Fatty Legs: Teachers Helping Students Explore FNMI Perspectives in Literature

by

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Abstract

This study examined three teachers' experiences with infusing First Nations, Métis, and Inuit (FNMI) literature and content into the curriculum using the memoir *Fatty Legs* (Jordan-Fenton & Pokiak-Fenton, 2010). Participants were recruited indirectly from an overarching research project. Informed by qualitative methodology, the data included interviews. This autobiographical account reveals how teachers negotiate curriculum planning and implementation in support of social justice initiatives. These teachers explored Olemaun's Canadian residential school experience, which helped their students to link topics beyond the historical text to their own contemporary lived realities. Major findings include the use of a critical literacy framework in the learning environment, students' sense of awareness, forms of oppression and marginalization, and how youth can create change in their world. These teachers demonstrated how to construct curriculum with a creative and artistic vision. This study raises concerns about the supports teachers need to infuse FNMI literature into the curriculum. Implications are raised for teachers, administrators, and teacher education.

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CHAPTER 1:

INTRODUCTION

> My people will sleep for one hundred years, but when they awake, it will be the artists who give them their spirit back. (Louis Riel; Manitoba Métis Federation, 2014, quotation 5)

I hope that Indigenous literature in the Canadian classroom will open minds, open hearts, and increase the awareness of social justice in the minds of all Canadians. If teachers take the time to explore an Indigenous narrative with students, this may lend an opportunity to see far and beyond the margins of historical contexts and contemporary realities. When teachers take the time to question today with their students, I hope that these youth will question tomorrow and reconsider stories that may not otherwise be present in these children's lives.

Situating Myself as a Teacher and Researcher

Raven is Watching

Shelby LaFramboise, March 22, 2011

I'm just a kid from the wrong side of the tracks.
East meets West; well, I'd have to see about that.

They say that they're respectful of other ways of knowing,
But only if you say, feel, and do as we do, or you'd better get going.

The only difference allowed is colour.
Be like us, see like us, or we'll make an example of you.

Many find power in the notion of right,
Formulating comments so unruly that none can be quite right?

Who would share their colonized ID in a Canada so true?
And to boot, a Catholic too.

Discourse and drama, they seem to follow me,
Suggestions of reverse racism on an already colonized me.

Here I am again to take my forty lashes,
So that Judas and his followers might be right and make others see.

But the holes in my hands shine a dim, quiet, soft light,
So that others might have the chance to just be.

This poem surfaced during my writing process. It is a summary of what it is like to live in between spaces. I understand that one of my life's purposes is to navigate the space in between and that this in-between space is necessary for the dance to take place. One may describe it as a two-step, a box step, or a friendly neighbourhood jig.

I am a Métis woman from Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. My father's roots originate near Batoche, Saskatchewan, a historical Métis community; and my mother's roots originate from a farming community close by. I was raised in the city, and the concrete jungle became my playground.

During my adolescence my mom would take us to the library, but I do not remember reading works by an Aboriginal author until much later in university. She often took us to the library, but I do not remember seeing myself in a positive light. It was mind-numbing and humiliating to see oneself as an "Indian" killing and hurting others. This literature shaped my early years, and my ability to navigate these experiences as growth opportunities provided me with a deeper sense of meaning and understanding of my own historical and contemporary story. These times of identity formation have led me to this place. My first memories were seeing myself in outdated social textbooks engaged in blood-dripping wars with Euro settlers. In my child's mind, these painted historical depictions created a false sense of identity and a shame I could not name at that

time. Kirkness (2000) stated, "Studies on the effects of integration have shown that Indian children reveal patterns that can be identified as alienation and identity conflict. The Indian child is caught between two cultures and is therefore, literally outside of, and between both" (p. 5).

Despite the many authentic family stories that I heard as we travelled the prairie landscape in the summer and winter months, they were not the ones I heard in the classroom. My everyday story was absent from the literature we read in the classroom. My story seemed irrelevant because it was not found in the curriculum and/or the classroom. I believe my childhood is part of what drew me to teaching. However, much of my teaching has been driven by change—a desire for change within myself and a desire for change within a classroom of believers, the greater teaching community, and, ultimately, the greater society. I hoped that my presence in the centre of a classroom might change the perspectives and realities of those whom I call *student*. My desire to become a teacher began as I witnessed injustices in greater society, whether stereotypes, assumptions, poverty, or inequities. This overall struggle and at times absence of my voice from the political and socioeconomic powers and the cultural makeup of Canada contributed to my frustration. Much of my childhood, although facilitated by well-intentioned teachers, did not reflect my voice and/or story in the Canadian prairie classroom. Often stereotypes and realities that were not my stories were assumed in the text provided to the youth beside me—my peers. These stories gave false understandings of who and what I was. Identity and my walk as being bicultural, neither Neyihaw (Cree) nor Moniyaw (White), but Métis, has guided

my presence in every room that I enter. My identity has not been difficult for me to decipher, but it appeared to me that it was hard for greater society to understand. With this lack of understanding, challenges ensued. My identity is strong now, but only because of a quest riddled with deeper systemic issues layered in the realities of everyday society.

Becoming a teacher nurtured through the Saskatchewan Urban Native Teacher Education Program, better known as SUNTEP, has given me a profound place of knowing and being. It has strengthened my identity and, with it, my role of teacher. Today I am proud to say that a program driven to promote Métis urban students both culturally and academically has surpassed its benchmark. It provided me with a safe place to be who and what I am. My historical connection to this land and uniquenesses were nurtured. Today, I am a master's student at the University of Alberta with extensive successful teaching experience. It has been a place where I have had an opportunity to explore deeper questions and issues that I still have about schooling for children.

As an educator, my attention is drawn to the lack of First Nation Métis and Inuit perspectives being infused into the everyday curriculum. I believe that activism within greater society can begin with teachers who challenge the status quo and curriculum making. A teacher's ability to think critically about curriculum integration may aid in exploring stories and/or messages not previously heard. When teachers create an environment for critical thinking and reflection on collisions of ideas and negotiate these complicated issues with children, they can contribute to a sense of being within the whole. When

individuals are cognizant of their worldviews and their place in greater society, this may contribute to transformative change and awareness within students and greater society. However, facilitated in the safety of a classroom, with informed teacher practitioners, this may create a venue for further reflective thought.

As a child growing up in the 1970s and 1980s, and like many Aboriginal Canadians, I did not really understand exactly where I fit in the context of this diverse mosaic of a landscape we call Canada. I did not know what it meant to be Aboriginal, or Métis specifically. My walk, like that of many other children across Canada, was something called bicultural, or walking in two places to make a whole. Later in my youth, at university, this struggle and my journey of identity were strengthened by the First Nations, Métis, and Inuit (FNMI) literature that portrayed me in an authentic light. As teachers and Elders introduced me to authors such as Maria Campbell, Thomas King, Lee Maracle, Jordan Wheeler, Louise Erdrich, Sherman Alexie, Richard Van Camp, and many others, I learned that identity struggles were not new or easy to resolve and that others before me had also experienced this.

These storytellers encountered greater obstacles in varying degrees in the generations before me. On their paths to individual reconciliation, they wrote their stories down to share with the wider Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities. We are fortunate to have these literary treasures proliferate the ever-evolving stories that identify us. The ability to see ourselves in the context of a book feeds our hunger to see ourselves in the mosaic of our Canadian landscape. This realization reinforced for me that my calling was to help not only

FNMI youth, but also non-Indigenous youth, and to see Indigenous people in positive, everyday lived experiences in the literature. My classroom teaching ranged from a very diverse classroom to classrooms with little diversity. These varied experiences helped me to realize the importance of literature for all children.

As a classroom teacher, I often led my discussions with an artifactual item, hidden in a bag or a box to make it more intriguing for the students. I would bring in Elders who would share their items while storytelling to share a deeper message. Whether sage, tobacco, a basket, or an element from Mother Earth in the hands of the Elders, these literacies facilitated a deeper story, one embedded in the lived experiences of the Indigenous world.

Historical Context

Canadian society is multicultural, and policies in this area have affected schools, programming, and curriculum over many years. Canadian scholar Zinga (2004) wrote an overview of Canada's state of multiculturalism since its inception in 1971 by former Prime Minister Trudeau, who adopted and promoted a multiculturalism state policy. Trudeau was acting on the recommendations of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism (Erasmus & Dussault, 1996), which called for the recognition and maintenance of Canada's diversity. This Royal Commission was searching for ways to "reconcil[e] the concepts of dualism and multiculturalism" (Li, 1999; as cited in Chalal, 2006, p. 8).

According to Li (1999; as cited in Chalal, 2006), "The final recommendations of the Royal Commission were mainly about how to carry an

official bilingual policy, but it made sixteen recommendations regarding how key institutions can change to maintain their language and culture" (p. 8). During this period the House of Commons presented its three main principles: cultural retention and development, full egalitarian participation in Canadian society, and cultural sharing (Magsino, 1993; as cited in Chalal, 2006, p. 2). To this end, many subsequent provincial acts have either referred to or adopted these principles, albeit in varying degrees: the 1974 Saskatchewan Multicultural Act, the 1984 Alberta Cultural Heritage Act, the 1983 Manitoba's Intercultural Act, and Manitoba's Policy for a Multicultural Society. As well, different provincial governments made statements that contained provisions to support these multicultural principles. Despite multiculturalism's positive elements in public policy and education, there have been challenges, such as the failure to deliver on its promise of addressing inequality and the systemic racism in Canada (p. 10). Some do not consider these multicultural policies as going far enough and push policies framed by antiracist theory and practice instead (p. 8).

Canada during the 1960s and early 1970 saw a kind of political awakening, and Indigenous people began organizing around their needs and issues. As the civil rights movement swept through the United States, it drew public attention to the intense racism and discrimination that African Americans and other minorities experienced, which led to Canadians questioning the inequality of and discrimination against Canada's First Nations (University of British Columbia, 2009). The Canadian federal government recognized that Canada's Aboriginal peoples were facing greater poverty and serious

socioeconomic barriers such as higher infant mortality rates, lower life expectancy, and lower levels of education compared to non-Indigenous Canadians.

Harry B. Hawthorn, a University of British Columbia anthropologist, was commissioned by the government in 1963 to investigate the social conditions of Canada's Aboriginal peoples. In the report *A Survey of the Contemporary Indians of Canada: Economic, Political, Educational Needs and Policy* (Hawthorn, Cairns, & Tremblay, 1967), he concluded that Aboriginal peoples were Canada's most disadvantaged and marginalized population, to whom he referred as "citizens minus" (p. 13). According to Hawthorn, the residential school system and years of failed government policy left Canada's Aboriginal people unprepared for participation in the contemporary economy. He recommended that Aboriginal peoples be considered "citizens plus" (p. 20), provided with resources and opportunities to choose their own lifestyles whether off or on reserve. Hawthorn advocated ending all forced assimilation programs, especially residential schools (p. 2).

Minister of Indian Affairs Chrétien decided to amend the Indian Act based on Hawthorn's recommendations. In May 1969 the Canadian government brought regional Aboriginal representatives to Ottawa for a nationwide meeting, where leaders expressed their concerns about Aboriginal and treaty rights, self-determination, access to education and health care, and title to the land. A response to these consultations from Ottawa in June 1969 produced the *White*

Paper, which proposed the dismantling of Indian Affairs (University of British Columbia, 2009).

Canada's Aboriginal people were shocked by the proposed *White Paper*. It failed to address concerns raised by their leaders during the consultation process. No provisions recognized or honoured First Nations' special rights or dealt with historical grievances such as Aboriginal and treaty rights, title to the land, or meaningful participation in Canadian policy making (University of British Columbia, 2009).

Although the *White Paper* acknowledged the social inequality of Aboriginal peoples in Canada and the historically poor federal policy choices, Aboriginal peoples viewed the new policy statement as the culmination of Canada's long-standing goal to assimilate Indians into mainstream Canadian society and abandon the Treaty obligations. Aboriginal groups felt that the federal government was simply, as Harold Cardinal (1969) put it, "passing the buck" (p. 1) to the provinces. The Government of Canada's intention was to absolve itself of responsibility for historical injustices and of its obligations to uphold treaty rights and maintain Canada's special relationship with First Nations. The disregard for First Nations' opinions during the consultation fuelled outrage, because it appeared that the abolition of the Indian Act was the goal of the *White Paper* (University of British Columbia, 2009). The Indian Act became a focus for much debate about a land base for First Nations peoples.

At the time, Harold Cardinal, a 24-year-old Cree man, was the head of the Indian Association of Alberta. According to the University of British Columbia (2009):

> Cardinal's book *The Unjust Society* exposed for the non-Native public the hypocrisy of the notion that Canada was a "just society." Cardinal called the white paper "a thinly disguised programme of extermination through assimilation." He saw the white paper as a form of cultural genocide. In 1970, the Indian Association of Alberta, under Cardinal's leadership, rejected the white paper in their document *Citizens Plus*, which became popularly known as the Red Paper. *Citizens Plus* was soon adopted as the national Indian stance on the white paper. Quoting the document, Aboriginal organizations across Canada agreed: "There is nothing more important than our treaties, our lands and the well-being of our future generations. (Responses to the White Paper section, para. 3)

The controversy over the *White Paper* (University of British Columbia, 2009) dawned a new period of political organizing. As a result of the *White Paper*, First Nations across the Western provinces came together in new ways. The new leaders were awakened in the youth of the day. Cardinal, proved to be both politically savvy and university educated and took it upon himself to spearhead the movement of this younger generation. In British Columbia, for example, three Aboriginal leaders—Rose Charlie of the Indian Homemakers' Association, Philip Paul of the Southern Vancouver Island Tribal Federation, and Don Moses of the North American Indian Brotherhood—in 1969 invited bands from across British Columbia to a conference in Kamloops to develop a collective response to the *White Paper* and to discuss the ongoing fight for recognition of Aboriginal rights and title. Attending this conference were 140, which at that time was the largest meeting ever of the province's Aboriginal leaders (University of British Columbia, 2009):

> The conference in Kamloops led to the formation of a new provincial organization—the Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs (UBCIC)—whose main focus was the resolution of land claims. The UBCIC's *A Declaration of Indian Rights: The B.C. Indian Position Paper*, or "Brown Paper," of 1970 rejected the 1969 white paper's proposals and asserted that Aboriginal peoples continued to hold Aboriginal title to the land. The Brown Paper would become the cornerstone of UBCIC's policy. (p. 4)

In other parts of Western Canada there was great concern over The *White Paper* (University of British Columbia, 2009) and the leaders' coming together in opposition. In summary, the *White Paper* of 1969 was a Canadian policy document led by the Minister of Indian Affairs, Jean Chretien, along with Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau, that proposed the abolition of the Indian Act. The goals were to assimilate First Nations people into the Canadian population with the same status as other ethnic minorities and to reject their land claims and any special relationships previously upheld as per the Indian Act. Some believe that this act has contributed to the marginalization of First Nations peoples in greater society. However, many believe that assimilating First Nations people into society was not the way to achieve equality.

In 1972 the National Indian Brotherhood/Assembly of First Nations wrote a policy paper titled *Indian Control of Indian Education.* The paper clearly stated the philosophy and goals of Indian education. The following is the statement on the Indian philosophy of education (National Indian Brotherhood, 1972).

> In Indian tradition each adult is personally responsible for each child, to see that he learns all he needs to know in order to live a good life. As our fathers had a clear idea of what made a good man and a good life in their society, so we modern Indians, want our children to learn that happiness and satisfaction come from:
>
> - pride in one's self,
> - understanding one's fellowmen, and
> - living in harmony with nature.

> These are lessons which are necessary for survival in this twentieth century. (p. 1)

Kirkness (1999) described *Indian control of Indian education* as based on two education principles recognized in Canadian society: parental responsibility and local control. It recognizes that Indian parents must have the same fundamental decision-making rights about their children's education as other parents across Canada do. It promotes the fundamental concept of local control, which distinguishes the free political system of democratic governments from those of a totalitarian nature (p. 12).

This policy paper was the catalyst for Indian people to take control of their children's education. Like the Seminole paper that asked Indigenous and non-Indigenous people at the time to reconsider the direction and leadership of education for Indigenous Canadians at this time, Eber Hampton (1995) reminded us of the role that Indigenous educators played and continue to play in the transformation of education and the importance of "think[ing] along with other Indians in the hope of making a reflective contribution to the conversation among Indian educators about defining and implementing an education worthy of our children and our ancestors" (p. 5). The conversation about Indian control of Indian education continues to take place today.

Although much has transpired since that time, these issues and concerns of First Nations people in the 1960s and 1970s are yet unresolved in the eyes of many, as is evident in the Idle No More movement of today. Concerns over land rights, health, housing, and education remain. The history of FNMI education has been fraught with problems, and Indigenous people have struggled to find a place

in this country where they fit in and see themselves in a positive and successful light. Stereotypes and assumptions continue to plague public perceptions and perpetuate false contemporary worldviews of Indigenous peoples in film, media, and news coverage globally, nationally, and locally, such as in the documentary film *Reel Injun* (Bainbridge, Fon, & Ludwick, 2009).

Current Context for the Exploration of the Literature

Over the past three years I have been involved as a research assistant in a project called *Engaging Teachers With Canadian Literature for Social Justice*. Ingrid Johnston is the principal investigator in the overall SSHRC study, and Lynne Wiltse is the co-investigator, along with five other co-investigators across the country. This research is a national study that explored the possibilities for teachers to develop curricula and pedagogies for diverse classrooms through collaborative teacher inquiry groups. Using an action research approach, the teachers and researchers explored ways in which Canadian literature can address issues of equity and historical marginalization and promote social justice in schools. This study considered teachers' selections of Canadian literature and their understandings of diversity as crucial in helping their students to develop sensitivity to a changing Canadian society. Although increasing numbers of literary texts have been written and illustrated by Canadian authors in the past 20 years, many Canadian teachers still focus on teaching Eurocentric texts in their classrooms and have little experience with teaching literature from a social-justice perspective. The study explored ways in which researchers and teachers collaboratively develop strategies to select, read, and teach a range of

contemporary Canadian literature in their classrooms and reflect upon students' responses to the issues raised by the texts. I was a research assistant, and in my subsequent study I explored three teacher participants' choice of a book for study, *Fatty Legs*, part of FNMI literature.

Research Group and Gleaned Understandings of My Role

Initially, my role in the overarching research study *Engaging Teachers With Canadian Literature for Social Justice* was as a research assistant. However, I seemed to become a storyteller throughout the process of the research in the larger meeting space at the University of Alberta. My story and many students like me were hidden in the brief vignettes and stories I chose to share with the research participants. Like Wilson (2008), much of my life has led me to this place and to these educators, so that together we might garner new understandings in this world of research. Wilson spoke about his research journey in his book *Research Is Ceremony*:

> It was a bit of a convoluted path to the point where I am now as I write this, and the topic of my study has evolved as I progressed. It has become apparent to me that my entire life journey, including the experiences I have had, the teachers that have led me and the upbringing and values given to me by my family, has impacted on my ability to see this topic as I now do. (p. 32)

My stories, although my own, do not really belong to me. They belong to any bicultural student from the past, present, or future. During the research meetings my ability to impart my own life experiences in the role of storyteller rather than researcher/author is more culturally appropriate for Indigenous people in Canada and abroad. It was my way of reflecting an Indigenous research paradigm (Wilson, 2008, p. 32). Although this paradigm was unknown to me at

this time, I inherently believed as an educator and storyteller that my story recognized that listeners filter the story being told through their own experience and thus adapt the information to make it relevant and specific to their lives (p. 32). Some of what I share is simply a story, and some of what I share is a message; in particular to the larger overarching research study, it was my intention that the participants and researchers would never be the same after they heard my story. King (2003) advised:

> Take it. It's yours. Do with it what you will. Tell it to your children. Turn it into a play. Forget it. But don't say in the years to come that you would have lived your life differently if only you had heard this story. You've heard it now. (p. 151)

And I, like these research participants, gleaned an understanding of the fears and trepidations they encountered when they explored literature for social justice. Inherent to these teachers' quest was a desire to do better, to know more, and to expose their students to 'good literature' that enriches the lives of all students. For this experience I am grateful to know that educators are attempting to expand the margins of social justice through the literature choices they select on behalf of their students.

Statement of the Problem

> Despite the painful experiences Aboriginal people carry with them from formal education systems, they still see education as the hope for the future and they are determined to see education fulfill its promise. (Erasmus & Dussault, 1996, p. 3:434)

Based on the report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (Erasmus & Dussault, 1996), Aboriginal education has made significant advances in Aboriginal leadership and control since the 1970s (p. 3:422-584). Castellano,

Davis, and Lahache (2000) stated that Aboriginal educators have assumed a leading role in interpreting Aboriginal philosophies of education (p. xiii). This is a very important step.

Yet, in reality, an examination of how many times children are presented with FNMI literature and/or knowledge systems in the classroom might demonstrate that it is not yet a common phenomenon. More details are needed about where and with whom these literatures are being explored. My quest is to see myself as an Indigenous woman in the literature and for my children to see themselves in the literature. Multiculturalism and multicultural literature are not enough; there is a need for Aboriginal children to see their lives, histories, and realities in the texts and storybooks of the day. A gentle infusion of curriculum by a progressive teacher practitioner can be nurtured in any teacher education program and/or progressive school board professional development practices. It is important for teachers to help Aboriginal students see themselves in the curriculum as well for non-Indigenous students to see their peers in the curriculum. Without a presence, Aboriginal stories and the messages contained in them will never be shared with all Canadians. Without an evolving treaty relationship amongst the people and increased mutual understandings, communication will continue to be plagued by false truths. Classrooms can be a place for an awakening, and it is teacher practitioners who are the curriculum designers and individuals who can change the future.

Similarly to how the Medicine Wheel teachings that originated with the First Nations of the plains have gained broader acceptance as a means of

maintaining awareness of the interrelatedness of all life and deepening our understanding by focusing on segments of the whole (Castellano et al., 2000), I hope that this thesis research study will have broad implications. It focused on one segment of the exploration of a social justice text by educators from a small research group, using Aboriginal literature, which will be helpful in understanding the bigger issues in this field.

Castellano et al. (2000) suggested that, like the vertical and horizontal axes of the Medicine Wheel that reach out in the four directions, they strive to reach out to all peoples and all cultures, drawing attention to the harmony that can be achieved when divergent elements are brought into balance within the circle of life. Applied to education, the Medicine Wheel illustrates the necessity of attending to the physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual dimensions of learning and personal development (p. xiii). Irene Oaks (2013, as cited in Ledding, 2013) described her father's vision of education as balancing education and culture and tradition as a team of two horses, one representing Aboriginal people and one representing non-Aboriginal people, pulling forward together (p. 14).

FNMI literature written for children is a relatively new phenomenon in education, and it should not simply be "shuffled" or included under multicultural literature. It is a separate genre and needs to be respected as a separate entity. Good works of FNMI literature portray Indigenous peoples in respectful roles. However, painful stories also exist and need to be honoured. Indigenous stories and perspectives are inherent to this country and convey understanding and

connection to all Canadians. Some of the best teacher practitioners recognize the value of representing all children, and especially Canada's Indigenous peoples, in the classroom/school learning environment.

Another issue with regard to literature is that many teachers fear and are anxious about exploring "authentic" FNMI literature. Teachers who are aware of stereotypical portrayals of Indigenous peoples in literature can help to end the perpetuation of myths and assumptions from the past. Students and teachers who are asked to critically reexamine the truths of any text may contribute to a lens of critical thinking. If the story causes shame, embarrassment, or hurt for an Aboriginal child in the classroom, a teacher may reconsider this story. As well, if it causes shame to a group identity or anyone's family, the teacher needs to reconsider the choice. With all of these considerations in mind, it is evident that further in-depth examination can illuminate the possibilities for the future.

Research Goals

With this research study I hoped to reach out to all of the research participants in the hope of attending to the multiple domains of learning and personal development for teachers and, ultimately, students. The topic matters because it brings greater awareness and understanding to students, teachers, and administrators in planning curriculum. Classrooms provide a safe forum to challenge the status quo in our thinking, perspectives, and deeper relations at the school level. Admitting that racism does exist in our society and combating or being proactive in our relations, historical perspectives, and truths may require that histories be reexamined and studied in the Canadian classroom.

The lack of FNMI literature in schools denies Aboriginal students the equal benefits of participation in Canadian society. It can be said that non-Aboriginal students who are not exposed to literature from an FNMI perspective are also disadvantaged in their greater understanding of the historical perspectives in a Canadian context.

The goal of this research was to push the boundaries of teachers' abilities, and in turn those of our students' thinking and greater society's notion of FNMI historical and contemporary perspectives. With this research study I hope to benefit school administration, professional planning, curriculum development, and a society that dawns altruistic meaning makers of tomorrow.

This begs me to question, In what ways can we make it easier for non-Aboriginal teachers to explore Aboriginal content in the classroom without fearing that they are appropriating the material or speaking about something that is not theirs? It is important that teachers feel comfortable and successful in implementing these resources. These ideas led me to a research area that appears to have been overlooked in this field.

Research Questions

The questions that led this study are as follows:

1. In the novel *Fatty Legs*, an example of FNMI literature, what challenges and/or rewards might educators encounter while exploring this text in the classroom?
2. What practice and/or supports led the teachers to use *Fatty Legs* in their classrooms?

3. What further background knowledge do teachers perceive that they require to more fully infuse FNMI literature to foster social justice?

The following chapters include a review of the literature, the research methodology that I used for this study, the findings, the implications, and future considerations pertinent to the use of FNMI literature in the Canadian classroom.

CHAPTER 2:

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter gives a historical context of multiculturalism, social justice, and FNMI perspectives in Canada and includes a discussion of critical literacy and the research done in recent years that has addressed these topics. The chapter also provides the reader with an overview of the understanding on which I have based my research, examines the call for FNMI perspectives to be infused into the everyday curriculum in the Canadian classroom, and further explains the challenges that teachers encounter in incorporating FNMI literature into the curriculum.

A Call to Authentic Voice Through Literature

Like so many minority children, FNMI children did not see their lives mirrored in the classroom of the 1990s (Blair, 1994, p. 14). Almost 20 years later, in these contemporary times, we still see the lack of Aboriginal content in Canadian curriculum. At the same time teachers are encouraged to build a multicultural identity among children in a united fashion to build a strong Canadian national identity. Questions arise about the lack of a reciprocal relationship in greater society and how this is reflected in the classroom curriculum. A history void or history that is selectively absent from curriculum perpetuates myths, assumptions, and contemporary stereotypes and creates shifts of knowing that may be ill informed. Therefore, the pressures from an ongoing treaty relationship to produce positive images of Indigenous peoples come from a history of colonization and a desire to counter stereotypes, such as drunken, lazy,

promiscuous Indian, or historical stereotypes of the bloodthirsty warrior, noble savage, or seductive Indian maiden (Wolf & DePasquale, 2008, p. 92).

According to Wikipedia (2014), curriculum in formal education is defined as the planned interaction of pupils with instructional content, materials, resources, and processes for evaluating the attainment of educational objectives. Fine (as cited in Cochran-Smith, 2004) stated, "Reinventing the curriculum by using more inclusive and multicultural materials is only part of what goes on when teachers try to build on their students' resources and interest" (p. 70).

Bell hooks (as cited in Cochrane-Smith, 2004) spoke to the centrality of having all children represented in curriculum:

> Our struggle has not been to emerge from silence into speech but to change the nature . . . of our speech. My goal was to place my students at the center of a curriculum that is inclusive of a Latina perspective and embraces their legacy as one that should be heard. (p. 70)

As Cochran-Smith said in discussing the preparation of student teachers, these examples suggest that part of teaching for social justice is building on what students bring to school with them. To do so, her student teachers co-constructed knowledge with children by building on their interests and questions, constructed curriculum so that it includes multicultural and inclusive content and perspectives in addition to traditional content, and developed culturally and linguistically congruent interactional and questioning patterns (p. 70).

Curriculum can be bent and flexed with the unique demographics of any learning community, and, as with math, science, and biology curriculums, so too must Aboriginal curriculum and Indigenous perspectives be accounted for in all education jurisdictions. If our job as teachers is to be resource collectors,

searching for a wide range of literature on emerging topics, then why, as Blair (1994) asked, is the voice of Aboriginal youth still missing in some classrooms?

Children's voices originate from their community and/or home experiences. Teachers who value children's lived experiences as curriculum demonstrate the importance and value of incorporating children's "funds of knowledge" (Moll & González, 1994, p. 445). Rudine Bishop Sims (1990) concurred and talked about the role of diverse literature as a window and a mirror for all children. If we can give FNMI children an opportunity to see their experiences in the literature, it would offer non-Aboriginal children a window to a world that they would otherwise not see. In support of Aboriginal literature, Blair (1994) suggested, "We cannot possibly move forward without powerful literature experiences that develop one's own learning through inquiry-based learning and in order to foster our students' voice, we may have to temper our own" (p. 16).

Speaking about Aboriginal literature for children in Canada, Clare Bradford (2007) stated:

> In many children's texts, school settings constitute a liminal space where differences of class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, and race are played out. Schools are, of course, far from neutral zones and are deeply implicated in the political and cultural systems they serve, so that relations of power generally favour majority cultures. (p. 159)

If schools are intrinsically nonneutral zones, Bradford was referring to texts that are presented to students for further consideration. She spoke about Lee Maracle's (2002) *Will's Garden* and Joseph Bruchac's (1998) *The Heart of a Chief*, where Indigenous adolescents must negotiate differences in valuing, intersubjective relations, and styles of learning as they move back

and forth between home and the liminal space of school (p. 159). As well, Bradford mentioned Pat Lowe (2003) *Feeling the Heat* and Paula Boock's (1995) *Home Run*, in which non-Indigenous characters find themselves in settings coded as Indigenous and cross borders of race and class (p. 159).

Much of what students experience today in their classrooms may be what Bradford (2007) discussed: students moving back and forth between home and the liminal space of school. Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth may therefore benefit from reexamining the relations of power found in these texts and, ultimately, in their local and greater communities of coexistence. Bradford noted:

> In all four texts, relations between individuals are inflected by histories, positive and negative, of engagement between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, and by the stories, memories, and expectations that inform the ways young characters envisage and experience inter-subjective relations complicated by racial and cultural difference. (p. 159)

Texts that challenge notions of power may provide a lens for youth to see the greater relationships of power at work in society. This power may influence norms of communication and relationships beyond the borders of the classroom. Maori author Linda Tuhiwai Smith (as cited in Bradford, 2007) explained, "Imperialism frames the indigenous experience. It is part of our story, our version of modernity. Writing about our experiences under imperialism and its more specific expression of colonialism has become a significant project in the indigenous world" (p. 48). Bradford suggested that autobiographical works trace individual and communal histories that construct Indigenous experiences and identities in their variety and complexity, carrying out the counter-discursive

tasks (p. 48). Terdiman (as cited in Bradford 2007) termed it "representing the world differently" (p. 48). Bradford saw this as exposing the strategies of forgetting and totalization by which dominant discourses maintain power (p. 48). Canadian author Jordan-Fenton and Pokiak-Fenton, 2010 told her stories for children to consider a counter-discursive to the dominant understanding of the Canadian residential school experience.

The need for authentic voice of minority people in classrooms is important. Van Camp (2010, as cited in Van Camp, Courtland, & Gambell, 2010) stated during an interview in relation to literature:

> This theme of two worlds—Aboriginal culture and values, and the postmodern cybernetic world—bringing about a personal and community interface that offers opportunity and at the same time creates voids and frictions. These tensions are explored in writings for young people and include language loss and its concomitant culture clashes, education values that include the residential schools dystopia, the impact of drugs and alcohol in Aboriginal communities, violence and suicide, and community losses of the elderly and elders that creates a crisis of leadership and mentoring. (p. 154)

Van Camp et al. suggested that Aboriginal youth are trying to research their own culture and celebrate their traditions in two worlds. Specific topics important to young Aboriginal people are coming of age, cultural home, survival, teaching stories, historical and social resistance, and historical documents. As well, they provide the world with an FNMI way of seeing things, FNMI history, and stories told in Indigenous ways. However, writings by Indigenous authors also feature themes of redemption, family, hope, and devotion. Aboriginal literature provides a voice for the above topics to be explored in much more depth (Blair, 1994; Van Camp et al., 2010).

Van Camps' (2010) comic book *Path of the Warrior* explores what being a modern-day warrior is in the face of so many things that are new (e.g., gangs, crystal meth, cultural relocation). This book is contemporary Aboriginal literature that provides a place for Aboriginal youth to see themselves in the story, to draw identity and/or weave interconnectedness into their lives as Aboriginal adolescents (a time that is so fragile for any adolescent in seeking collective cohesiveness and identity).

A great deal needs to be done in this area, and many considerations need to be explored, such as criteria, cultural authenticity, insider/outsider perspective, and stereotyping. It is important to establish criteria for Aboriginal literature. Temple, Martinez, Yokota, and Naylor (1998) made suggestions for evaluating good multicultural literature in the classroom. This framework for teachers includes consideration of whether a work presents cultural details authentically when they search for best works, whether the author writes from an inside or an outside perspective, whether the work promote stereotypes, and which cultural group the author is describing in the work. According to Temple et al., consideration of these issues can guide teachers in selecting multicultural literature and facilitate discussions of such literature among students (p. 88).

When a book is filled with specific details that are authentic, members of that culture who read it feel that their experiences have been reflected and illuminated for others to share. Culturally authentic books are written by authors who have developed a "culturally conscious" way to entertain, educate, and inform, thereby instilling racial pride. However, books that distort and

misrepresent information about a culture create feelings of betrayal in members of that culture. Misleading images may contribute to stereotypes or a dated image of a culture, further contributing to the inability of readers outside the culture to discern what is authentic or not (Temple et al., 1998).

Writers have lived experience and intimate knowledge of what it means for a member of this cultural community. A writer with an insider perspective writes as a member of the culture and is more likely to portray the cultural group authentically; an outsider writes from the point of view of a nonmember of the group. However, the range of cultural experiences and opinions in the depictions of culture vary. Sometimes an outsider perspective may miss the accent, rhythm, or flavour of the experience or lack the cultural nuances that would make it alive (Temple et al., 1998). A simple detail missed or misrepresented may cause hard feelings on the part of the reader from a culture that is inaccurately represented. Aboriginal publishing houses may contribute to the publication of more authentic works.

There are varying views on this insider and outsider question. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. (1998; as cited in Temple et al., 1998), W. E. B. Du Bois, Professor of Literature at Harvard, believed that cultural outsiders can gain an inside perspective when they explore multicultural literature. According to Temple et al., "No human culture is inaccessible to someone who makes the effort to understand, to learn, to inhabit another world" (p. 89). Outsiders who have lived immersed in this cultural world may gain enough depth of

understanding to write and contribute to authentic literature. These relationships are integral to the development of cross-cultural relations.

When attributes are assigned to an entire cultural group, individuality and diversity are overlooked, which result in stereotypes. This may occur in the portrayal of certain characters, characters' interactions with one another, the treatment of a theme, the description of a book's setting, or simply in conveying information (Temple et al. 1998). Such examples of patronizing and condescending ways include the book *Ten Little Rabbits* (Grossman & Long, 1991), which depicts Native American characters as animals to be counted, who are all alike but wear different blankets representing different tribes from America (p. 90). Another example of stereotyping a culture in film media is the movie *Peter Pan* (Disney, 1953). It is a terrible depiction of Aboriginal people, who are portrayed as savages—a movie that many children still view to date and draw inaccurate conclusions from its message in these contemporary times.

In consideration of a call for authenticity, educators need to reflect on their own teacher perspective and how their views and text choices suit their children. Ensuring that all children see themselves in the fabric of the classroom, school, or greater community is a reflection of Canadian society.

Worldviews Collide

Racism comes in various forms, including the exclusion of others. Perry Nodelman (2008) made a powerful statement in his reflection on his own ability to be so blatantly unknowing of something larger than his way of thinking: "In 1987, I was arrogant enough to think that the presence of these forces of

meaningful significance to members of a culture other than my own marked the novel as a fantasy" (p. 107). Nodelman was speaking about the notion of ceasing to see others and their way of knowing. The Western worldview and ways of living define materialism, ego, acquisition of wealth, and competition. The collective worldview of many Indigenous is contrary to this place of being, and Nodelman asked us to recognize these differences and reconsider a meeting of space and minds.

Historically, our Canadian North American school systems have been designed based on a Western worldview, and questions arise as to the adequacy of this model and the need for a reexamination with regard to teaching Canada's Aboriginal peoples. Potentially, its inadequacy in meeting specific needs may affect learner outcomes such as high school graduation rates. Some perceive that their view matters above all, placing the views of others as less valuable. Johnston, Bainbridge, Mangat, and Skogen (2009) noted:

> One critique suggests that official multiculturalism has rested predominantly on its efforts to create a coherent common narrative of nation that fails to address complex questions of identity. Canada has officially relied on the mythology of "two founding nations" (England and France) as the means of focusing its relationships with its visible minority citizens. (p. 76)

Johnston et al. (2009) discussed Canadian identity as the preservice teachers in their study perceived it:

> The intriguing thing about Canadians is their constant insistence to describe themselves by saying what they are not. To me it seems we are so preoccupied by juxtaposing our identity in sharp contrast to the U.S. or the Brits. This in itself, makes our culture interesting—as we are the "invisible other." (p. 84)

Since the 1970s these multicultural policies may have indirectly led to Indigenous Canadians being an invisible fabric in the loom of Canadian multiculturalism. As I discussed in chapter 1, Indigenous Canadians might not engage in education in this country because they see themselves as invisible in the greater relations of Canada. Multiculturalism practices have overlooked Indigenous ways of knowing and being. Indigenous Canadians have clearly stated that they see themselves as distinct, and it is inappropriate to shuffle Indigenous peoples under a multicultural banner. Worldviews could not be more unparalleled—for example, the Western worldview and Aboriginal collective worldview (historically)—and thus the challenges that ensue today.

The greater Indigenous Canadian community recognizes each Indigenous culture as unique and specific to its home territory. No culture is entirely the same for Indigenous people. Individuals cannot claim knowledge because they can only speak on behalf of themselves, their Indigenous worldview, and their lived experiences.

In contrast to a Eurocentric view, Indigenous author Van Camp (2010) reminded us of the importance of minority children:

> To this day, when I sit down and write a story, I'm always thinking about the children out there in the world who deserve to see themselves in what it is that we're writing about. . . It's really for the world. I'm writing for the world and I'm writing so that people can see themselves. That's my wish. (p. 170)

Dr. David Williams (as cited in Lyubansky, 2012), professor of African and African American Studies at Harvard University, addressed unconscious discrimination:

> The research shows that when people hold a negative stereotype about a group and meet someone from that group, they often treat that person differently and honestly don't even realize it. Williams noted that most Americans would object to being labeled as "racist" or even as "discriminating", but he added, "Welcome to the human race. It is a normal process about how all of us process information. The problem for our society is that the level of negative stereotypes is very high." (para. 5)

Although Dr. Williams spoke about racism and bias in healthcare for Latino and black Americans compared to their counterparts, White Americans, this framework might be considered a model for comparison with the Canadian health care system; by extension, this model may also apply to education. Is it unimaginable to think that Indigenous Canadians may be secondary to their counterparts, White-settler Canadians. Williams asked us to understand the power of unconscious bias and appealed to leaders and advocates to continue to work to bring racial healing and racial equity to communities across the U.S. Williams' model is a lens through which Canadians should see themselves with regard to, for example, their health care system, the public service sectors, and educational settings.

The argument can be made that we have our own unconscious biases in our Canadian public institutions and places of public service. As with our southern neighbours, the 2002 Institute of Medicine report may open a window to racism within the fabric of Canadian healthcare, police services, and other places of public service such as education. Centuries of colonialism and a society that assigns value to groups of people are embedded in the consciousness of Americans and are impacted by centuries of bias (Dr. Gail Christopher, vice president of Kellogg Foundation, April 25, 2012) (Retrieved, April 17, 2014).

Similarly, this statement holds true for Indigenous Canadians who live north of the 49th parallel; Williams' (as cited in Lyubansky, 2012) statements may be cause for consideration of why the infusion of good FNMI literature into the curriculum could be important to youth in the Canadian classroom. Again, this points to the path of FNMI literature in classrooms and the fact that greater insights may be gleaned from stories about experiences and relations with one another.

Stereotypes in FNMI Literature and Adding on to the Curriculum

Treuer (2012) discussed the civil rights movement in the United States as an example that brought a great deal of attention to America's unfair treatment of Black citizens and described successful efforts of weaving strands into the curriculum about Black history and Black heroes. He also stated that there has never been a comparable effort to weave Indian heroes into the curriculum on a systemwide basis. Treuer noted that with so few American Indians in the world and so few in positions of educational, financial, and political power, prevailing assumptions about them often go unchallenged, or the challenges lack efficacy. Still today, the image of American Indians is proliferated as a mascot for sports teams when no other racial group in the country is similarly denigrated or mocked, and Americans are left to their imaginings (p. 147).

Robertson (2003, as cited in Bouvier & Karlenzig, 2006) reminded us that still, where efforts to introduce Aboriginal education have taken hold, provincial educational systems and institutions have developed somewhat different ideas

about what this concept means and how it should be presented. Some institutions and cases demonstrate an additive approach or "tokenism" in which distinct subjects or courses about Indigenous issues have been inserted into an already established and basically Eurocentric curriculum (p. 16). Bouvier and Karlenzig also referred to some cases in which limited Aboriginal content or perspectives have been grafted onto one or more preexisting courses such as humanities and natural or social sciences (p. 16). This may prove problematic, because they contended that it needs to be a holistic position rather than an "add-on" to the more familiar curricula and pedagogies. Bouvier and Karlenzig also envisioned Aboriginal education as involving a qualitatively different and transformative process for teaching and learning, such as embracing Indigenous people's worldviews, social structures, and pedagogy as legitimate foundation upon which to construct new meanings or knowledge alongside Western traditions and ways of knowing (p. 17).

Treuer (2012) also commented on the mutual exchange of relationships necessary for solutions to come forward:

> We need help with everything from education to grant writing to advocacy. If you are not part of the solution, you might be part of the problem. Teachers too afraid to teach about Indians are likely perpetuating stereotypes of Indians or erroneous versions of the Christopher Columbus story, alienating Indians without even realizing they are doing it. (p. 163)

This points to the reoccurring question of fear and unknown in teaching across the curriculum:

> It can be very frustrating for non-native people to know how best to reach out to Indians or to help address the problems in Indian country. Most

> human beings are terrified of offending others or being accused of racism. Sometimes it seems safer and easier not to teach about Indians, not to learn more and more deeply about Indians, and not to advocate for change. (p. 164)

Treuer (2012) reminded his readers that for evil to triumph, good men do nothing (p. 164). Like Treuer, I am reminded, along with my colleagues, not to imagine Indians, but rather to understand them. If I am able to understand the depth of the biases and perspectives that I bring to any situation or, in particular, to my classroom, I may be able to understand others at a much deeper level and thus contribute to a teaching or professional work environment of respect and reciprocity. Treuer stated, "Keep asking questions, reading, listening and advocating for change. Don't tolerate stereotypes" (p. 164), and similar to the title of his book, *Everything You Wanted to Know About Indians but Were Afraid to Ask*, don't be afraid to ask. He also reminded Indigenous peoples of the role they have inherently assumed: "And if you're native, give a meaningful response to those questions rather than an angry rebuke. It really makes a difference" (p. 164).

Treuer (2012) commented on the fact that many books and resources about Indians have had no input from Indians. Although he recognized that tribes and tribal people as getting better at reaching out and developing more resources online and in print, he recommended that educators continue to seek out good resources and not get discouraged. Treuer believed that a genuine quest for understanding and a desire to help through a combined effort of a great many Native and non-Native people will make it easier for Indians to be understood rather than imagined (p. 158).

Teacher Knowledge and Cross-Cultural Expertise

Moll, Amanti, Neff, and Gonzalez (1992) developed a research approach that was based on understanding households (and classrooms) qualitatively. By utilizing a combination of ethnographic observations, open-ended interviewing strategies, life histories, and case studies, combined analytically, they portrayed the complex functions of households within their sociocultural contexts (p. 132). Like the *Engaging Teachers With Canadian Literature for Social Justice* project, Moll et al.'s designed their research to coordinate three interrelated activities: the ethnographic analysis of household dynamics, the examinations of classroom practices, and the development of after-school study groups with teachers (p. 132). Although Moll et al.'s work was primarily about children from working-class Mexican communities in Tucson, Arizona, it is similar in some ways to the teacher inquiry group which was part of the overarching study for my research project. These teachers seek to enrich the lives of all children they encounter on a daily basis or will encounter in the future. Moll et al. spoke described the study groups as collaborative ventures between teachers and researchers in settings where teachers discussed their developing understanding of households and classrooms (p. 132). In Wiltse's research group, I see the teachers functioning through "mediating structures" to develop novel classroom practices that involve strategic connections between these two entities (Moll et al., 1990; as cited in Moll et al., 1992, p. 132).

Susan U. Philips' (1992) book, *The Invisible Culture*, was a study of the organization of communication in face-to-face interactions among the Warm

Springs Indians and of the consequences of that organization for the teaching and learning experiences of Warms Springs Indian children in and out of school. The book, on one hand, was intended to develop an understanding of the nature of human communication in face-to-face interaction and of what is universal and culturally variable in human communication. On the other hand, the book is a critique of the ways in which Indian children are treated in American schools, where the organization of interactions placed them in a subordinate position not only by virtue of their status as children and students relative to adult teachers, but also as Indians relative to the dominant Euro-American school culture imposed upon them through teachers' control of classroom interaction (p. xi). Philips explained the specific implications for the way in which teaching and learning in American classrooms could be changed to make school learning experiences less oppressive for ethnic minority children who learn how to learn in culturally diverse ways. Philips examined both the theoretical and the applied work of teachers and children in the classroom (p. xi), described an invisible culture found in an American Indian classroom, and asked us to question the invisible culture of the students found in any classroom of learners despite borders of ethnicity, class, and gender. Teachers who examine their practice may become aware of a systemic base of instruction that alienates learners. This awareness may be necessary for teachers to develop curriculum and pedagogy that creates an inclusive learning environment. Placing value on invisible forms of communication and exchanges of knowledge asks teachers to create and see the invisible curriculum.

Critical Literacy and Pedagogy

Canadian classrooms should be small democratic models in which the daily routines of greater society are mimicked and practiced. These classrooms are models for future professional and social relationships that children will enter either by choice or by their vocational trade and/or university background. Unfortunately, some students fail to complete a basic Grade 12 education. Although there is much talk about how education systems fail these students, Myers (1996, as cited in Creighton, 1997) cautioned that the way in which we construct our world is changing, and therefore literacy must change with it (p. 439). Cope and Kalantzis (1993, as cited in Creighton, 1997), wrote:

> This is no longer a world in which dogmatic canonical texts . . . seem to make much sense. . . . It is a world of fragmentation, of cultural diversity, of multiple gender identities, of half a dozen different types of family, no one of which commands a majority adherence, of subcultures and styles and fads. . . . So, what else can be done but create a pedagogy which gives voice to each child's cultural proclivities and to the bewildering kaleidoscope of dialects and discourses? (p. 439)

This points out that the reality of the family structure, the view of the reading acquisition process, and the role of literature in the classroom have changed dramatically in North America over the past 150 years (p. 438). Creighton suggested that critical pedagogy brings to the classroom an awareness of the structure of cultural systems and positions of power therein (p. 439). If this awareness is honed during a student's youth, it may create a certain vantage point. Darder (1991) stated, "Adult intelligence and social and emotional competencies are critically shaped during the early years" (p. 10). If these emotional

competencies of some students are not nurtured during the early years, it may be problematic for their personal and professional interpersonal relationships:

Darder (1991) explained that language is one of the most significant educational tools in the struggle for cultural democracy in public schools, that it is intimately linked to the struggle for voice, and that it is essential for liberation. Our positions are defined not only by language, but also through the language that we use to define ourselves as subjects in the world (p. 107). Darder identified the most important goal of critical bicultural pedagogy as to create the condition for voices of difference to find their way to the centre of the dialogical process, rather than remaining forever silent or at the fringes of American classroom life. (p. 107)

Creighton (1997) concurred and elaborated: "Critical pedagogy brings to the classroom an awareness of the structure of cultural systems and positions of power therein, and of ways in which they can positively or negatively affect groups or individuals" (p. 439). This reminds educators and administrators to reflect on practices that both support and hinder student growth and success. As a former teacher, I would often state to my students, "You can be anything you want to be in this life." I also followed this statement with, and continually stated throughout the school year, "When you go to university . . . ." Darder's (1991) examination of the use of language and the power that some inherently hold has led me to reflect on my words and realize the distinct disadvantage that some children inherently face throughout their daily lives.

Darder (1991) recommended that, prior to any engagement with instrumental questions of practice, educators delve rigorously into the specific theoretical issues that are fundamental to the establishment of a culturally democratic foundation for a critical bicultural pedagogy in the classroom (p. 99). Darder contended that bicultural students must find opportunities to engage in classroom dialogues and activities that permit them to explore the meaning of their lived experiences through the familiarity of their own language. She also considered this important to their development of social consciousness, process of conscientization, and awareness of how language and power intersect in ways that include or exclude students of colour from particular social relationships (p. 103). Darder further stated:

> Although bicultural students fully develop and strengthen their bicultural voices (as Puerto Ricans, Chicanos, African-Americans, etc.) through their interactions with others in their own communities, it is also imperative that, in order to understand more fully the impact of language on social structures and practices, students of colour enter into critical dialogues with those outside their cultural communities. (p. 104)

In reflection, I see myself, a once bicultural student now taking on this discourse with fellow colleagues, as a bicultural educator/researcher who is informing educators about language, culture, practice, and power in the classroom. This kind of examination is intended to inform other teacher educators about the challenges that bicultural children and teachers may encounter. As is the teachers' role, to inform me of the challenges they face while implementing a curriculum that creates conditions for a culturally democratic classroom.

Creighton (1997) suggested that seeing self in the text or stories is necessary because they entertain, arouse curiosity, stimulate imagination, develop intellect, clarify emotions, attune us to anxieties and aspirations, help us to recognize difficulties, and offer solutions to problems. Good literature can also serve as a mirror to reflect and validate our individual images and backgrounds (p. 438). Critical literacy is a powerful tool to understand stories—the thread of humanness woven through our universal reading and writing communities—that explore shared commonalities such as values, belief systems, systems of hierarchy, customs, and similar lived historical experiences. Through this reexamination of texts, readers might one day question their role in a democracy that is influenced by the position of power based on the notion of culture and power in the classroom.

Watkinson (2004, as cited in Zinga, 2004, p. 10) was candid about the challenges ahead for democratic education and contended that it is possible for students to challenge curricula that are racist or ethnocentric "or those that exclude histories of marginalized groups such as Aboriginal peoples, Black people, or persons with disabilities" (pp. 97-98). Teachers who use literature written from a multiplicity of perspectives on sensitive topics, as I stated above, can help students to challenge racist or ethnocentric realities and experiences in greater society. Literature is a tool with which teachers can explore this multiperspectival approach to teaching.

Current discussions in literacy education incorporate a strong critical literacy component. Teachers' engagement in critical literacy with all works that

enter the classroom is an underlying theme and philosophy that is important. Teacher practitioners' power is tremendous with regard to the literature that they choose for classroom and greater school use. Creighton (1997) noted that teachers who are sensitive to the different voices in the classroom foster an environment in which student voice is accepted and encouraged in a nonthreatening atmosphere (p. 444). She also suggested that the position of power within be shifted—for example, the teacher can assume the role of facilitator during classroom discussions (Pierce & Stein, 1995) by allowing personal response through a variety of media and by encouraging students to be critical thinkers and readers and to articulate the pleasure or discomfort that has resulted from reading or hearing a text (p. 444). Creighton took the position that if teachers avoid texts that challenge or disrupt, or even alter their original context in any way, then they might miss an opportunity to enlighten and educate themselves and their students (p. 444).

Proponents of critical literacy recommend that teachers reexamine the resources in school collections for stereotypes, assumptions, and false notions. Creighton (1997) suggested that an important first step for teachers to take to develop critical literacy in their classrooms is to understand how easily assumptions can be made at any level and examine how those assumptions may affect their students, because "each individual sees the world through his or her own cultural and gender experiences" (p. 444).

Creighton (1997) also questioned teachers' selection of their favourite childhood books for classroom use. This is not a negative practice; rather, she

suggested that educators continue to develop over the course of the school year an awareness of their students' experiences and their need to see their own culture and gender reflected in story (p. 444). Teachers who advocate for all children's voices are critically examining what is missing or absent from curriculum. This may be cause for consideration as to why some literature has been overlooked or shuffled into historical collections. Teachers play a key role as change agents. Their ability to navigate social justice issues through the literature they select and weave into the curriculum addresses issues in greater society. Creighton believed that this reexamination can be achieved by acknowledging the social complexity of the reading process, being aware of positions of power within the educational structure and how this structure may exercise their authority and closely examining the text for cultural and gender representation and possible biases (p. 444). Exploring local grassroots issues may address the larger systemic challenges within our institutions and the greater community.

FNMI Perspectives and Inservicing for Teachers

Aboriginal consultants can support teachers who are navigating FNMI perspectives as they bring in authentic texts and adapt contemporary curriculum practices. The opportunity to "bounce ideas" off one another in an inservice forum may reduce teachers' fear. Teachers who explore social justice topics together may be able to break down the issues for their students in the everyday lived classroom, and teachers who have honest conversations can build on their own and their students' understanding of FNMI perspectives together. These safe places of discourse give teachers the courage and strength to integrate the practice

in their classroom. FNMI perspectives that naturally permeate the curriculum and take more of a natural approach throughout the yearly curriculum development process result in a learning plan that is inclusive rather than an add-on approach such as the one-week themed approach or the token National Aboriginal Day. A continuous effort of natural infusion contributes to an Indigenous sense of seeing and being within the curriculum..

The practice of naturally permeating curriculum with FNMI content includes immersing the new content into the curriculum without its being obvious to the learner. This natural flow of teaching and infusion can build on any learning that has previously taken place. According to Van Camp et al. (2010) "The creative process is always a dance of trust" (p. 168), and the use of children's literature in the classroom is also a dance of trust.

The absence of Aboriginal curriculum is a serious concern. This is an area, as I stated earlier, that needs to be assessed and reported locally, provincially, and nationally. Similar to teachers' accountability for what they teach in other classroom curriculum, Aboriginal curriculum must also be viewed in the same way.

The Office of the Treaty Commissioner ([OTC] 2012) in Saskatchewan suggested that leadership in the area of Aboriginal education is required within any school division. Aboriginal educators must have rich opportunities to share and work collaboratively to lead the curriculum with enriched professional development opportunities. This requires that consultants with exemplary leadership teams enrich teachers' professional development opportunities within

each school board. It is no longer acceptable to opt out of such practices when "we are all in this together"; and, as the OTC stated, "We are all Treaty people." This reminds us that our Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal forefathers all signed the Canadian treaties.

Van Camp et al. (2010) recommended that levels of inservicing be provided within each school division and enriched collaboratively with others who are modeling best or progressive practices for Aboriginal learning services. Teachers cannot teach FNMI children if they do not have rich and accurate historical perspectives on Indigenous peoples who are inherent to Canada and/or North America and contemporary works and resources. There is a risk that teachers will do all children in the Canadian classroom a great disservice by not providing a mirror of interracial and human relationships. It does not matter if 2 children or 100 choose to self-identity on school registration forms; all Canadian children require Aboriginal content incorporated into the curriculum. Van Camp et al. reinforced the idea that "fearless voices, . . . people who aren't scared to take on their leadership, to question the teachings of their elders or the customs or their people (p. 154), are required.

The amount of professional development varies within the provinces. Some may have mandated provincial curriculum in which the classroom teacher is expected to incorporate Aboriginal content into the curriculum, whereas others seem to vaguely explore Aboriginal content until high school for examples social sciences and historical lenses.

It is important to know teachers' perspectives, how to improve the utilization of resources, and how teachers can enrich the lives of all children/ students. How do teachers ensure that all children will see themselves in the fabric of the classroom, school, or greater community? Van Camp et al. stated that

> Nobody was talking about the second generation of residential schools and its impact on my little home town. Nobody was talking about the beauty of the North, the humour, the storytelling, the two-stepping, just the romance of the North and the land, the power of the land. (p. 156)

Much of Van Camp's (1996) writing in his *The Lesser Blessed* is his perspective on his self, his cultural link to ways of knowing, and his shared identity with Canadians. The book serves as a lens for one northern Canadian community and gives the educational community a perspective on what it means to be a Dogrib youth in contemporary times. It is useful for teachers' professional development and inservice workshops.

It is certainly important to consider proper and specific inservicing for preservice teachers and teachers alike. Each Indigenous group is unique to its cultural and linguistic community.

Inquiry Groups as Support/Mentorship in Relation to Teaching for Social Justice

According to Wenger (1998, as cited in Philpott & Dagenais, 2012) a community of practice is a group of people who share a history of experience. The more experienced members represent this history and disseminate knowledge to new members. Wenger explained that this negotiation of meaning has the potential to create rich opportunities to form new identities (for both the

individuals and the community; p. 86). Wenger also noted that this negotiation can create tensions that result in the repositioning of the members or adjustments of the characteristics that define the community of practice. Wenger described competence within a community defines membership and defines one's identity within the community. This can leave members feeling either included or marginalized based on the incompetence or competence determined by their position within the community (p. 86).

Clandinin and Connelly (1995, as cited in Philpott & Dagenais, 2012) explored the process of induction into teaching by examining the narratives and experiences of teachers as they began their careers. They proposed a framework for studying induction based on the metaphor of professional knowledge landscapes, which refers to the complex layers of teachers' professional lives (p. 86). Clandinin and Connelly examined the relationship between how teachers live in their classrooms and how they live in other professional places (p. 87) and contended that, for transformation to occur, they need safe places in which to engage in conversations with others about struggles and challenges: places where stories are shared, reflected on, recounted in different ways, and relived (p. 87). Philpott and Dagenais explained that, because there are few places to actually drop the veils of false competence, novice teachers often feel further isolated and reluctant to portray themselves as struggling (p. 87). Their professional knowledge research primarily involved new teachers, but more experienced teachers may also benefit from a safe place for discourse to examine their uncertainties about the literature and social justice initiatives they are considering

for classroom practice. Philpott and Dagenais' work highlights that teaching conditions play an important role in determining new teachers' capacity to work towards equity in education (p. 96). Although their research included new teachers who were entering the field of teaching and social justice initiatives, my understanding is that the *Engaging Teachers With Canadian Literature for Social Justice* group develop a model similar to this one, but for experienced teachers.

Summary

The exploration of Aboriginal literature in the classroom gives learners an opportunity to share and witness and/or braid oral tradition and Aboriginal perspectives with the written word (Van Camp et al., 2010, p. 153). Contemporary Aboriginal literature also gives new voices and young voices an opportunity to celebrate their traditions in two worlds (Van Camp et al., 2010). As Van Camp et al. stated, "What interests me now is Dogrib Indians alive today walking in two worlds" (p. 157). He provided insight into the plight of Aboriginal Canadians and their walk in contemporary times. Often Aboriginal children walk in two worlds and need to feel that they are not alone and that they hear their language and witness their identity in their classroom environment.

A teacher's ability to share story is powerful. A well-trained, skilled, insightful practitioner must make an attempt to reflect the daily stories of the youth found within the home and local community. This lends to a presence in the fabric of the Canadian classroom and the greater Canadian landscape in which we all live. Reflective practitioners understand that seeing themselves in the

literature gives Aboriginal children the power necessary to tell their stories tomorrow. The most beautiful thing about story is to hear one's own voice.

CHAPTER 3:

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Although not much research has been done with teachers who use FNMI literature in the Canadian classroom, in this study I aimed to further explore the limitations, challenges, and rewards of three non-Indigenous teachers' journeys. The focus of my study was three experienced teachers who were incorporating the memoir *Fatty Legs* (Jordan-Fenton & Pokiak-Fenton, 2010) into their classroom teaching. The book is about Margaret Pokiak, an eight-year-old girl who longed to learn how to read. After much warning about the terrors of residential school, Margaret's father agreed to let his daughter leave their small Arctic village and venture on a five-day journey to this place of reading, writing and learning—this residential school. Margaret met the Raven, a hooked-nose, bony-fingered, black-cloaked nun who soon grew to dislike Margaret's strong will. Raven found pleasure in her attempts to break Margaret's spirit through shame and humiliation by, for example, such as making her wear the only pair of red stockings. The strength and courage of this one young girl and her lesson in human dignity are evident to both the Raven and the reader alike.

The three teachers who used this book in their classrooms for this study are from an urban and/or greater urban school board and were involved in a larger overarching research project with a small inquiry group of teachers (*Engaging Teachers With Canadian Literature for Social Justice* (a Social Science and Humanities Research Council–funded national study) in exploring a novel

with FNMI content by an FNMI author. These teachers' perspectives, challenges, and successes are central to my research project.

Although researchers have conducted some qualitative research on multicultural education and literature, a gap remains in the qualitative research on FNMI children's literature that teacher practitioners use in urban classrooms. Although a quantitative case study would measure faster the numbers of teachers in urban school boards who use FNMI content and literature, a qualitative stance with a detailed interview process and observations from the overarching research provides a deeper and richer understanding of the topic. In this research the in-depth interview process with each teacher practitioner created a window into the daily, lived experiences of teachers who were challenging the status quo with literature and youth. In doing so they encountered challenges in planning and implementing and in garnering students' interest. With a greater understanding from this research, I hope to witness the inspiration and possibilities of FNMI literature in the classroom and explore it in context with youth, as well as the challenges for teachers. This greater understanding and in-depth analysis may lead to recommendations for other teachers, administrators, and school boards and directions for future research.

Qualitative Case Study

Background

Merriam (2002) stated:

> The key to understanding that nature of qualitative research lies with the idea that meaning is socially constructed by individuals in interaction with their world. The world, or reality, is not fixed, single, agreed upon, or a measurable phenomenon that it is assumed to be a positivist, quantitative

> research. Instead, there are multiple constructions and interpretations of reality that are in flux and that change over time. Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding what those interpretations are at a particular point in time and in a particular context. Learning how individuals experience and interact with their social world, the meaning it has for them, is considered an interpretive qualitative approach. If you were interested in studying the placement of a child in foster care, for example, you might focus on understanding the experience from the perspective of the child, the foster family, the agency involved, or all three. (p. 4)

I have had a kind of apprenticeship in a qualitative case study research paradigm and many opportunities during my graduate program; for example, to present a short bibliographical paper on FNMI literature at the Northern Area Reading Association meeting in Alberta. I also became part of a group of teachers who were researching good books for classroom use and participated in a children's-literature graduate class in which we examined the role of literature and its power to convey a greater message. I worked as the coordinator for the Alliance Pipeline Young Women's Circle of Leadership, which created avenues to explore Cree language and literacy for youth at the University of Alberta. I worked as a research assistant under the direction of Dr. Lynne Wiltse in her study *Engaging Teachers with Canadian Literature for Social Justice*, which was instrumental in fostering a greater understanding and validating the focus of my research. I also had opportunities to attend and co-present at various conference programs, which have resulted in perspective and a call to action research—action through programs and research initiatives that engage teachers through literature and students through programming that revitalizes language. This simultaneous learning curve has given me opportunities to walk along and in the midst of the

work, seeing while I live and breathe it. All of these experiences have broadened and deepened my understanding and experience with qualitative research.

According to Creswell (2012):

> Qualitative research is an inquiry approach useful for exploring and understanding a central phenomenon. In order to learn about the phenomenon, the inquirer asks participants broad, general questions, collects the detailed views of participants in the form of words or images, and analyzes the information for description and themes. From this data, the researcher interprets the meaning of the information, drawing on personal reflections and past research. The final structure of the final report is flexible, and it displays the researcher's biases and thoughts. (p. 626)

This qualitative study explored the central phenomenon of FNMI literature around three teachers experiences involved in a larger community of teacher practice. General guiding questions were prepared to help facilitate audio-recorded interviews. Audio recordings were transcribed and analysed for codes and themes.

> A qualitative data collection is more than simply deciding on whether you will observe or interview people. Five steps comprise the process of collecting qualitative data such as the need to identify the participants and sites, gain access, determine the types of data to collect, develop data collection forms and administer the process in an ethical manner. (p. 204)

Recruitment of Participants

After fulfilling the requirements for ethics approval (Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, and Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (Tri-Council, 2010) for this study at the University of Alberta, I solicited participation from four targeted teachers who were involved in an overarching national research study (*Engaging Teachers With Canadian Literature for Social Justice*

by Dr. Lynne Wiltse and Dr. Ingrid Johnston), in which they were researching the novel *Fatty Legs*. I followed all appropriate protocols with the University of Alberta and the appropriate school boards (Cooperative Activity Program) and received administrator and teacher permission at the local level. My invitation to the four teachers resulted in three participants who were readily available to participate in the study. I gave them information letters and consent forms to sign. To adhere to the Tri-Council's guidelines, I will destroy all data in five years' times.

Research Participants and Locations

The criteria for the teacher participants included an urban or greater urban context. In my initial criteria selection, I believed that my being an Indigenous researcher who is researching Indigenous teacher participants would result in an excellent study. However, during the selection process, when I was searching for teachers who were exploring the novel *Fatty Legs*, synchronicity and the larger national research study revealed my participants to me. Because all three of them are non-Indigenous, they created an opportunity to study the collaborative teaching efforts of non-Indigenous teachers who were striving to incorporate FNMI content and protocols to the best of their ability. This window gave me an appreciation for the fears and protocols that they were trying to honour in their daily teaching duties.

The research participants have chosen their own pseudonyms for this thesis.

Initially, I knew that the book of choice was *Fatty Legs*; however, I was uncertain about how to access participants. My initial objective and goal was to witness one teacher educator incorporate and navigate this text reflectively, but, in fact, three teacher participants came forward. In the initial stages of planning, one urban school board suggested a teacher participant. However, the synchronicity of three of the four teachers whom I short-listed revealed my research participants. They were all interested in the novel *Fatty Legs*, which I had chosen for my research, and were therefore suitable selections.

The locations that I chose for the research interviews were the teachers' teaching-assignment sites in schools in urban settings in Western Canada. As a researcher, visiting each specific site gave me a perspective on the teachers' and students' everyday lived forum for discourse. Entering these sites as an Indigenous researcher also helped me to focus and develop my questions; for example, into what environment was I walking? As a researcher I kept my eyes and ears open to try to understand the students' experiences when they enter a school landscape or classroom environment. I wondered whether the students were able to see themselves in the halls and walls, as one teacher had commented. Ultimately, our environment says much about the people within the school. What I viewed on the walls and the feeling that enveloped me as I entered each site often sets the tone for the classrooms in which curriculum is navigated and negotiated. I searched for a welcoming environment in the hallways and classrooms that felt like a place for discourse. Two schools had environmental print on the walls and in the halls that evidenced many of the children's

backgrounds. There were images of diversity, students' drawings, posters, photos, stories about family backgrounds, and abstract art to complement their interpretation of self. Prior to the interview, one teacher, the second research participant, took the time to show me the collaborative home project in which the students interviewed one parent and/or grandparent/great-grandparent. The emphasis was on identity: bringing their Canadian identity to the classroom to share through art, questions, interviews, and poetry, as well as art in the hallway for all school members to observe.

The third school had a much less obvious presence of diverse learners. I observed the students leaving the classrooms and hallways near the end of the day, which gave me examples of the potential dynamics of the student population and how they see themselves or their lives portrayed around the school.

Meeting June. I met June in September 2012 as part of the teacher inquiry group in the national research study. June is an experienced teacher with a master's degree and was expecting her first child during the research interview process. She is a non-Indigenous teacher in a Canadian, multicultural, urban Grade 6 classroom. She was receptive and willing to be part of my research project. I listened to her read "popcorn style" with her students as part of the larger national study and directly observed her calm, gentle, student-led classroom setting. In June's interview for this research study I was able to hear her beyond the borders of the four walls of the overarching teacher conversations. She provided an intimate, private lens through which I viewed the classroom content and discourse that she so intentionally offers her students. June

considered good literature, no matter the author, a key teaching tool. She was also aware of her role and that of teachers in honouring protocols that this uncertainty or new territory may contribute to teacher fear.

Meeting Martin. I met Martin initially in an online class in a graduate school program and again in person in a face-to-face graduate children's-literature class. Little did I know at that time that he would be one of my research participants. Martin is an experienced teacher with a master's degree and approximately 10 years of teaching experience with both separate and public urban school boards. He was currently teaching in a public school and saw literature as a way for teachers to introduce students to topics that were once silenced and/or missing from classroom curriculum. He was working on a social-justice-through-literature project that began in the fall of 2013.

Meeting Anahid. I met Anahid in the fall of 2012; she was part of the national study group. She is a French immersion teacher in a greater urban community. Anahid also holds a master's degree in education and has over 10 years of teaching experience in Eastern and Western Canada.

During the second year of the study Anahid became interested in my targeted research novel, which sparked my interest in soliciting her as a research participant. She willingly accepted my invitation, and I interviewed her once I had met all of the ethics requirements.

Data Collection

As the researcher, it is my duty to describe the manner in which I gathered data. The data-collection procedures consisted of the following methods common

in qualitative research: observations, interviews, audio-recordings, transcriptions, visits to teaching assignment sites, and a search for themes and/or parallels in the research participants' interviews (Creswell, 2012). Initially, I felt that photographs would be helpful to cue my memory; however, I became more interested in the research participants' words, so I decided not to use photographs.

During the interviews the teachers were willing to share their views, feelings, and understandings of what literature brings to the classroom and offers their students, and I intended to sift these commonalities through my ears, eyes, and feelings. The research participants were willing to be audiotaped and did not seem uncomfortable during the interview process, and I appreciated that they candidly shared their views on the questions that I asked them.

Three interviews that ranged from 44 minutes to over an hour were my primary data source. I used a digital voice recorder with a backup on an iPad for the interviews and took anecdotal notes during the interviews. I then transcribed each interview. The participants also gave me a guided tour.

Multiple open-ended questions guided the interviews for this study (Appendix A). In the role of researcher I listened to their responses and probed for additional information. The teacher practitioners shared their experiences and perspectives on the use of FNMI literature in their own teaching environments of Canadian classrooms in which they naturally shared and felt comfortable in a world in which they negotiated and challenged boundaries daily. They each painted this safe place for discourse in their own words, and I believe that their descriptions represented the overall experience of teachers in urban and greater

urban schools who navigate FNMI literature. I appreciated their detailed descriptions and the opportunity to be present in their unique learning environments.

Data Analysis

I used field notes, interviews, and a reflective journal as data sources for my analysis. I thoroughly read each interview transcript once to garner the main ideas. During the subsequent reads and rereads I looked for supporting ideas, which I highlighted and circled for themes. I analyzed each case on it's own and then examined all of them for common threads and differences. This cross-case analysis (Creswell, 2012) resulted in further depth in my analysis. I then noted similarities in the challenges, rewards, and findings. Finally, I gave each research participant the full text of the transcription to review for accuracy (member checking).

While I reread the transcriptions and coded them for themes as they first appeared from my research questions, I added the remainder of the themes that emerged to the findings. These were either new findings or revealed questions that did not fit into the guiding questions that I asked the participants.

I noted other data sources in a journal, wrote a poetry journal, made sketches in a personal journal, and wrote in a notepad application on an iPhone. I initially organized and stored all records and data in a notebook, soon after moving the growing data into two larger binders. They included permission protocols, overarching research project notes, a literature review, anecdotal field notes, transcripts, and my reflections on the interviews. I stored the voice

recordings on an iPad and personal computer initially and then moved them to a flash drive for transcription purposes.

Analysis of Emerging Themes

As I began my data analysis, from the transcripts I wrote descriptions of each participant's responses to the main research questions. I highlighted and noted what their responses meant to me and then read and reread them. I also noted new questions that I would ask each participant. Once I had gathered their responses to each question, I rewrote them by merging the highlighted themes and the commonalities. In addition, five new themes emerged from the interviews with the teachers.

Indigenous Research Considerations and Protocol

Prior to each research participant's interview, I smudged with sage in my home. I prayed to the Creator that I would be an active listener and hear the participants' words and ideas about their experiences with infusing FNMI literature into their classrooms. I remember my father's words on one of our visits: "*Shelby, your son needs to be with his father out in the world experiencing life; he needs to watch and listen. This is how he will learn to be a man.*" Near the end of a long visit he told my children, "*Grandpa and Grandma won't be around forever. One day you're going to need to stand on your own two feet*!" These words might have been meant for me, but I am uncertain. However, I believed that I had the ability as a researcher to watch, listen, and learn. My actions would reflect the participants' words, and I would think reflectively about what they told me and what action this research required. My words, pauses,

reflections, and desire to know more would push the discussion rather than hinder it if I took over the conversation. I believe that my participants felt safe in the discussion, because my intention was to listen to their experiences and explanations of how they arrived at this place. I also believe that the relationships that I had built with them during the years of the overarching project contributed to the success of this research. As Steinhauer (2002) and Wilson (2008) stated, from an Indigenous perspective, relationship is central to learning and sharing knowledge.

My role in the national study was a research participant, and this has informed my current work. The power of my previously established relationships with all three participants gave me a sense of relationship that revealed truths that might not otherwise have surfaced. At the time of the interviews I had known June for 10 months, Anahid for two years, and Martin for approximately three years, which gave us a sense of comfort with our long-established trust-based relationships and allowed us to ask and answer difficult questions candidly and honestly. I strongly believe that relationship is necessary to move forward. Respect is also essential in any relationship, and I believe that we came to a place of knowing and being to be able to learn more from one another. This is also congruent with Indigenous research methodology.

Researcher Positioning and Reflexivity

I believe that the participants thoroughly understood me as an Indigenous researcher because of our multilayered relationship in the overarching research. Our previous discussions were often based on research articles that extended the

limits of our thinking on what is good literature for Canadian classrooms. These conversations, I believe, gave us a transparent understanding of teaching styles and pedagogy.

During the overarching social-justice research meetings, I candidly explained my identity as an urban Indigenous woman and shared numerous experiences of my inability to see myself in the literature in classrooms as a child. I believe that sharing my stories with the prospective research candidates has informed my role in this study and my interpretation and reporting of the data. Sharing my identity and my childhood memories of not being able to see myself in the text and not hearing my stories as a child in the classroom context has shaped my discussions about the site and group (Creswell, 2012).

Revealing my personal memories as a child navigating identity helped the participants to see me as a product of the research. Although we were learning alongside one another as researcher and participants, I hoped that they would be able to see me as one of their students in their current research on the use of FNMI literature to bring greater awareness and understanding to non-Indigenous students who have no Indigenous history or perspectives. This research project drew on our understandings of one another, and, as an Indigenous researcher, I believe that I have been able to gain deep understandings from these non-Indigenous teachers. Kirkness (2013), in a discussion with Roberta Miskokomon, a fellow educator with a graduate degree, wrote, "I knew that very little research was being done by our people and that non-Natives were continuing to study us"

(p. 134). As I read and reflected on her statement, I realized that my position was similar to yet different from this.

Learning together draws on relationship and parallel stories that are layered and hidden in history—the contemporary lived realities of teacher participants Indigenous and non-Indigenous alike. I am also an Indigenous scholar who is studying non-Indigenous teacher participants. When I described my effort to find three non-Indigenous participants, an Aboriginal colleague commented, "They've studied us for so long; it is important for us to study them. It may help us to know more." Reflecting on this statement, I realize that it is so profound, because I do not know how many Indigenous scholars are researching non-Indigenous participants who are exploring FNMI perspectives. If we are honest, much of what we do in society is in relationship with one another, based on colonial practices and policy. For example, from an Indigenous perspective, some would say we are all Treaty People (non-Indigenous Canadians and Indigenous Canadians). We are all part of the agreements made between nations when the Treaties were signed (Saskatchewan Treaty Commission, 2014).

This multilayered study may bring greater understanding to what is happening in the policy-making realm of curriculum planning. I hope that, ultimately, the experience of an Indigenous scholar who is walking alongside non-Indigenous teacher participants will bring greater understanding to a historical story that is absent from most Canadian classrooms. Reciprocal, mutually beneficial relationships will meet the needs of our ultimate investment in children and youth.

CHAPTER 4:

FINDINGS

Several themes emerged from this research with teachers who were using the memoir *Fatty Legs* in their classrooms: (a) challenges and rewards, (b) teacher practices and supports, (c) the need for further background knowledge for social justice, (d) the future use of FNMI perspectives in school communities, (e) previous Indigenous background knowledge/awareness, and (f) a strong sense of background knowledge and social justice for all. The final finding is a reflection on myself as an Aboriginal researcher in a non-Aboriginal context.

Challenges and Rewards

With any new lesson in a classroom, challenges and rewards ensue. These three teachers gave clear, honest, reflective feedback on their journey of infusing FNMI literature into their elementary classrooms. Their challenges and purposes have created a lens through which to view practice that supports or hinders teachers' efforts. Few teachers whom these teachers knew had used the memoir, and this sense of breaking new ground in their teacher circle brought some challenges. June found some teacher guides online, but not as many as for the book studies she already utilizes in her classroom. Teachers with numerous years of experience rely and build on ways in which they have used texts in the past. One of the problems evident was their uncertainty about which direction to take the text discussions.

Initially, June had a large project planned for the students to compare the experiences of the main character in *Fatty Legs* with their own. However, as they

progressed through the novel, the student and teacher discussions became more informal, similarly to what I had observed in this classroom during the overarching study. June described it as more low-key than she anticipated because of her concerns about time management. She was surprised at how much the students were enjoying the novel and connecting to the main character through statements such as "Is that happening? That's not fair! I wonder why." They were able to make numerous connections. Some of June's students had not typically been big readers prior to this project, but with this particular book many of them were reading ahead, which surprised her. Some typical responses when group reading ceased for the day included, "What is happening next? We can't stop!" "We can't end now!" "We can't end here!" or "Let's just read one more." Their interest in and eagerness to read *Fatty Legs* seemed significant to June.

June described the greatest reward of the book as the students' "buying into" literacy. Their initial reaction to the novel was that it was humorous or funny because of its unusual title. The students also rethought the notion of bullying that they found in the book and wondered why the nun would do those things: "Why is the Raven so mean to her?" Because most of her students were 10 years old, they did not necessarily have a deep understanding of residential schools, but they were able to identify with the notion of bullying. Bullying has become a more visible issue in schools and the wider social context, and the students were alert to it.

Many of June's students made a connection to the per-child payments to the residential schools, and a discussion ensued about residential schooling as a

business and the exchange of currency for a human being's care and education. The students drew such connections as "What if you guys didn't get summer vacation because the ice was frozen or the boat didn't come get you?" June commented in her interview, "I think it's an important topic to be taught; it is more important than electricity."

June believed that a tremendous amount of her success with this story was based on the trust between her students and herself, which she described as a luxury because she knew her students very well and felt comfortable teaching in the classroom community and the greater school community context. She demonstrated that trust plays a significant role in her daily teaching routine and gives her an opportunity to explore topics possibly perceived as delicate or challenging.

June also found that exposure to new titles and access to new and complex books was problematic. She commented that often the books are not found in the school library, which makes it difficult to track down resources. Martin commented that this was a problem as well in his initial teaching experience. He relied on the textbooks that were provided, but now, with more exposure to FNMI literature, he is able to discern what is relevant for classroom use. Martin explained that he once taught from a historical perspective and that this book changed his thinking. Rather than seeing Indigenous perspectives as something of the past, he still sees them as living and breathing in the young and old people of today. He hears the perspectives of the people in the stories and texts written by Indigenous authors in more recent times. In recent years he has been exposed

to better literature that can be used to support the curriculum. He finds books that are written from different perspectives and are useful in his classroom.

Martin was part of a new teacher-induction program last year, and the school board offered an FNMI session on diversity. Teachers throughout the district received kits, books, and suggestions on how to access additional resources for classroom use. He believes that FNMI resources were offered under the umbrella of diversity.

Martin described his greatest challenge with using the book *Fatty Legs* as "bringing the text alive for them." It was difficult for the students to understand and relate to something so foreign as the idea of children leaving their families, which was typical of their day-to-day life. Some of the students knew that older schools in their city had separate boys' and girls' entrances and wondered whether it was like that, when today either gender can use an entrance. Martin explained to them that these boys and girls did not go to the school within their community. They often had to travel, as the book said, extremely long distances to arrive at a residential school for an extended period of time. It was beyond their comprehension: Most of these children would never have to be away from their families for very long.

Martin used picture books to introduce the topic of residential schooling to help the students understand, rather than beginning with the overarching topic of residential schools, and he tried to break the topic down by focusing on one family/one girl. He also considered the theme of religion in the book because it

painted the nun and priest as evil people, which, of course, is not true for every nun and every priest, but he did not know how to address that.

Martin also realized that some of the children in his room were Catholic, which was also an issue, so he explained that this book is only one person's experience and that it might be different for others. I understood this as Martin's request that his students not make generalizations.

The students recognized how fortunate they are to live in a family and attend a community school in which they are valued and treated with respect. A reward for Martin was that this book inspired the students to read similar books, and a few read the sequel, *A Stranger at Home* (Jordan-Fenton & Pokiak-Fenton, 2011), independently following their class study of *Fatty Legs*. Martin observed that the young girls especially took an interest in the historical-memoirs format, and he noted their choices for future reading.

Anahid's was the exception to the teacher participants' experiences because she was teaching in a French-immersion context. She was candid about how difficult it was to find good French literature in all areas of language arts, but especially in the area of FNMI literature. Often she struggled with choices for literature circles and was unable to offer any books. The limited selection resulted in only one book for a novel study. One of her greatest concerns was the time required for planning and learning each student's reading level and capacity. Although she is not new to teaching, she is fairly new to this grade level, and the teachers have to replan for each reassignment to a new grade level. Switching

grades presents challenges for teachers, and it takes times to reestablish what they know and to find new resources.

Anahid also described one of her obstacles as having to readjust her teaching with *Fatty Legs*, because some of the vocabulary in the second language was difficult for her students to comprehend. Their limited time also impaired their vocabulary comprehension. The difficult vocabulary meant that she had to adapt her time management. She spent significant time reading, retelling, reading, and explaining, followed by discussing the chapters. She believed that the unpredictability of her time management hindered her ability to readjust her planning schedule accordingly. Anahid described the students' learning as "learning in chunks." They would often return to an area of the novel for further discussion about what had taken place, and again, the vocabulary and content were recurring problems in the second-language context.

Anahid believed that the students understood the story best when she read to them. However, she used a "popcorn style" of reading in which the children had an opportunity to 'jump in' and read when they wanted. She found this particularly challenging and thus returned to the teacher-reading-aloud model because of comprehension and time-management concerns. Anahid had a keen understanding of her students' comprehension levels and would stop when she could see in their faces that something did not make sense to them. This experienced teacher recognized signs and remedied the teaching moment by helping the students with their vocabulary comprehension.

Often if the picture on the page evoked an emotion, the students' curiosity would result in a question. Anahid described each chapter as "working through the book" and acknowledged the significant time required to explore each chapter thoroughly. She was very pleased with a link to the Grade 6 curriculum with a guest speaker who had been a Nazi concentration camp survivor. Her students were able to make connections to how people can feel loss. They talked about the loss of culture, loss of language, and the impact of racism and life-changing events on a person's experience and place of being today. The children made connections to the book *Fatty Legs* (Jordan-Fenton & Pokiak-Fenton, 2010) and the idea of children being taken away from communities while at the same time considering the advantages gained by learning to read and write. The children also discussed the main character, Olemaun's (Margaret's) desire to read and choosing to attend school.

Anahid's students also made a connection to the daily intimidation and bullying that Margaret endured. Her students believed that they sometimes endured bullying within their own classroom and school environment, although at a much lower level. They talked about the future consequences of bullying and what it does to people's self-esteem. Anahid commented that this memoir sustained the children's interest, but she acknowledged that the depth of second-language-students' understanding is uncertain and wanted to work in this area on a future curriculum development project. She stated, "I still feel like the kids don't really know."

Anahid believed that the almost invisible population of Indigenous children at this particular school might be one reason for the "reality of the students' lack of understanding." Because of the school demographics, the students have a limited knowledge of Indigenous peoples within their greater community and the Canadian context.

Initially, Anahid's students' reaction to the novel was confusion. They were unable to grasp the girl's experience and knew little about the context. Only one or two of the children in her classroom had heard of residential schools, which she said was "a jump from last year, where no children had heard or viewed the book before." This particular year a couple of the children had seen the book, which the classroom teacher had strategically placed in a library display. She described this as planting the seed prior to the book study.

Anahid believed that when the students began to empathize with Margaret, they began to understand such things as the significance of a black truck and its effect on the children. For Anahid, this was an unexpected impact on her students, and she had to navigate their unplanned responses to the novel; however, she acknowledged that part of teaching is the need to navigate unpredictable responses. Teachers need to know that "messiness" is acceptable. Classroom planning and preparation may not prepare them for unique responses. Rather, the teacher and students navigate students' responses respectfully knowing that the messiness of complex topics is part of pushing boundaries and learning. Teachers who do not know everything can use a model of exploration and learning together to find out more; as June said, "Let's find out together."

Anahid believed that the "hush in the classroom" while the students watched the *Fatty Legs* (Jordan-Fenton & Pokiak-Fenton, 2010) video was "a big moment." She also felt that near the end of chapter five when Margaret was standing in front of the microphone, choosing not to say anything, was a very powerful moment for her students.

Anahid noted that she would do things differently in the future, such as the initial planning. She had used this book for two years and reported that "the first time was like being in the dark, exploring with my own experience." She acknowledged that her time management in the first year was unsuccessful because of the priority of assessment, such as the Provincial Achievement Tests, but that it was more successful in the second year. She also acknowledged that having studied the memoir *Fatty Legs* (Jordan-Fenton & Pokiak-Fenton, 2010) as part of a group of four teachers in the larger overarching study made it much easier during the second attempt. Anahid believed that exchanging ideas with her colleagues in this group gave her the confidence and encouragement to know that she was on the right track.

Although Anahid had received the novel in the overarching research study, she said that in the future she would have her own copies in her classroom. She often borrowed from the library and filled out a suggestion form in her school to have the book ordered for her because she considered a class set valuable.

Anahid had found it difficult to find FNMI literature in French, which is a challenge for immersion teachers. However, she was aware of the lists published by Alberta Education with literature and social studies links, and she intended to

request some of those books. This raised the continuing challenge of the need for more advanced French books and novels in Division 2. She also noted that professional development in the area of FNMI resources was a budget issue for her board.

Anahid made a language arts connection to the program of studies: "This is pretty typical of any language arts lesson." What she found unpredictable was the unpredictability of the preplanning and the unknown, such as the students' reactions to the content of the book and how to redirect the learning. Although she could create her lesson plan, her reflection revealed that it unraveled when she did not have enough time for the students' responses. In retrospect, she wished that she had more time for planning the unit.

Supports for Teachers' Navigation of New Terrain

If teachers are encouraged or expected to infuse FNMI literature into their classroom teaching, teachers' challenges and need for supports require consideration for further practice. June compared her teaching experience with this book to teaching about electricity and commented that anything that she did not know she considered a learning moment. She said, "I know these kids and I trust them and I like them. It's a really safe group." June acknowledged that she does not have all the answers, "but if we work as a team, we need to think about that and can figure it out." They could attack it again the next time. "I don't need to be the teacher who knows every single answer all the time." June's willingness to try new ideas and work with her students was evident. June's familiarity and awareness of these students and their families contributed to a safe place of

discussion for students to further explore notions of injustice that took place in the book.

June considered preparing teachers to incorporate FNMI literature important, but thought that there might be many different ways to do so. She suggested that novice teachers develop a rapport with mentor teachers, talk to facilitators and professors, and become comfortable with teaching the content and ultimately taking risks. June contended that it is not as easy as saying that teachers should use this particular textbook in this class. She also believed that the challenge is not specific to FNMI literature alone:

> Teaching is such an art, and there is no way to possibly prepare everyone for everything. What I would like to see done is to have new teachers and senior teachers feel comfortable in their environment and feel they can try new things—being safe in their skin.

She described her school environment as awesome and was aware of schools in which "teachers are left to dry on different issues," which would be "very tough, walking around on pins and needles."

June admitted that how she decided to use *Fatty Legs* (Jordan-Fenton & Pokiak-Fenton, 2010) was purely by happenstance. A teacher colleague had chosen the book for her, and she was willing to try a new text. She stated, "I will simply jump in and figure it out, and it will be what it will be with ultimately lots of learning from it." June considered herself on the same team with her students and acknowledged that she is not the only one who directs students' learning. She told her students, "It will be just fine; it will all work out. June will come and you will go to Grade 6, and it will be fine."

June thought that the school board offered professional development for teachers who use FNMI literature. She was aware of assistance but said, "You have to ask for help." She felt no trepidation about asking for direction: "I know I could go talk to someone at the district and specifically pull that kind of literature."

When looking back on his past professional development opportunities or undergraduate and graduate classes, Martin reported that only a couple of resources had helped him with diverse literature, one of which was the children's literature class he had taken in his graduate studies. He had also taken a social studies course, but "it didn't give it justice" because it did not explore FNMI perspectives as a current and contemporary reality, and FNMI perspectives and people should not be taught in the past tense or as a historical record. He also discussed his previous experiences with a large urban Catholic school board and found the FNMI department a good support. It encouraged professional development on Thursday afternoons, in which the teachers would explore ceremony different aspects of culture and make crafts. Martin stated, "At some of the schools we even celebrated National Aboriginal Day. We would have access to dancers and storytellers."

Martin knew that resources are available for FNMI projects and recognized the importance of having a variety of Indigenous authors from whom to choose, a variety of contexts, and supports available to new and experienced teachers. As he stated, only a phone call or an e-mail are required to find resources. Martin noted that the two large urban school boards in his city "are

there to support you." He has found using author lists and the library to find a collection of FNMI books "particularly helpful, [especially] if there is someone, a librarian or resource person, to pull these together." He preferred to use the local public library because he could submit a request, and the librarians would find books, which would be waiting for him to pick up. He did not rely on his school library much.

Martin was fortunate to have a teacher librarian who was willing to work with him, but this person was a part-time support in his school. His librarian was working to locate the FNMI books in one area of the library, with the intention of making the library friendlier for teacher and student searches. He hoped to make them more aware of a range of possible choices.

Martin will teach this text again, but as a single novel study rather than taking a thematic multiple-novel approach. He hoped that in the future the entire class would read the memoir together and participate in the discussion as a whole class because he wanted to hear different perspectives on the book. He preferred the experience of reading the book as a group rather than individual reading. He wanted to keep the students on track and gain a sense of their questions and understandings. As well, he would focus on the pictures the next time because many of the students were interested in the illustrations and the historical photos near the end of the text. Martin suggested that the class could have spent more time analyzing the text for comprehension and thinking about how the students supported the story text.

Martin has been promoting *A Stranger At Home* (de Vos, 2012), the sequel to *Fatty Legs* (Jordan-Fenton & Pokiak-Fenton, 2010), and has used a few other books with FNMI perspectives, such as *The Red Sash* (Debon & Pendziwol, 2005), *Knots on a Counting Rope* (Martin & Archambault, 1987), *The Secret of Your Name* Arcand, Bouchard, Fleury, & Weber, 2010 and *Nokum Is My Teacher* Bouchard, Sapp, & Singers, 2006. His students also enjoy a series of books called *Turtle Island Voices* published by Pearson Canada (he described these books as legends, realistic fiction, and nonfiction). The *Turtle Island Voices* collection is used for guided reading. Some are in graphic-novel format, which seems to appeal more to male students. In the future Martin wanted to consult with the school board's FNMI representative more at the local school level. He stated that the children's literature class that he took during his graduate program exposed him to and encouraged him to explore literature for classroom use such as *Knots on a Counting Rope* (Martin & Archambault, 1987) and *The Red Sash* (Debon & Pendziwol, 2005). This was his introduction to FNMI children's literature.

Martin did not spend an inordinate amount of time on planning the unit. He read *Fatty Legs* (Jordan-Fenton & Pokiak-Fenton, 2010) once and reread it with a critical eye the second time, thought about passages that would work well for classroom discussion, and marked them with sticky notes. He also explored online resources, including the Edmonton Regional Learning Consortium (2014) and searched for a collection of picture books to use as companion texts. During his second reading of *Fatty Legs*, he recorded his voice as the reader for his

lower-level readers, and they took the CD home before the classroom discussions and listened to it to be able to participate in the classroom discussion. Or if the students did not have a CD player, Martin would set them up in a quiet corner of the classroom or just outside the classroom door to listen to the book with headphones. He made tremendous creative efforts to meet the different learning needs in his classroom.

Martin felt "mostly prepared" when he began to work with the book. The social justice study group at the university had prepared him to work with these kinds of books, particularly because the group members discussed so many FNMI books. Martin acknowledged that without this prior experience he would not have been able to speak so openly. Martin believed the social justice group provided a forum for teachers to share their successes and challenges while infusing the FNMI content into their classroom. The readings were a source of valuable discussion where thoughts and ideas were further taken up by the texts given to teachers. These texts were tools used by teachers and students for valuable classroom use. Martin stated,

> In the past I was afraid to say the wrong thing or 'I don't know.' I just don't feel like I would have been as effective. Looking back, I don't think my undergraduate or graduate work necessarily prepared me to infuse FNMI content.

Although Martin finished his graduate degree recently, he believes that his undergraduate work did not especially prepare him for infusing FNMI literature. However; he believed certain classes offered some enrichment along the way such as the social studies courses and children's literature course which

contributed to a large body of texts either under the umbrella of multicultural or diversity in which he found more specifically FNMI literature for classroom use.

According to Martin, urban school boards are trying to support teachers' incorporation of FNMI literature into the curriculum. However, some are taking what he considered a mandatory approach, such as " We are going to become aware." Opportunities are available in his current school board, but each teacher must actively search for them: "It's kind of your choice to pursue them or not." His previous employer presented professional development opportunities on Thursday afternoons to allow all staff members to explore FNMI literature with their colleagues.

Anahid explained that just before the novel study of *Fatty Legs* (Jordan-Fenton & Pokiak-Fenton, 2010) commenced, she randomly moved the book from spot to spot in her classroom in an attempt to evoke student interest. She described it as "planting the seed" and sparking the students' interest by exposing them to the cover of the book with its red socks. As well, the book on her desk was written in English, which also captured the students' attention. Initially, they were confused by the book's content—residential schools in Canada—but when they began to read it, they became interested and started to talk about it. As work on the book progressed, the students' attention waned, but Anahid believed that they reached a turning point when they watched a video on residential schools. The video, *Shi-shi-etko* (Kroll, 2011), piqued the students' interest, especially the scene in which the red truck picks up the young children, which they remembered

from reading the memoir. Anahid noted that the students made an immediate connection to the black truck in *Fatty Legs.*

Anahid's students also explored geographical locations identified in the numerous resources and pictures that she acquired online. She tried to connect the children in her class who had moved once or twice to the children in the novel, who moved seasonally. She found it difficult, but she believed that drawing comparisons or similarities would enhance their understanding. Anahid also taught the children about the seasonal link to the land and the resources required to sustain people through hunting and fishing.

Anahid suggested that her students' French immersion context was a language barrier to their full understanding and thus had an impact on their vocabulary. She believed that her students had to have a grasp on the French vocabulary, which was an additional obstacle to adhering to the novel study's timeline. Anahid challenged them to "act out" chapter 5 and reported that the students loved the experience of developing their own creative theatre. She also asked them to author chapter 6 in the hope of enhancing their understanding of the novel. They chose a character, depicted his or her experiences, and explained why they portrayed the character in such a way. The students especially enjoyed the opportunity to manipulate a character's choices and reality and to change the story during the writing process. Anahid hoped that the students would be able to empathize with Margaret's reality, although it was only imaginative. In the future she wanted to pursue a much deeper understanding of residential schools with her students.

Anahid contended that resource people are invaluable to help with such topics and other FNMI literature. Unfortunately, neither her school nor her school board has such a person, but Anahid felt that it is a very valuable role to assist teachers. She would also accept help from a resource person in the greater community, such as from other school boards or community members, whom she could ask questions. Anahid spoke about the need for a trusting, ongoing, open relationship with a school board representative who could answer questions in a safe environment free of judgment, which she emphasized would be a valuable resource.

Anahid said:

> I know that I can bring a question to the Canadian Literature for Social Justice group [in which she participates at the University of Alberta]. When I sit down there, I sit down with other people that I really enjoy working with, have the same interests and same experiences.

She acknowledged the resource group as a powerful and invaluable tool for teachers' and, ultimately, students' success. I believe that ricocheting ideas off one another gave her a theoretical framework from which to plan her novel study.

Anahid also shared that the webinar offered through the Edmonton Regional Learning Consortium (2014) was a valuable tool. Although she did not utilize all of the materials, but considered the webinar an excellent starting point. Anahid reported that she would use *Fatty Legs* (Jordan-Fenton & Pokiak-Fenton, 2010) again the following year when she would teach a Grade 5/6 class.

Anahid noted that she needed a significant amount of time to plan for the use of *Fatty Legs* (Jordan-Fenton & Pokiak-Fenton, 2010) in her classroom because she did not know which direction to take it and where to stop. For

example, she had to determine what the students needed to know, what their limits were, and how much more she could do with only one book. She was aware that she seemed to struggle with pushing boundaries, but she was not certain whether her students needed more or less inducement. Anahid acknowledged that the topic is very large and multilayered and that focus is a consideration because the students could easily be distracted in discussions. She described the year as "an exploration, sometimes feeling lost as the teacher and feeling unsure of the process." However, she acknowledged it as a creative process and pointed out that the students were sometimes inspired to take the discussions in different directions. Anahid tried to honour her students' interest, noting that she allowed some discussions to unfold naturally.

According to Anahid, the school board needed to offer teachers more support, such as a contact or resource person as a valuable tool. She recognized that working with a small school board has certain challenges because these supports are often lacking. She had been advocating for support for French and reported that the district had finally hired someone beginning in the 2011/2012 school year, but only a half-time person. She recognized the process of acquiring a resource person as lengthy. Furthermore, two administrators had told her that because the district does not have many FNMI students, it is a "nonissue."

Anahid suggested that FNMI and multicultural resources are often not intended solely for those students but, rather, serve the diverse needs and relationships of all students at a higher level. She considered herself a representative of diversity and recognized that FNMI perspectives are different.

Although she respected her school administrator profoundly, she rejected the viewpoint that representing FNMI perspectives is a nonissue because of the demographics.

The community that Anahid is teaching has changed profoundly in dynamics and makeup in recent years. Alberta is also changing very quickly in terms of diversity, and she contended that the education system has a long way to go to meet the needs of our diverse students, especially those with an FNMI perspective. Anahid suggested that it would be helpful for teachers to have a resource person, particularly non-Aboriginal teachers:

> I really want to feel comfortable teaching in the field with a strong foundation of knowledge. I want to be sure that I don't have any preconceptions about certain topics or ideas, that I am following protocol and that I am careful around controversial topics and, most importantly, that I can be comfortable teaching the topics.

Anahid noted that teachers faced so many "grey areas" when they develop something on their own. "Who do we contact for help? Can we call a larger school board and have a relationship, share resources, and build a network that is more collaborative?"

Ultimately, she did not want to feel that she was left on her own and hoped that her unit would be acceptable for classroom use. She stated:

> By far, what I enjoy most about the social justice group I am part of is the ability to bounce ideas off one another and to hear what others are doing. Then you can take it back to your classroom.

This speaks very profoundly to the potential for teacher practice to be extended through the use of appropriate and meaningful support mechanisms.

Need for Further Background Knowledge for Social Justice

Cochrane-Smith (2004) described social justice pedagogy as rejecting transmission models of teaching; instead, it assumes that knowledge is socially constructed and that teachers and students co-construct curriculum (p. 69). This asks teachers and students to re-vision history in the context of a student's cultural and linguistic background while presenting a traditional and contemporary revisionist story that recognizes that stories change because of new facts and information (p. 69). Background information is necessary to re-vision history in the everyday lived classroom.

June acknowledged that she did not know much about FNMI background and perspective. She was unsure of which direction to go once she read the book and the kind of background knowledge about residential schools that she required. Her search for knowledge was challenging because she was not certain about how much to delve into residential schools and/or students' backgrounds in general. The biggest challenge for her was not knowing what the reactions would be: whether parents would be distressed or students would become upset as they explored the topic. She needed more background knowledge.

When June compared teaching the memoir *Fatty Legs* (Jordan-Fenton & Pokiak-Fenton, 2010) to teaching electricity, she said, "I just don't know a lot about electricity, teaching Grade 5 for the first time and using this novel for the first time. It's really about knowing my level of expertise, and I like to be prepared." As well, June recognized the sensitivity of the issue of residential schools and wanted to give her students correct information, especially because

she know that some of her students might be more knowledgeable than she was on the topic.

During one of the larger overarching research meetings, June asked her colleague to choose a text for her. She described the relationship as one of trust. She used Google to do research on the book, which revealed book study plans, and her plan unfolded from there. June admitted, "I kind of figured whatever happened, happened." If she used the memoir again, she wanted to know more about what happened in residential schools, what happened to the culture, and what has happened since: "As a person and a Canadian, I would like to know more. It isn't specific to this one issue; I would simply like to know more, like I want to know more about electricity."

June was unsure whether residential schooling was included in the Grade 5 curriculum and had not discussed it with her class thus far, beyond the book study. However, she realized that she had not discussed many other topics either. June presumed that many of her students had heard about residential schooling, because after they began the novel study, a few had told her that their grandfathers had attended schools like that. One said, "My grandpa's knuckle is still broken because he went to a school like that." June reported that the students heritage varied, and they brought a lot of background knowledge to the classroom. Only two of the four Aboriginal students in her classroom spoke about residential schooling, and only in passing. She asked the one student what his grandfather had said, but because he did not want to discuss it, she assumed

that the children might not actually know much more about the topic than they had mentioned.

Because of her school's multicultural makeup, June was not certain whether other teachers had prepared specifically for FNMI literature, because diversity involves more than just FNMI. She "wouldn't only want to explore one heritage, because I wouldn't want to exclude other kids. I would make it part of a larger study [such as] identity." June would incorporate FNMI literature into a discussion of other identities rather than breaking it down: "It is simply a book. I'm always really careful about the students that identify with being First Nations, Métis, or Inuit. I'm not sure how they would feel about that, being singled out."

June believed that this literature study with her students had made her more aware of the choices that she makes and that educators "should just go for it, jump right in and see what happens, and use it as a tool to explore everyone's identity." She was aware that specifically singling out people with regard to ethnic origin can be dangerous and make students uncomfortable. For this reason a book should be just another story told within the web of stories found in her classroom.

June would use other supporting literature with the memoir in the future. She wanted to take more of a holistic approach to residential schools and history in Canada in general and make it a thematic unit. She would use similar books that deal with similar or comparable issues, as well as videos and guest speakers to ensure that her students have a deeper understanding of the topic. She would continue with a "popcorn" style of reading because her students were interrupting

one another while trying to gain an opportunity to read. This would allow students who are apprehensive to have time and develop the confidence to read.

In discussing FNMI literature, June asked, "What is FNMI literature? Do we have any picked up in the library and identified as that?" She affirmed that she would select only quality books for classroom use, those with rich text.

To build her background and plan the unit, June took the time to Google-search, printed some group ideas, and began "going for it." She was a busy teacher, with a new grade in the year of this study, and realized that, because she would teach it again, she needed to continue to build on the unit for future reference. She recognized this as the beginning, and although she had planned no formal assessment at the time of the interview, she would develop it as she progressed. She reflected on students' participation, discussion, and responses in written text.

June felt that she was not fully prepared to teach FNMI literature and used the simple philosophy of 'jumping in,' which she considered the best route, and she could add to the theme later, one year at a time:

> I wasn't prepared. Like I said, I don't know a lot about residential schools, to be honest, so I kind of figured anything we needed to learn we would take as a learning opportunity where we would Google-search and dive right into it. That is how I do most of my teaching.

June reflected on *Fatty Legs* (Jordan-Fenton & Pokiak-Fenton, 2010):

> It makes me think about my own schooling, as a university grad, and did I learn this in high school? Did I block it out? It seems like a big issue. It's not in my own personal heritage, so it's nothing we would have spoken about. I'm finding I'm learning a lot, looking at the photos in the back of the book. I'm thinking about all those kinds in that classroom. I think about me being a teacher and lots of learning on my part. I'm trying

> to be open, and it reminds me of being a grad student again. I just don't know a lot, but I'm open to learning, and although I'm an adult, I don't know much about residential schools. I'm grateful for the book to open my brain a little bit.

June's honesty and openness about her lack of background in this area was grounded in a kind of pragmatism with regard to figuring it out. She recognized that children should learn about residential schools in Canada, that the topic needs to be addressed at some point in a student's learning, but she would not "get hung up" on which grade to introduce the topic.

Anahid believed that the almost invisible population of Indigenous children at her school might be a reason for the "reality of the students' lack of understanding." She noted that because of the small number of FNMI students in her school, they had limited knowledge of Indigenous peoples within their greater community and the Canadian context.

A minority student had registered in Anahid's classroom two years ago, and it was "a big deal" for the students, who were accustomed to a homogenous classroom. The new student brought in artifacts from Egypt, and the children still talk about it as a phenomenal experience. She acknowledged that because Canada is a place of diversity, students need to know their own history. The community in which she teaches is also very contained. It is a small suburban community, and its members might view the diverse people as "others." She wanted her students to know that there is more beyond their small world. Although she reminded them of Canada's diversity; their homogenous experience may have shaped what they see, and she tried to speak other languages to them to demonstrate diversity. Her reminder was intentional, to distract them. Anahid

considered her position as a visible minority in her own classroom a powerful tool: It made her a change agent within her classroom and school. She recognized that, immersed in a homogenous society within their community, it might be difficult for her students to see beyond this because they live it. Anahid also hoped that more diversity in the room would bridge the understanding between cultures. She was unaware of the reserve less than a 10-minute drive from the community in which she had been teaching and residing for some time, and she could not understand why there was little to no relationship between her school and this larger Indigenous community.

Anahid described herself as an Armenian in Canada who knew nothing about First Nations people when she entered her undergraduate program. She asked herself, "How can I not know anything? It's just not right." Because of her extended relationship with her classmates during her undergraduate work, she was invited to attend a few community celebrations affiliated with the university and the greater First Nation community in a large cosmopolitan Canadian city, where she became interested in FNMI perspectives. During her graduate work at a small Canadian university, Anahid believed that in her courses the right people were at the right place at the right time: "My graduate program and relationships brought tremendous links to the community." The focus of her graduate work was cultural performance linked to schools through food, theatre, language, music, and voice. Anahid had a strong desire as an undergraduate and graduate student to know more about FNMI peoples in Canada and a strong sense of obligation as

a Canadian and a teacher to share literature that might enrich their perspectives and experience in a Canadian classroom.

Future Use of FNMI Perspectives in Their School Communities

These teachers are examples to other educators who are considering infusing FNMI perspectives into their curriculum. Educational transformation begins with teachers' and students' re-visioning knowledge systems in the classroom (Battiste, 2013, p. 175):

> Teachers and students can confront and defeat the forces that prevent students from living more fully and more freely. Every school is either a site of reproduction or a site of change. In other words, education can be liberating, or it can domesticate and maintain domination. I can sustain colonization in neo-colonial ways or it can decolonize. (p. 175)

Martin was in the process of applying for a grant for the following school year to focus on celebrating his students' heritage. He believed that this grant would be useful to begin the year, that he and his students could get to know themselves and the people around them. He hoped to instil pride in all students at the school and to celebrate it on, as he suggested, "We're All Related Day."

Martin intended to use the true story *Fatty Legs* (Jordan-Fenton & Pokiak-Fenton, 2010) again in his classroom, because "any time you come at it a second time around, you have more experience and more enlightenment." He will also search for more supporting literature and learn how to incorporate that into the study to help his students further understand the complexities of the issues around residential schools and social justice issues in greater society.

Anahid explained that "within our own schools and communities there are obstacles such as building relationship between local communities." She wanted

to see growth in this area but was uncertain about how to approach a First Nations community and/or school in the area. She was also afraid that her students would consider a partnership between two Grade 6 classrooms a "helping project." For example, she thought that some may perceive one group as having more power over the other, which would cause division because of the sense of inequity and power. However, Anahid hoped that it would be more of a relationship-building exchange between the two communities and that her students would approach it in the correct manner. She considered it as a reciprocal relationship rather than as one group aiding the other. In the future Anahid wanted to gain a much deeper understanding of residential schools with her students. She would start earlier, use new PowerPoint presentations, share new websites with her students on the classroom's homepage, and add audio clips. She described the process as regrouping by assembling the information to make it more accessible and interesting to the students, such as creating a centre around the theme with a variety of materials. Anahid would also allow the students to bring materials from home.

Previous Indigenous Background Knowledge/Awareness

Desmoulins (2009, as cited in Courtland et al., 2009) contends that it is not whom you see in Canadian society that fosters understanding, but how educators value and address diversity in classrooms and curricula (p. 151). Teachers require professional development opportunities, interactions with members of the Indigenous community, and opportunities to grow their practice with their teaching career as models for preservice and teacher training.

Anahid shared her experience of working with the Nisga'a people during her graduate work. She explained to her students the intimate relationship between the Nisga'a people and the land and how this relationship impacts many facets of everyday life. In her work with them she often wanted to interview people; however, they would be out on the land, fishing, or preparing salmon. She hoped that her students would understand the sustainable relationship that we all need with the land.

Anahid had garnered a great deal of knowledge from her graduate experience with the Nisga'a people and found it very helpful in planning this unit. The university was small, and the undergraduate and graduate students came to know one another through watching movies together and sharing candid discussions, which resulted in relationships built on confidence and trust. She was therefore able to take an active role in her research and within the greater community. Experiences at the local Friendship Centre, community events, friends, and colleagues gave her a direct link to the community:

> It was very much something that I was interested in, and that is what drew me to the novel. Friendship and trust were at the core. In the beginning this led me into the community and into my professional relationship during my graduate work.

Anahid understood that the sudden loss of previously established relationships when she moved away from her previous community had impacted her life.

Anahid was concerned about doing things "the right way" as much as possible, and she needed to be able to bounce ideas off others. She learned about Indigenous protocol from her previous graduate experience with the Nisga'a and that only certain songs can be shared in the school context. She drew on her

experience, and her role became to try to establish deeper relationships in her new teaching community.

Anahid knew that she could not write down the musical notes of a song because anybody who taught the song could pass them on, whereas the Indigenous way is to give a song to another person. She had been gifted a song to take with her for the purpose of teaching. Certain songs can be shared or sung only during certain seasons, depending on the Indigenous community. The community respects protocol and frowns upon a person taking something that does not belong to him or her. However, Anahid had permission to take the song with her, to pass it on and utilize it in her classroom. She has a strong sense of protocol and has made significant efforts to honour her roles of researcher, teacher, and research participant.

Strong Sense of Background Knowledge and Social Justice for All

These teachers were all very conscious about the need for social justice in their classrooms and the greater school community. What drew Martin to the autographical account of *Fatty Legs* (Jordan-Fenton & Pokiak-Fenton, 2010) in the first place was a culmination of factors and dynamics, such as his current students, his graduate studies work, professional development opportunities that his school board offered, professional development opportunities of choice, and research in which he has participated. He also believed that his own values and beliefs about people and, ultimately, the society he hoped to see in the future were factors. Martin was aware of people who live on the margins of society and was eager to give them a voice and validate them: “It’s not the White, middle-class

person that is the most important and that everybody should have a voice and be proud of who they are." This sense of social justice was evident in Martin's actions as well.

Anahid became interested both personally and professionally in the true story *Fatty Legs* (Jordan-Fenton & Pokiak-Fenton, 2010) and spent hours online gathering background and current information to become well prepared to teach it. She could see similarities between the experiences of First Nations people and some of her own. For example:

> When I was learning about the history of my people, it was not only cultural genocide, but genocide. In 1915 a half million Armenians were massacred, and I grew up with those stories . . . And we have a lot of similar stories to the First Nations people . . .

Anahid's grandmother told her stories, which was the Indigenous way: "We used to hide our Armenian books in a special place upstairs, hidden away because we were not allowed to have books in Armenian. They'd go up and read them secretly." She recognized her fear of acknowledging her family's ethnic identity as something in common with First Nations people.

Anahid also made a connection between the cultural genocide of her people and the circumstances of the children in the novel *Fatty Legs* (Jordan-Fenton & Pokiak-Fenton, 2010). Although they are two separate stories of cultural genocide, she linked the different yet parallel experiences that have surfaced in the stories of the Elders. Anahid also shared some of the horrific stories that her grandmother and father had told her about rape, torture, and murder in their family history. A variety of stories in her classroom of residential schools, her personal family experience of Armenian cultural genocide, and the

Holocaust helped her students discern similarities and parallels. This multilayering of experiences is a powerful result of raising social issues.

At her birth Anahid had received the name of a family member who had been murdered in the past, and she spoke about her father's tears on her birthday. She never understood why her parents cried, but she now recognized the layered memory connected with this family member. Intergenerational trauma lingers in any cultural or ethnic group. Although she did not tell her students her family experience of cultural genocide, she told them about the loss of language and the need to hide books. She drew on the relationships and events and the parallels among the three ethnic groups and to the global template. She explained that each culture has a story to share and that we cannot generalize a generation's experience or a group of people because we do not all have the same experiences.

June recalled teaching Grade 3 and the curriculum that explores various cultures, including Peru, Ukraine, and others. She thought it was strange that the social studies curriculum does not have more of a Canadian slant, and she wanted that to change. Her curiosity had been piqued, and she wanted to examine the Grade 5 textbook to see how it presents Canadian history. This issue has affected many people, and it is important to teach it as Canadian history: "Even if you're not personally Aboriginal, there's still some sort of connection to generations ago."

Self as Aboriginal Researcher in a non-Aboriginal Context

One of my findings in this research has less to do with the topic under study and more with my experience as a researcher. I believe that I have lived

much of my life thus far in between spaces, navigating assumptions, stereotypes, myths, and false generalizations on both sides—the Indigenous ways of knowing and being and the mainstream thought process of knowing and being. This binary construct or view on being has been difficult to navigate. This meaning, those that perceive me as either one or the other may have categorized me without knowing me. Humans encapsulate a body of knowing and being in the form of the mind's consciousness. Our bodies and/or ethnic identities become a culture. However, this is a superficial identity for us to truly discern, garner new understandings, and learn from one another's stories to further understand who we are as human beings. Some take this journey. In this research study I asked middle-years students and the teacher participants to try to understand and know one another better. Our stories change the way we think, the way we see, and the way we will be with one another tomorrow. If I have done my job well, they will never perceive an Indigenous person the way they have previously, nor will I perceive the way that a teacher navigates unfamiliar curriculum.

Seeing myself as an Indigenous researcher among non-Indigenous participants in the overarching study, and, in particular, in this research study requires the understanding that I am also a change agent. Although the research included teachers who saw themselves as change agents, it also included a trinity of change agents: myself as the researcher, the teacher participants, and the students.

When I view myself as an Indigenous researcher in a non-Indigenous context, I ask myself, what have I learned in this community of practice and what

have my participants learned. I believe that Aboriginal women in particular in Canada have little value based on the violence against Aboriginal women in contemporary media. Aboriginal women have always been victims of horrendous crimes and violence in Canada, and this study may ask middle-years students and teacher participants why Indigenous women are perceived as less valuable in Canadian society. Accurate stories about historical, lived experiences help us to learn Canadian history. It is clear from this research that even the teacher participants were unsure of the historical facts about and implications of residential schools. I hope that we will know our own Canadian story better today than we did yesterday.

Summary

Although the research focused on the true story *Fatty Legs* (Jordan-Fenton & Pokiak-Fenton, 2010), a short memoir, it is not only about *Fatty Legs*. It addressed issues of social change in greater society: how we are changing the consciousness of society and how we see human beings. I strongly believe that changing the way human beings view one another revolves around relationship and knowing one another's story. If relationship is not possible, then what better way to escape one's world than to enter another through a book, a true short story, or, in particular, a story about a young woman navigating the Canadian residential school experience?

The teacher participants told me about their experience of what they perceive this autographical account provided them with. They reflected on the novel study as a place for students to learn more about residential schools and

about one another and about ethnic ways of knowing and being, to learn more about literacy and reading, and to learn more about their own knowledge of Canadian history, specifically with regard to FNMI perspectives. As Thomas King (2003) advised after he told a series of stories:

> Take it. It's yours. Do with it what you will. Tell it to your children. Turn it into a play. Forget it. But don't say in the years to come that you would have lived your life differently if only you had heard this story. You've heard it now. (p. 151)

CHAPTER 5:

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Discussion of Key Findings

The purpose of this study was to understand how teachers help students to explore FNMI perspectives in literature though the use of one particular autographical account, *Fatty Legs* (Jordan-Fenton & Pokiak-Fenton, 2010). They revealed that students see themselves through their cultural identity, collective identity, and gender, in peer relationships and classroom membership, which make up the whole person.

The numerous key findings from this study involve the challenges and rewards that these teachers experienced, what they suggested that they need, the future study of FNMI perspectives in their school communities, the Indigenous background knowledge/awareness that they bring to their classrooms, and their strong sense of background knowledge and social justice for all. This research also reflects myself as an Aboriginal researcher in a non-Aboriginal context.

In this chapter I have described the themes that emerged from my research with the teacher participants. I will also discuss in detail the findings, implications, and limitations of this research. In conclusion, I will discuss what might be valuable in setting future directions.

Critical Literacy in Action

McKeough et al. (2008) stated that the purpose of education is to instruct the next generation about what is valued and important in society (p. 150). Critical literacy practitioners in the everyday classroom ask students to be critical

readers and thinkers. Students who read, listen, hear, and respond critically and reflectively will learn the discourse of power in their local school communities and potentially in the larger national identity that they will assume one day. Creighton (1997) explained that each individual sees the world through his or her cultural and gender experiences (p. 444). She has also witnessed the power of books in helping children to learn about themselves and others and suggested that stories play a crucial role in the psychological, social, and cognitive development of children (p. 438):

> The need for critical literacy encourages students to articulate the pleasure or discomfort that has resulted from reading or hearing a text. . . . If we avoid texts that challenge or disrupt, or even alter their original context in any way, then we miss opportunities to enlighten and educate our students and ourselves. (p. 444)

To engage children in explorations of literature, it is essential that teachers have accessible and critical resources. It was clearly evident that two of the three teacher participants relied heavily on their local public library because of the efficiency of having books packaged and ready for pickup. The continuing challenge is local resources that are not categorized as FNMI. Some teachers do not perceive FNMI literature as a category, which is problematic in defining space within a school library and making works easily accessible to teachers and students. However, the label might be restrictive because assumptions cannot be made that FNMI literature is applicable only to Indigenous students. Some administrators still perceive FNMI literature as a 'nonissue' because of the demographics in their particular schools or jurisdictions, and their school libraries may reflect this. This lack of vision is a problem because diversity requires that

non-Indigenous students, teachers, and administrators learn from an FNMI perspective.

Becoming a critical practitioner requires preparation in a variety of ways. The teachers in this study contended that their undergraduate and graduate programs did not adequately prepare them as teachers to infuse FNMI perspectives into the everyday curriculum. Some local school boards are pursuing this initiative and are inviting teachers at the local level to learn how to weave FNMI perspectives into their curriculum.

It is clear from this research that the three non-Indigenous teacher participants did not feel equipped or have the background knowledge necessary to incorporate FNMI literature into their curriculum. They clearly stated that they wanted to honour Indigenous protocols and were open to sharing practices and teaching strategies that tread carefully on sensitive topics such as residential schooling. Most smaller school boards do not employ FNMI consultants, and this makes it challenging for suburban and rural teachers who plan to infuse FNMI literature and/or perspectives into their curriculum. If this is the case for teachers more broadly in Canada, then educational discussions on FNMI people and the residential-school experience are absent from their classrooms. The lack of background preparation is a major concern; it is difficult for teachers to actively engage their students in critical literacy experiences without good resources.

These teachers stressed that specialized supports are important to their success as teachers, such as the teacher support group and graduate and undergraduate classes that support teachers who want to explore social justice by

reading rich texts/literature, teacher librarians who help teachers to access rich resources, bibliographies, and compilations for quick reference, and FNMI consultants who support teachers and facilitate relationships.

Richard Shaull (1970) stated that critical literacy is used as a tool for the masses to gain a new awareness of selfhood by looking critically at the social situation in which they find themselves and taking the initiative to transform the society that has denied marginalized peoples the opportunity to participate. Critical literacy requires that teachers, students, and researchers view education as a subversive force in shifting the consciousness of the people (p. 1). I believe that my research participants were a community of teachers who had an opportunity to reassess and bring significant insight into how a collaborative inquiry group can address vital questions on social justice through the medium of contemporary Canadian literature that pays attention to historical and political factors such as colonialism, Aboriginality, immigration, and multiculturalism (Wiltse, Johnston, & Yang, 2014).

Relationships

While laying the framework for this study, I presumed that the change agents would be the teacher practitioners. However, it is clear from the overarching research study and this study that a triune of relationships (teacher practitioners, academic researcher, and research assistant) revealed itself as an important coalition for moving the thinking ahead.

This relationship may be at the very core of this study. Examining ways in which the teacher participants, I as the researcher, and the research assistant

took up this relationship of pedagogy/theory, research, and practice into the community may reveal the core of transformation leadership and change within this teaching community. This triune of relationships may be a model for administrators, teachers, and students/parents. In this study I examined teachers' reflective thoughts on practice to discover what helped them to arrive at this place of critical teacher pedagogy by working with others.

Clearly, all three teachers were willing to try something new. Their openness, desire, pragmatism, and curiosity fostered their exploration of unknown territory with their students. With the guidance of the social justice group, they felt a keen sense of belonging and group identity, which encouraged them to take up new topics and search for new materials. All of the teachers believed that their relationships with students, parents, colleagues, administrators, and professors were built on confidence and trust.

I believe that my relationship with them as a researcher also falls into this category because without trust, these honest, candid conversations would not have taken place. The opportunity for the teacher participants to see me in the midst of the overarching research laid the foundation for our evolving relationship as co-researchers, peers, colleagues, and companions friendship. As much as I was researching their practice, they were inquiring into my identity, my place in the overarching study, and my place in this study as principal researcher. Much like the relatively unknown topic of FNMI literature, at the beginning of this research study perhaps I symbolized an unknown to these teachers. Indigenous scholars Steinhauer (2002) and Wilson (2008) stressed the importance of relationship.

According to Wenger (1998, as cited in Philpott & Dagenais, 2011):

> A community of practice is defined as a group of people who share a history of experience. More experienced members ('old timers') represent this history and serve to disseminate this knowledge to new members ('newcomers'). . . . Not all new members share a common trajectory with existing members and may, in fact, wish to offer new insights, discourses and ways of being within the community of practice. (p. 86)

As the academic researcher, I modeled this community of practice by challenging the participants' and research assistant's views through articles and discussions and subsequently applied a theory of practice. This bumping up of landscapes and spaces inside our minds through discussions may have contributed to a new sense of teacher and researcher identity. My study further expanded the notion of Indigenous perspectives found in the literature and within the minds of the 21st-century classroom.

In this research study I asked the teacher participants to think reflectively about their teacher practice. They discussed taking up the memoir *Fatty Legs* (Jordan-Fenton & Pokiak-Fenton, 2010) either differently or similarly next time and noted the power of the social justice group in their classroom's exploration of the memoir (Wiltse et al., 2014). The peer support group gave them an individual and collective space to plan and create. Their ability to bounce ideas off one another and take the ideas back to their classrooms yielded powerful momentum and created immediate change in students' exposure and knowledge at the classroom level.

The social justice group served as a theoretical framework that offered the teachers rich discussions on curricula. In this research study I asked the teachers to find a quiet moment near the end of their busy teaching day to discuss with me

what had taken place that day and what it meant to them. These teacher practitioners' words, voice intonation, and body language helped me as the researcher to reflect on what mattered most to them from their use of *Fatty Legs* (Jordan-Fenton & Pokiak-Fenton, 2010).

Similarly to what the monthly social justice meetings offered teachers, this research study encouraged them to share moments of reflection beyond the chatter and "busyness" of their everyday lives and classroom responsibilities and divulged notions of theory and practice. Overall, as one teacher stated, they "just don't know a lot about the residential school experience." They expressed a desire to know more as a teacher and as a Canadian. The teachers had an opportunity to reflect on their own voices and what they considered important for future practice as teachers. One expressed concern about planning and preparing for the class study of *Fatty Legs* (Jordan-Fenton & Pokiak-Fenton, 2010) because of the significant time and effort required to plan, manage the book study, and see it through.

Transformational Leadership

Teachers who demonstrate transformational leadership within their classrooms create citizens of the future, calling them to think freely and to continue the transformation of their society. Shaull (1970), like Paulo Freire (1970), spoke of the struggle not only of Blacks and Mexican-Americans, but also of middle-class young people in America (p. 2). Young citizens in our classrooms need to know of the sharpness and intensity of the struggle in this developing world. Freire often refers to the Third World. Like Freire and Shaull,

I understand Turtle Island and/or North America as much like the Third World for Indigenous peoples. James Anaya, "the UN's special rapporteur on indigenous rights" ("Canada's Indigenous Peoples," 2014, para. 2), wrote a report about Canada that was discussed in a blog. Anaya stated that

> "Canada faces a continuing crisis when it comes to the situation of Indigenous peoples of the country." One of the most jarring aspects of their position for Mr. Anaya was the third-world living conditions on remote reserves, where half of the water systems have been labelled posing a medium-to-high health risk to their users, and where overcrowding and sub-standard housing help spread disease and violence. Of the bottom 100 communities in the country's Community Wellbeing Index, 96 are First Nations. (para. 3)

It has been long understood among Indigenous people in 'Indian country' that Indigenous Canadians are somehow deemed less valuable than their non-Indigenous countrymen. This is reinforced by shocking statistics of health and violence and abuse of women. According to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police ("Canada's Indigenous Peoples," 2014):

> Almost 1,200 aboriginal women had gone missing or been murdered across Canada in the past 30 years. Although aboriginals constitute 4.3% of Canada's population, they make up 16% of murdered women and 12% of missing women during that period. (para. 2)

Although The Native Women's Association of Canada is one of several groups pushing the national government to show leadership by holding a formal inquiry to address these atrocities, not much has been done about the numerous community concerns either publically and locally. These relations continue to plague and divide Indigenous and non-Indigenous relations. Questions remain,

> "Are the indigenous women and children who have been murdered or are missing here in Canada somehow less important than other women and children?" As long as the government refuses to hold an inquiry, many

> aboriginal Canadians will see the answer to that question as "yes." ("Canada's Indigenous Peoples," 2014, para. 6)

A great deal needs to be done to transform the Canada of today into one of equity and justice for all. Leadership is needed in a range of places. The stories of marginalized groups, whether Indigenous or non-Indigenous, ask us to create a new space for insight, new models of education, and new hope as we face our own situation here in Canada. I have heard Elders say that we give our children much knowledge, but we offer them little intelligence. I hope that children young or old continue to learn beyond their scope of understanding and gain new insights. Cajete (2008, as cited in McKeough et al., 2008), a Pueblo scholar, noted that Aboriginal knowing acknowledges the mutual reciprocity between human beings and all things, tangible and intangible (p. 150). McKeough et al. summarized Cajete's statement: "For Aboriginal peoples, then, education is a process of becoming aware of the entwined interconnected relationship of all life and one's role in creation" (p. 150). Educators have the ability to help teachers to push boundaries and ways of being so that we might have a unified nation, the human nation that sees, listens, considers, contemplates, reflects, and tells a different story. It is this kind of transformational leadership that emerged in this research.

The testimonies of the teacher participants made it evident that students and teachers alike can make connections with marginalized groups of peoples such as Nazi concentration camp survivors, Armenian Holocaust survivors, and victims of bullying, gender discrimination, and intergenerational trauma within the local school context. The students' and teachers' ability to examine these

themes together creates a perspective that helps students to connect and link human relationship beyond the borders of ethnic groupings. The ability to link topics such as cultural genocide through a multiplicity of human histories creates a window through which to see one another's cultural atrocities as atrocities against the human race. The teachers' actions and use of the memoir *Fatty Legs* (Jordan-Fenton & Pokiak-Fenton, 2010) linked the past to the present in these students' classrooms with regard to bullying practices either experienced or observed, possibly shaping a social consciousness in policies of tomorrow. The teachers' and students' ability to deconstruct the past and link it to their contemporary lived experience may be at the very core of social relational change.

Another key finding is the power of transformational leadership within the teacher participants' classrooms. All believed that relationship is built on confidence and trust, and friendship and trust are at the core of this study. These teachers have been creative risk takers, making connections to personal student experiences, the historical and current reality of residential schools, and intergenerational trauma and were ultimately able to get the children to buy into literacy. These teachers all viewed teaching as an art. They were aware that they do not know everything and that this is acceptable, because teachers should feel comfortable with facilitating new opportunities for both students and teachers to learn together. One teacher also described the year as an exploration and creative process that went in many different directions with a sense of discovery.

Fatty Legs Opens Doors Between the Past and Present

The three teacher participants explored the short novel *Fatty Legs* (Jordan-Fenton & Pokiak-Fenton, 2010) with their students, hoping to infuse a broader understanding of the residential school experience in Canada. In this research study I asked the teachers to explore not only residential school history, but also one residential school survivor's story. They asked their students to make connections to their personal background knowledge and the issues of diversity that all Canadian children face and to connect past and present.

One topic in which the students made connections to the story *Fatty Legs* (Jordan-Fenton & Pokiak-Fenton, 2010) was bullying; they were able to make an initial connection with the young woman Olemaun/Margaret, which the teachers identified as a powerful marker in the connection to the protagonist's school experience. The students were able to feel Margaret's sense of injustice in her interactions with the Raven and the other cruelties that she endured while attending her residential school. These students' ability to relate to Margaret's daily schools tasks enabled them to compare their own daily tasks in their school environment. They were reminded of the freedom and respect that they receive daily from their teachers and the greater school community and found it difficult to imagine Margaret's dehumanizing treatment. The students realized how fortunate they were to be treated so well by their teachers compared to the way that Margaret's teacher, the Raven, treated her. The teacher participants explained that many students found it too difficult to imagine the poor treatment

that Margaret endured and that the closest connection for them was the notion of school bullying.

Another area of connection was the engagement of the children in the story to the practice of reading. Martin stressed that getting students to buy into literacy is key. He spoke about bringing the novel alive for students and believed that some aspects of the residential school topic were beyond their understanding, but he believed that if he focused on the students' parallels or similarities and everyday lived reality, he might foster and understanding. Similarly to the issues that critical literacy theorist Creighton (1997) raised, these teacher participants offered their students the critical-literacy instructional approach of examining parallels and similarities within their own sense of self/identity.

Bruner (1991, as cited in McKeough et al., 2008) stated:

> Narratives allow us to organise and represent our experiences by providing an account of events over time, express them in a sequential and diachronic order; understand behaviour that is sometimes contrary to some culturally defined norm and the human plight that results; and, provide a way to reflect, examine, and interpret the underlying intentions behind action (p. 150)

Nelson (2003, as cited in McKeough et al., 2008) also noted that when they represent events, narratives necessitate reflection, analysis, interpretation, and making meaning of experience (p. 150). According to Campbell (1988, as cited in McKeough et al., 2008) a narrative is a powerful tool for socialization" (p. 150) and Miller, Wiley, Fung, & Lang (1997, as cited in McKeough et al., 2008) stated an effective way to transmit cultural knowledge, values, and beliefs (p. 150). In this study Martin asked his students to share a personal narrative of self. The exploration of self in this student-facilitated model led them to the communities,

their homes, and their extended homes, where they interviewed family members such as grandparents. They then formulated presentations on what they had discovered and posted their knowledge in the school hallways for the greater school community to view. This helped the students to create an identity within the larger overarching thematic novel study. They explored their personal histories and drew meaning and understanding in their personal lives. Martin's example of students' drawing knowledge from their home community is a shining example of what students require to draw deeper understandings and meanings from their individual and collective learning.

Rather than considering Indigenous perspectives as something of the past, Martin saw them as living and breathing in the young and old people of today. The teachers recognized that each student has background knowledge and that the diversity could lend to student and teacher enlightenment. All teachers talked about the use of the memoir *Fatty Legs* (Jordan-Fenton & Pokiak-Fenton, 2010) in the future as an opportunity to regroup, reflect on the process, and consider opportunities for growth in, for example, student-assessment practices and further relationship-building exercises in the school community, local school board, and greater community. Although one teacher described her homogenous classroom as sheltered from other ways of being and knowing, she reflected on her role of teacher and her own minority status as integral to changing perspectives for young learners. She believed that one day her students would be able to see her role of change agent, if not directly, at least indirectly. As the true story *Fatty Legs* did for Margaret Pokiak, Anahid mirrored her sense of self back to her

students daily through the stories of her parents' and grandparents' survival of the Armenian Holocaust and what it meant for her and her family.

Martin was also aware of people living on the margins of society and was keen to give them voice and validate them. People who embrace diversity can see, hear, and know people beyond society's assumptions about them. All teachers commented that their students deserved a much deeper understanding of the topic of residential schooling, and their reading of *Fatty Legs* (Jordan-Fenton & Pokiak-Fenton, 2010) brought them to this understanding, which she noted for future practice. Reflecting on her elementary, high school, undergraduate, and graduate experiences, June commented that she did not know a great deal about residential schools and wondered why. She thought about all of the children in Canada, like the children in the book, who had attended these schools and wondered what became of them and their culture and what is happening today. She wanted to know more for herself and her role of teacher and especially as a Canadian citizen: "At one time or another, the residential school experience needs to be explored." June also noted that children learn about Peru and Ukraine in the social studies curriculum but very little about Canada's historical context. She wanted to examine the curriculum again and see it change to take more of a Canadian historical perspective.

Teachers Identify Their Needs

Another finding of this study is the practices and supports that either hinder or support teacher success. Two urban teachers noted the power of their FNMI contact/resource person and the invaluable support that they received to

search for resources. The small urban school board did not have a resource/contact person, which proved to be a challenge. The social justice group at the University of Alberta was an invaluable support for all teachers because it served as a forum for the teachers to bounce ideas off one another, talk about what was working, ask questions, and consider implementing ideas immediately in their classrooms at the grassroots level. As Shaull (1970) stated about Freire's work:

> From a situation of direct engagement in the struggle to liberate men and women for the creation of a new world, he has reached out to the thought and experience of those in many different situations and of diverse philosophical positions. (p. 4)

The teacher participants in the social justice group strove to reach out to students in the hope of presenting many different perspectives to help them to view the whole.

The social justice group proved to be a place where ideas could resonate. The members developed the groundwork theory for all types of issues and implemented their own actions in a short time. Paulo Freire's (2000) work speaks to the power of perspectives and the ability to see the whole in transformative leadership practices in the classroom. A classroom of cohesiveness creates a space for free thought and being. Similarly to the research in the *Engaging Teachers with Canadian Literature for Social Justice* project, in this study I examined in detail the three teachers' experiences of incorporating FNMI literature and what ultimately brought them to their understanding.

All teachers described success as based on trust with colleagues and students. Much of their trepidation was a result of the unknown direction of the

book study. All three teachers spoke about the challenge of time management, planning, student capacity, the unpredictability of the students' reactions, and the inability to plan for the students' reactions. The teachers also did not know what direction to take with the study, where to stop, and how much they should delve into the residential school experience. June commented that trust with her colleagues, students, and parents is necessary to feel safe. Her admission to not knowing all the answers proved invaluable and allowed her to become a risk taker. The teachers all proved to be risk takers in choosing a sensitive and complex topic that many teachers would rather avoid. They wanted to confidently and competently offer their students background knowledge and believed that a resource person is necessary to achieve this goal.

This study reveals the importance of background knowledge to teachers. Although none of the teachers in this study were of Aboriginal background, all three made an attempt to connect to the diversity of their students' ethnic backgrounds and ways of being. One teacher had significant knowledge on Indigenous ways of knowing because of her graduate research work in an Indigenous community. She also spoke about her personal historical connection to cultural genocide and the connection to the children's plight in *Fatty Legs* (Jordan-Fenton & Pokiak-Fenton, 2010). She suggested that this story gave her students a three-layered lens through which to view genocide: in Armenia, in the Nazi concentration camps (which the students were studying simultaneously in another subject area), and in residential schools. Anahid saw a connection between the experiences of First Nations people and some of her own experiences

as a child layered in the stories of her father, mother, and grandparents, which she believed linked the similar/parallel and uniquely different experiences. These teachers were aware of their choices and how they helped them their students to explore many ideas. Without this memoir, it is unlikely that June's student would have shared his story about his grandfather's attendance at a residential school and the trauma he endured there. Stories such as this can reveal truths that society has not previously heard or that are silent in the hearts of Elders.

Indigenous Researcher

A key finding as an Indigenous researcher is the power that my story may contribute to these teachers' deeper understanding of the residential school story. Although I am not a residential school survivor, the residential school experience is inextricably linked to my identity and familial background. The language loss within my family background asks me to consider what else is linked to this language loss. Gardner (2000) stated, "Then I would hear and read that the Elders said, "The language is central to our identity…the land is the culture…and our world view is embedded in our language" (p. 9) Gardner speaks to the passage of the traditions being broken.

Despite an education system's best efforts to camouflage success for students based on Western worldview's assessment standards and practices I have asked myself like Gardner (2000)

> What happened to us? Why are we in the state we are in? What happened to our language, our culture, our traditions? Burning, burning through my heart, my soul, my being. Ultimately, my question has been "Who am I?" Who can tell me who I am? How can I know who I am? (p. 8).

For the youth of today, this is a significant time of change—a time of choice with regard to learning language, learning culture, belonging to a community, and having relationships driven by interests and commonalities. People are taking back what was once theirs and what many have endured due to the legacy of residential schools. Some say, "Your ancestors will find you." I strongly believe that as Riel (Manitoba Métis Federation, 2014) stated, the artists, youth, academics, storytellers, politicians, and everyday folk, along with the next generation of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people working together, will continue to revitalize efforts and policies to effect change. I hope that my story matters, layered within the discourse among the members of the overarching inquiry group. Last, I hope that Margaret's story matters and that these teachers and their students hear it, for it is never really one person's story.

Implications

Throughout this qualitative case study I sought answers to my research questions: In the book *Fatty Legs* (Jordan-Fenton & Pokiak-Fenton, 2010), an example of FNMI literature, what challenges and/or rewards might educators encounter while exploring this text in the classroom? What practice and/or supports led the teachers to use *Fatty Legs* in their classrooms? What further background knowledge do teachers perceive that they require to more fully infuse FNMI literature to foster social justice? In this research study I have presented numerous answers to these questions.

One implication for teachers is their ability to help students understand critical literacy in action. These teachers asked their students to consider

Olemaun's autobiographical account of residential school in relation to their own elementary school experience. Many students could not fathom the experience, but they were aware of and could understand the connection to the bullying that young people face in classrooms and schools today. The teachers were also able to make connections to the everyday curriculum for their students. These teacher practitioners drew on what the students knew to make cultural, familial, and greater community connections both locally and globally. This touchstone of knowing oneself helped the students to look inside their school and their own families, which gave them a deeper understanding of Olemaun's (Margaret's) story. Olemaun's autobiographical account serves as a window into the legacy of residential schools and the ongoing treaty issues for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians.

Much as Olemaun's autobiographical account helps students to discover and hear one Canadian woman's story, so too is the topic of residential schools pertinent to our collective knowing as Canadians. Although parents might not be privy to classroom conversations on the content of the memoir *Fatty Legs* (Jordan-Fenton & Pokiak-Fenton, 2010), the layers of conversation might overflow into the homes to which these children return daily.

Another implication is the importance of relationship to the success of the inquiry group. Although my research study stemmed from the overarching research study, without these previously established relationships it might have been difficult for the teacher participants to share their candid thoughts about infusing FNMI content into the curriculum. My being an Indigenous researcher

in the midst may have been a valuable tool to help non-Indigenous participants to hear voice and stories seldom heard in educational settings.

Clearly, the social justice group's community of practice encouraged the members to teach literature that they might otherwise avoid. This sense of belonging created a safe zone in which the teachers shared what has been successful, what was working, and what they would reconsider the next time. The overarching research group shared resources, websites, links, and picture books. This inquiry group and community of practice proved valuable in supporting teachers in both theory and practice. My findings suggest that transformational leadership requires numerous partners; it cannot be carried out alone.

Another implication is the role of universities and school boards in providing support to preservice and service teachers. Although the teachers in this study were savvy, experienced teachers with graduate degrees, they required a community of support to exchange ideas in search of a best-practices support system. Their background knowledge was limited because of their personal identity and overall lack of exposure to FNMI perspectives during their undergraduate and graduate classes, although, in her graduate work, one research participant had extensive research experience with an Indigenous community. However, in her current teaching community she could clearly understand the divisions based on demographic identification that seem to be the reason for the absence of FNMI perspectives. Clearly, these teachers had a strong desire to learn more through the inservicing that they have received throughout their

careers, such as various professional development opportunities that their employing school boards offer. One teacher thought that a children's literature class and a social studies class offered some limited exposure to FNMI perspectives, but under the umbrella of multiculturalism. Another teacher also recognized her own absence of knowledge throughout her elementary, high school, and university experiences and desired to know more.

Curriculum for teacher development in this area is needed. These highly educated and experienced teachers questioned their ability and lack of knowledge because of their specific preservice training. They also acknowledged that much of what they do know is a result of their personal pursuits and strong need for personal development as teachers. This strong desire to know more as Canadians often led them to represent the perspectives of voiceless and marginalized Canadians. Curriculum development that provides teachers with valuable tools, such as curriculum guides, books, current and contemporary literature, novels, graphic novels, guided reading books, movies, posters, consultants, teacher librarians, teacher inquiry groups, and communities of practice, helps to create a safe place of learning and discourse inside the halls and walls of any Canadian school.

Good classroom materials are available and can be used in classrooms to open up the discussion; for example, the animated family-audience series called *Wapos Bay* in which three children, T-Bear, Talon, and Raven, explore their remote northern community. The stories include oral traditions, contemporary times, and media with material from contemporary films and characters such as

Star Wars, Mike Holmes (proper housing), David Suzuki (environmental issues), *CSI* (graffiti), and Jordin Tootoo (NHL hockey player), and made into parodies. As well, topics such as signing land deals and the environmental impact of such deals are explored in this animated series. Many of the issues and challenges for Aboriginal Canadians are explored through the use of storytelling and humour. These are potential resources for classrooms.

It is essential that Aboriginal voices be authentic in Canadian history books and storybooks. The role of educators is key in exploring these texts/materials through what we hear, touch, taste, smell, and listen to in our classrooms, which contributes to people's consciousness tomorrow. Our past enters the present in every relationship that we encounter, such as in relations of power, systems of government, and modes of representation (Blair, 1994, p. 13). The residential school apology in 2010 was a monumental movement forward for all Canadian citizens. It made Canadians aware of the role of the Canadian government and the Church in the cultural genocide of Canada's Aboriginal peoples. Given the current status of the relationship in Canada between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, it is important to study Aboriginal authors/stories of the past and present to share, inform, and validate the experiences of Aboriginal peoples. Seeing themselves in the curriculum and literature is empowering for Aboriginal people, but also important for non-Aboriginal people to hear.

School boards and provincial education systems that examine policies with regard to FNMI perspectives lead children, youth, and young adults into a

conversation that honours the treaty relationship that began so long ago and continues to exist today for the children attending school every year. Policy is a good starting place, but a comprehensible plan is also required for the incorporation of FNMI literature.

What I have learned through this research study is that there is no easy path to knowing and seeing someone, but as Canadian citizens and, in particular, as teachers, students, and researchers, we must listen. Without the ability to listen, to reflect, to consider, and to become aware, teachers and children might find it impossible to learn a little more today than they knew yesterday, and constructive, honest, candid, and thought-provoking conversations will ensue. Although I conducted this research study in a large urban Western city and a suburban community, I can say that it reflects the experiences of Canadian teachers in general. Therefore, what are we doing to help preservice and service teachers infuse and weave FNMI perspectives throughout the curriculum? If children are not hearing authentic stories, how can we expect them to be aware of one another and succeed in their future direct and indirect relationships? Looking for universality in our stories may be the key to identifying a cohesive contemporary society of peers, colleagues, and friendships.

Limitations

A limitation of this study was the difficulty of comparing a large urban school board's resources with those of a suburban or rural school board's resources. It may be a generalization to suggest that school boards lack resources

based on population. The results from this study need to be interpreted within the context in which they occurred.

The study occurred over a two-month period. However, the larger overarching study has reached the end of its third and final year. Because the participant sample was small, it may reflect teachers' experiences indirectly. This is not the intent of the study.

Ladson-Billings (1995) describes her work and research as situated in the context of black feminist thought. She suggested that there were tensions around her position as a "Native" in the research field that forced her to face the theoretical and philosophical biases she brings to her work in overt and explicit ways (p. 483). Like Ladson-Billings, because of my position as an Indigenous woman and researcher, I might also have brought certain biases to my work. Although I am aware of these possibilities, my inherent sense of being might impose a certain perspective on any situation.

Research Reflections and Suggestions for Further Research

The challenge with my chosen research methodology, a qualitative case study, was what I should do with all of the material that I gathered. It was difficult to decide whether to make the written piece a creative and collaborative reflection of the stories within a story. However, for the purpose of this research study and because of time constraints, it made the most sense to honour the participants' experiences in a qualitative case study format. As well, it was difficult at times to decide where to draw the line between the overarching

research study and my own. However, realizing that they are inextricably linked helped me to see the bigger picture.

This study can serve as a point to begin examining how we develop curriculums provincially, across Canada, or in Turtle Island/ North America. It asks us to reflect on the content of our curriculums and what is missing. Future studies could examine how teachers use literature to break free of the barriers that society sets up for marginalized peoples. Schools may play an integral role by awakening a nation's citizens from their traditional patriarchal lethargy. This awakening creates a freedom within our consciousness and our greater relationships with one another. As Shaull (1970) stated about Freire, "His early sharing of the life of the poor led him to the discovery of what he describes as the 'culture of silence' of the dispossessed" (p. 3). I believe that a "culture of the voice" can be found in a model of holistic education.

I believe that teachers are the curriculum makers, bending and flexing curriculum guidelines, often facilitated by a creative and artistic vision of practice and contributing to an internal awareness inside the minds and hearts of young Canadian citizens. A universal message can be found in any literature, but most particularly in literature that has seldom been found in school libraries, classrooms, and the Canadian consciousness. These stories hold universal messages. Teachers hold the key to freedom—the freedom to create a culture of learners who think "outside the box." When I was a child, my mother and father would often have intense discussions around the kitchen table about the overtones of our local sociopolitical context and where we as Métis belonged provincially

and nationally. Often our voices as Indigenous/bicultural children, youth, and young adults were unheard in the larger political sphere. Many a time my dad would say, "They have no relationship with the working man, the one in the trenches living and working, day in and day out. They have forgotten what it is like." I remember clearly, driving home along the South Saskatchewan River valley one day, he advised us:

> Always look up. Never let anyone tell you what you should think. Take the time to see the big picture and put the pieces together. Listen to the people's stories, and you will come to know them. One day, you'll see it.

I believe that this freedom to think makes new members of society refuse to be "monkeys in puppet suits" (S. LaFramboise, Elder, personal communication, October 10, 1988).

Just as students are asked to search for universal themes in literature, I invite you the reader to engage with the following excerpt from Nelson Mandela's 1994 inaugural speech. Let his words speak to you; let his words fill your heart with the beat of a drum or the rhythm of a fiddle; let his words help you to see the message inside the bottle:

> We understand it still that there is no easy way to freedom. We know it well that none of us acting alone can achieve success. We must therefore act together as a united people, for national reconciliation, for nation building, for the birth of a new world. Let there be justice for all. Let there be peace for all. Let there be work, bread, water, and salt for all. Let each know that for each the body, the mind, and the soul have been freed to fulfill themselves. Never, never and never shall it be that this beautiful land will again experience the oppression of one by another and suffer the indignity of being the skunk of the world. Let freedom reign. (para. 10)

The teacher practitioners and students in this study took one woman's memoir (*Fatty Legs*; Jordan-Fenton & Pokiak-Fenton, 2010) and made significant links to either their personal identity or students' family stories, intergenerational interviews, culture, and daily classroom practice (e.g., bullying). Anahid made an effort to connect the class discussions in her classroom and school community to topics that her students were already exploring, such as concentration camp survivors. June connected the book to the bullying that students witnessed in the halls, in the classrooms, and school community; and Martin focused on familial identity as a link. Although these teachers made individual efforts, they all drew on the theme of personal connections with their students, ultimately getting students excited about reading. These teachers were aware of what is required to excite students about literacy. They strongly believed that the message about residential schools is a universal theme of freedom and this notion can be explored by any group of students in a Canadian classroom.

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APPENDIX A:

GUIDING INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

FOR TEACHER PARTICIPANTS

1. What challenges do you think educators face while attempting to use FNMI (First Nation, Métis and Inuit) literature in the Canadian classroom? What has been your experience?

2. What challenges did you encounter while planning the novel *Fatty Legs* for classroom use?

    a. What were your greatest obstacles?

    b. What were your greatest rewards?

3. What were your students' reactions to this novel? Do you believe students understood at a surface value or at a much deeper level the experiences of residential school survivors? If not, why so? If so, tell me how?

4. What suggestions do you have for other educators planning to infuse FNMI literature into their curriculum planning?

5. Will you use the novel again? What will you do differently?

6. Will you continue to use other FNMI literature in the classroom? If so what are you thinking of and why?

7. From your perspective how well prepared were you to address this novel with your students? How well are school boards and/or universities providing adequate preparation of FNMI resources for teacher practitioners wanting to explore FNMI content for classroom use? If so what has been your experience? If not, what would you like to see done?

8. Was it your personal interest in the topic or another form of professional development that led you to this place of FNMI infusion in curriculum?

APPENDIX B:

RESEARCH STUDY INFORMATION LETTER

Study Title: Fatty Legs: Teachers Helping Students Explore FNMI Perspectives in Literature

Research Investigator:
Shelby LaFramboise-Helgeson
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Supervisor:
Dr. Heather Blair
551 Education South
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Edmonton, Alberta, T6G
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Background Information

My name is Shelby LaFramboise-Helgeson I am a master's thesis student in the Department of Elementary Education at the University of Alberta. I would like to invite you to participate in a research study, **Fatty Legs: Teachers Helping Students Explore FNMI Perspectives in Literature.** The results of this study will be used for my dissertation and for academic presentations and publications.

Purpose of Research

This study will explore the perspectives of one to three Canadian elementary classroom teachers utilizing the novel Fatty Legs. Through reflective interviews, the research aims to investigate with teachers their role and perspectives on the process of infusing FNMI perspectives into Canadian curriculum that addresses issues of voice, authorship, historical lived experiences and contemporary realities, marginalization, inter-generational trauma, individual inequity and structural inequalities, and the role literature plays in striving to achieve social justice in the Canadian classroom setting. Teachers are asked to reflect on their integral role while exploring voice/FNMI perspectives in the Canadian classroom.

About the Research

This research study is an extension of the research examined with Dr. Lynne Wiltse, *Engaging Teachers with Canadian Literature for Social Justice*. However, this research focuses on one to three teachers perspectives while infusing the novel, *Fatty Legs* written by Christy Jordan -Fenton & Margaret Pokiak-Fenton. The research hopes to explore teacher perspective while infusing FNMI perspectives into the Canadian classroom context.

Study Procedures

Beginning in March 2013 until June 2013 approximately, I will interview you and make notes on your thoughts and words. I would like to ask for your consent to be part of this study. If you agree, I would like to gather information from you in two ways:

1. I would like to interview you twice for 30 to 40 minutes. This interview could take place during one of your breaks or before or after class. I will audio record this interview and then transcribe (type) it.
2. I also ask for you to journal your thoughts and experiences while using the novel *Fatty Legs* with your students. I will collect this data at the time of our interviews and ask that you share important reflective moments during your teaching experience.

If I use any of this information for the study, I will check my notes or the transcripts with you to see if you would like to add, delete or change anything in your comments.

Research assistants will comply with the University of Alberta Standards for the Protection of Human Research Participants
http://www.uofaweb.ualberta.ca/gfcpolicymanual/policymanualsection66.cfm

Benefits and Risks

I hope that you will benefit from participating in this study. You may benefit from having me to support you and listen to your experiences. You will also have the opportunity to share your experiences with others. Researchers and other programs may learn from these experiences. Your ideas and knowledge may help programs develop their course materials and textbooks and improve their teaching strategies.

I do not anticipate any risks to participating in this study. You will be invited to share some of your personal experiences. Some of these might be upsetting to you. You are free to refuse to discuss any topics that might be uncomfortable for you. I can help arrange for counseling services if you wish.

Voluntary Participation

You are not obligated to participate in this study. Your decision to refuse will not affect your standing in the program or your relationship with your instructors in any way. Even if you agree to be in the study, you can change your mind. You can withdraw from the study until the end of data collection. If you withdraw from the study, I will delete your words and actions from all my notes, transcripts and other data sources.

Confidentiality and Anonymity

This data would be used for my master's dissertation and for academic publications and presentations. The use of data will meet the University of Alberta Standards for the Protection of Human Research Participants. I will keep your information confidential. I will not include your name, or any other information which might identify you, in my writing or presentations. I will not include your real name or identifying information in the transcripts and notes. I will not publish the name or location of the research site. I will try to keep your participation in the study anonymous and will not talk about your participation with others.

My supervisor will see or read any information I collect in this study (transcripts, notes, audio-recordings, photos, videos). She will sign a *Confidentiality Agreement*. If someone is asked to translate our conversations or to transcribe (type) the conversations on the tapes, they will also sign a *Confidentiality Agreement*. All persons involved with this research will comply with the University of Alberta Standards for the Protection of Human Research Participants.

During the study, original data (field notes, audio tapes, transcriptions and analysis) will be stored on a password protected, encrypted computer. After the study is completed, I will keep all data in a locked and secure cabinet for a minimum of five years following completion of the research.

If you would like to receive a copy of the findings from this research or transcripts of your interviews, please ask me and I will make a copy for you. I have included my contact information below.

Further Information

If you have any questions or concerns about this research or if for any reason at any time prior to June 30, 2013 you choose to withdraw from this research please contact:

Shelby LaFramboise-Helgeson
551 Education South
University of Alberta
Edmonton, Alberta, T6G 2G5
slaframb@ualberta.ca
123.456.789 (cell)

If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a participant, or how this study is being conducted, you may contact the Research Ethics Office at 780-492-2615. This office has no affiliation with the study investigators.

APPENDIX C:

CONSENT FORM

Title of Project: Fatty Legs: Teachers Helping Students Explore First Nation, Métis & Inuit Perspectives in Literature

Principal Investigator: Shelby LaFramboise-Helgeson, Department of Elementary Education, University of Alberta, 123.456.789 (cell)

1. Do you understand that you have been asked to be in a research study? Yes No

2. Have you read and received a copy of the attached information sheet?
   Yes No

3. Do you understand the benefits and risks involved in taking part in this study?

   Yes No

4. Have you had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss the study?
   Yes No

5. Do you understand that you are free to refuse to participate, or withdraw from the study at any time, without consequence, and that your information will be withdrawn at your request?
   Yes No

6. Has the issue of confidentiality been explained to you? Do you understand who will have access to your information?
   Yes No

This study was explained to me by: _____

I have read and understood the attached information letter and agree to take part in this study:

_____ _____
Signature of Research Participant Date

_____
Printed Name

I believe that the person signing this form understand what is involved in the study and voluntarily agrees to participate:

_____ _____

Signature of Investigator or Designee Date

A COPY OF THIS DOCUMENT SHOULD BE GIVEN TO THE PARTICIPANT

APPENDIX D:

VALUABLE LINKS/RESOURCES ON

RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS

https://www.dropbox.com/sh/rn12giudmmpvfp0/fxrlknnOJJ/trc/trc_poster

http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/index.php?p=580

http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/index.php?p=808

http://www.legacyofhope.ca/

https://www.nfb.ca/film/we_were_children/trailer/we_were_children_trailer

APPENDIX E:

RESOURCES: FUTURE POSSIBILITIES FOR TEACHERS

Due to a lack of reference material readily available on Canadian children's literature specifically by Indigenous authors, various groups have tried to create bibliographies and/or lists on Aboriginal literature. Therefore, making it more readily available to teachers, librarians, students, community groups, parents, and researchers. Such examples include the following:

- Aboriginal Authors: Children's Literature, University of Saskatchewan, http://library.usask.ca/indigenous/holdings/az_list-childrens_authors.php

- Ontario First Nation Libraries' Advisory Committee, Ontario Library Service, also provides an online bibliography called "First Nation Librarians Recommend . . . Aboriginal Materials for Children" (Wolf & DePasquale, pp. 145-147).

- A Select Bibliography of Canadian Pictures Books for Children by Aboriginal Authors explored in our class readings (Wolf & DePasquale, 2004, pp. 152 – 160).

- Literature to Support First Nations, Métis and Inuit (FNMI) Student Success in Elementary Schools. Workshop Facilitator Guide. Southern Alberta Professional Development Consortium. http://www.carcpd.ab.ca/pdresources/fnmi_pd.html

- University of Manitoba (check title, relatively older titles) http://www.umanitoba.ca/cm/cmarchive/vol20no4/aboriginalbooks.html

- Aboriginal Literatures in Canada: A Teacher's Resource Guide http://curriculum.org/storage/30/1278480166aboriginal.pdf

- Our words, our ways: teaching First Nations, Métis and Inuit learners https://education.alberta.ca/media/307199/words.pdf

Insert from the Language Arts for Indian and Métis Students, "A Guide for Adapting English Language Arts: A Curriculum Guide for the Elementary Level": https://www.edonline.sk.ca/bbcswebdav/library/curricula/English/More/Aboriginal_Languages_K-12_1994.pdf by Saskatchewan Education, Training and Employment (February 1994)