interpretations of my relationships with my identity, a culturally responsive curriculum in a particular Indigenous context, my pedagogy, and my students. As Clarke (2009) similarly contends, the hermeneutical interpretation of my teaching experience found that practitioners' research, reflection, and "identity work" is central to both their development as an educator, and also to building relationships with students and the curriculum. According to my analysis, teacher research and reflection would make visible the lenses of an educator's effective histories; hence, the teacher would be able to understand her/his personal and professional relationships with histories (e.g., colonialism, oppression), texts, and students.

Taking risks with our own learning through the hermeneutic circle, questioning the curriculum and teaching environment based on our background and expectations, and questioning our background and expectations in light of the curriculum and teaching environment, teachers necessarily become more comfortable with vulnerability and more sensitive to the conditions required to inspire students' self-exploration. Developing trusting relationships and safe space for exploration will enact a pedagogy that is responsive to the needs of students and the curriculum, and responsible to the culture and traditions of the local community. Pedagogical development in this manner would correspond with the current literature in that it would a) involve teachers adapting curricula and pedagogy to suit the local context (Berger, 2007), and b) provide Indigenous students with the opportunity to integrate their cultural knowledge across the curriculum (Kanu, 2005). Teachers' ongoing study of their own practice through reflection, careful research, and through actively developing their identity as a means to develop professionally is therefore integral to the development of a pedagogy that aspires to engage students in becoming active participants in their own learning.

Impacts of Colonialism

The effects of colonization and neo-colonialism on Indigenous education and on education in general are too great to address in a study of this length. However, this study does consider some of its consequences for school policy, curriculum and pedagogy, cross-cultural relationships, and teacher identity in Indigenous contexts or for Indigenous students. The current literature is unanimous in its assertion that the long history of colonial structures in schools has led to the silencing of Indigenous voices in schools (Kanu, 2005), as well as to the privileging of outside opinions (Goddard & Foster, 2002). Battiste (1998) and Goulet (2001) both trace policies

of assimilation and colonization back to the European-descended settler society's ideology that Indigenous peoples were inferior. Given that Aitken (2005) found that current dominant-culture teachers' perceptions of the Indigenous community in her study are also deficient, it is clear that the colonial influence over educational practices is still very powerful.

My analysis of both the accepted literature and Manaim Memorial School's multi-levelled policy setting concur that the effects of colonialism on school policies, curriculum, and pedagogy continue to limit possibilities for the inclusion of Indigenous content and pedagogy, as well as preventing a shift towards locally created, culturally responsive curricula (Aitken, 2005; Battiste, 1998; Rasmussen, 2009). The policies created by school boards, and by provincial and federal governments, attempt to implement a "one-size-fits-all" approach to regulations, curriculum, and assessment, in an effort to maintain the dominant society's control over public education (Battiste, 1998; Berger et al., 2006). Similarly, my study of one such school in northern Québec illustrates several instances of how the local administrator, the school board, and the government's policies and curriculum perpetuated colonialism in that community to the detriment of student success.

After my first year and a half teaching in northern Québec, I moved west to begin graduate school, hoping to uncover some answers to the questions that emerged from those experiences. One question emerging from the first research chapter asks if it would be possible for me to recognize the colonial practices that are, as a result of the dominant culture by which I was educated, inherent in my teaching. This inquiry raises the issue of teacher identity and social privilege and the level of awareness it is possible to have about one's professional practice. In the second chapter, I answer this question, and that of colonial relationships, by way of an in-depth hermeneutical analysis of my experiences teaching a newly developed, culturally

responsive curriculum in rural British Columbia. The ability to identify the lenses of one's past experiences makes it possible to understand how such past experiences might be shaping one's current understanding of relationships to one's professional identity, a curriculum and pedagogical guide, course texts, and the students. Indeed, as Clarke (2009) notes, since "our work as teachers shapes and is shaped by the very mode of our being, then thinking about the formation of our identities is crucial" (p. 186). My study proposes that the "identity work," which involves in-depth interpretations of oneself as reader, texts, and the interplay between them, is critical for the creation of context-specific culturally responsive and responsible pedagogies that could mitigate the colonial effects of a non-Indigenous teacher's dominant-culture education. According to Pappas and Cowling (2003), through these interpretations, a fusion of horizons becomes possible—an event that "transforms one's horizon of experience in such a way that one discovers new possibilities for action" (p. 216). A pedagogy that supports such transformative encounters is what is necessary for students to gain insight into their own identities, as espoused by the curriculum.

Relationships

At a recent gathering, my aunt introduced herself to new acquaintances by listing how she was related to a number of people both present and absent. Another guest, overhearing her lead-in, commented, 'hmmm, defined by relationships.' In that moment, she was referring to my aunt's statement; considering her words more broadly however, aren't we all? Relationships are primary to our identities; we cannot describe ourselves outside of scores of connections. Wilson (2004) similarly describes Indigenous peoples identities as being relational. Of course, his description also differs in that he holds that Indigenous identity is also inextricably connected to

a relationship to the land. Still, he articulates the fundamental basis of relationships that I believe my aunt was articulating. In illustrating a typical encounter with a new acquaintance, he outlines how Indigenous peoples often introduce their relations, and moreover, are known to ask about where another person is from, and do they know so-and-so. This practice, he contends, enables "existing relationships [to] be used to establish a context upon which new relationships can form" (p. 163).

Seeing one's reality as dependent on relationships is especially significant in the field of education. In the context of my role as a teacher, I am not only involved in multiple interpersonal relationships with students, staff, and community members, but my position is simultaneously also in relation to curriculum, course texts, policies, histories, the local landscape, and indeed, even to my self and my perceptions of these relationships. Day, et al. (2006) and Harper (2004) argue that these interconnected relationships both shape and are shaped by a teacher's identity, such that in order to resist the effects of colonialism, all educators have "an ethical obligation to reflect on our identities and to engage to some degree in 'identity work'" (Clarke, 2009, p. 187). Indeed, Cordova (2004), Justice (2001), Richardson (2007) in his account of Delorian philosophy, and Wilson (2004) would concur. To be ethical, according to these scholars, researchers must be accountable to the relationships that are implicated in the research. Since this is a self-study, this responsibility would extend to one's relationship to one's self.

My analysis of my first-year teaching assignment addresses this experience of being a white teacher in-relation to various facets of Indigenous education, and especially to policies and curricula. As a new teacher, my professional identity development was only just beginning at the time, and yet through my reflections on these policies, I was able to gain clarity on the grasp of colonial rule, and contravene regulations that I deemed to be assimilationist or otherwise

destructive. While my relationship to the policies and practices that I determined to be detrimental is not specifically explored in my analysis, my awareness of myself as a participant in the processes of neo-colonialism and as a potential ally in the struggle for decolonization, demonstrates my relationship with my identity, as well as Indigenous education and policies more broadly. I positioned myself in this context according to what Piquemal (2004) calls a 'reverse' deficit model, whereby I regarded myself as having insufficient cultural knowledge to decolonize my teaching. In order to respectfully acknowledge one's relationship to Indigenous peoples and communities then, it is essential that white educators and researchers such as myself, "are aware of assumptions around cultural productions that are embedded in colonial ideologies and Eurowestern epistemologies" (Sinclair & Eigenbrod, 2009, p. 9). As a result of this experience and analysis, I became committed to advocacy for and solidarity in decolonizing education, while at the same time inquiring deeper into my own perspectives and perceptions of my practice.

Through the self-study of my experiences teaching a culturally responsive curriculum, my research found that through engaging in reflection and hermeneutical interpretation of my identity and practice, my relationships to students, curriculum, and pedagogy were substantially improved. The study involved a certain measure of risk and vulnerability in order to identify the lenses by which I interpret my own practice. By positioning myself consciously in relation to the various readers and texts in the course, I was able to better understand my relationships with these, and to create the intimate space required for my students' own identity work. In doing so, my relationships with students grew stronger on the bases of trust and reciprocity, thus satisfying Piquemal's (2004) recommendations for ethical relationships in schools, and supporting Dion's

(2007) claim that that self-awareness is a means to "progressively transform relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people" (p. 340).

Responsiveness and Responsibility

In light of this study's findings regarding the pervasive effects of colonialism and neo-colonialism on Indigenous education, it is clear that no culturally responsive curriculum or pedagogy will be implemented in a school or schools without the agency of local Indigenous communities and also of local Indigenous and non-Indigenous teachers. My study of teaching *English 12 First Peoples* in British Columbia illustrated, as Harper (2000) states, that the agency at all levels of education was necessary to make the course a success. Developed by the provincial First Nations Education Steering Committee, then proposed by my school board and administrator, and finally offered in the school by me, the course was to a great extent dependent on the Indigenous community "finding its way" to the school (Battiste, 1998, p. 24).

In this instance, the opportunity for the teacher to engage with an already developed culturally responsive curriculum required no agency on the part of the teacher. However, my self-study demonstrates the need for teacher agency in the development of their identities as a means to offer ethical pedagogy in Indigenous contexts. In order to act responsibly vis-à-vis the uncertainties of new situations, such as cross-cultural teaching, relationships, or culturally responsive curricula, my self-analyses showed that, in accordance with Clarke (2009) and Day et al. (2006), teachers' active attention to their identities is necessary. This responsibility also includes being accountable to one's relationships within the research, including, but not limited to, one's relationships with one's self, the participants, and the Indigenous communities implicated in the study (Cordova 2004; Sinclair & Eigenbrod, 2009; Richardson, 2007; Wilson,

2004). Through said contemplation of one's identity and relationships, my study contributes the idea of *positional shifts* as being the small increments required for transforming (a colonized) consciousness. I also found that such shifts are highly dependent on educators' investment in their own learning, and their capacity to position themselves as prepared for Diller's (1998) notion of 'torpefication.' The conclusions proceeding from both inquiries into my pedagogical experiences suggest that white teachers' reflection and interpretation of their own histories, in terms of how they act upon (and are in-relation to) texts, relationships, and their practice, is one way to veer away from reproducing colonial encounters in their teaching.

Nevertheless, my research also suggests that not all biases, nor all lenses of interpretation, are recognizable to a teacher or teacher-reader. In Québec, I recognized that due to a lack of understanding of my identity, history, as well as those of the local community, I was not able to identify all of the culturally inappropriate and colonial pedagogies that were inherent in my teaching as a consequence of my own personal and educational experiences. While exploring the lenses of my effective histories and their impacts on my reading of curriculum in British Columbia, Gadamer's (2001) caution for the limits of interpretation brought this same problem of acknowledgement to light: "no one knows himself or herself. We always already have a certain character; no one is a blank sheet of paper" (p. 43). Therefore, reflection and interpretation, though these are vital to the development of identity that is promoted by this study, are never enough to create culturally responsive and responsible pedagogues. This is not just because they are imperfect means of understanding, but also because they must be accompanied by action. Freire (1970) would call this constant interaction between reflection and action "praxis," while Richardson (2007) and Wilson (2004) would call it "being" or "becoming" the relationship between the two (in contrast to knowing or perceiving).

Upon my recent relocation to a new community, I have realized that research and participation (i.e., action) are as important as a teacher's willingness and capacity for reflection. As the critical analysis of my first-year teaching experiences found, it is essential that non-local teachers seek guidance from the community they serve regarding cultural traditions, as well as local epistemologies and pedagogies. Through praxis (or studying the relationships between reflection and action), this research could also work towards equalizing power relations between dominant-culture teachers and Indigenous communities, as teachers would need to recognize the effects of colonialism on education and the normalized superiority of settler society's knowledge in order to learn from the local community (St. Denis, 2007; Goulet, 2001) and position themselves as lacking the requisite knowledge to teach in a particular context (Piquemal, 2004). The review of current literature similarly agrees with this condition for dominant-culture teachers seeking to develop professionally around cultural responsiveness and responsibility in their practice (Berger, 2007; Berger et al., 2006; Harper, 2000; Wihak & Merali, 2007). Now a new teacher in another northern community, I have come to understand that regardless of my initial commitment to reflection and advocacy for decolonization, I cannot act in the interests of decolonization in this region without a clear understanding of the particular effects of colonialism here (past and present), and without well-established relationships with students, colleagues, curriculum and the community. My insufficient relationships to this land and people and their histories substantially hinder my perspective, and as such, also highlight the significance of the recommendations that my research, and that of current scholarship, has yielded.

Strengths and Limitations

Given that current research on dominant-culture teachers' experiences in Indigenous contexts and/or with Indigenous students is decidedly lacking, this study has several strengths that result in its meaningful contribution to this topic of study. Present scholarship suggests both what is required of dominant-culture teachers in the effort to decolonize Indigenous education, and what is necessary in terms of further research. *On Being a Sama7 Teacher* addresses both of these areas in an intimate and practical manner, meeting the prescribed needs while also contributing a unique voice to the existing literature.

Approaching the topic from a first-person perspective enables this study to delve deeper into a white teacher's experiences and perceptions of the curriculum and pedagogy as it relates to ongoing marginalization of Indigenous culture, traditions, and voices. Through a concerted effort to position myself in a 'reverse' deficit model, as Piquemal (2004) advocates, this self-study contributes a challenge to Aitken (2005) and Harper's (2004) findings in their studies of white teachers in northern non-dominant settings. They found that many teachers could both be described by particular colonial constructions of their identities, and at the same time, resist adopting a colonial identity and the power and privilege that their position holds in an Indigenous community and school. While I do not invoke a particular colonial identity to describe my position in Indigenous communities, I do heed the fact that it exists, and that I must work to transform that identity as much as possible. In doing so, this study may provide practicing teachers, pre-service teachers, and teacher educators with opportunities to reflect on their own "identity work" ethically necessary for effective cross-cultural relationships in, and decolonization of, Indigenous education.

Moreover, this study offers the practitioner's voice to the models and practices already in effect in two Indigenous contexts in Canada. While two contexts are a rather small sample, given the limited current research on education in Indigenous communities, the conclusions of this thesis provide some new insights into policies, curriculum, and relationships in Indigenous education from the perspective (albeit non-Indigenous) of an insider/teacher. From this position, the study is able to make recommendations regarding the necessary reorganization of those models and practices while taking into account a teacher's relationships to the community and curriculum, and from the point of view of a person prepared to participate directly in and advocate for those changes. This last issue is of particular note, as the existing literature calls for dominant-culture teachers to act in the same way as this study claims to do: in a commitment to advocacy for research, reflection, participation, relationship building, and professional development.

Naturally, approaching the topic from the experience of one individual white teacher in a couple of distinct circumstances creates limitations for the study's transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) across all non-Indigenous teachers in all Indigenous contexts, as well as its ability to grapple with the complexities that arise from the participation of a multitude of individuals and communities in the project to both conscientize and decolonize Indigenous education. My recent relocation to a coastal community in northern British Columbia has underlined the importance of simultaneous attention to the particularities of a teacher and her or his context as well as to the broader picture of colonialism and the process of decolonization.

In order to gain further insight into dominant-culture teachers' identities and practices in any one context, the identities and reflections of several teachers, across various subjects and grade levels, would need to be analyzed. Likewise, in an attempt to understand dominant-culture

teacher identity in Canada, the value of a self-study is relatively limited. When compared to Aitken's (2005) study of seven teachers in northern Québec, and Harper's (2004) of 25 in northern Ontario, *On Being a Sama7 Teacher* represents only a singular perspective on the experience of engaging in the identity work deemed necessary to work as an ally in decolonizing education. Still, it constitutes a worthwhile shift from focusing on non-Indigenous teachers' distancing and avoidance of colonial identities and ideologies, to an active effort to confront the colonial histories and biases of dominant-culture teacher identity—and alter the influence of those pervasive ideologies.

Finding myself suddenly in a new environment, in a new community with new subject content, new students and colleagues was an effective way to assess the applicability of my research on the capacity for a white teacher to teach in culturally responsive and responsible ways. Upon arrival, I immediately recognized that I suddenly knew nothing about the local culture or traditions, and as such, I worried about how I was going to stand in a classroom in a week's time, face the 85% Indigenous students, and admit my ignorance. In effect, I didn't have to. My inexperience and lack of knowledge was as evident as my lack of relationships to both the community and the new curriculum I was teaching. As I have begun to observe and listen to the local community, I have learned about the successes and setbacks in its efforts to decolonize education. Although I have only been a student of the local community for a few months, I am already realizing the tensions and conflicts of an Indigenous community's efforts to regain control of its children's education. I have begun to understand that one of the greatest limits of my research was its disregard for the complexity of Indigenous peoples agencies (as they are bound up with countless relationships, as well as the heterogeneity of identities involved in the project of decolonization.

Unfortunately, by ignoring the conflict and negotiations of the various participants in a community's advocacy for decolonization, my self-study is both limited in scope, and not entirely accountable to the Indigenous communities with whom I worked for the duration of this study. In this sense, it does what Battiste (1998), Kanu (2005), and Aitken (2005) warn against— perceiving the identity of the Indigenous communities with whom I worked to be a homogenous whole against which my white identity is varied and distinct. In doing so, I have further marginalized the voices of the Indigenous teachers, students, community members and scholars whose work and perspectives are of utmost importance to decolonizing education. Reflecting on this experience, I have made yet another positional shift towards recognition for the limits and ignorance that a self-study of white teacher identity has on the greater project of decolonization. In light of Freire's (1970) call for conscientization, and Graham Smith's (2003) call for the uptake of that concept specifically in research that places Indigenous peoples in the centre (as opposed to the trend of decolonization to continue to fixate on the colonizer), my study's perspective lamentably contributes some more of the same marginalization of Indigenous participation and voices.

Nevertheless, I must remain cognisant of Thompson's (2003) metaphor of the anti-racist freeway that is forever undergoing construction. She contends that this perpetual freeway, understood as attempts at anti-racist work, creates "unproductive expectations and helps trap us in static roles" (p. 389). Even if some roadblocks hinder my study, these do not diminish my contention that my "identity work" is important as an initial step, nor does the project necessarily need to have an end point. As Justice (2001) asserts, "considerate non-Indians have a place in our communities, and we hold enormous respect for those who are sincere and responsible, regardless of their ethnicity" (p. 266). While I may still be in the process of studying what it

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means to be truly accountable to (and therefore ethical in) my relationships in my research (Richardson, 2007; Wilson, 2004), I have put forth a very sincere and honest effort to acknowledge all of those relationships.

Recommendations

As the vast majority of teachers of Indigenous students are members of the dominant culture, this research could be applied in a number of ways for dominant-culture practicing teachers, pre-service teachers, and teacher educators of non-Indigenous students. In addition, it is relevant to any dominant-culture researchers or practitioners in Indigenous contexts, seeking to reduce the impact of their colonial identities on the local community. The conclusions outlined here with respect to dominant-culture teachers' roles and responsibilities in Indigenous settings are also useful to policy-makers, administrators, and communities who are developing cross-cultural training programs. Ultimately however, the applications of this study that are of greatest value, are those that lead to dominant-culture teachers' engagement in their own identity work as a means to develop awareness of their relationships to their practice and their communities of practice.

Recently, the province of British Columbia made a three-credit course in Indigenous Education a requirement for graduation from its teacher education programs. However, my research suggests that while this is a step in the right direction, until it is a required course for graduation from secondary school, or in elementary school, or until there is a shift towards a postcolonial framework that restructures the systems and curriculum to correspond to an Indigenous worldview (Battiste, 1998), its importance will continue to be overlooked and marginalized by the privileging of Western knowledge in schools (Battiste, 1998; Mason, 2008;

Kanu, 2005). Nevertheless, this study does propose applications that may be valuable in the design of teacher education courses and programs that wish to engage new teachers in reflective practice and in the ongoing development of their professional identities.

In my own experience in teacher education, I observed how teacher candidates were often more concerned with filling their 'bags of tricks,' than developing their professional identities. To shift this tendency to focus on the activity of delivery towards reflection and interpretation of how teachers' actions and pedagogical decisions are shaped by their identities, courses and programming in teacher education will also need to be restructured. According to this study, it is as important for teachers to be introduced to various curricula and pedagogy during their preparation, as it is to be able to engage in hermeneutical (or other) interpretation of that curriculum, as well as themselves as its pedagogue. The focus of pre-service teacher education methods courses should therefore have an additional objective: to develop teachers who are philosophers of their own education (Diller, 1998), especially with regards to their professional identities.

Similarly, programs developed for in-service and professional development of non-Indigenous practicing teachers (and other education professionals), especially those in Indigenous contexts or serving Indigenous students, should endeavour to develop the same capacities for reflection, interpretation, questioning, and torpefication (Diller, 1998) in order to reduce their, perhaps unintentional, assimilation of students' cultural identities (Ellsworth, 1992). This research might help administrators and school boards in Indigenous communities to determine the criteria for non-Indigenous teacher suitability to cross-cultural contexts (as proposed by Taylor, 1995), as it synthesizes the requirements for ethical practice as dominant-culture teacher in some Canadian Indigenous contexts. It also seconds Rasmussen's (2009)

findings that policies that attract dominant-culture teachers to Indigenous contexts should be reconsidered in the interests of decolonization. Finally, it may help communities, administrators, and educators to create the in-service and professional development necessary for current non-Indigenous practicing teachers to expand their capacities for cross-cultural teaching through training initiatives (as advanced by Cardinal, 1977 in Deer, 2008). Still, if such programs are to be developed by administrators and teacher-leaders, similar objectives and restructuring of graduate courses and programs will also be necessary. This study would contribute to such objectives in its practical model of Clarke's (2009) notion that engaging in 'identity work' is an ethical obligation.

Future Directions

Considering this research study as a whole, it is clear that substantial research is still needed in all areas concerned with the experiences of dominant-culture teachers in Indigenous contexts, and especially as these experiences relate to colonialism past and present, as well as to relationships with their students, curricula, pedagogies, and their own identities. Even with the addition of this thesis, more studies are required to consider both the effects of dominant-culture teacher identity development in Indigenous contexts, and whether this would lead to more ethical and effective cross-cultural relationships. Moreover, any future research would also have to consider the roles, participation, and agency of Indigenous communities and governments in the conscientization of teachers' identities and practices in schools.

The limited, yet in-depth scope of this study, as well as the current population of dominant-culture teachers working with Indigenous students in Canada, results in the obvious need for further research on dominant-culture teacher identity in Indigenous contexts. Such

studies should explore multiple dominant-culture teachers'—and perhaps also Indigenous teachers'—experiences teaching in Indigenous contexts and at multiple grade levels and vis-à-vis a breadth of curriculum and subject content. I recognize that there are complexities in the term "Indigenous teacher" in the context of this study and others that I propose, Indigenous teachers may mean local teachers, but could also refer to Indigenous teachers working in communities that are not their own. These teachers would, in perhaps both similar and dissimilar ways, negotiate the insider/outsider dynamics experienced by dominant-culture teachers. There could also be more studies of such teachers (Indigenous and dominant-culture) who are engaged in identity work and/or culturally responsive curriculum and pedagogies in Indigenous contexts, as well as more widely (in areas with diverse populations). Reflecting on the identity work of other practitioners would be an additional benefit of further research in the field, since literature of this sort would provide models, questions, and challenges for pre-service and practicing teachers to consider while engaged in their own development and growth.

This study took place over five years, and yet only scratched the surface of the research required for an understanding of dominant-culture teachers' identities, pedagogies, and possibilities for allied contributions to decolonization and conscientization of education. Further, it offers no conclusive evidence that dominant-culture teacher engagement in their identities, relationships, and policies with respect to their local communities will assist in the transformation of these educational structures and environments. Fundamentally, it suggests only that such commitments and advocacy will limit the perpetuation of colonial discourses and practices. If the development of a professional identity that is capable of ethical cross-cultural relationships in education can take over a half a decade to establish at the most basic level for a beginning teacher, it is evident that the work involved in realizing the goals of this one specific

topic is staggering. As a consequence, the small, incremental positional shifts that are necessary

for transformation of an identity or relationship will need to be observed, both in how they occur

in individual teachers, as well as across teachers of various ages and life stages (Hargreaves,

2005). Through close attention to these shifts, as well as to the relationships that may facilitate

deep and transformative change, perhaps the process can be expedited in the interests of

culturally responsive and responsible education for Indigenous students in their particular

contexts.

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