Pihtikwe:

Exploring With*ness* in Teacher Preparedness and Professional Development

by

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ABSTRACT

The *Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement* in 2006 (Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada, 2018), the creation of the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada* in 2008, the *Calls to Action* document in 2015 (TRC, 2015b), and *Alberta Education: Teacher* (TQS), *Leadership* (LQS), *and Superintendent Quality Standards* (SLQS) (2018a, b, c) all highlight necessary changes in educational policy over time. With educational policy change there is a direct need for teacher professional practice to shift: changes to curriculum, pedagogy, and professional development coupled with the "unlearning" (Donald, personal communication, 2020) of approximately 50,000 certificated staff in Alberta schools (Alberta Education, 2018) is what is needed for significant impacts in education. The creation of the *Teacher Quality Standard* (TQS) (2018), and my experience as an Indigenous educator trying to unpack its complex requests, brings me to question what Alberta teachers will need in order to achieve confidence in applying foundational knowledge (as stated in the TQS). Further to teaching *about* First Nations, Métis and Inuit people, I am curious about the teacher experience of teaching and learning *with* Indigenous people. Using Indigenous Research Methodology I seek to answer the question: What personal and professional meaning do white Canadian educators gain from learning with Indigenous people?

DEDICATION

"The mission." Sometimes it would come up randomly woven into a Cree sentence or conversation. Sometimes Grandma would say "that's what we were taught in the mission." For a long time, I did not understand what that meant, and I did not ask.

In my late teenage years, I decided to enter into that space and ask my Grandma about the mission. Seeing my grandmother cry during the conversation that occurred between us made me cry but became the start of what some people call purpose. Marie is my grandmother's name, and she is the reason I became an educator. This research is for her and the generations of Indian Residential School survivors and their descendants who have been waiting to see changes in Canada's education system.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction ... 1
- Research Purpose and Relevant Historical and Contemporary Background ... 1
- Positioning Myself to Research ... 4
- Research Question ... 10
- Terminology ... 13

Chapter 2: Literature Review ... 15
- Teacher Identity- Non-Indigenous Teachers, Whiteness, and Life-Experience ... 16
- Teacher Preparedness ... 24
- Teacher Knowledge ... 29
- Teacher Comfort and Confidence with Indigenous Content ... 36

Chapter 3: Research Methodology ... 49
- Indigenous Research Methodology ... 51
- Research Design ... 52
- Researcher and Participant Relationship ... 55
- Ethical Considerations ... 58
- Credibility and Truth ... 60
- Data Collection: Using Indigenous Research Methods ... 62
- Hermeneutic Interpretation ... 64

Chapter 4: The Research: Participant and Process ... 70
- Meet Jessica ... 70
- The Pipe Ceremony ... 76
- Tea with an Elder ... 78
- Stories from an Inuk Woman ... 80
- The Sweatlodge ... 82

Chapter 5: Pointing at and Pointing Out: Interpretation of Data ... 86
- Coming in: Pedagogy of Comfort ... 86
- Coming in: Pedagogical Insights ... 92
- Coming In: Pedagogy of Heart and Spirit ... 98
- Coming In: Storied Landscapes ... 105

Chapter 6: Discussion ... 110
- Considerations ... 110
  - Needing and Wanting ... 110
  - Teacher Comfort and Confidence ... 111
  - Conflicting Worldviews ... 111
  - Timing ... 113
  - Being Connected ... 115
  - Learn as You Go ... 116
- Suggestions for Policy and Research ... 118
  - Existing and Future Research ... 118
  - Decolonizing Teacher Preparedness and Professional Development ... 120
  - A Withness Education ... 123
  - Remembering our Treaty Obligations ... 125

Chapter 7: Conclusion 129
Pihtikwe 129
Expanding the Circle 131
From Inside the Circle 132
References 135
Appendix A: Information Letter and Consent Form 152
Appendix B: Recruitment Letter to Future Participant 155
Appendix C: Consent Statement 157

Chapter 1:

Introduction

Research Purpose and Relevant Historical and Contemporary Background

In 2007 a consensus was reached between the former Indian Residential School students, the Assembly of First Nations, the churches, and the Government of Canada (Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada, 2016). They agreed to compensation to former students titled, *Common Experience Payments* (CEP), which were made to the students who attended the approximately 139 Residential Schools that existed across Canada (Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada, 2016). Each survivor was also entitled to a separate settlement which they would then have to pursue called an *Independent Assessment Process* (IAP). This was an intrusive process of disclosing and speaking privately and publicly about the physical and/or sexual abuse endured while attending Residential Schools (Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada, 2016). My mother was the interpreter for my grandmother who chose to tell her stories in her *nehiyaw* (Cree) language. My late mother recalled how traumatic and equally heartbreaking it was to listen to those stories, some of which she had never heard. When I imagined the experience of a daughter lovingly supporting her mother, I was met with strong Cree woman energies. Initially, thinking about my grandma retelling her story in her own language sort of haunted me. Anyone who understands the language Cree will know that it is incredibly detailed and telling a story in Cree often takes longer due to its descriptive nature. Contrary to feeling haunted about their experience, I sensed strong ancestral and generational pride. This feeling ran through my veins, it touched my spirit, and left me

feeling elevated. I felt an overwhelming sense of gratitude thinking about their strength. On that day, the strongest women I know were able to reclaim what so many survivors had lost.

I do not give the legal system a nod and suggest these lawsuits mobilized further change for Indigenous people. It was the Indigenous survivors and their descendants that continued to rise above countless adversities. Their strength and bravery throughout this legal battle was the beginning of many positive changes in provincial systems. Further measures for community healing included seven commemorative events across Canada (Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada, 2018). In 2015, the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada* released their final report titled, *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future: Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*. The summary includes the findings, discussions, and stories of approximately 6,000 former students, "those who survived the experience of living in the schools as students" (TRC, 2015a, p. 7). Also revealed in the report, were The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's *Calls to Action* (TRC, 2015b). The purpose of the 94 *Calls to Action* were to "redress the legacy of Residential Schools and advance the process of Canadian reconciliation" (TRC, 2015b, p. 5). The *Calls to Action* (TRC, 2015b) challenged federal and provincial governments to commit to addressing issues in education, justice, child welfare, and health care systems. I remember sitting with my grandma and telling her about the changes occurring in response to both her truth-telling and to the work of the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*. We talked about the dialogue occurring in my teacher circles as well as in nation-wide media platforms. I

looked at her like a child looks at a superhero. I stared at her and admired her humble nature. A small and gentle woman, she nodded her head and said "yes, it's about time."

Since the *Calls to Action* (TRC, 2015b) there have been small but impactful steps made in Indigenous education in Alberta and the first of those includes the introduction of the *Alberta Education: Teacher Quality Standard* (TQS) (Government of Alberta, 2018ab). An addition to the original standard document is competency number five, titled *Applying Foundational Knowledge about First Nations, Métis and Inuit,* a piece that has created much discussion about the direction of Indigenous education in Alberta. The creation of this document was years in the making but ahead of its time in comparison to other provinces in Canada. This competency calls on Alberta teachers to demonstrate an understanding of the "historical, social, economic, and political implications" of Residential Schools and demonstrate an understanding of treaties and agreements negotiated with Métis. It encourages teachers to engage in "collaborative, whole school approaches to capacity building in First Nations, Métis and Inuit education" as well as provide opportunities for "all students to develop a knowledge and understanding of, and respect for, the histories, cultures, languages, contributions, perspectives, experiences and contemporary contexts of First Nations, Métis and Inuit." (p. 6). Lastly, it asks teachers to support "the learning experiences of all students by using resources that accurately reflect and demonstrate the strength and diversity of First Nations, Métis and Inuit" (Government of Alberta, 2018a, p. 6).

Accompanying the *Alberta Education* TQS (Government of Alberta, 2018a) is the *Leadership Quality Standard* (LQS) competency number five, titled *Supporting the Application of Foundational Knowledge about First Nations, Métis and Inuit* (Alberta

Government, 2018b, p. 6), and the *Superintendent Leadership Quality Standard* (SLQS) competency number five titled *Ensuring the First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education for all students* (Alberta Government, 2018c, p. 4). All documents are similar in scope, however, unlike the TQS (Government of Alberta, 2018a) both the LQS and the SLQS challenge school and district-level leaders to "pursue opportunities and engage in practices to facilitate reconciliation within the school community" (Government of Alberta, 2018b, p. 4). Having education standards that extend from the classroom to senior leadership has been integral in generating meaningful progress over the years.

Positioning Myself to Research

I grew up in a small Northern Alberta city. A Cree/French/Mètis in Treaty Eight territory. My mother, a Cree woman from a Northern Alberta Cree community. My father, a Métis/French man from a tiny neighboring town. My mother, who was raised by her Cree speaking grandfather (he did not speak English) wanted to raise my sister and I elsewhere. While my dad was away pipelining, my mom enlisted the help of her many uncles to come and move her to a small apartment in the city. My sister and I, only fourteen months apart, were brought up in the public school system from Kindergarten to grade twelve. My most vivid recollection of Kindergarten was when my mom came in to talk to my class about Cree culture. She wore a hide dress adorned with beautifully painted wild roses. She carried a cabbage patch doll in a moss bag. My class and I sat in a large circle. I slid over and positioned myself right under my moms' knees, my hands clasped underneath my chin, looking up at the most beautiful woman I knew. The teacher said, "you have to move so your friends can see too." So, I did. I think that moment was

my first experience feeling like proud *nehiyaw iskwesis* (little Cree girl). Unfortunately, that time would be the last time, for a long time. My sister and I, having fair skin, could have passed as being white. However, my mom's presence in our classrooms made it very obvious to everyone that we were the "Indians" in the school, and from what I remember, there was not a lot of us. I remember being teased in the first grade. I was standing in the boot room waiting for my sister when a young boy in my sister's class came up to me and started calling me a "stupid Indian." He made the classic war sounds with his mouth and his hand as I stood in the corner, paralyzed, tears streaming down my face. My sister came in, put her arm around me and said, "let's go." I think we walked all the way home like that. This is no fault to my mom; I attribute my shame to a system that never allowed me to be inherently me. A system that failed to lift me when I needed it. My mom remained the same proud woman she always was throughout my entire childhood. My mother consistently attempted to instill in me a sense of identity and pride. I always think about what life would be like had she not persevered, or if she were ashamed too. I attribute my strength to her strength and I was fortunate to see her pride in action as I eventually grew into a proud Cree woman just like her.

I did not grow up hearing my grandmothers' stories of Residential School. Sometimes, she would talk about "the mission." Sometimes she would warn us about doing things a certain way and say, "that's what the nuns taught us." It was not until my later teenage years that I started to ask my grandmother about her upbringing. The first time she told me a fraction of her story, she cried. I had never seen my grandmother cry before; I remember feeling so sad for her as I watched the many tears roll down cheeks. That feeling stayed with me and ignited an inner desire to be a part of a much larger

solution. I began seeking out opportunities to be a part of the urban Indigenous community. Not growing up with many Indigenous peers, these opportunities were satisfying to me. During this period of my life, I started to reclaim some of the pride that was lost as a child. I joined Native Counselling Services of Alberta as a youth advocate in a healing and trauma program they were creating. I recall standing in a circle and holding the hand of one of the Elders and breathing in, with my eyes closed, as I acknowledged the warmth and comfort of his hands. I felt welcomed in that space. I became an Aboriginal Liaison Worker (as it was called then) at a Junior High school and had the privilege of assisting youth who, like me, felt shame. I tried to be the person I never had in school. I attempted to help them find their identity as Indigenous youth and helped them cope with the demands of living in two worlds. I realized in that role that, sadly, I did not have the power to change anything. I realized that what those kids needed, was unfortunately, not me or a person with my role. The youth needed teachers who would understand them, their history, and their experiences. They needed a school system that made them feel empowered, not ashamed. Shortly after that I enrolled in the Bachelor of Education program in Northern Alberta.

I eventually moved to Edmonton and continued my degree at the University of Alberta. In my last practicum. I was placed in a small-town, predominately white, Catholic school system. I was teaching the students in grade four about the First Nations and Métis people of Alberta. I created a Treaty simulation unit titled, *Project Railroad*, where students had to make way for the imaginary railroad coming through the school (symbolic of Canada). Using a large map of the school, students had to strategically decide a route for the railroad as well as decide which classrooms (symbolic of First

Nations) they would eliminate to make space. The students had to write a Treaty for the classrooms they chose to eliminate and convince these teachers to leave their beloved spaces. The students convinced teachers to leave by promising them things they would want like new technology for the class or more time off. I asked them to get into the minds of a teacher and think about what they would want, knowing that they would not fulfill their promises. Like the actual treaties, some teachers agreed and signed the treaties, and some did not. I had other rules for *Project Railroad*, for example, the railroad had to cross through the library (symbolic of the buffalo), and the students had to find ways to get rid of all the books. The gymnasium was prime land (symbolic of farmland) and you were forbidden from destroying it during the construction of the railroad. The students had so much fun, as did I. My fondest moments were when the students would say "did you know I'm Cree?" or "I'm actually Métis!" I was certain, as was the teacher, that they were not Indigenous. Nevertheless, I could not believe that these students *wanted* to be Cree or be Métis. In an ironic way, I envied their experiences.

I spent my first five years as an educator working with First Nations and Métis students of varying ages. I worked as a classroom teacher in a Treaty Six First Nation Cree community. I moved to Treaty Seven territory to work in an Indigenous perspectives school. Being a proud Cree woman, I felt a sense of relief to be welcomed lovingly into Blackfoot territory. Prior to leaving for Treaty Seven, people had reminded me that the Cree and the Blackfoot were historical enemies. I enjoyed my time down south and gained memories and experiences. In 2012, I was called back to Treaty Six territory where we welcomed a beautiful baby girl, Layla. I spent much of my maternity leave up north where my mom was happy to hold the status of *kohkom* (Grandmother in

Cree). When Layla was 8 months old, my mom died suddenly from a heart attack. I grieved my own mother as I grappled with the emotions of being a new mom. Although I was happy to be a new mom, I was lonely in the city with very few friends. I decided to end my maternity early and go back to classroom teaching in 2015. I took over a maternity leave in the same school as my practicum, a small-town Catholic school system. This time was different. I was bringing back with me years of teaching experience with Indigenous children to a school with little Indigenous student presence. Even though I loved being a classroom teacher at my practicum school, I longed to be deeply rooted in Indigenous education in some form or another.

In June 2016, the Minister of Education in Alberta signed a 3-year *Joint Commitment to Action* agreement which ensured that all K-12 teachers would receive training in areas of Indigenous history and culture (Government of Alberta, 2016). The stakeholders included Alberta Education, The Alberta Teachers' Association, The Alberta Association of Deans of Education, The Alberta School Boards Association of Alberta, The Alberta Regional Professional Development Consortia, The College of Alberta School Superintendents, and the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation (Government of Alberta, 2016). The strategic plan for the next 3 years was to build capacity in all facets of education in Alberta and in all levels throughout each organization. Superintendents, Deans of Education faculties, and even school boards required learning supports. Some, but not all, stakeholders chose to hire Indigenous educators to lead their organizations in "education for reconciliation." I was selected as one of those educators.

When I was hired in 2016 as an Indigenous education consultant, the collective mandate of all stakeholders involved was to design workshops, create resources, and facilitate various sessions that would support teachers and school leaders in anticipation of the *Teacher Quality Standard* (2018a), which was yet to be signed and still in draft form. A few of the professional development sessions and printable resources made available around this time were on topics such as Residential Schools, Métis History and Legislation, Inuit Culture and Land Agreements, Alberta Treaties, Elder Protocol, and Terminology, to name just a few of many.

A few years later, while still working provincially as a consultant, I was approached by my most recent school division where I taught my practicum and was asked to lead their organization in learning as the Indigenous Education Coach. My role as coach within the school division was to work alongside teachers, either one-on-one, in small professional learning communities and/or in larger professional development sessions. The district plan was to create capacity within the schools through a Lead-Teacher framework, similar to many other schools in Alberta. For every school in the district there was a teacher who volunteered to lead Indigenous education initiatives in their school community. As a team, we would meet once a month to share ideas, collaborate on whole-school approaches, and gain "foundational knowledge" in various areas of Indigenous history, policy, contemporary realities, or resources for professional learning. Together we planned district-wide professional development days and strived to make the learning meaningful for our colleagues.

Working throughout Alberta for 3 years of the *Joint Commitment to Action* era, as well as leading Indigenous education in my own school division, I became privy to many

teacher discussions. The discussions were both positive and negative; some teachers felt guilt and shame, some teachers resistant to a mandatory process, many teachers echoing feelings of inadequacy. Most teachers were incredibly excited to start or continue the process but needed a lot of support and information. Most of these conversations captured the anxiety and stress caused when trying to fathom the complexity of the *Teacher, Leader, and Superintendent Quality Standards* (Government of Alberta, 2018a, b, and c). These were the same worries that I encountered with my colleagues 6 years earlier when I was teaching in the classroom. I started to notice that despite all the changes federally and provincially, it seemed as though very little was happening for teachers internally. I continued to wonder, what do Alberta teachers need to alleviate these feelings? Why is there such a hesitancy to learn and teach about Indigenous people?

Research Question

After a few years working in teacher professional development, I became well-versed in the Teacher (TQS), Leader (LQS), and Superintendent Quality Standards (SLQS) (Government of Alberta, 2018a, b, and c). I guided educators through these documents, often unpacking the expectations that were outlined for all educators. We dug into each and every word, and, as strangers, attempted to create a safe space for dialogue: "benefit for all students," "resources that accurately reflect," "gain a respect for," "implications of" and "collaborative whole school approaches" (Government of Alberta, 2018a, p. 6). When we were discussing the *Leadership Quality Standards* (2018b), we spent hours co-creating definitions of reconciliation. We imagined what it might look like

to "facilitate reconciliation within the school community" (Government of Alberta, 2018b, p. 4).

I became increasingly more curious about how the TQS (Government of Alberta, 2018a) and LQS (Government of Alberta, 2018b) would be utilized, implemented, and assessed. I began to wonder how the TQS (Government of Alberta, 2018a) positioned Indigenous people and their communities. While listening to a podcast interview of Dr. Dwayne Donald for *Intersection Education* (Haley, 2018), Donald discussed the "about*ness*" of Indigenous people saying that, when Indigenous people are taken up as "concepts of culture" or in "anthropological ways," they (as human beings) become removed from documents like the *Teacher Quality Standard* (Government of Alberta, 2018a). Donald explained that this preoccupation with the socio-spatial tended to place Indigenous people "outside of the real work" (Haley, 2018). In all of the many sessions I led, where teacher, leader, and superintendent standards (Government of Alberta, 2018a, b, and c) were un-packed, I failed to see that it used the word "*about*" in all three standards: "Applying Foundational Knowledge *about* First Nations, Métis and Inuit" (Government of Alberta, 2018, p. 6). "Schools are really good at teaching about things," Donald said (Haley, 2018). "So am I," I thought. I, too, have succumbed to the about*ness* of teaching teachers. I was reminded of what Elder Cardinal told me, as told to him by late Elder Joe P. Cardinal, "the longest journey you will ever make is from your head to your heart" (Personal Communication, 2016).

patahenow kêkwây oma, this is what Elder Cardinal always asks, "what is missing?" I started to question the long-range impact that standard sit-and-get professional development sessions were having in education. I pondered how much

information was being retained by my professional colleagues in the standard learning opportunities I was offering them. What would it be like for educators to stray from the normative learning structures that formal professional development sessions offered? Elder Cardinal's words, combined with Donald's comments, made me wonder what it would be like for educators to learn *with*, and not just *about* Indigenous people. Could learning *with* possibly be the key to building teacher confidence in engaging with Indigenous content? Is coming into the community or coming into sacred processes what is missing?

The question that I committed to unpacking in my research was: What personal and professional meaning do white Canadian educators gain from learning with Indigenous people? Using Indigenous Research as methodology, I endeavoured to make meaning of a teachers experience learning *with* and *from* Indigenous people.

I would like to admit that this research is timely, but it seems less relevant given that *The Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada* (TRC, 2015a, p. 7) was published in 2015. Fortunately (for this thesis), change in Indigenous education happens at a snail's pace. Fortunately, I am starting to see, in my own school division, positive steps forward in engaging with Indigenous content. This research is necessary in education now as it attempts to shed light on approaches not yet acknowledged in current educational structures. This thesis topic addresses a gap in research and academics around themes of "with*ness*" in teacher preparation programs and professional development. As I gaze at the current education structures that support teachers (that in turn support students), I shake my weary head (as many have before me) and think "what else could we be doing?" I am curious to unravel the *why* in hopes to

improve the *way*s in which post-secondary institutions and public-school systems prepare their teachers for "applying and developing" foundational knowledge (Government of Alberta, 2018a).

Terminology

Terminology can be confusing. As an Indigenous woman it has always been awkward identifying with impersonal labels that did not seem to match my deeply personal story. I use identity terms in my writing knowing that they might not match my participant's rich story, nor will they match other educators' narratives. Here, I will clarify the use of certain terms to make sense of the writing throughout.

Indigenous refers to the earliest known inhabitants of a place that was colonized by a now dominant group (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). Indigenous, is defined in Canadian as an umbrella term for First Nations, Métis and Inuit. When the term Indigenous is used, it refers to all these groups (Queens University, 2019, p.2). In most cases within my research, I am speaking about Indigenous people who live in Canada, however the term Indigenous can also refer to all Indigenous groups globally.

Critical Race Theory (Brayboy, 2005), White Privilege (Leonardo, 2004), and Anti-Racist education (St. Denis, 2007) are theoretical writings relevant to my research. However, I wanted to look more into the dominant colonizer group as historical beings situated in non-colonized ideologies. I sought to find literature on how non-Indigeneity and whiteness impacts teacher experiences with Indigenous content and people, as most teachers are in fact not Indigenous. Aside from calling themselves white, *non-* is a prefix many educators use to describe themselves in relation to Indigenous people, being non-

Indigenous. These layered definitions are often confusing since using the term non-Indigenous could also imply that people of colour are among this group. To clarify, non-Indigenous does not include people of colour since they are not a part of the dominant group. To replicate the identity terms found in the literature, I use the term non-Indigenous almost synonymously with White. Although, I preferred not to address my colleagues as non-something else's, I only did so to mirror the identity descriptions of my colleagues and the research terminology I encountered.

Chapter 2:

Literature Review

There is an increased awareness of history, people, and contemporary realities of Indigenous people since the creation of the TQS (Government of Alberta, 2018a). However, at the time of writing, there did not seem to be any less worry around teaching Indigenous topics. During the course of this research, the conversations I had with teachers still revealed similar feelings of inadequacy as 10 years earlier. Teachers still shared their own guilt and shame around *not knowing*. Some teachers showed resistance to mandatory processes, often questioning the *why* of such influxes in teacher professional development. Teachers still questioned their ability to teach Indigenous topics authentically because of their own absence of Indigenous ancestry. Teachers still talked about their comfort level or discomfort when teaching and/or learning about Indigenous history. Luckily there were many willing and eager teachers excited to start or continue the process, but they needed a lot of support, knowledge, and resources to do so.

Why was there *still* such a hesitancy to teach *about* First Nations, Métis, or Inuit topics? Further, what was holding teachers back from learning *with* First Nations, Métis, or Inuit people? Kanu (2005) says that when it comes to Indigenous education, practicing teachers still lack adequate knowledge, proper classroom resources, and support of their school administrators (as cited in Deer, 2013, p. 179). Apart from my own personal encounters with teachers there is additional evidence of teacher encounters with Indigenous content found in literature. This literature review is aimed at highlighting what it is like to learn *about* Indigenous people in the hope that we could understand what

it would be like to learn *with* Indigenous people. The literature themes supporting teacher encounters are: Teacher Identity, Teacher Preparedness, Teacher Knowledge, and Teacher Comfort and Confidence with Content and Curriculum.

Teacher Identity- Non-Indigenous Teachers, Whiteness, and Life-Experience

When I asked teachers to justify their feeling of inadequacy in teaching about Indigenous topics, many alluded to their identity as being non-Indigenous, non-Native, or white as a contributing factor. “I don’t feel adequate enough to teach about Indigenous topics,” which was usually followed by “I don’t feel it’s my place to teach this.” In this section, I sought to understand how teacher race or whiteness affected the ways in which teachers engaged with Indigenous topics, and further, people.

The College of Alberta School Superintendents (CASS) *Indigenous Teacher Survey Report* (2019) states that less than 1% of provincial school teachers in Alberta are Indigenous (p. 3). While this statistic of self- identified Indigenous teachers supports the reality that most teachers in Alberta are, in fact, non-Indigenous, it also shows the obvious lack of representation of Indigenous educators working in Alberta schools. Aside from being non-Indigenous, Ryan, Pollock, and Antonelli (2009) affirm that the Canadian teaching profession is mostly white (as cited in Lorenz, 2017). However, there is no statistical data publicly available in Alberta about how teachers identify racially. In my own professional experience, most of the educators I have shared space with were *not* of Indigenous background, nor were the populations culturally diverse, this includes my teaching experiences in provincial and First Nation school systems. Sleeter (2005) says that teachers in the United States are “increasingly white” (p. 243). In Canada, it is

comparable with visible minorities only reflected in 6.9% of the teaching force (Dharamshi, 2019). Educators should critically reflect on the lack of diversity in Canadian educational institutions and encourage Indigenous representation in all school jurisdictions. I am left to wonder how the lack of racial diversity affects the teacher and student experience. How does this impact the way that white and non-Indigenous teachers learn *with* Indigenous people?

First Nation students comprise over 25% of the elementary student population in some provinces and territories (Young et al., 2010). Young et al. (2010) express the desire for some of these youth to learn alongside Indigenous teachers. Further, *all* students would benefit from having Indigenous teachers. How does this change the way that students learn and relate to Indigenous people? Alberta Education revealed that 3% of graduating Bachelor of Education students self-identify as Aboriginal, therefore a similar percentage of Alberta teachers may also be Indigenous (Lorenz, 2017, p. 87). There may also be uncertainty about the location of newly employed Indigenous teachers and whether they take employment outside the province in a First Nation community school or in public systems across Alberta. It is evident that there is a disproportionate number of Indigenous educators available to provincial schools. In my youngest and most impressionable years, I, too, did not have any Indigenous educators to look to. According to Statistics Canada (2018), "teachers and pre-service teachers in Canada remain a fairly homogenous group (i.e., middle-class, white, women, and monolingual) while more than half of public-school children are from racially and linguistically diverse backgrounds" (as cited in Dharamshi, 2019, p. 29). Until we employ more Indigenous educators in Alberta, and while non-Indigenous teachers continue to learn more, I continue to find

research positioned around teacher identity as a barrier to learning about and with Indigenous people.

I do not recall taking many classes in my pre-service teacher days that discussed white privilege or fragility, it was not until my graduate classes that it was spoken of. These discussions seemed slightly closer to being normalized but to say it was normal is not to assume it was comfortable for people. Despite a seemingly progressive next generation of teachers, there is still resistance to white-centered dialogue in the more experienced teacher generation. White privilege (Barnett, 2013), and white fragility (Diangelo, 2018) are topics relevant to the discomfort that is associated with teachers' experiences learning about and with Indigenous people. Moreover, unpacking white teacher emotion is relevant to teacher identity, an insight I will discuss in my findings section. I have taken a closer look at research situated around white teachers to shed a light on my research question: What personal and professional meaning do white Canadian educators gain from learning with Indigenous people?

Strong-Wilson says that the term "white teacher" has become synonymous with resistance (2007). I look back at my own experiences with resistance while presenting Indigenous topics in professional development sessions. I have witnessed the overwhelming guilt that white Canadian teachers expressed after emotionally charged discussions, such as, Residential Schools and intergenerational trauma. The sadness is heavy as teachers express their feelings of shame or shock, "why didn't I know this happened?" "White guilt can be paralyzing" (p. 140) says Leonardo (2004), explaining that most people end up feeling individually blameworthy. White pre-service and experienced teachers also experience discomfort when it comes to talking about race

issues, or the fact that race matters in education. I have encountered many educators who said to me or those around me, “I don’t look at colour, I just treat them all the same.” Sleeter (1993) says that white teachers commonly take on the “color-blind” role; a popular strategy utilized by contemporary teachers relating closely to their lack of understanding of power and privilege. Bollin and Finkel (1995) entered into research with five pre-service teacher programs, looking to investigate the attitudes among preservice teachers. They used the *Six Stages of White Racial Identity,* developed by Helms (1990) to analyze racial identity in white preservice students (Bollin & Finkel, 1995). The stages move from stage one (Contact/Naivete), those with an understanding that race does not make a difference, then moving up progressively to the stage six (Autonomy/Transculturalism), the stage of inner motivation to learn from other cultural groups (p. 25). Here are some of Bollin and Finkel’s findings:

> Teacher education students coming from predominantly white, middle-class settings are most likely to be in the early, naive stage due to the lack of close contact with people of other races [...] Teacher education students found it difficult to accept that “being white” makes a difference. At this stage they are unaware of any personal prejudices they may have. [...] The majority of students will proclaim that they will treat all children equally, regardless of their race, class, or gender [and] students were less willing to accept that cultural differences should have any impact on classroom interaction. After reading the book, *Black Children: Their Roots, Culture, and Learning Styles* (1986) a group of pre-service teacher students were angered, decrying it as racist because it maintained Black children were different and were hesitant to give credibility to any dissonant

> information provided directly by the professor. Despite the students' new insights, almost all students said they would refuse to accept a field placement or student teaching assignment in the inner-city. (1995, pp. 26–27)

Interesting to note is that the book *Black Children* was also used in a graduate level course where the students were predominantly practising teachers, and the intake was quite different. Bollin and Finkel said that students were better able to relate the content to their previous classroom experiences (1995, p. 27). Helms (1990) asserts that progress throughout the *Six Stages of White Racial Identity* is highly dependent on life experience and that direct contact with people of colour was much more likely to bring about significant growth (Bollin & Finkel, 1995, p. 27). There is no doubt that there are tensions around white privilege and teacher identity (Burm & Burleigh, 2017) and identifying as non-Indigenous seems to also create the same sense of awkwardness for some. Burm and Burleigh (2017) explain that there is some discomfort in the "non piece", saying it excludes, divides, and perhaps even distances them from their work and the subject. They also ask the question: "how do I both present my legitimacy, my motivation for working in Indigenous education while being honest with myself and others that I am still very much a learner alongside them?" (Burm & Burleigh, 2017, p. 38). In their article, Burm and Burleigh (2017) say that identifying as non-Indigenous leaves them questioning their positionality and identity as educators and often struggling as non-Indigenous women working in Indigenous education (p. 39).

Burm and Burleigh's (2017) story is validating. They say that sharing their story and experiences (as non-Indigenous educators) seemed to mitigate post-secondary student resistance and anxiety and helped them to also understand their own roles in their

field as post-secondary professors. Fritzlan (2017) shares her experiences as a non-Indigenous teacher teaching Aboriginal Art. She attributes her success in this course to the relationships she built *with* Indigenous people. She relied heavily on the friendship and collaboration of her Indigenous colleague, Rosie, and admitted that in her ignorance, she was lumping together different cultural stories and symbols under the broad stroke of "Aboriginal art". By following the lead of local community members, Fritzlan (2017) was able to take away many lessons. She states:

> I exercised power in the curriculum that I highlight, the student's suggestions I accept and reject, and the stories that I tell and that I hear. More importantly, I have begun to understand the incomplete nature of the knowledge and ways of knowing that I work with in relation to Aboriginal education. Working as a non-Aboriginal teacher to develop culturally conscious and decolonizing education practice requires risk and engagement in relationship. Local experience with and relationship to Indigenous community members are necessary elements of including ontological differences [...] Evolving collaborative teaching, reflective writing, and accepting how much I don't know have been invaluable tools for me in this process. (p. 13)

Little research is done on teachers working in Indigenous work contexts, or on non-Indigenous teachers in Indigenous school contexts (Parding, 2013). Sleeter (2001) points out that much research focuses on attitudes and lack of knowledge rather than teachers' own experiences and their own identified needs (cited in Parding, 2013, p.243). Research *has* been conducted on non-Indigenous teacher perspectives (Castagno, 2012; McGregor, 2005; Oskineegish & Berger, 2013; Strong-Wilson, 2007), however this

research predominantly focusses on the non-Indigenous teachers' roles with Indigenous students (and not teachers) or relates closer to culturally responsive pedagogy. Research on Indigenous teacher perspectives (Kitchen, Cherubini, Trudeau, & Hodson, 2010; Tinkham, 2013) focuses on teacher education and its impacts on Indigenous students. In Higgins et al.'s study (2015), their participants revealed that "whiteness profoundly influenced their participants' teaching practices and their relationships to knowledge and knowledge acquisition" (p. 260). It is evident that research is lacking in the area of non-Indigenous teachers teaching Indigenous content or *developing and applying foundational knowledge* as it is stated in the *Teacher Quality Standard* (Government of Alberta, 2018a).

Alongside teacher identity there is a need to challenge the national identity, says O'Dowd (2012). Understanding the history of Indigenous colonization should challenge the "national self-image at a deep level" (O'Dowd, 2012, p. 112). Battiste (1998, 2000, 2013) also invites educators to think critically about Indigenous history in education systems. In addition to challenging our national story, we need to confront issues of race and racism in education. Battiste (2013) explains how race helps Canadians make sense of "who they are and who they are not [and] is constructed from what we do, say, and think as a society" (p. 132). Battiste (2000) says that racism cannot be dealt with in the classroom with supplements and add-on courses; rather we must confront the problem holistically. Blatant and unconscious racism experienced in schools may have a lot to do with a lack of knowledge around structural and systematic racism, why it exists, and how it continues to affect Indigenous and other minority populations. In an interesting study of Alberta teachers, Lorenz (2017) captures the stage one naivete of practicing teachers

around racism in education. The survey she conducted invited responses from 168 Alberta Teachers' Association members on the statement, *white people in Canada can experience racism* (p. 86). Sixty-four percent of the participants believed that racism against white people was possible, while 21% did not (Lorenz, 2017, p. 88). One of the themes that emerged from the study was *reverse racism*. Defined by Lorenz (2017), reverse racism in a Canadian context is "the way in which white settlers believe they are facing systemic race-based oppression from Indigenous peoples and or people of colour within a white settler colonial nation-state" (p. 82). Lorenz (2017) asserts that white people cannot be systemically be discriminated against due to race, and therefore cannot be subjected to racism or reverse racism. She goes on to say that "race—as a concept derived by Europeans for their benefit over the Other—functions as a manifestation of settler colonialism, affecting how settlers understand oppression in Canada in the present" (p. 89). I discuss white teacher guilt, racism, and white-teacher research not to allude to a deficit of white teachers in Canada, but to suggest that whiteness has been a barrier for teachers who are learning about First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people. Whiteness, I suggest, could be a barrier to learning *with* Indigenous people on a personal and professional level. There is still a clear "lack of incorporation of Aboriginal history and perspectives into mainstream education" (Foley & Howell, 2017, p. 41) despite cultural awareness training and/or increased professional development in Alberta.

The development of teacher identity is "complex, difficult and contextually based" (Harlow & Cobb, 2014, p. 71). "What it means to be a teacher" can be built through teacher experiences over a period of time (Harlow & Cobb, 2014, p. 71). What it means to be a non-Indigenous teacher is clearly complex as well. The experiences one

brings to the profession cannot be summed up in the skills and knowledge taught in pre-service teacher programs. Professional teacher identity involves a lot of deconstructing of one's own childhood experiences and historical relationships (Madden, 2014). Except for a few great scholars, not much is known about practicing teachers' engagement in Indigenous education (Madden, 2014). In this section of the research, Teacher Identity, it is clear that non-Indigenous and white teacher identity presents a challenge in learning about Indigenous people. What has been missed here is a glimpse of what it is like for non-Indigenous and white teachers to learn with Indigenous people. Further to that, I am still perplexed with how learning with Indigenous people can benefit teachers personally and professionally. Apart from Fritzlan (2017), there is very little evidence of what it is like to learn with and alongside Indigenous people for the benefit of professional and personal practice.

Teacher Preparedness

How much teachers feel prepared to teach Indigenous content is relevant because it directly impacts the way that they view, relate to, and feel about Indigenous content. These realities for beginning and practicing teachers also affect the ways that they teach the content and the confidence they feel towards their knowledge directly impacts the way that students absorb and perceive the information. Britzman (2003) describes the tension between theory and practice as becoming more evident when prospective teachers leave the university and attempt, through their teaching, to render their new knowledge as pedagogical and relevant (p. 61). Britzman (2003) explains that the transformation of knowledge and identity in teachers is highly problematic because it is not just the

university experience that shapes the teacher, it is the "student teacher's life history, both in and out of the classrooms" that defines "what it means to learn and to teach" (p. 62).

It is difficult to fathom the complexities of teacher preparedness in theory and practice. Preparedness in teacher practice also includes how teachers engage with their own students based on their own life experiences. For Indigenous education, and for the purpose of this research, we must consider teachers experiences learning with and about Indigenous people as a means to gauge their overall preparedness as an indicator of confidence. Lingard et al (2003) shares that teachers are very good at creating caring environments, however, many lack a pedagogical repertoire of how to deal with student difference (Blackmore, 2006, p.194). Developing this practice requires "a culture of teacher inquiry and professional learning over time" (p.194).

Whether tokenistic, practical tolerance, or meaningful engagement, Blackmore (2006) questions professional development in diversity. We are called to question what type of learning is occurring and is it enough to change minds. More importantly, is it enough to change hearts? It is hard to tell the change that has occurred in current or recently graduated students. Foley and Howell (2017) explain the little to no change in the depth of knowledge that 1st-year university students have regarding Aboriginal history, politics, and people. They say, "in fact, most students emerge from high school knowing very little about their own history" (Foley & Howell, 2017, p. 41). As a result of having very little understanding of Canadian history, teachers do not have the adequate knowledge to teach in meaningful ways (Dharamshi, 2019). Knowing that there is limited knowledge of Indigenous history coming out of high school, let us turn our attention to post-secondary education as a way to understand teacher preparedness in education.

Lorenz (2017) worries that educators may not have been given the skills and tools necessary during their preservice teacher education programs; however, I find the assumption that new teachers have limited knowledge and experience of Indigenous education perspectives (Parding, 2013) a thing of the past. Since the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was created, teacher education programs have been working to respond to the "generalized lack of knowledge and cultural understanding around Indigenous matters" (Pratt, 2017, p. 10). Universities in Canada have created mandatory classes in preservice teacher programs that aim to better educate and prepare students for a life of meaningful teaching. In my work with preservice teachers and beginning teachers, I have witnessed the exceptional level of foundational knowledge they bring to the profession. Having said that, there is still a need to elevate Indigenous history and awareness and there is more work to be done. Pre-service teachers deal with many insecurities which include fear of failure, discomfort with the subject matter, guilt, and not being Indigenous as reasons to be apprehensive (Deer, 2013). Regardless of offering enhanced workshops for pre-service teachers they still did not feel confident in teaching about Indigenous issues after the fact (Dharamshi, 2019). I can relate to this as I have asked lead teachers I work with the same questions, "now that you have learned this (treaties, Residential Schools, Métis history) who now feels confident to go back and teach this to your school staff?" No show of hands. Despite learning about specific topics present in the TQS (2018), teachers still need more in order to teach with confidence. What is missing?

In addition to mandatory Indigenous perspectives courses, pre-service students would also benefit from race-related curriculum integration across several courses (not

just in a separate course) (Bollin & Finkel, 1995). Young et al. (2010) challenge teacher education programs to start honouring traditional knowledge, to give up ongoing denial of legacies of colonization, and stop the silencing of present-day issues faced by Aboriginal people. Young et al. (2010) encourage universities to strive to lead national and international change in teacher education.

So, what happens with the approximately 50,000 teachers in Alberta who did not take a mandatory course in Indigenous history in their preservice years? What Indigenous content-knowledge do they bring to the profession? Many of Indigenous educators (myself included) rely on teacher professional development for potential hope and changes in teacher capacity building. Unfortunately, professional development related to Indigenous topics is not mandated by educational leaders or school divisions. Depending on the school division, school-wide, yearly, professional development is decided by senior administrators. Much of what teachers *want* to learn they have to seek out on their own. The silver lining is that the *Teacher and Leadership Quality Standards* (Government of Alberta, 2018a and b) now hold teachers and leaders more accountable to further develop their teacher practice in Indigenous education. Adversely, when professional development is made mandatory, it is sometimes met with tension and resistance. Further, Lorenz (2017) says:

> if school boards refuse to offer professional development for teachers on Indigenous topics or teachers refuse to seek out professional learning opportunities to aid in teaching Indigenous content in their classrooms, the Calls to Action will not be actualized in the spirit and intent they are meant to be. (p. 92)

Sleeter (1993) explains teachers' perceptions on multicultural education staff development saying that participants found it to be useful only when it gave them new information they did not already "know all about," or if it reaffirmed what they were doing in the classroom (p. 248). Burm and Burleigh (2017) explain that during their study, there were assumptions made by non-Indigenous students who said, "I will be teaching here in town [...] I won't have any Indigenous students in my class so I would not need to use these types of books" (p. 40). I have heard this phrase many times, "I don't have Indigenous kids so…" or "I teach math so…". Luckily, there is much support from the *Teacher Quality Standard* (Government of Alberta 2018a) which states "a teacher develops and applies foundational knowledge about First Nations, Métis and Inuit for the *benefit of all students.*" (p. 6). For professional development in Indigenous education to be meaningful and enjoyable to the collective, it needs to be strategic; learning does not happen by chance, rather it relies on well-thought-out integrated strategies (Parding, 2013). Despite reconciliation being contested (as cited in Pratt & Danyluk, 2019, p. 2), there is continued passion to mobilize teacher learning in Indigenous education. Policy and proposed curriculum changes are also propelling teachers and leaders into finding appropriate learning opportunities. Lorenz (2017) asserts that it may be too soon to say what "will or will not happen with education Alberta plans towards reconciliation, teacher professional development, and curriculum redesign" (p. 92). This uncertainty and the potential unknowns do not assist teachers in alleviating their anxieties around professional support. The uncertainty from educational organizations luckily provides teachers with more time to learn about Indigenous topics.

This section of the literature review is evidence that there is limited knowledge, lack of experience, and ever-present apprehension in both pre-service and practicing teachers. There is also an uncertainty about what type of preparation is best for non-Indigenous and white teachers. How do institutions tackle this dilemma of preparing teachers to teach Indigenous content? There needs to be more discourse positioned around exposure to Indigenous people versus exposure to Indigenous content. In my own research I seek to find insight into the potential benefits of learning with Indigenous people for increased teacher confidence and readiness.

Teacher Knowledge

Teachers are encouraged to be life-long learners which is consistent with my own nehiyaw understandings surrounding personal growth: knowledge is not a destination; it is a continual process which takes a lifetime. I am reminded of the words of Elder Cardinal as he humbly said, “I know this much” and shows me the tiny space between his thumb and his pointer finger. If someone like Elder Cardinal can acknowledge his path in learning this way, it is no doubt that learning to *apply and develop foundational knowledge* will take time for teachers. Britzman (2003) asks “how does teacher lived experience shape our relationship to knowledge (p. 49)?” My question then is, how does lived experiences implicate the way teachers take up unfamiliar, difficult, or new knowledge? In trying to understand teacher knowledge, I try to locate discourse in the area of teacher knowledge as a barrier to learning about or with Indigenous people.

Since the creation of the new *Teacher Quality Standard* (Government of Alberta, 2018a), there have been a lot of questions, concerns, and wonderings around what kind of

knowledge teachers will need to *develop* in order to *apply* the standards. Up until this point, teachers' knowledge of Indigenous history and contemporary realities have been guided by their own lived experiences or through the curriculum they are mandated to teach. Up until this point, teachers have taught as much as they can with the knowledge they had/have; to some degree, the *Teacher Quality Standard* (Government of Alberta, 2018a) now obligates teachers regarding the knowledge they acquire about First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people. Understanding treaties; agreements negotiated with Métis; Residential Schools; and First Nations, Métis, and Inuit histories, cultures, languages, contributions, perspectives, experiences and contemporary contexts are a few of the foundational knowledge pieces stated in the standard (Government of Alberta, 2018a). However, teachers feel angry with their own expectations around decolonizing and Indigenizing curriculum (Higgins et al., 2015). These tasks are frustrating for teachers who had very little exposure to Indigenous epistemologies and ontologies during their own Eurocentric education (Higgins et al., 2015). It is obvious that the need for knowledge is overwhelming.

I recall a time in 4th year Social Studies curriculum class where groups were assigned to present on Social Studies strands and approaches. Some groups covered Current Events, some groups discussed controversial issues, and the list went on. The group presenting on Aboriginal perspectives (as it was called at the time and is still titled at the time of this writing) went up to present on the topic. Their presentation started with an activity that encouraged all of us to answer the question "What do you want to know about Aboriginal people?" and write our responses in smaller groups. This cringe-worthy moment started with one of my group members saying, "well let's just get our resident

expert to answer this for us" as he stared at me, smirking. What came next was a classic example of Stage One naivete in Helms' *Six Stages of White Racial Identity* model. The class responses were, "I'd like to know what they eat" and "I would want to know why they get free money" and "I want to know why they don't pay taxes." The heaviness I felt in my chest that day still lives with me. In that moment I thought, "these students will go on to become teachers?" I was not angry at them, nor did I feel resentment towards them. I knew then and still know now that their lack of understanding did not come as their own fault. These aspiring teachers received the same education I did and that my mother did and that my grandmother did. All Canadians, regardless of colour, received the same Eurocentric, colonized, and romanticized education. The education system we were all raised in was one which left out a truthful, often painful, yet beautiful Indigenous story.

Upon completion of their pre-service programs, teachers are expected to have the knowledge and competence needed to teach in any classroom (Parding, 2013). My question is: what kind of classrooms are we preparing educators to teach in? Not knowing the answer to this question is problematic. I consider why teachers have waited so long to learn *with* Indigenous people; possibly because they are still trying to learn *about* them. I also wondered how many teachers had Indigenous people as friends-a meaningful relationship and not just an acquaintance. The inner teacher desire to know more of the *about* in a contextual way and not in a relational way seemed to stop many teachers in their tracks and could be the reason why teachers may perceive and experience the *Teacher Quality Standard* (Government of Alberta, 2018a) adversely.

I ponder the knowledge that teachers encounter and inquire about how it makes them feel. Felman (1982, as cited in Strong-Wilson, 2007) says that "teaching . . . has to

deal not so much with lack of knowledge as with resistances to knowledge" (p. 124). Teacher emotions about the knowledges they encounter probably depends on the type of knowledge they are immersed in. How one would react is probably dependent on the personal experience and/or lived narratives of teachers. Dion (2004) (as cited in Douglas, Purton, & Bascuñán, 2020) says that Indigenous perspectives and knowledges are rendered as difficult to teach and learn. Aside from it being difficult to teach, the knowledge itself can be described as "difficult knowledge" according to Britzman (as cited in Garrett, 2017, p. 4). Simply put, difficult knowledge can be described as the "things that we do not want to know" or encounters with a painful and traumatic curriculum (Garrett, 2017, p. 4). Rightfully so, hearing traumatic stories can trigger trauma in the listener and can be detrimental to mental well-being. There are pedagogical troubles associated with teaching a particular kind of content (Garrett, 2017). Learners and teachers are pitched into their own crises as they encounter, perhaps unconsciously, their own difficult experiences. Difficult knowledge evokes various emotions in people, and, for some, it can ignite an inner passion. As a young girl, hearing my grandmother talk about her Residential School stories for the first time was really difficult. I do not think I will ever forget seeing those tears and hearing her words. It was shocking, scary, aggravating, and overwhelming. Adversely, her stories motivated me; I wanted to do something that would change the education system. As a result of her stories, I made it a personal goal to learn as much as I could and became a teacher. The process I went through as a learner is similar to social justice movements in that hearing horrific stories or learning difficult knowledge activates social and systemic change. Difficult knowledge, the complications of human relations (Garrett, 2017), also cause us to reflect

on how we can then come to terms with encounters that unsettle us to the core. We then seek to "tell new stories about the world or ask, 'what one makes from the ruins of one's 'lovely' knowledge'" (Garrett, 2017, p. 5). What comes from difficult knowledge and Indigenous histories is our ability to reflect on how this affects us personally and professionally. It allows us to focus on the ways that emotion and affect are a part of the learning environment (Garrett, 2017).

For many reasons, Canadians are choosing to ignore the colonial past and disregard the colonial processes that are still occurring (Lorenz, 2017). Alcorn (2013) says, "We seem unable to face the facts about our inability to take in the facts" (as cited in Garrett, 2017, p. 6). Until teachers are met with knowledge that is compulsory, coming to know and understand true and *difficult* history will continue to be a slow process. O'Dowd (2012) cites Donald as saying we "must work backward, beginning with a thoughtful accounting of the present state of affairs and revealing the very deep linkages to the past" (p. 105). Looking back and relearning allows us to explore the theoretical concept of "un-history" (O'Dowd, 2012, p. 105) which allows us, as individuals and as a collective, to move forward in reconciliatory ways. Looking back, remembering, or understanding how history happened is not always that easy. Simon, Rosenberg, and Eppert (2000) say that remembrance is a *difficult term,* however, by engaging with history, we are then able to think about our next move (Pinar, 2014, p. 9). Hopefully, just as it happened to me, learning historical truths will reveal an inner desire to mobilize information into the classroom in meaningful ways. I return to the words of Elder Cardinal: "the longest journey is from your head to your heart," and until teachers

experience knowledge that makes them truly *feel*, there will be slow to little change in teacher knowledge and knowing.

Indigenous knowledge, although something not encouraged specifically in the TQS (Government of Alberta, 2018a), has been largely ignored, and continues to be ignored in Canadian education contexts (Battiste, 2005). First Nations, Métis, and Inuit histories, cultures, languages, contributions, perspectives, experiences, and contemporary contexts (Government of Alberta, 2018a, p. 6) can justify some of what Indigenous people and scholars define as "Indigenous Knowledge". Indigenous Knowledge is nothing new and has thrived and existed for centuries. According to Battiste and Henderson (2000) Indigenous Knowledge systems are complex relationships of heritage and consciousness that rest differently among the band, community, and individual (cited in Douglas et al., 2020). Understanding Indigenous Knowledge reveals the wealth and richness of Indigenous languages, worldview, teachings, and experiences, (Battiste, 2005). Other names of Indigenous Knowledge (or closely related concepts) are "folk knowledge," "local knowledge or wisdom," "non-formal knowledge," "culture," "Indigenous technical knowledge," "traditional ecological knowledge," and "traditional knowledge" (Battiste, 2005, p. 4). Indigenous Knowledge is sometimes seen as "sacred" (Battiste, 2005, p. 7) which can create hesitation for teachers. Indigenous Knowledge is all encompassing which includes the way that Indigenous people connect to the spirit world, processes, and protocols which, yes, can be sacred. Daes (1993) shares that Indigenous Knowledge includes "all kinds of scientific, agricultural, technical and ecological knowledge, including cultigens, medicines and the rational use of flora and fauna" (Battiste, 2005, p. 4). It is "inherently tied to land, not to land in general but to

particular landscapes, landforms, and biomes where ceremonies are properly held, stories properly recited, medicines properly gathered, and transfers of knowledge properly authenticated" (Battiste, 2005, p. 8):

> [Indigenous knowledge] embodies a web of relationships within a specific ecological context; contains linguistic categories, rules, and relationships unique to each knowledge system; has localized content and meaning; has established customs with respect to acquiring and sharing of knowledge; and implies responsibilities for possessing various kinds of knowledge (Battiste, 2005, p. 8).

Indigenous Knowledge systems are unique to each community. Learning from the community closest in proximity connects the learner to land which also positions the learner closest to language and Elders. Indigenous Knowledge is stored in all three. Indigenous Knowledge has sustained and empowered Indigenous people and communities for centuries and when accessed carefully, Indigenous Knowledge can empower teachers. Battiste (2005) says, if Indigenous Knowledge and pedagogy are to be integrated effectively into the provincial curricula, it works as a necessary form of "mind liberation" that opens possibilities that ultimately have value for society as a whole (p. 9). This knowledge is not a commodity that can be controlled by educational institutions, more so it is a process to be absorbed and understood (Brayboy & Maughn, 2009). Learning about the "ingenuity of Indigenous people" (Brayboy & Maughn, 2009, p. 15) and the knowledge systems stored in people, languages, and landscapes would be inspiring for teachers and could greatly enhance teacher practice and pedagogy. Smith (2006) explains that "coming to understand something is never a once-and-for-all event, but a continual process of emerging understanding, growing out of a spiraling dialectic

between the parts and the whole" (p. 3). Further to all this, Battiste (2002) says that understanding Indigenous Knowledge and attempting to let it guide practice, can bring balance to our education systems (as cited in Douglas et al., 2020). It is clear that Indigenous Knowledge would benefit teachers both personally and professionally. However, teachers would have to learn with Indigenous people in order to understand these complex yet beautiful systems.

Understanding teachers' experiences is important as these experiences assist in highlighting issues of social justice and inclusion (Parding, 2013) and as well, might inform the way that educators learn about and with Indigenous people. Much of the research I located seemed to focus on teacher attitudes towards knowledge or teachers expressing their lack of knowledge. Understanding teachers' experiences with knowledge is important as these experiences assist in highlighting issues of social justice and inclusion (Parding, 2013, p.243) as well, they may inform us about how educators learn about and with Indigenous people. Through my research, my goal is to contribute to discourse surrounding teacher knowledge obtained through learning alongside and with Indigenous people.

Teacher Comfort and Confidence with Indigenous Content

"You can't be the doctor if you are the disease."

(Mi'kmaw Elder Kji Keptin Alex Denny, n.d, as cited in Battiste, 2013, p. 139).

There are many tensions surrounding Indigenous and Eurocentric ways of knowing and the challenges these conflicts bring to education systems (Battiste, 2005)

and teachers alike. Lorenz (2017) explains that settler teachers, having limited understanding or experience of Indigenous context, feel uncomfortable teaching Indigenous subject matter for three reasons. First, they are uncomfortable with the little knowledge of Indigenous topics they possess. Second, teachers express they have few classroom resources relating to Indigenous topics. Third, they indicate they receive insufficient administrative support (Lorenz, 2017). Kanu (2005, 2011) (as cited in Lorenz, 2017) also provides a fourth rationale for not wanting to teach Indigenous content: some teachers do not believe that Indigenous content is worthwhile or important to learn. Lorenz asks, "knowing there are several reasons why educators will not teach Indigenous content, what happens with classrooms if curricular and policy changes mandate Indigenous content from pre-kindergarten to grade 12?" (2017, p. 80). In an effort to understand *learning with,* I seek to find research related to teacher discomfort in learning *about* (content and curriculum).

How does a teacher's education, experiences, and prior knowledge play into their comfort when teaching Indigenous history and content? According to a study done by Rodriguez (2011), it was found that teachers who participated in an immersion trip and spent time in classrooms in Bolivia felt better prepared to teach students of diverse cultural backgrounds (as cited in Regalla, 2016). The teachers in this study felt that they had a "deeper understanding of the importance of knowing and respecting students' cultural backgrounds" (Rodriguez, 2011, as cited in Regalla, 2016, p. 66). There is something to be learned from service-learning in Indigenous education as it is in the unfamiliar space that one can truly begin a transformative process as an educator. A similar effect happens in social justice contexts where coming out of one's comfort zone

means that teachers get involved in self-work, looking at equity, power, and privilege in education (Riley & Solic, 2017). Knowing that much can flourish from such experiences, I wonder how many teachers are ready to take on the uncomfortable.

Looking at the research, there are a few themes related to confidence and comfort levels of teachers. Hopefully it is clear that the points covered previously are understood as interconnected demonstrating that experience, knowledge, and identity are closely linked to the ways in which teachers react to specific content. “By making visible what has been rendered invisible” teachers are met with guilt, anger, and paralysis (Strong-Wilson, 2007, p. 118). Resistance, according to Zembylas (2017), can be an emotional response to how “teachers identify with the issues being raised and [or] the felt threat to their group identity” (p. 660). When the issues being raised, or the content is hard truth, much like learning about Residential Schools, teachers can choose to absorb or resist that knowledge. The alternative to absorbing or resisting is the space in-between. Garrett (2017) says that, “knowledge can unsettle us and can feel like our undoing” (p. 12). Lorenz (2017) explains how resistance is linked to race and oppression, “white people-who have not faced systemic oppression due to their race—when racialized people start to gain equity in society, they feel as though their rights are being taken away from them” (p. 91). Trying to teach educators about racism as it relates to oppressive policy for Indigenous people is incredibly difficult and exhausting. Sleeter (1993) asserts that educators who try to teach “white people about racism usually experience tenacious resistance” and that studies that include pre-service and in-service education about multicultural teaching report mixed findings, “some studies find white students’ attitudes to improve somewhat immediately after receiving instruction, other studies do not find an

improvement. Further, the research has not investigated the extent to which attitude change persists or improves classroom teaching" (p. 244).

Another reason why teachers may feel uncomfortable with Indigenous content and topics could be a conscious or unconscious resistance. O'Dowd (2012) names resistance as an outright reluctance of non-Indigenous teachers to engage with Indigenous history. What O'Dowd (2012) tries to bring to the surface is that ignoring the "shameful past" is not recognizing that Indigenous history is also *non*-Indigenous history (p. 114). For some, resistance "looks like a blatant disregard for histories altogether" (Riley & Solic, 2017, p. 179). There are many reasons why a teacher may resist or disregard new knowledge: lack of time or personal interest. It could also be that Canadian colonial history is hard to hear and accept. Felman (1982) says that teaching has to deal not so much with lack of knowledge as with resistances to knowledge, much like a passion for ignorance. Felman cites Lacan (1982), who writes:

> Ignorance is a "passion." Inasmuch as traditional pedagogy postulated a desire for knowledge, and analytically informed pedagogy has to reckon with "the passion for ignorance." Ignorance in other words is nothing other than a desire to ignore...a refusal to acknowledge one's own implication in the information. (p. 30)

In my own experience, I have heard comments from resistant teachers that indicate that they do not understand why Indigenous themes have become an educational priority. It is difficult to explain the threat that teachers feel when there is a (seemingly) over-abundance of Indigenous content training. It could be that teachers may see other knowledge as an attack on current curricula and the knowledge it provides us, therefore

the response is to resist. Resisting can go hand-in-hand with fear. I hear it all the time, “I don’t feel like it’s my place” or “I’m scared to say the wrong thing.” There is a resistance to hearing the history (O’Dowd, 2012) and a discomfort for educators in teaching an unfamiliar subject matter (Fritzlan, 2017). It is especially difficult when “knowledge is connected to cultural identity that is not one’s own” (Fritzlan, 2017, p.4). Fritzlan (2017) says that a teacher teaching Indigenous ways of knowing “risks exposing their own ignorance [...] it is safer to avoid teaching what one does not know (p. 4). This paralysis (Strong-Wilson, 2007) can come about due to fear of “getting it wrong” (Fritzlan, 2017, p. 4). Anxiety, as discomfort, is apparent amongst non-Indigenous teachers (Foley and Howell, 2017). Some of this anxiety is due in part to the desires teachers have to teach history and perspectives *authentically*. Authenticity as a teacher, being real or genuine, is about “being open to position oneself not as the authority on any given subject but as a facilitator of learning thinking and further inquiry” (Foley & Howell, 2017, p. 44). In the mix of many emotions, embarrassment (Koleszar-Green, 2019) can be common with teachers who are uncovering their lack of knowledge of Indigenous history, culture, and/or lived realities. Many of the issues around authenticity relate directly to teachers’ conscious or unconscious desire to be the expert.

Student [and teacher] resistance has many manifestations including discomfort, defensive denial, guilt, mockery of Indigenous history, and purposeful denial of the harm done to Indigenous people (O’Dowd, 2012). O’Dowd (2012) verifies resistance by teachers and says that “it is not surprising that non-Indigenous students may resist Indigenous history, nor is it not surprising that non-Indigenous teachers are reluctant to teach Indigenous history” (p. 113). Other research related to teacher discomfort looks at

teachers' guilt. What is the moral imperative of teachers? Once we know what we know, how do we navigate the tensions of that knowledge? Purple (2004) expresses these feelings and writes that, "we want to be responsible but not to feel guilty and to act out of guilt involves other unhealthy emotions like anger and resentment (p. 56).

Indigenous education in Alberta is moving towards a mandatory approach for teachers. As I have witnessed in many teacher sessions, having a Teacher Quality Standard (Government of Alberta, 2018a) that is mandatory has created tension between teacher, content, and their profession. The exact source of resistance, stress, anxiety, and discomfort from teachers is still unknown. Purple (2004) says, "We are educators not indoctrinators; we persuade, we do not force; we are primarily social and moral leaders, not partisan politicians; we examine political, religious, and moral issues, we do not promulgate political, religious, and moral dogma" (p. 74). This is a complex problem and so far, the research is showing the web of interconnectedness within teacher identity, experience, knowledge, and confidence.

Burm and Burleigh's 2017 article, *Non-Indigenous women teaching Indigenous education: A Duoethnographic Exploration of Untold Stories* was an interesting read as they talked about their discomfort teaching Indigenous perspectives as non-Indigenous educators. They discussed the discomfort felt by pre-service teachers as they encountered hesitation and fear (Burm & Burleigh, 2017, p. 42). Their article validates that which is not discussed much in the research—first-hand encounters. Some of Burm and Burleigh's (2017) most profound insights and results from their experiences as non-Indigenous teachers in Indigenous education were:

I realized that as a teacher I was implicated within the system [and doing this work] as a non-Indigenous person, is not simple at all [...] it is wrought with complexities about place, space, identity, legitimacy, and allyship. (p. 42)

There is no knife sharp enough to cut through the tension [...] around what Indigenous education is, what it can be, why it is important. It is often tiring, emotional work. (p. 43)

We realize the stories we shared previously were ones where we felt most comfortable; those where a happy ending was always guaranteed and where our audience was left feeling hopeful about the future. We avoided the embarrassing, awkward, and upsetting stories. (p. 43)

We found what we fear most is compromising relationships, including our relationship with ourselves. A greater fear lies in compromising our integrity and silencing ourselves to the point where we are unable to embody allyship in Indigenous education. This implores us to seek new strategies beyond censorship and avoidance. (p. 44)

Avoidance was a strong tactic used in our academic and social interactions [which is] limiting to our position as instructors in Indigenous education and as allies to Indigenous agendas. (p. 43)

Articles I did find pertaining to discomfort usually were accompanied with white teacher contexts. Aside from autobiographical self-work (Riley & Solic, 2017) examining teachers' classroom practices (Boon & Lewthwaite, 2016), there is also a need to have knowledge of some hard truths about the history of Canada (Lorenz, 2017). It seems as though teachers have many mixed emotions about content and curriculum. Experiences with and in Indigenous education, along with relational approaches to teacher professional development would greatly benefit teachers in building their confidence and easing comfortability.

The Indigenous population in Alberta is growing twice as fast as the settler population says Schmold (2011) (as cited in Lorenz, 2017). Sixty-three percent of that population live in urban areas and are under the age of 14 (Lorenz, 2017). "The need for updated curricula and greater teacher understanding is imperative" (Lorenz, 2017, p. 80). The current status of a proposed new curriculum is contentious and the pedagogical strategies that teachers are utilizing are not currently meeting the needs captured in the Calls to Action (TRC, 2015). Battiste (1998) questions the "add-on and stir" method as it fails to challenge the normalcy of colonialism within educational institutions (Lorenz, 2017, p. 89) and incorporating food, music, and holidays from different countries (Sleeter, 1993) is not enough to change attitudes, perceptions, and confidence in practicing teachers. Trying to incorporate or infuse Indigenous perspectives is a challenge for teachers. The challenges result in anxieties that dictate the way teachers move forward with the knowledge they have (or do not have). Afraid to rock the boat, appropriate, or stereotype are a few of the more concrete worries of practicing teachers (Carroll, et al., 2020). Dion (2004) discusses the "perfect stranger" theory in which

teachers “invisibilize” Indigenous content. Dion (as cited in Douglas et al., 2020) argues that white teachers who claim to know little or nothing about Indigenous peoples and cultures will opt out of integrating Indigenous perspectives as a way to shield themselves from difficult knowledge.

Donald (2013) writes about “woefully unprepared” teachers as they try to *infuse* or *incorporate* Indigenous perspectives into their classrooms (p. 3). Donald addresses the use of these verbs and its etymology as being problematic. By placing Indigenous content into a colonial curriculum in order to absorb or dissolve goes against what Donald (2013) suggests which is to find ways to honour balance and enhance relationship (2013, p. 3).

The “hidden curriculum of whiteness” (Leonardo, 2004, p. 144) needs to be challenged, where teacher self-work and an un-packing of current policy affecting Indigenous people needs to be deeply explored. D. G. Smith (2000) explains how a blatant disregard of “truth, as truth-seeking, truth discovering, and truth sharing” solidifies use of curriculum as being “procedural manipulation” (p. 5). “Education cannot save us from the complications of the lives we lead . . . Education is both a solution and problem” (Garrett, 2017, p. 10). Garrett (2017) states “I began to recognize my teaching was a defense against hearing students’ ideas. I began to see that their resistance was not a problem to be overcome, rather, their resistance was the first way of engaging with, rather than running from, the content” (p. 8). Garrett’s thoughts are insightful and make me think about ways in which teachers can explore their own reactions to difficult content. Learning with students rather than teaching at them may help teachers navigate content unknown (or undesired) to them.

Battiste (2000) brings up issues of "normative" curriculum in much of her work in decolonizing education (p. 193) . She explains curriculum as helping Aboriginal people "participate in Canadian society" but it has never empowered Aboriginal individuals, nor has it liberated the collective (Battiste, 2000, p. 192). The deficit in public education is that only a one-sided story is taught, one where children, particularly Indigenous children, are not exposed to a knowledge base that "sustains" them (Battiste, 2000, p. 202).

I appreciate Douglas et al.'s (2020) metaphor of an ocean of fish to paint a picture of settler colonialism in education (p. 310):

> Settler colonialism is made to feel as natural as water feels to fish, even though it is constructed and imposed by settler nations. Even though fish are immersed in, and impacted by the water, they are not determined by it. As Battiste (2005) has described it, we have all been "marinated" in colonialism and Eurocentrism. In our capacity as educators, we are making efforts to recognize that vast colonial waters around us and see our work with students as calling their attention to the water that holds and sustains them. As students become aware of the water, they experience the ocean differently. We imagine it as seeing ripples or threads of light, revealing that there is, indeed, water surrounding you much like when we can see the air around our bodies because of mist or fog. This awareness can be disorienting [. . .] the ripples reveal something about the water that was previously hidden. As students acclimate, they find avenues to swim forward and engage with the awareness of settler colonialism. [. . .] the individual can come to terms with the water they are immersed in, how they are entangled with the ocean, and

how they experience it. [. . .] Although the water has not changed, the ways we relate to it has.

Looking at Douglas et al., (2020) metaphor of ocean of fish brings new light to teachers' reactions to hard truths about curriculum and content. Curriculum is "rife with absences of Indigenous perspectives" and more so, the depictions of Indigenous people are inaccurate (Douglas et al., 2020, p.310). When teachers realize these tough facts there is an inner struggle similar to when a fish realize the water is around them. Battiste (2000) calls on educators to become conscious of inequities in the curriculum and to promote Indigenous knowledge in order to bring in what has been excluded for over a century. Not only is the curriculum not liberating for Indigenous people, but the resources also used in the classroom are a detriment to society and whole nations of Indigenous groups (Battiste, 2000). Battiste (2000) calls out classroom books as "not accurately depicting the history" and ignoring the "blatant racism" found in such school resources (p. 200). Battiste (2000) explains that it is not enough to show the beautiful images of regalia in "polished texts" that blind us from historical truths and continue to perpetuate stereotypes (p. 200). Battiste (1998) argues that Indigenous people cannot be limited to just "beads, buffalo, and bannock" (p. 22). It is obvious that Battiste urges for a drastic change in curriculum and resources as they are agreeably outdated, inaccurate, and in need of a new story.

Perhaps Douglas et al.'s 2020 fish in ocean metaphor might help educators to realize their own marination in colonial education waters. Maybe teachers need to see themselves as connected to the curriculum in which they teach. The idea of holistic

curriculum is exposed by Miller (2007) wherein the focus of such a curriculum holds up relationships as integral to education:

> "the relationship between linear thinking and intuition, the relationship between mind and body, the relationship among the various domains of knowledge, the relationship between the individual and community, the relationship to the earth, and the relationship to our souls" (p. 13).

I return to Elder Cardinal and the head-to-heart journey. Maybe educators will see learning *about* and *with* Indigenous people differently knowing that curriculum, knowledge, and pedagogy can be a "heart" process.

It is evident that there is much scholarly work focused on teacher identity, preparedness, and knowledge. There is an obvious lack of confidence and comfort when encountering content and curriculum related to Indigenous people. The literature speaks to much of what makes teachers fear, ignore, resist, and deny knowledge about First Nations, Métis, or Inuit people but lacks answers to my curiosities about learning with them. The literature speaks to the about*ness* of education and less on the with*ness* and relationality of teacher preparation. It seems obvious now that the literature themes are the very reasons why teachers have not engaged in learning with Indigenous people for their own personal and professional growth.

Coming into a place, *pihtikwe* in Cree, is a reflexive and historical necessity to a with*ness* in teacher education-professional development and pre-service preparedness included. Through my research, I will draw more attention to the experience of learning with Indigenous people and honour the ways in which it benefits and challenges teacher education. Through an Indigenous Research Methodology, I look to understand what one

white, Canadian teacher gains personally and professionally from learning with Indigenous people.

Chapter 3:

Research Methodology

There was much uncertainty and uneasiness about trying to fit my own worldview within a prescriptive framework and methodology. This inner conflict I felt “traversing cultural paradigms” (Kovach, 2009, p. 164) consumed me with anxiety. I assume many Indigenous scholars before me felt the same tension, and in fairness, all scholars probably face these tensions. Going back and forth, I struggled to set my sights on just one.

In my in-classroom years I was never afforded the opportunity to teach the same thing twice. I had either moved or I was asked to try something new every year. At the time, not experiencing mastery in one curriculum or grade was mentally and pedagogically draining, each year having to learn a new curriculum: Kindergarten, Grades 7 to 9 (multiple subjects), a three/four split, Grades 1 and 2 literacy groups, cultural arts (multiple ages), and Cree language (Kindergarten through Grade 9). This became exhausting and slightly annoying as I became tired of flying through all the grades and subjects. I liken each year to being a 1st-year teacher, *every single year*. I recall being stressed, busy, and emotional; however, I also recall many life-changing take-aways. I had a great appreciation for various curricula and ages, even if it was for one brief but impressionable time. Being privy to many experiences allowed me to assist teachers in ways that would seem difficult had I taught limited subjects and grade levels.

Experience in many subjects can be viewed as an advantage or a deficit in the teaching world, perhaps even more in research and academia. For my own study, I explored various methodologies and found much connection and agreement with most of them. I looked into phenomenology and considered this research as a “reflection on the

lived experience" (van Manen & Adams, 2010, p. 2). Much of the questions I had were driven by my fascination with the teacher experience (van Manen & Adams, 2010, p. 2) . My original research question took on phenomenological associations in that I wondered "what it is like" (van Manen, 1990, p. 46) for a non-Indigenous educator to learn *with* Indigenous people but this question did not align with my research process. I was curious about the "what is it like" experience of developing knowledge with and from Indigenous people however I was uncertain about the process of describing events in detail. Much of what we were attempting to do together was to participate in ceremony and I was highly aware of the ethical considerations of this sacred experience.

I explored Participatory Action Research and wondered whether to use it as a framework for this research. PAR, being a collaborative process, seemed like a great fit for this research. PAR is layered in that the result is not just a transformation in the participant but possibly in an entire community, including the researcher (French, 2015). PAR works to empower the researcher in order to bring about organizational change which is exactly what I hoped my research would evoke, institutional change (Herr & Anderson, 2005). PAR reflects deeply on teacher practice, professional development and addresses social change (Herr & Anderson, 2005, p. 106). The goal of this research was to ultimately change the way that teachers see and experience learning for personal and professional practice. However, PAR did not align with the way in which I wanted to do my research. I wondered whether my research would involve participant and community in the analysis. I knew that my participant was the one being researched and would not be viewed as the co-researcher or the writing collaborator. I also realized that all stakeholders in my research will not be afforded the extended opportunity to reflect in the

same way that PAR suggest (Jacobs, 2016, p.51). There seemed to be many flaws in using PAR in my work.

I found it difficult to set my sites on just one methodology. Naturally, I felt called to a few. Employing multiple methodologies from my academic toolbox seemed risky as I was still uncertain about which methodology my intentions and processes aligned with. Deloria (1999) was correct, trying to "weld" Indigenous research methods into Western knowledge made me feel confused (Kovach, 2009), p.36). I grappled with the responsibility that comes with choosing one and that this process did not coincide with my past professional, or ceremonial experiences. I have always taken comfort in understanding the many (in small ways) compared to understanding one (on a deeper level), so I felt an inner conflict in writing this part of my thesis. In choosing to utilize one definitive methodology, many insecurities brewed within me. I realized that not being an expert in a single methodology caused me much delay in my writing. I decided to trust the process in the same way I trusted my teaching career transitions.

Indigenous Research Methodology

I leaned heavily toward Indigenous Methodologies (Kovach, 2009) and was captivated by other Indigenous scholars and topics like as Decolonizing Education (Battiste, 1998, 2000, 2005, 2013; Smith, 1999), Indigenous Storywork (Archibald, 2008), Indigenous Resurgence (Simpson, 2011) and Research Is Ceremony (Wilson, 2008). As my research participant was not Indigenous, I struggled to place her within certain Indigenous methodologies as many (not all) scholars discussed the complexities around researching Indigenous people or being in First Nations communities. I trusted

my intuition as an Indigenous woman and allowed my spirit, past teachings, and Indigenous academia to guide me through the research process. I looked to Indigenous-written discourse as a means to reclaim the pedagogical ways in which our people taught, in the hope that this would greatly advance current teacher preparedness and professional development.

My *nehiyaw* name, *wapikihew iskwew* (White Eagle Woman) also serves as a guide to my choices and decisions as a researcher. *wapikihew iskwew* is a name given to me in ceremony. When I was gifted this name, no one told me how to use it or how it would serve me. No one taught me about what it means and why the Eagle is significant to my life. However, it is up to me to understand my name and to discover why the eagle, *nikweme*, my namesake, is important in my path as a Cree person, *nehiyaw ayisiyiniw.* My research and my writing are a large part of my narrative as *wapikihew iskwew,* yet it is difficult to verbalize academically. The best way I can describe my name as a guide to research would be, like the eagle, *kihew*, I seek to raise up the macro-level significance that this ground-level research has on Indigenous education and teacher professional development.

Research Design

I started to question the long-term impact of professional development for Canadian teachers. How could I elevate and extend the learning for teachers I was working with? How much information was being retained by professionals during these formal learning opportunities? I could hear Elder Cardinal, "the longest journey you'll make is from your head to your heart" coupled with what Dr. Martin Brokenleg said in a

video, “I can teach someone’s mind by just talking to them [. . .] but I get something into your heart only by certain experiences” (Brokenleg, 2015).

There is a still a lot for teachers to know. In the past, I had designed learning resources and professional development opportunities provincially based solely on the demands of the TQS (Government of Alberta, 2018a). Teachers everywhere were fully engaged in the “aboutness” of Indigenous people. I wanted to immerse my research participant in learning experiences that focused on relationality and learning with, not just about. I deliberately strayed from PowerPoint presentations, sign-up PD through provincial organizations, or printed resources. I sought out opportunities for my participant that were similar to the way in which I learned about my own culture, in community and in ceremony. With Indigenous research and my own personal experiences in mind, I planned four events where my participant could learn *with* and *from* Indigenous people. The events were: a pipe ceremony, tea with an Elder, Inuit storytelling, and a sweat lodge ceremony. The events happened over the course of 6 months.

Kovach (2009) explains that preparation requires attention to culture in an active, grounded way (p.109). She says that there is “no formula (nor could there be) for this preparation. Nor do the details of this work need to be explicitly retold, for they are not preparations amenable to academic evaluation” (p.109). Part of my preparation process was personal work or “going inward” which can include dreaming, ceremony, and prayer (Kovach, 2009, p. 50). Part of my research preparation even included going back to my northern Cree community for eight days (two separate occasions) to be with my Grandma. It is there that I feel grounded and am reminded about who I really am. During

this time there, I was reminded of where my family comes from and how language has sustained them. Since my mom had passed away years earlier, I am finding that it is not as easy to get these answers. Going back to my Grandma's gave me a stronger sense of identity; feeling this way was integral to the research process.

The first task as an Indigenous researcher was to offer protocol (tobacco) to an Elder, one whom I have known for many years. I knew both my participant and I would need guidance as we walked throughout the process together so offering protocol was essential. In my own teachings, it was explained to me that the tobacco speaks for me. The tobacco would help me to express the words that I had not yet uttered in prayer; it would be a reminder of the personal and sacred process that my research is. Offering tobacco is not something that I simply *did*, it is always acting on my behalf, even until the research and writing is complete.

I had certain ceremonies in mind. Knowing the seasonal significance of these ceremonies, I knew that if they were missed, it could be a year before I was able to bring my participant to them. Sundance and pow wow in the summer, harvesting in late summer and early fall, roundance in the spring, and/or storytelling in the winter. Land-based experiences could be done year-round but I had to consider inclement weather conditions. I was set on ending the research with a sweat lodge ceremony and I knew that I could arrange this at any time of the year.

There was not a scholarly or prescribed way to plan for specific events as sometimes they came up in their own *nehiyaw* way. The easiest way to describe the *nehiyaw* (Cree) way would be: one moment you're sitting around the house cooking breakfast with no plans for the rest of the day and in the next few hours you are berry

picking, at a feast, a funeral, a roundance, a pipe ceremony, or a sweat. These things would just come up. They would not emerge or happen in a disorganized or chaotic fashion, they happened in a *the time is right* sort of way. Although we did not know that for weeks people had been planning and praying for that ceremony or event, it would take us minutes to run out the door after we found out. This was the case growing up and it is still the case now. The *moccasin telegraph* as we call it in this territory and others, even happens via social media. Not for all ceremonies or events, just some. I would see a post for a round dance two days before it happened. This is contrary to our colonized need to know *weeks* ahead. What felt like our typical westernized *last-minute* type of situation, was happening in the *nehiyaw* way, however it was difficult to ask my participant to join in on our *Creeness* given the time and familial commitments of my participant. Being a full-time teacher, my participant could only participate in research events that happened after-school hours or on the weekend.

Researcher and Participant Relationship

I had one participant as a part of my research. I utilized wisdom from the *Fecundity of the Individual Case: Considerations of the Pedagogic Heart of Interpretive Work* (Jardine, 1992) as a way to support this decision. What Jardine (1992) explains in the aforementioned article is that often in research, significance "becomes mathematized" in that we connect the significance of a story with frequency (p. 54). Jardine (1992) uses a story or an "instance" of a new teacher to explain an event which "evokes and opens up an already-familiar way of belonging in the world" (p. 56). In using Jardine's article as inspiration and inviting only one participant, my hope was that my participants'

experiences (through interpretive work) would evoke, in other teachers, a familiarity that would assist in the transformation of teacher practice and professional development. If it were multiple participants in this study, we would not have the opportunity to be "taken aback" nor will it "allure us" or "catch us off guard" (Jardine, 1992, 54). The intent to study a single participant was not to provide insight to what other teachers could potentially expect in the same events, it is to separate the experience from others, it is to honour my participants story and acknowledge the kinship to this research experience. I also thought about the ceremonial ways in which *peyak*, the number one in Cree, is significant in my *nehiyaw* existence. I thought about the way we enter ceremony: one at a time. I considered the mathematized nature of much research and then visualized many people entering a sweatlodge all at once; I was uncomfortable with this thought. I thought about each person's *coming in* experience and how it is a sacred part of the ceremony. I likened this research as an individual experience much like Jardine's explanation of the individual case (1992). This symbolic entering of ceremony, one at a time, is just as sacred as one entering into research. Explaining and storying on behalf of the masses seemed irrelevant. The goal of the research is to leave the reader connected to the individual story and/or be allured to *come in*, in a similar way.

My employment as an Indigenous Education Coach in a local school district was relevant to the research. My role as coach, and not consultant, was as much metaphorical as it was pedagogical. As Indigenous education coach, I sat on the sidelines, and both suggested and encouraged practical strategies, offered positive shifts in practice, and mapped out opportunities for growth. My role as coach allowed me to work alongside educators and lead in small professional learning communities (PLCs), facilitate whole-

school professional development sessions, or design learning opportunities for the lead teachers within our district. Lead teachers (popular in Alberta education) are considered to be Indigenous or non-Indigenous ally teachers who express an interest in Indigenous culture, history, and contemporary realities of Indigenous people in Canada. My participant was one of these lead teachers.

To recruit a suitable research participant, I curated an email for each lead teacher in my district, explaining my intended research. With an acceptable deadline, I left it up to each lead teacher to contact me expressing their interest. I also mentioned that I would be choosing only one participant. It was explained that if there was substantial interest, I would enter into an application process where each volunteer lead would write a letter identifying and explaining their interest. It was just my luck that the universe aligned a person who was intrigued by this opportunity.

Relationality as an asset to Indigenous research methodologies was considered in my search for a research participant. Being relational though, was more so a need I had within the research more than a methodical process. Being relational, according to Wilson (2008) is "at the heart of what it means to be Indigenous" (p. 80). It was important that the research participant be someone that I was familiar with. I saw it as critical to have an existing trust bond between us. Due to the nature of the events I had planned, I wanted a participant who felt comfortable enough to walk alongside (or sit beside) me in a shared learning process. Kovach (2019) explains having trust established prior to the research makes for "deeper conversations and [. . .] richer insights" and in Kovach's writing, this trust relationship helps to deepen self-knowledge of the researcher

(p. 132). Further to this, establishing and maintaining a healthy and strong research relationship also leads to a strong and healthy researcher (Wilson, 2008, p. 86).

Ethical Considerations

Knowing that ethics within Indigenous research differs "from the dominant academic way of doing things" (Wilson, 2008, p. 63), I attempted to maintain balance in my Cree scholar identity. I thought about answering the question Kovach (2009) poses: Should an Elder ask "why did you do *that* research and why did you do it in *that* way" (p.109). I would want to answer knowing that I did this work in a *good way*, aligning my heart and spirit with those intentions. There is no definition for doing things in a good way. Kovach (2009) says that we (as Indigenous people) define it and what matters most is that our ancestors and other Indigenous scholars know what *doing things in a good way means* (p. 50). In doing relational research in a good way, according to Wilson (2001), I am answering to all of my relations (Kovach, 2009, p. 35).

Conducting myself in a way that reflects the *miyo* or goodness (Kovach, 2009, p.147), I reminded myself of the deep respect I have for Elders and community members that have assisted me in my growth over the many years. Important to me was the way in which I honoured and upheld teachings of protocol while in community and in preparation for ceremony. I was mindful to ensure my participant was respectful of all protocols as I helped her to prepare for each occasion.

In respect for the ceremonies and the people who hosted them, I have not revealed inherited teachings or community wisdom in my findings, nor have I described the ceremonies themselves. Shawn Wilson (2008), through the teachings of Jerry

Saddleback, explains that there are three kinds of stories, one of which is defined as sacred (p. 98). Experiences held sacred by the participant were not written or described, rather, the participant's reaction to them was documented later in my writing. Knowing that there was risk and unease in bringing Indigenous Knowledge into the academy (Kovach, 2019, p. 147), I was sensitive to describing each event in a procedural way.

Having a deep respect for the community which I was conducting research in was at the forefront of my research endeavour. Alongside the trust relationship with my participant was the importance of trust within the community we were entering. I did not name cultural leaders, community members, storytellers, or pipe carriers, nor did I name people who were present at the times of these events. The research participant agreed to use her real name and I received written documentation evidencing her permission.

Naming and acknowledging, although recognizable ways of honouring Indigenous relations, was not done in my research. This was not done as an act of disrespect but as a means to simplify ethics approval and place specific focus and intention on my research participant. All of the people attending ceremony with us, whether we knew them or not, were not aware of my intention to write about the event they attended. I did this to provide the most authentic, real, and unaltered version of that particular event. I was concerned that if attendees knew of the research, then perhaps their reactions would be ingenuine, unnatural, or emotionally tainted. I wanted my participant to experience the ceremony without an audience and trust that the process was hers to own, honour, and receive fully.

Credibility and Truth

I want the tobacco I offered in and through this research to speak my truth, *tapwewin*. The tobacco seen as a sacred part of an agreement or request assists in guiding one's work in a spiritual and good way. I am also pulled in and guided by Indigenous research as methodology. I am taken by the words of Brant-Castellano (2004) who said that Indigenous ethics cannot "be limited to a defined set of rules," it is about knowing who you are and the values you hold (Kovach, 2008, p. 146). My truth, my values, and my intentions were offered as tobacco and were taken up to Creator in smoke. I seek to be judged in credibility only by my ancestors, *all my relations*. Since we are still faced with a dilemma in how Indigenous research is evaluated according to procedural guidelines (Kovach, 2009, p.133) I feel tangled in linear systems and am compelled to be accountable to the all-mighty checklist. To honour balance and add to the tobacco offered, I have used a blend of strategies to add to credibility within my research.

I clarify bias (Creswell, 2014) by acknowledging my place in the research relationship. I am consistently transparent in my description of events and my presence in the research is intended to be obvious. Further to naming the participant/researcher relationship, the measures I used to enhance credibility and truth in this study were: triangulation, member checking, and peer debriefing. In this study, I used data from our conversational anecdotes, collected participant narratives, and recorded interviews. Utilizing several sources of data or triangulating, according to Creswell (2014), contributes to a more rigorous and trustworthy thesis. Although sounding highly academic, triangulation can also be seen as a part of our Cree ways of being. Triangulation or the nuance of three, is essential in the way I have been taught to view

sweetgrass: symbolic of our mind, body and spirit. Triangulation as a sturdy structure for a tipi, is also symbolic, as this research was like building a lodge for ceremony: each part of it lovingly put in the right place.

The final writing was also validated by the research participant. The participant was invited to read over the completed thesis in its entirety to clarify narratives, interpretations, and events included in the study. Allowing my participant to re-read her experience as lived helped to also solidify the trust relationship we had created over time, enriching the data and future research associated with similar initiatives. I also was mindful to include peer debriefing as a way to add validity to the research. Allowing a person unassociated with the study to read over and ask critical questions was essential to this process. Peer debriefing added clarity to the writing and ensured that the study was coherent, transparent, and true to who I am.

I feel an inner struggle in explaining that sometimes there was not an explanation for what I *did* as a researcher. At times I felt guided, maybe this was me remembering an event as a child, possibly an ancestor showing me the way. Edna, cited in Smith (1999) says "we wear our teachings" (p.42). Many times, throughout the process, I did not fully explain the event or the process in detail to my participant as this was the way that I learned. This *going in blind* type of pedagogy was how I came to witness and obtain knowledge from many incredible community helpers. For me, methods were initiated from the "flow of movement" (Weber, Pillwax, 2004) and I would often "make decisions about today's methods based on yesterday's activities and methods" (p.85). In using Indigenous research methodology, I feel confident that this methodology honours my deeply embedded experiences as an Indigenous woman. Further to that, IRM naturally

acknowledges my *nehiyaw* epistemology and *nehiyaw* processes, both planned and unplanned.

Data Collection: Using Indigenous Research Methods

I understand that as researcher, I am essentially borrowing another person's experience and that I too am deeply connected to that experience (van Manen, 1990, p. 62). As a researcher, I also feel a responsibility to honour that experience with the best of intentions through interpretation. In a reciprocal act, we both give ourselves to the research in order to make meaning and eventually come to a deeper understanding of what learning with Indigenous people is like for a practicing teacher.

Talking circles, focus groups, use of narratives and storytelling are all methods closely linked with Indigenous research (Weber-Pillwax, 2004, p.81). Instead of an interview as method, I was intentional in using conversational method as it honours orality and follows relational tradition (Kovach, 2019) . Kovach (2019) also explains that this approach to co-creating knowledge is consistent with Indigenous paradigms that value respect, relevancy, reciprocity, and responsibility in research. I was drawn to the "culturally organic" approach as it felt natural, given our participant/researcher relationship (Kovach, 2019, p. 127). Further to this, it felt natural to share story in such a way that honoured my own Cree upbringing: tea, a table, and good dialogue. Feeling also like what Haig-Brown (1992) refers to as "research as chat" (Archibald, 2008, p.47), this method was as comforting as sitting with a relative. The conversation was natural and held open space for both stories, silence, and laughter. I had a mental list of wonderings I wished to unpack with my generous participant as well as a more formal list of semi-

structured questions should I need them. The conversation seemed to flow, and the questions entered into our space with uninterrupted ease. I was curious about her experience as lived and how this might help educators make meaning of their own pedagogical challenges. I asked her questions like "is it possible to apply what you learned (as requested by the TQS)? If so, how?" or "how does this experience add to your skills as an educator, or does it?" I was also curious and would ask "which parts of this experience felt comfortable/uncomfortable, if any at all?" The rest of the participant experiences are written and are shared in the discussion section of this research.

Before many of our conversations, we would begin with a smudge. We would cleanse our minds, bodies and spirits and prepare ourselves in honouring another beautiful experience together. After smudging, I turned on my device to record our conversation using the "voice memos" application on my iPhone. Each conversation varied in length, averaging around an hour. We met within a week of the ceremony/event and our follow-up conversations occurred at the school she worked at or in her home. Each time we met, her lovely children were present, and you can hear their sweet voices throughout the recordings. As a Cree researcher, having the presence of children was more evidence that we were doing things *in a good way*. As we shared in conversation, I made notes on themes or insightful revelations that my participant had discussed.

To honour storytelling and story gathering (Kovach, 2009, p. 125) as methodology, I had also asked my participant to write her own narratives throughout the research process. Acknowledging that story triggers memory and emotion (p. 125), I asked that she provide an introduction to herself and some background information on her teaching experience. I was vague in my criteria and wanted to give her space to write

what she felt was in her heart. I had also asked her at the end of the research to write a closing narrative that would summarize her experience in her own words.

Due to the sacred and spiritual nature of ceremony, I did not take field notes. Since I was participating in the same event, I was able to use close observation to document. In order to do this effectively I had to find balance between attending to the ceremony and attending to the research. Van Manen (1990) calls this "hermeneutic alertness," p. 69), however I view this dual duty as normalized as the dual discourse (Kenny & Fraser, 2012) of living in two worlds. This "insider" research, as Smith (1999) calls it, held both tension and inherent skill (p. 137).

Hermeneutic Interpretation

Creswell (2007) says that interpretation is essential in deciphering the multi-layered meanings of human experience (as cited in Nigar, 2020). As a researcher and listener, I paid close attention to the experience as lived and the story as told by my participant. Using hermeneutic interpretation, my goal was to work through the data and name the qualitative differences that seemed to "make a difference" (Chenail, 2012, p. 248). Interpretive meaning-making involves a subjective accounting of social phenomena as way of giving insight, an inductive way of knowing (Kovach, 2009, p. 130).

Qualitative research aligns with Cree philosophies as it is a process that honours and seeks *nisitohtamowin,* or understanding (Kovach, 2009, p.27). I have learned that, for both my participant and I, coming to know and understand was a reflexive, relational, and reciprocal process. Gadamer describes hermeneutic interpretation as belief that the said is always in relationship with the unsaid (Moules, 2002, p.3). Throughout my research, I

seek to extend the “range of vision” by utilizing hermeneutic interpretation to fuse together the said and unsaid of my participant (Moules, 2002, p.9). Knowing that hermeneutics is not considered an “Indigenous epistemological approach to data analysis” (Kovach, 2009), I use this blended approach in meaning-making to honour my own blended life experience; one that is Indigenous and one that is not. Finding the balance in the two has been a beautiful dance that I find solace in.

The mission of the hermeneutic scholar is to engage in life hermeneutically, or find what makes life, life (Smith, 2006, p.106). Like Cree researchers would seek *nisitohtamowin,* or understanding, so does hermeneutics. It is a part of a tradition called *lebensphilosophie,* life-philosophy or understanding (Smith, 2006, p.107). Hermes, the son of Zeus and Maia, was an interpreter for his father, a messenger for the Gods, usually giving his own rendition or interpretation (Meyer, 2003, p. 56). Hermes, considered a trickster by Wallin (2007), poses the notion that understanding can be messy and paradoxical (Solvey, 2018, p. 80). The trickster aspect of Hermes entices me as I relate him to the Cree trickster/character *loving spirit* (I am told his name cannot be uttered outside of the winter season). Like Hermes allows us to live through his actions, we often find the meaning of story in conflicting, yet, illuminating ways. In hermeneutical interpretation, understanding is never complete, we are continuously called on to (re)connect and (re)imagine (Solvey, 2018, p.82). This cyclical process, one that aligns with my own epistemological understandings, is not intended to bring up fixed bodies of knowledge, rather it is to engage in the cycle of knowledge to develop conceivable interpretation of events (Luce, 2008, p. 24).

Jardine (1992) explains that the interpretation of the data is "unavoidably linked to me" (p. 57). By walking alongside my participant, I also put myself *in* the research. My ideas as a researcher cannot be put aside and seeing the world through an Indigenous and holistic lens made it natural for me to interpret hermeneutically (Connelly, 2010, p.127) . My interpretations and insights were woven consciously and unconsciously throughout the research process: during observations, in conversations, and while listening to the recorded interviews. I also repeatedly read over the written and recorded narratives of my participant as she submitted them. Informed by hermeneutics, her written stories were interpreted throughout the writing process of this thesis. I relied on my written conversational anecdotes to lead data analysis, and at a later stage I relistened and transcribed parts of the interview that "held tension or insight" (Solvey, 2018, p. 96). Guest, MacQueen, and Namey (2012) (as cited in Creswell, 2014) also suggested "winnow[ing]" the data, which is a process of focusing on some data and disregarding other parts (p. 195). Conversation as a method also made it easier to interpret and "understand the content and complexity of meaning" in my participant's experience (Chan & Chien, 2013, p. 5). I utilized what was revealed in the data to uphold themes relevant to the experience of learning with Indigenous people and also to uncover the "unhiddenness" of my participants' experience (Moules, 2002, p.3). This uncovering works to open something that was once closed so as to reveal, this is done hermeneutically throughout my thesis as I explain my research findings.

Potts and Brown (2005) say that making meaning also includes some "clarity as to whom the research is going to benefit" while also recognizing the implications and the "responsibilities of the knowledge that one is constructing" (Kovach, 2009, p.130). The

clarity necessary to uphold this notion is another tension I look inward to, *miskâsowin*, going to the center of oneself (Kovach, 2009, p. 49). As I think about my Indigenous research alongside a white educator, it appears as though the research benefits white people, *moniyawak*. This seems contrary to my interest in decolonizing education as decolonization seeks to benefit Indigenous people. To be clear, the research is intended to benefit everyone, *kahkiyaw*, or all of you, *kistawaw*. This research, as a decolonial act, is not simply a rejection of all Western knowledge or theory, rather decolonizing encourages me to connect to my own worldview and theorize based on my own cultural notions (Archibald & Santolo, 2019, p.6). If I connect hermeneutically to my work as a researcher, then I also must admit that finding balance in my own duality is relevant to whom the research benefits. The insider-outsider positionality as addressed by Smith (1999, p. 137) opens up a space for me to consider the in-between feelings of this research. My lived reality as a mixed-Indigenous person, with both Cree and white experiences give me comfort in my approach to hermeneutics as interpretation. According to Kovach (2009, p. 134) there are three audiences with whom Indigenous researchers engage for transferring knowledge in our research:

(a) Findings from the research must make sense to the general Indigenous community,

(b) Scheme for arriving at our findings much be clearly articulated to the non-Indigenous academy, and

(c) Both the means for arriving at the findings themselves must resonate with other Indigenous researchers who are in the best position to evaluate our research.

Knowing that almost half of Indigenous people (44%) reside in urban settings (Statistics Canada, 2016) coupled with the majority of provincial school teachers being non-Indigenous, I feel good in knowing that this research will benefit Indigenous youth attending city schools. In saying that, this is something that I hope the general Indigenous community would relate to and understand. Further to that, this research is for the many non-Indigenous teachers that teach in First Nations schools as much as it is for Indigenous educators also on a journey to learn, know, and understand. I look back at my own schooling experience and wish my peers understood my culture as much as I was ingrained in theirs. I wanted my teachers to know the plight and the pleasure of being Indigenous and show this resilience in their lessons. The TQS (2018) states that obtaining foundational knowledge is for the "benefit of all students" (p.6) which is at the heart of my research intent. Knowing that this research seeks to benefit Indigenous youth through meaningful experience-informed pedagogy, it is equally important that it benefits their non-Indigenous peers. This way of clarifying, for me, is an essential part of the research process.

The kinship that hermeneutics brings voice to connects heavily to my own nehiyaw teachings of *wahkôhtowin.* Defined loosely by Cree Elders and language speakers, *wahkôhtowin* means kinship, but as Cree people, we know it is much more than that. It is the idea that we are all in close relation to one another, and like hermeneutics, we seek to understand our own horizons (Moules, 2002, p.9). The fusing of horizons acknowledges both our isolation and connection to each other. This idea is closely related to discussions of ethical relationality in that it is informed by life connections and helps

us to realize “how our different histories, memories and experiences position us in relation to one another (Donald, 2016, p. 11). Honouring the significance of these relationships speaks to the intentionality that is hermeneutic interpretation. It is my hope that the reader will sense the deeper kinship ties in hearing the participant’s tale (Jardine, 1992, p. 51). My attempt in employing hermeneutical interpretation is not to simplify the complex questions I ask here, rather it is to restore “life back to its original difficulty” (Jardine and Field, 1996, p.256), or as Caputo (1987) puts it, exposes us “to the groundlessness of the mystery” (Moules, 200, p. 17).

Chapter 4:

The Research: Participant and Process

At the time she agreed to be a part of my study, I asked my participant if she preferred a pseudonym. She indicated she did. Knowing that her story is an integral part of her experience as a participant, I later made the ethical decision to invite my participant to characterize herself. I am honoured that she has agreed to share her story. Larger bodies of her words will be *italicized* throughout the writing, she will also be quoted throughout.

Meet Jessica

"I always thought racist people openly discriminated against different races through actions. As a kid, images of American segregation schools, the Holocaust, and priests in residential schools would come into my mind. However, growing up I didn't consider a person racist who just spoke negatively about a group of people, made crude jokes, and had negative stereotypes. I do now and realize how this permeated my childhood.

I still think there needs to be more education on internalized colonialism/racism, and hopefully it will lead to more self-awareness and empathy. I don't think my parents see themselves as racist, but they make prejudiced comments towards First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people. Would they ever make a rude comment to a person who was not [Indigenous]? No. Not to their face. However, they spent years privately generalizing and discussing openly how this "group" is rock bottom—never an individual, always the entire group.

My grandparents moved to Treaty Six land within 5 kilometres of First Nation community in 1956. In this rural community, discrimination towards Indigenous children/adults was common among rural white farmers. My grandma was a storyteller. She shared stories as a teacher and her life on the farm. The stories often had slivers of her hostility towards Indigenous students or were about the First Nation people that came off the highway to the farm that bothered her. Her mindset formed on generalizing principles about the entire group of First Nations, believing anyone who received any money from the government was a deadbeat and that hitting children in school was normal and expected. This was just how it was at the time.

My parents raised my brothers and me on this same farm. They worked in the surrounding areas, often closely with the First Nations from the area. My brothers and I were told about housing covered by taxes on reserves and how the money is squandered through a corrupt, nepotistic filtration by chiefs who only help those they want; about companies that have tried to get jobs for the people on reserves, but their work ethic was terrible; that they fought with each other; that nothing got done; and how this system often created controversy between the families of people on the reserve. My mom always mentioned how busy the store was after "payday" which was the day welfare cheques came in. She would share stories of native people addicted to drugs and trying to steal from the store, bullying her about charging items, having too many FAS kids, and playing the victim card of history over and over. Sadly, I saw evidence of this, and it was my only real exposure to First Nations people.

These stories also included rude jokes about obesity, drinking coke, chips, incest, and free money on the reserve. I heard these stories for so long I started to dehumanize

First Nations people. They no longer were individuals; they were that horrible group my parents hated. I was bitter and resentful to learn about their history in school and I lacked any empathy. Growing up, it also was a similar experience with my aunts/uncles in rural areas speaking openly about similar perspectives. It was how they saw the community of First Nations on reserves.

I've often wondered if my parents thought about how these comments would impact their children's understanding of people. I don't think it was considered. It was also conflicting being Catholic. We are supposed to love and uplift those less fortunate, but apparently not Indigenous people. It would be extremely challenging to work with those vulnerable people that suffered from addiction, mental health issues, and had high levels of poverty. However, my parents didn't share any history lessons about treaties, residential schools, or the Indian Act. I assume they just didn't know. They also lacked empathy. We were taught there was no reason (even a treaty) for someone to receive anything from the government. It is a matter of personal responsibility. To them, this means forgetting the past, pulling themselves up, and living the life of a perfectly behaved, unemotional European person whose identity centered around building the economy. The idea of privilege, intergenerational trauma, colonial effects, or listening to other people's stories still doesn't resonate with them. Disdain was always directed towards the reserve system and anything paid by Indigenous Affairs. In their minds, historical inequalities didn't matter, only the present mattered. I also think this carried into disdain for those Indigenous people's actions at the time, hopefully not the group themselves, which was extremely conflicting, because I would just call it being racist. I

stopped bringing this up with them anymore because they wouldn't listen to me. My actions and efforts go to those I feel will listen.

I haven't answered how I came to be an ally. Although I always worry about sharing these stories, others might doubt that I want to learn and change. Or maybe they will think I am incapable after years of hearing such negativity. All I can say is it's a journey. I continue to educate myself and challenge my views; hating people doesn't make the world a better place. Stories from Indigenous people will inspire other teachers, and reflective self-awareness of internalized bias/racism will prompt action.

I would say one reason I wanted to change was personal adversity. While working for Social Services and finishing school, I struggled with mental health and addiction issues. I was unable to deal with stress from school. My husband returned from Afghanistan with PTSD, and working with foster care children broke my heart. Many of those foster care children were Indigenous. I didn't share this with my parents or family, as I expected their lifelong lack of empathy. I started to read about mental health and addiction and began connecting with some of the parents who lost their children. Maybe we weren't so different; however, I had the privilege of a family that could afford to send me to school, and my ancestors were not separated from their children. I met an Indigenous father who would take his son for walks in the Edmonton River Valley and teach him about the land. I've never had an education that focused on land as collective, animated, and spiritual. This man valued hard work, family, and culture but struggled in his life. I saw parts of myself in him and appreciated getting an opportunity to learn from an Indigenous person. He told us a story about losing his father at a young age. Afterwards his mom asked him to travel the world. He decided to buy a truck instead. I

could tell he deeply regretted this choice. This man's son was named Ben, so I called my son Ben to keep his story with me.

Through increased education about mental health, I stopped judging and started learning. I read "The Inconvenient Indian" by Thomas King, which gave me a different perspective on my parents' misleading attitudes. I let go of thinking my view was the right one and started listening to others. Although some of the families upset me, I disassociated their race from my emotions and focused on disliking their actions, while accepting they had a very troubling life, and at the same time practicing gratitude for my privilege.

Maybe my story is unique because most children raised in homes where parents stereotype and discriminate tend to spread those values and beliefs. However, the movement towards reconciliation is also happening during a time of increased openness to mental health, education about trauma, and breaking stigmas. I believe that my parents both compounded each other's chronic stress and anxiety, but that's still no excuse for perpetuating discriminatory attitudes at home.

My oldest brother and I went into professions that enable us to learn, encourage cultural diversity training, and increase our awareness of Indigenous culture. My other brother works in the trade industry and has my parent's thoughts on Indigenous people. He also lives on the farm. Maybe there is some unique quality that makes certain people want to be open-minded, seek justice, and learn with others. If I could figure out what it was, I would share it. But maybe it's just exposure, education, and personal adversity that pushes people to change.

Four years ago my administration asked for volunteers to take the lead on professional development in Indigenous education, and I knew it was an area where I needed more growth. My best friend has four beautiful Dene children in our school system. I thought about them, the biological father who inspired me, and how I wanted to educate my students/children differently from my parents.

When I first started my B.Ed. I was very hesitant to teach about Indigenous people because of the negative stereotypes I had learned in my upbringing. I graduated from the U of A in 2010, and I missed the courses offered to increase my foundational knowledge on First Nation, Métis, and Inuit history and teachings. During my first year of teaching, I tried to avoid the conversations that inevitably came up in the Social Studies classroom. I thought if we didn't speak about Indigenous people but focused on the textbook pages, we could avoid any issues or confrontations that may come up. I felt ashamed that I knew so little about Indigenous content, had the responsibility to teach it, and I wasn't sure I knew how to do this in a meaningful way. I originally signed up to be part of the district PD opportunities in my 3rd year to learn more. I was very nervous about learning from Etienna, Elders, and Indigenous people because I was worried that I would say something wrong or I would show how little I knew or be perceived as ignorant. After being on this journey for the past 4 years, these anxieties have reduced but still exist. I've found the best teaching has been to listen and keep learning. My confidence increased with my foundational knowledge [learning].

The Pipe Ceremony

The Pipe Ceremony was something I planned for in my initial research proposal. As an Indigenous Education Coach, I had the opportunity to plan a year-end event for our district lead teachers and opened up the invitation to lead teachers from another local school district. Prior to this planned event, I had approached a friend and cultural mentor to lead us in the pipe ceremony. We decided that since the ceremony would be a learning experience for teachers, I would offer protocol to him the day of and at the start of the ceremony. Being that many of the lead teachers are female, he thought it was of utmost importance to involve the women's pipe. I agreed whole-heartedly and was excited to include a woman's pipe carrier in the ceremony. It was important to this female Elder and pipe carrier that I offer protocol prior to the event. I met her at her home an hour away and it was an absolute honour to do so. Equally pleasing was sitting alongside my own daughter as we both joined in effortless conversation with this wise and welcoming woman. In addition to preparing for protocol, there was the preparation of the lead staff that also occurred prior to the Pipe Ceremony. Educating staff around moon times, alcohol use prior to ceremony, wearing skirts, and answering questions that would ease my colleagues' fears and concerns was just a small part of this special occasion. Purchasing berries and fish and learning how to say "please pray for all of us" in Cree (*kâkîsimostamawinân kahkiyaw niyanan*) were a few of the finer details I found myself pleasantly consumed with.

The day of the Pipe Ceremony was a beautiful and sunny day in June. All of the teachers arrived to share their stories as lead teachers with the partnered district. We spent that morning smudging together and welcoming all educators into the shared space.

It was a fairly relaxed event but I could also sense that the lead teachers from the other school district were a little nervous, perhaps unsure about what the day would bring. We engaged together in the pipe ceremony around high noon (as requested). It was led beautifully and both pipe carriers provided an appropriate number of teachings as ceremonially possible. My team and I were able to reflect on their new experiences along the shore of the lake later that afternoon. This day was just the beginning of a beautiful journey for Jessica and I.

I reflected with Jessica in the days following the pipe ceremony. We started our research relationship with a smudge. I prayed for Jessica during this process, and for continued guidance from my ancestors and spiritual guides. Jessica is insightful and wise and shared her experience with ease, comfort, and transparency. We veered into side conversations and, not-coincidentally, were taken to meaningful discussions rooted in professional and personal growth. Jessica shared some of her initial thoughts about the pipe ceremony with me.

"I didn't Google 'pipe ceremony,'" she said. We laughed at the reality of this idea. Jessica talked about going into certain situations without expectations, enjoying the thrill of a surprise. Prior to participating, Jessica talked about her own insecurities and misconceptions surrounding a pipe ceremony, "will I be accepted?" she thought or "will I be judged?" She was confronted with other self-reflective questions like "what will I learn from it?" and "would we actually smoke it?" drawing from her own stereotypical visions of the movie Peter Pan. She grew nervous as the ceremony began but talked about how she was eager and excitedly awaiting the pipe, "what does it look like?" She was curious. Jessica described the environment and the ceremony as welcoming. Some of the

aspects of the ceremony that Jessica appreciated were the option to pass (pipe or food) when necessary, opportunities to ask questions, the obvious respect for women, and the ceremonial "why" that was explained throughout. Jessica said she felt respected in the circle and was happy to learn about spirituality as it related to connectedness of the pipe and the land. Jessica said, "the more I learn about this culture, the more I wish it was *my* culture". Jessica acknowledged her own emotions and began to situate her own story into the pipe ceremony experience:

Whenever I'm experiencing something new and significant in Indigenous culture, I always think "what would it be like if my parents were here?" because my parents, they are very discriminatory, stereotypical, and the first time I experienced a blanket exercise too, I just thought, you know, would this help change their mindset, what would they be thinking if they were here. So I kind of took some time to reflect on what brought me to this point, which is always, you know, trying to be better, not be better, but be different than them so I can be different for my kids. I was feeling some emotions about that because I really want to do it justice and take it in and be respectful. But also, I was feeling a little apprehensive too because it was something different from anything I had ever experienced.

She said that she walked away feeling lucky and privileged that she was able to do it and felt more connected to the people sharing space this day.

Tea with an Elder

Tea with an Elder was an opportunity I wanted to make available to Jessica. However, on this day and at this time, we were supposed to go sage picking. This time of

year can be tricky and the last of the sage would almost be gone to seed or sparse in some areas. At the last moment, this lovely Elder who I have been guided by for many years, invited us into his home for tea instead. I felt a little uneasy as this was something that I could not prepare Jessica for. I reminded myself that this process does not require "prep work" and Jessica's prior knowledge of Elders would assist her in our conversations. In addition to that, I have faith and confidence in this Elder and knew he would guide us in the right direction. I offered protocol to him and he lit a smudge for us. I appreciated starting our conversation this way, in a good way. Any uneasiness I had before was gone.

"I've never been in an Indigenous person's home" Jessica said, describing the thoughts on her drive there. "What will it look like?" she wondered, "I'm not sure what to say. What questions do I have? Will I sound ignorant?" Her thoughts probably mimic those who have gone before her. I am certain I had the same questions running through my own mind at one point too. We sat on his big comfy couch and learned about living a life of balance. Jessica listened intently to his words and paid particular attention to the teachings of the four directions. Jessica had a notable revelation during her visit where she thought "I was wondering what questions to ask [and] I realized I wasn't there to ask questions, I realized I was there to listen."

[The Elder] has lots of Indigenous art, he also had (a picture of) Mary and other Catholic religious paraphernalia. I don't know why I thought that Indigenous people wouldn't have that. I just thought with the residential school systems, being so negative in so many ways, that Indigenous people would really distance themselves from Catholic/Christian religion. But no, it's seeing (this) Elder's house that enlightens me from my expectations and assumptions. I guess [...] I still feel very confused on how a

person can emulate a holistic perspective on the world, live a life of balance, of mind, body, and spirit, and emotion, but work within such a linear society, where there is very little balance. We are often pressured to focus on mental. Emotional get very little attention. The spiritual gets very little attention. This is the way that I have been raised for so long, that I am still really struggling on whether I can change my mindset to think about teaching and creating a classroom with that type of mindset. Meeting this Elder brought me back to step one again. I thought I was getting somewhere. I'm not sure if I really have been embracing the holistic way of life [...] I remember leaving there feeling super inadequate as well. Am I doing enough? Am I doing it in a way that is giving the culture and the history and the balance the respect it deserves? It's a journey, I understand.

Despite questioning her approach to teaching and living, Jessica left feeling appreciated and welcomed during that time. "He has soul," she said, "a calming presence about him."

Stories from an Inuk Woman

As part of my year-long professional development plan for teachers in my school division, I had organized many half-day and full day session for interested teachers. Months prior, I sent out session descriptions (described by presenters) and speaker biographies (as written by presenters) as well as suggestions for who might benefit in terms of subject content and curricular ties. Stories from an Inuk Woman was described in the following way:

> This session is for anyone wanting to gain foundational knowledge about Inuit culture, language, worldviews and lived experiences of Inuit. Are you interested in learning more about living off the land and the Inuits' inherent resourcefulness and resilience? Grade two teachers would also benefit immensely as these teachings relate closely to the Social Studies curriculum.

There were approximately 10 teachers who signed up for this December event, including Jessica. This number was far more than I expected as it was close to Christmas break and teachers tend to be busier during this time. I was grateful for all who attended as it showed me the true passion that many of our district teachers have for learning.

"I was excited to learn," Jessica explained. She walked into the day with a lot of excitement. The morning was filled with games and cultural knowledge from the north. In the afternoon, the room was silent as we listened to the story and life history of an Inuk woman being raised in the north. This was not a cheerful story; much of what was shared highlighted the traumatic and lonely existence of a young girl faced with poverty, segregation, and abandonment. This was the type of story that teachers are rarely exposed to and intentionally shielded from in their own upbringing. There were tears and heavy hearts as we were brought into her story. Most of us sat at the edge of our seats in anticipation of a happy ending. The entire day brought Jessica to a deeper awareness of the culture, language, and daily life of the Inuit.

(This experience) gives me more confidence to tell story in class because she was telling her life story [...] it was her learning how to get a driver's license, and working at McDonald's, but it was powerful and significant [...] Hearing her story, just how hard

her childhood and life was, it was devastating. I have a background working in Social Services, sadly most of the clientele I was working with were Indigenous.

How can I bring that level of emotion, and not that I want them (my students) to be emotional, but hearing those stories, you do want students to get that emotional impact so that it is meaningful and they are motivated to do better in the future. So, I don't want them to be desensitized, so I always have to be very conscious of the resources that I use, so that they are the absolute best, because I only get them (the students) for 1 year. I want them to learn as much and be as impacted as possible.

Jessica left that day with a deep respect for the northern lifestyle and an even deeper connection to our spirited presenter. Jessica later acknowledged the power of story and left there "wanting to learn more." "I left curious about this woman [...] I felt connected to her story" she said.

The Sweatlodge

Along with many other opportunities I had in mind for Jessica, this was one that I felt needed to happen. I purposely and purposefully planned this sweat as the final activity because I thought it would be a good way to complete our research together. Even though Jessica and I still had a lot of conversations and follow-up meetings planned, this sweatlodge would be the last of the *learning with* planned for us. A lot of planning and consideration goes into attending ceremony. I had prepared Jessica for protocol and advised her to purchase tobacco and some prints (broadcloth). Preparing protocol for ceremony was unfamiliar to Jessica so we agreed to go together, both of us with our kids in tow.

The day of the sweat was a warm and sunny winter day; it was New Year's Day. "What a great day for a sweat," I thought as I drove to the location. I was no stranger to this place, ceremony, or Elder. My daughter, my husband, and I were all named by this exceptional Elder. My family was there to join in on this day and it made sense that they came as Jessica had become more familiar with my then 5-year-old daughter. Feeling conflicted, I pondered leaving my daughter at home simply because I wanted Jessica to have my full attention. Conversely, I brought my daughter along to decrease any fears that Jessica may have had, children have a beautiful and innocent way of easing tensions. It was cleansing and a much-needed experience as always and we ended with a feast of bannock, stew, tea, and an assortment of treats and goodies. I left with a lot of trust and peace about this process, and I was anticipating the moment that Jessica and I could talk about it. Not long after the sweat, Jessica shared some of her reflections with me. Without divulging her sacred experience, the sanctity of the sweatlodge, and/or the wisdom that is shared in ceremony, I will respectfully share some of Jessica's lived experience, as it was shared with me.

"I've read a lot about pow wow but never much about sweat lodge" she explained as we reflected on her experience. Although she was excited to learn, she described being nervous leading up to the day of ceremony. She wondered if she would be the only one who had never been to a sweatlodge before. She worried about making a mistake offering protocol and still had insecurities about feeling inadequate or ignorant. "Should I be here?" "Can I physically do it?" "Would I be able to handle the heat?" She wondered all these things all while feeling fearful of disturbing everyone else's experience if she needed to leave. Jessica appreciated a lot about this experience. Some of Jessica's fondest

moments did not occur inside the sweatlodge but prior to going in. All of the women attending were waiting in a separate lodge: changing, tending to food, visiting. Mostly Indigenous females, we continued to speak openly and naturally about our life. Jessica admired these conversations. She sat back and thought, "this is what learning is like without the Aboriginal Studies textbook." "I never get to hear things like that," she said. Jessica described her experience as a privilege.

The personal challenge for me was it was my time off. I was a little nervous about approaching it. "This is what I want to do on my New Year's Day." [...] There was a bit of a challenge on both sides to "why do you want to do it?" To my family, and to my husband, "it seems like an odd thing to want to do with your time" and it was me reconciling with the fact that I wanted to experience this, I wanted to experience other cultures, I wanted to learn from this experience. I wanted to cleanse in this experience. I wanted to pray in this experience.

I really felt a connection in the sweatlodge, to everybody, even though I didn't know everybody. I felt like our spirits were kind of joined in a way. It was a very connecting experience [...] It was a really intimate and comfortable experience.

Jessica and I spoke about the amount of knowledge that surrounded us on this day; most attendees were Indigenous academics, scholars, and professionals. In addition to that, there were many others there who offered so much wisdom and insight to the experience. Getting out of the lodge, she described a rebirth, "the sky seemed clearer" she said. She felt a deeper land connection and more in tune with nature, "maybe the sweatlodge forced me to be in the moment more" she said. She left feeling rejuvenated and "connected to people, and to energy [...] like we were joined," she said. Her heart

was lifted when we ended with hugs. Jessica felt welcomed and said this was one of the most humbling experiences she has had. She caught herself thinking after, “I wonder how many teachers would attend a sweatlodge if they were invited to go?”

Chapter 5:

Pointing at and Pointing Out: Interpretation of Data

The purpose of this study is to examine the experience of Jessica in her endeavor to learn with Indigenous people in contrast to learning about Indigenous people. I was curious to understand this process and what it was like for Jessica to "live it" (Connelly, 2010, p. 127). As Gadamer (1983) asks, "What is the question for which this text is the answer?" (Smith, 2006, p. 106). I go back to my original question as a reminder: What personal and professional meaning does a white Canadian educator gain from learning with Indigenous people. In using an Indigenous Research Methodology, I seek to make sense of how Jessica's experience can inform institutional changes in education, starting with teacher preparedness and professional development.

Coming in: Pedagogy of Comfort

The topic of comfort and discomfort held intentional focus prior to the research process. Discomfort was evidenced by the many discussions I had with teachers over the years and further to that, these conversations were validated in the literature I located throughout the research process. As a curious response to Jessica's experiences with Indigenous people, parts of our conversations were spent discussing the topic of comfort/discomfort.

Jessica noted many moments of discomfort throughout her experience. According to the dictionary, discomfort is something that can be felt physically and mentally. However, throughout the research I noticed that discomfort for Jessica was also experienced emotionally.

As I have learned, ceremony requires much patience and perseverance. There are times when your body is physically tested in ceremony. Knowing that ceremony and storytelling require long periods of sitting, I assumed Jessica would experience physical discomfort in many of her experiences. I realized later that being uncomfortable physically was something that Jessica recalled a few times, explaining how she navigated her own physical discomfort. During the pipe ceremony, she remembers sitting on the floor and admiring "the dedication to being a part of the circle," having sore legs, and "not letting that get to you." Physical discomfort was also felt during the day of Inuit storytelling as we learned some of the traditional Inuit games. Jessica said, "it was uncomfortable trying some of the games she played as a child" and further to that "it was also uncomfortable to watch." The inner cringe-worthiness of this experience was also the embarrassment that others felt as they attempted something that they knew would be physically challenging. Jessica also recalled her time in the sweatlodge and said there was "something more profound about the sweatlodge because I was uncomfortable. I was hot, sweaty, and singing, and praying" and was physically uncomfortable because "we were sitting for a long time."

Jessica reminisced about areas of mental discomfort during her experiences as a research participant. Jessica questioned herself and was honest about her curiosities and insecurities. "What if I do it wrong?" was a question that came up a lot for her. There were times of uncertainty, not knowing whether to laugh at a joke or succumb to the seemingly seriousness of the ceremony. One thing that Jessica noticed is the humour present in Indigenous culture; we both appreciated this in times of tension or awkwardness. Having tea with an Elder created much curiosity for Jessica as she had

"never been in community in an intimate way." There was a moment during tea where Jessica had referred to the Medicine Wheel and she was quickly corrected as this particular Elder referred to it as the Four Directions. Jessica remembered "feeling bothered thinking that I know more than I actually do." Discomfort seemed to be partnered with a lack of knowledge and knowing. Jessica admitted her feeling of discomfort going into the Inuit storytelling session saying, "this is an area where there is the least amount of knowledge."

Jessica struggled mentally as she thought about the scientific versus cultural realities of utilizing narwhal for food in the north. Jessica described her "inner conflict about being an environmentalist" and also recognizing that "Indigenous people are stewards of the land." The tension for her was in understanding whether killing narwal was an act of honouring life or preserving life. She thought, "should I be skeptical about this person or skeptical of science?" This lack of knowledge tied with discomfort was also evidenced when the presenter asked our colleagues to speak Inuktitut. It was obvious that it made people uneasy as this is an area where they have very little experience. Indigenous languages were evident in every experience which added to the discomfort Jessica felt. Jessica said, "I couldn't understand the pipe carrier, [. . .] mentally, I was trying to keep myself in the moment." For Jessica, she coped with this by "putting the discomfort aside and focusing on what these people are all here praying for." Jessica seemed to use self-talk as a strategy to mentally get her through many of her experiences. As she arrived at the sweatlodge, Jessica was concerned about being an outsider and not knowing everyone in attendance. She expressed "insecurities as a white person [and] nervous that others would wonder why there was a white person in the sweat [. . .] feeling

like people would wonder." Her insecurities clung on until the moment we entered the sweatlodge. Later she described having a "reality check into my own ridiculous selfish mind, oh they must be thinking about me. They're not!" Jessica's inner dialogue and how she navigated some of her own uncomfortable thoughts gave me insight into her experience learning with Indigenous people.

Discomfort for teachers teaching Indigenous content can be accompanied by many and often mixed emotions. Jessica's emotional discomfort in learning with Indigenous people was manifested in anxiety, avoidance, confrontation, shame, nervousness, and worry. There were a lot of emotions during this process. Anyone who has attended a ceremony, or sat in a circle with Indigenous people, can recall those moments of excessive emotion, both discomforting *and* comforting. For Jessica, there were plenty of emotions. Jessica had feelings of guilt, of uncertainty about accepting or saying no to shared food—she didn't want to be perceived as rude. She described feeling apprehensive because she was entering something unknown and "something different." She recalled feeling nervous arriving at the Elder's for tea. She felt conflicted with knowledge and questions about "Western society and curriculum." Jessica also discussed feeling bad for having to leave early on one occasion. She also was "feeling nervous about when to do this or that" and worried about breaking protocol. Jessica also talked about the most emotional of the experiences which was hearing the personal stories of the Inuit presenter. "When she only spoke her language and we couldn't understand" Jessica recalled "feeling so inadequate." Watching the storyteller as she cried about her own pain and trauma for Jessica was "devastating." Jessica also felt a bit of guilt wondering

whether she should have felt worse, wondering whether she has become desensitized from her previous experiences working in social services.

I want to point out from Jessica's holistic experience the persistent discomfort in learning alongside Indigenous people. Her discomfort is strongly associated with her insecurities as a white person trying to learn coupled with her upbringing and negative and rare exposure to First Nations people as a child. I consider how Jessica's families' experiences would have been had their location been different, urban instead of rural. I wonder what life would have been like if their family did not have a store in which many of their negative assumptions were born. As Jessica said, her families' comments became her "only real exposure to First Nations people."

Throughout her experiences, Jessica wondered how her parents would feel if they were given the opportunity to come into ceremony. Jessica wondered if it would change her parents' perceptions of Indigenous people. After the pipe ceremony, Jessica said:

> *The first feeling I always have whenever I'm experiencing something significant in Indigenous culture, I always think what it would be like if my parents were here. Because my parents they are very discriminatory, and stereotypical, and the first time I experienced the Blanket Exercise too, I just thought, you know would this help change their mindset? What would they be thinking if they were here? So, I always take some time to reflect on, you know, what brought me to this point, which is always trying to be better, not be better, be different than them, so I can be different for my kids. So, I was feeling some emotions with that because I really want to do it justice and take it in and be respectful. But also, I was feeling a little, apprehensive too because it was something different.*

Looking at our conversations and thinking about my observations throughout the research, there was a constant discomfort in Jessica. Even up to our last event together, she came in with insecurities. "Worried about making a mistake" and "feeling ignorant" and "inadequate" and even going inward to ask herself, "should I be here" are all thoughts she described on our last day in research together. Jessica said in her introduction, "these anxieties have reduced but still exist." At the end of the research, Jessica said, "I found that I don't have to be comfortable to enjoy this experience." I thought her statement was profound. In learning about, with, and alongside Indigenous people, is discomfort just a given? Do we need to start decolonizing the ways that we experience learning, comfort included? Could the constant insecurity felt by Jessica be that we, as teachers, were never taught to teach in the margins of discomfort? I couldn't help but think about what the world would be like if teachers taught all the topics that they deemed uncomfortable or difficult. This notion is problematic yet alluring. When it comes to uncomfortable topics such as Residential Schools, there is unjustifiable assumption that the knowledge should terrify children. Teachers will say "how am I supposed to teach this in Kindergarten?" or "Well I don't want to traumatize them!" Teachers were never taught to consider uncomfortable content and they too, never had to experience it as students themselves. The challenge of teachers moving forward will have to be to find creative and gentle ways to teach hard topics, a way of coming into their own (dis)comfort.

Coming in: Pedagogical Insights

Current educational policy is and always has been invested in the assessment of teacher practice. Becoming a teacher as well as maintaining your teacher certification is questioned by the ways in which teachers can effectively apply current policy to their practice. This accountability model has been so ingrained in teachers that they, too, do not see value in professional development that does not directly relate to their current teaching assignment. "There is always that expectation that whatever you are learning about, you should then be able to do that. But that's not what it is supposed to be about" explained Jessica. In my own experience hosting sessions on Indigenous topics, teachers leave concerned with the "what now" and the "how do I apply this to the classroom?" To honour this tradition and appease my own curiosity, I thought it was worthy to address the application of Jessica's experience. I was curious how Jessica, after *developing* knowledge with Indigenous people, would *apply* it (as requested in the TQS) to her experience as a classroom teacher, if at all. I had asked Jessica questions about application during each conversation. When I asked Jessica how she would apply her new knowledge and experience of the pipe ceremony, her answers were quite profound.

I know I am not going to make a lesson plan about being a part of the pipe ceremony because I don't want to share all of what that entails. But I definitely see students getting the benefits of working in a circle, with those teachings, in any classroom. That mindset of "we're here to laugh or here to learn and we're here to grow together" is something that all schools in all classrooms could embrace. It's that non-judgmental space, it's so important [...] that aspect of culture from the pipe ceremony makes you feel like, you know, even if I'm not doing everything perfectly, even if I'm

making mistakes in this space, I'm not judged. In this space I am accepted, and my voice is still heard [. . .] The environment was very accepting, embracing. It was also engaging, [. . .] even though technically if you think about it, he (pipe carrier) was teaching us through lecture-based learning, it didn't feel like that. It felt like we were not sitting there listening to a professor teaching a lecture, but we were listening to stories, listening to someone speak about their life in such a connected way. It didn't feel as rigid. It felt like we were being talked with (as opposed to being talked to) [. . .] In teaching Social Studies (grade 9) and the topic of treaties, I now have a whole different understanding after having experienced that (the pipe ceremony). I'm not just going to gloss over that topic now. This could be a whole other conversation now with the kids. Making them aware that (the treaty) is not something to be taken lightly.

During our conversations over time, I discovered that Jessica held onto the pedagogical components of these experiences rather than the contextual pieces. I realized that she was not taking from the experiences the *what to teach* as much as she was taking away the *how to teach*. Learning from Indigenous pedagogical practice gave Jessica the tools necessary to teach with the heart and spirit in mind. Further to including heart and spirit, there are several pedagogical practices that were exposed to Jessica that display the true beauty and depth of Indigenous teaching practice. The assumptions that these practices are long gone and are rarely used were dispelled each time we attended ceremony together. Jessica was witness to these long-standing traditions throughout many parts of the research.

Jessica said she stepped into her "own indoctrinated mind" a lot and was caught up in something that the pipe carrier said. From our recollection he said, "If you want a

surface level impact, you will do surface level teachings." This stuck with Jessica as she thought about her own practice. She wondered whether she was creating meaningful impact with students knowing now how important it was to engage in meaningful experiences. Jessica thought about the benefits for other teachers and what that would be like if they could listen in the same way she was able to.

In terms of application, even sitting with an Elder had pedagogical impact for Jessica. Over tea, Jessica learned how to talk to students about balance using the four directions teaching. Although Jessica was aware that these teachings could be learned across a lifetime, she understood the importance of creating a classroom with a "holistic mindset." Jessica and I reminisced about some of the funnier parts of the pipe where humour was used, and laughter was heard. Jessica noted that "laughter is also a part of learning" as she talked about how powerful that could be in education. Another part of this experience that Jessica admired was the way in which the Elder would teach through story and use metaphor to share his understanding of the world. These were strategies that Jessica appreciated and saw value in. Jessica also discussed "the power that an Elder or Indigenous presence can have on learning." Jessica hoped that what she learned would help to build relationships with students.

Jessica was impacted by the ways in which storying can impact learning experiences. During the Storytelling with an Inuk Woman, Jessica was able to empathize and understand at a deeper level the negative impacts of history for the Inuit. The Alberta curriculum tends to highlight First Nation and Métis culture/history and aside from Grade 2 social studies, there are very few opportunities to learn about Inuit culture and people. For Jessica, this experience brought in the lifestyle of the north that was almost void in

textbooks and literature. From this experience, Jessica realized "how disturbing colonization was/is, [. . .] the deliberate and intentional killing of Indigenous people. Their life is hard enough." Jessica thought about taking what she knew back to her students. "I have so much more information now, giving students a glimpse of what this experience [or the presenters' experience] was like." Speaking about customs, traditions, collective rights, and understanding worldview are all topics that were applicable for Jessica as a classroom teacher. Having this experience gave Jessica the confidence to discuss her experience in a classroom discussion, "a story that helps to supplement" her teachings, as she explained. She left there feeling less ignorant, she said. This experience for Jessica was powerful because of the balance between story and lesson. Jessica liked that the presenter's approach "transcends both." Seeing the presenter vulnerable, able to share her story through tears, and allowing us to see the depth of her pain was an emotional experience. Everyone cried through her story. It was obvious that everyone was connected to her in some way. Jessica explained, "it was personal, and it was emotional [. . .] it was powerful and significant." Seeing the presenter's approach to story gave Jessica "more confidence to tell a story in the classroom." Jessica also wondered "How can I bring that level of emotion to my students?" Jessica and I discussed the disconnect in being a teacher and a human. As teachers we do not show students our humanness. We pondered on "being allowed to feel" as Jessica stated. We also talked about how the best thing about any experience is that it will leave you wanting more and that was how Jessica left that day—curious about the presenter, her story, and where to find more information. This experience also gave Jessica more confidence and

"reinforces that I am trying" she said, "I actually got to sit down and learn with an Elder [. . .] very humbling."

To be clear, the intent of each experience was not to have Jessica take information back from her experiences and apply her new experience directly to her classroom lessons. The question for her was how she would apply anything she learned, if at all. For Jessica, the sweat lodge left her with more personal take-aways than professional. However, there are parts of this experience that should be untold and under described. Some of these experiences are supposed to stay with a participant and are only for that participant. Dr. Dwayne Donald said during the pipe ceremony, "now that you've seen and experienced it, you will want to protect it." Jessica understood the deeply personal imprint that ceremony leaves on a person. Jessica knew that she could not give details or *teach about* the sweat lodge, however, she would be able to speak to the personally sacred experience she had if she chose to. Her experience gave her the knowledge necessary to explain to students in our Catholic school division the difference between First Nation ceremony and church. Although Jessica was not able to bring back and apply her sweat lodge experience in a topical way, I would argue that this experience changed her personally which, in turn, changes how she perceives Indigenous knowledge and knowing

Indigenous pedagogy, according to Koleszar-Green's article (2019), is based on Indigenous worldview and knowledge. This includes the use of metaphors, learning on the land, learning in ceremony, and through self-reflection and exploration (Koleszar-Green, 2019). This resonated well with Jessica's experience in community. In addition, Pratt and Danyluk (2019) stress the importance of experiential learning and listening

alongside Indigenous peoples as partners. Simply listening and practicing patience is a personal skill and a pedagogical approach that teachers can begin to discover with students in any contemporary classroom. I was able to draw from the many pedagogical nuances that appeared when learning with Indigenous people and it sounded like Jessica could too. I am eager to hear whether Jessica will start to take "creative risks" (Pratt & Danyluk, 2019, p. 4) in her pedagogical approaches based on her experiences with Indigenous people.

In a research project aimed at identifying strategies that increase teacher willingness to incorporate Indigenous knowledge and pedagogies into practice, the researchers (Nardozi et al., 2014) found that "first voice testimony" had a high impact on teacher candidate learning (p. 116). The teacher candidates in the OISE study repeatedly mentioned the impact that Indigenous guest speakers had on their learning (p. 118). Although the teacher candidate knowledge increased throughout the study, the participants "expressed a desire to see concrete examples of what the teaching of Aboriginal content in the classroom looked like in practice." (p.117). The need for Indigenous presence in teacher education is necessary given the fact that many pre-service and practicing teachers still express hesitancy toward meaningful application. One concern that was addressed in the conclusion of the study was how we can include Indigenous voice while also respecting the need and desire for Indigenous people to revitalize their own practice (p. 118). In entertaining the pedagogical benefits of Indigenous practice, we also must also consider the colonial and cultural imbalance this poses to First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities.

Coming In: Pedagogy of Heart and Spirit

A key insight here is that most teachers are being asked to teach in ways that they have never been taught. For Jessica, she experienced this way of learning and knows how it feels in a holistic way. I go back to Elder Cardinal and the late Elder Joe P. Cardinal's words: "the longest journey you will ever make is from your head to your heart" (Personal Communication, 2016). I thought of the lived experience of Jessica as she encountered learning *with*, and how this can implicate research. Here lies the absence of heart in professional development. What Jessica experienced pedagogically through ceremony was holism in motion. Learning through heart experiences brought a new level of connection for Jessica, one that seemed to work against the racism that permeated her childhood.

I remember learning in an ethics class during my pre-service years that *we* are the teachers, and *they* are the students. I remember the dark separation of the two humans. In that class the professor talked about the inappropriateness of hugging. I remember the fear that was instilled in us knowing that this act could be viewed as sexual and unethical. I had only known hugging as an act of loving, so I took this lesson to mean that we (as teachers) are not to show love for our students. I feel this separation of heart from our practice as teachers, I see how it costs us meaningful connections to children and the knowledge we engage them in. This brings me back to the discussions of humanity that Jessica and I had regarding storytelling and the power of sharing in that intimate way. I was reminded of Dr. Dwayne Donald's definition of colonialism (as an ongoing ideology) which is "an extended process of denying relationships" (Donald, 2020, 20:39).

I strongly believe that education has denied us a learning relationship in multi-faceted ways. Imposing a separation of heart and spirit from pedagogy has detrimental consequences for education. Donald speaks to this "relational psychosis" as causing an imbalance (2020, 21:36).

Jessica and I talked in detail about how this experience was a "head to heart" journey. Jessica mentioned a "shift" or a "feeling changed" after her experiences. Donald (2020) says through the process of "unlearning" we can begin to "question the common-sense notions of knowledge, knowing and human beingness" (Donald, 2020, 9:21). He goes on to describe the importance of "meaningful engagement" as critical in addressing "the cultural and spiritual problems that we face" (Donald, 2020, p. 21:35). I believe that the cultural and spiritual problems we face are evidenced in Jessica's experience growing up void of Indigenous presence. In not seeking out Indigenous knowledge with Indigenous people, educators and educational systems are closed off to knowledge and knowing that is rich with heart and spirit. Donald (2020) says that we can't address these problems in intellectual ways; rather we can give people "opportunities to change the way that they live" (Donald, 2020, 33:31). This head-to-heart, relational, and place-based learning that Jessica experienced is an approach that will hopefully awaken something in educators (Donald, 2020, 33:53) just as it has awakened something in Jessica, and me. Perhaps a part of her awakening can be described as the "shift" or "feeling changed" she felt throughout her experiences. The challenge for Jessica will be how to apply heart work into her practice as a teacher.

I go back to Jessica's childhood experience:

These stories (about Indigenous people) [told by her Grandma and Mother] included rude jokes about obesity, drinking coke, chips, incest, and free money on the reserve. I heard these stories for so long I started to dehumanize First Nations people. They no longer were individuals; they were that horrible group my parents hated. I was bitter and resentful to learn about their history in school and I lacked any empathy [. . .] *It was also conflicting being Catholic. We are supposed to love and uplift those less fortunate, but apparently not Indigenous people. To them, this means forgetting the past, pulling themselves up, and living the life of a perfectly behaved, unemotional European person whose identity centered around building the economy.*

I want to uncover the deeply rooted level of insignificance that Jessica's parents had for Indigenous people. In the research, we uncovered the pedagogical importance of love on learning however, all Jessica knew from her parents was hate. The stories her mother told her of being a teacher of First Nation people "often had slivers of her hostility towards Indigenous students" or carried deceptions like "hitting children in school was normal and expected." Jessica explains the ideas she adopted as a youth that "this was just how it was at the time." We can all relate to the "this is just how it was" dialogue. When people say this, it is usually a way for a person to disregard what they or their loved ones were doing was acceptable behaviour in the past. The intergenerational impacts of these ideas still resonate with current teachers, so how much of Jessica's childhood experience is shared by other teachers? How can I ignore the "undeniable kinship we experience when hearing this teachers' tale?" (Jardine, 1992, p. 51). Love and empathy for Indigenous people was absent throughout history, instead the opposite of that, hate, was taught to our teachers of today. According to Moules (2002), we *are*

historical beings and that by recalling and remembering history we learn "new ways of being in the present" (p. 2). What can we learn from the absence of love throughout our past? As humans and educators, how does this implicate the way we teach?

Teaching is a loving act; however, I am uncertain of the lengths that teachers go to show their love for students. I recall the many conversations with my grandma when talking about her Residential School experiences. She said, "They never hugged us (the nuns). Not even once." I cried when she told me that. I could not imagine the fear of a 5-year-old being taken away from their family and never feeling the simple, yet powerful, act of a hug. Not once. Education has done much work in severing the relationship between the head and the heart (Miller, 2019). If we, as educators, work to restore love back into the centre of education, then education might actually be closer to a holistic model (Miller, 2019). "Touching the heart of the child is important in teaching them to learn" (Kenny & Fraser, 2012, p. 27). I reflect on this and I think about restoring love back into education, and how this implicates professional development for the willing (and not so willing) teachers in our country. In order for teachers to feel connected to the content then teachers also need to experience a connection to the people. Digging deeper, past the surface level teaching, will require educators, and myself as coach, to include heart experiences in further learning. Feeling a connection to place added a spiritual and emotional component to Jessica's experiences. These are components missing from many district professional development plans.

Through this experience, Jessica expressed how her emotional, mental, and physical self was challenged in the form of discomfort. Looking back at Jessica's experiences there was less evidence or mention about Jessica's spiritual discomfort. I

interpreted this in many ways. Could it be that discomfort is not felt spiritually? Did we not bring it up because respectfully, we are told not to talk about those sacred stories? I also pondered Jessica's inner conflict with being a Catholic educator and the tension that may have existed in feeling "spiritual." When Jessica dreamed of the sweatlodge, she asked herself: "Was this my nerves or was it something spiritual?" When we acknowledged the dream in that way, Jessica mentioned that it was "rare" for her to think about whether things had spiritual meaning. Although Jessica had mentioned the term "spiritual" a few times throughout this experience, it was not shared as openly as the other dimensions of her experience. In speaking about the sweatlodge, Jessica said that the heat and the discomfort associated with the lodge made the experience "more spiritual" for her. The other mention of spirituality was when Jessica noted "the similarities and differences of faith and spirituality," as she noticed "the balance" of both while in ceremony.

I thought about the impact these experiences had on Jessica and I moved these thoughts to my own educational upbringing and my pre-service teacher experiences. I acknowledged that my K to 12 experience was void of discussion around spirit. My teachers never talked to me about having spirit or how to take care of my spirit. It was not until my early 20s that I started to explore this part of myself. Previously much of this had been guided by parents or other family members. When I attended university, I was not taught to teach children about caring for their own beautiful spirits. I was not taught to talk about spirit. Looking at current curriculum and textbooks, there is little mention of spirituality. Thinking about Jessica's experiences I equated the absence of spirit talk to many people's unconscious or conscious avoidance of the topic. Spirituality has been

absent from education so much so that it has become taboo to speak of in normalized ways.

Activating the spirit can be as simple as listening to a favourite song or feeling a deep sense of peace while visiting the mountains. Richard Wagamese (2011) describes being spiritual as:

> getting in touch with whatever moves your spirit. Silence [. . .] A painting, a photograph, a good book, the words of a song, a blues riff, the touch of a hand, a quiet walk, a walk with my dog [. . .] When you learn to carry that feeling into everything you do, your life becomes a ceremony. (as cited in Miller, 2019, p. 26)

For Cree people, our spirits are activated in prayer and in ceremony. For many Indigenous people, the spirit is activated while on the land. The landscapes in which we reside are "quivering with life" (Miller, 2019, p. 38). All living things are spirited beings, including the plants, the insects, and the water. Unfortunately, outside of ceremony and my own cultural teachings, I was never taught these things in school.

> "We have forgotten how to be enchanted by looking at the stars, feeling the wind on our face, or smelling the grass after it has rained [. . .] today, education focuses almost solely on the mind with some lip service to the body. The soul has been completely ignored" (Miller, 2019, p. 66).

Spirit talk, as a form of honouring life, is also void in teacher education and professional development. So, what does spirit talk in education look like? I believe it looks similar to what Jessica experienced. After our tea with the Elder, Jessica discussed the holistic aspect of our conversations. She said, "the spirit [in education] gets little attention." Ironically, a large part of what Jessica and I missed during this experience

were some deep reflections about how it made our spirits feel. We missed our own opportunity to talk about our spiritual connection to those experiences.

Having spirit is not owned by Indigenous people, in fact different cultures lift their spirits in varying ways. For Cree people, the spirit is activated on the land, in the water, through ceremony, and in song. How would white and non-Indigenous teachers take up spirit talk or spirit pedagogy? How would they do this without promoting one way or a right way to do so? Is there potential for teachers to become inspired by spiritually elevating practice possibly through professional development? Jessica said that she is still “really struggling” on whether she can change her mindset enough to think about teaching with a holistic mindset. Part of her inner struggle is because one must live holistically in order to teach holistically. I think about the familiarity this may bring to teachers as they try too, would attempt at weaving spirituality into their practice. Jessica said in her closing statement, “I still make mistakes because it’s a different worldview that I’m trying to understand.” It is difficult for Jessica, and teachers like Jessica, to move towards a holistic education which includes a spiritual mindset because this is a worldview that they do not share with Indigenous people. Trying to capture the importance of spirit, like the inclusion of heart, is difficult practice for educators who did not grow up experiencing spiritually in the same way that Indigenous people have. Historically, spiritual practices were outlawed and forbidden. It took years for Indigenous people to reclaim that way of life back. The shame and judgment around these practices still exists and could be the very reason why we do not teach spirituality in contemporary curriculum. Understanding the historical “objectifications of life” are complex and according to Dilthey (n.d) can never be fully understood because there is always

something to be uncovered (Smith, 2006, p. 109). As Jessica and I clearly ignored speaking of spirit in our research conversations, it is difficult to describe the effect it has or does not have on our practice. As a Catholic educator, Jessica will have to decide whether there is a space for spirit in her practice and whether this notion causes her an inner tension.

Coming In: Storied Landscapes

"Telling the story of one's journey is tracing one's steps through people, events and places that formed you. And as we pause at each special memory, we realize that we have indeed been formed by our encounters with the stories of each other." (Cajete, 2011, as cited in Young et al., 2010, p. 289)

I had designed and planned experiences for Jessica to learn with Indigenous people, never really intending the *with* part to mean *with me*. I somehow separated myself from her learning; her learning from me, me learning from her, myself as a learner in the experience, me learning alongside Jessica. There were moments throughout our conversations that I realized my own experience as it was lived alongside Jessica. Through both the conversations and in interpreting the data, there was a realization that we were becoming more connected through our experiences, both past and present. In our conversations, and throughout times of interpretation, I started to dig into the layered experiences of Jessica and myself. Even though I was arriving with more exposure and experience than Jessica, there continued to be a lot of learning and growth for me as well. Our experiences were separate but similar and I, too, left, with more questions.

I reflect on my own experiences as a learner and realize that Jessica and I both had insecurities. I also think I may say or do the wrong thing in many circumstances. Both of our identities as learners and teachers, are shaped by our childhood experiences. Having a lack of exposure to ceremony and Indigenous culture as youth made us both to feel inadequate at the best of times. At the same time Jessica was feeling nervous, I too was nervous, but for different reasons. For me, this feeling of anxiousness was usually a mix of excitement for Jessica and a feeling of deep responsibility for her experience. The feeling we shared about our experiences usually carried us into side conversations that were both meaningful and, most times, profound.

After the pipe ceremony we found ourselves discussing the simple act of sitting on the ground. We talked in length about how most people would complain about the hard surface, but in Cree culture, it is symbolic of a deeper connection to the Mother Earth and a teaching of humility. Jessica and I talked about how all teachers should feel the same level of connectedness that we experienced on that day. We realized that we both had unanswered questions about the pipe ceremony. We left more curious about the purpose, the protocols, and the teachings.

After watching me offer protocol (tobacco) during tea, Jessica and I talked about how offering tobacco never gets easier, nor should it. Each time you do it you have a different intention; those intentions are to be coupled with a deep respect for the person receiving it. We were learning about how to honour protocols and being a witness was also a learning experience for Jessica. Jessica talked about how she left the tea feeling like she knew less and had more questions. Jessica said, “I thought I knew more but I was brought back to step one.” I laughed as she revealed this as I, too, left with similar

feelings. Her thoughts resonated with me and would certainly make sense to the many others who hold space and respect for Elders. In learning together during the Inuit storytelling, afterwards Jessica and I talked about the things we appreciated, and both felt like this was an area we could all learn more about. We discussed the emotional connections we had to that experience. We talked about the need for teachers to constantly evaluate their own learning: "Indigenous education should be important to everyone [. . .] this is definitely a commitment" Jessica said.

Jessica was consistent in discussing her feelings of insecurity as a white person. Being one of the only white people in the sweat lodge, Jessica felt like her awkwardness "was a glimpse of what [Indigenous] students might face." We continued to talk about traversing both worldviews with integrity and balance, which is not always easy. This conversation led to other themes like community, segregation, and belonging. Jessica and I shared our feelings of humility and honour; it was a pleasure to share space with Jessica as well as this group of wise, caring, and insightful people throughout the process.

I reflected deeply about these experiences with Jessica. Although I was seeing and experiencing all of this for the second or third or fourth time, I still came to the experience as a humble learner, never knowing any more or any less. However, I did not come to the experience in the same way Jessica did. I thought about our learning: together and independent of one another. I relate this *layering of experiences* to Gadamer's hermeneutic notion of horizons (Strong-Wilson, 2007, p. 118). The horizon, which has been shaped by our social identities, is the range of vision that includes everything which can be seen from a certain vantage point (p. 118). Our prejudices, conscious and unconscious, represent what we cannot see within that horizon (Strong-

Wilson, 2007, p. 118). The horizon is our “inevitable historical situatedness” where we are always “situated somewhere in relation to what we seek to understand or to know” (Weegmann, 2004, p.7). In Gadamer’s (1975) words, to have a horizon means that one is “not being limited to what is nearby but being able to see beyond it” (Weegmann, 2004, p.12). Becoming more aware of our prejudices and our history gives us all a greater understanding of the Other (Weegmann, 2004, p.8). For Jessica and I, it is not possible to see the same horizon (research experience) because where we stand (our histories) provides a different view of it. If horizons are limits to our understanding (Vessey, 2009, p.532) it is also impossible for Jessica and I to have the same experience.

Jessica said in her written narrative:

> *Maybe there is some unique quality that makes certain people want to be open-minded. If I could figure it out, I would share it. But maybe, it’s just exposure, education, and personal adversity that pushes people to change.*

If I knew I would share it too, but for now I offer a few simple interpretations. Jessica is correct in her statement, I believe too that exposure to Indigenous people, coupled with increased education, and personal adversity helps to drive the process of open-mindedness. In the metaphor of the horizon, those three things help shape one’s view. As for the consistent insecurity of white teachers, Jessica included, the persistent feelings of “not knowing enough” or “saying the wrong thing” or “not wanting to offend” limits the ways in which teachers are able to see beyond what Green (1978) calls their “storied geography” or “landscapes” (Strong-Wilson, 2007, p. 122). Until teachers work with those feelings, they will continue to work with a limited, and possibly blurred, line of sight.

When it comes to *wanting* to be open-minded, teachers do indeed have to feel compelled to learn about and with Indigenous people. This is the work of the heart. Hirsch, as described by Vessey (2007) says that whatever we are looking to understand is either within our horizon or beyond our horizon (p.532). When it comes to Indigenous education, it is beyond many people's horizons based on their childhood and adult experiences. Further, it is beyond many people's horizon based on our *shared history*. However, the "this is just the way that it was" mentality cannot excuse teachers from the heart work ahead.

Chapter 6:

Discussion

Considerations

I asked Jessica what she thought the barriers would be for other teachers to learn with Indigenous people in the same way she did. The following is a combined summary of study limitations and future discussions from both of our perspectives and experiences.

Needing and Wanting

Jessica worried that given the same events and opportunities, other teachers might not see this as an opportunity to learn or would see it as not applicable to their classrooms. There is also the concern that teachers would see this as something they have to do because it is mandated by the TQS (Government of Alberta, 2018a). Jessica said she feared that “teachers are just checking a box.” Learning with and coming into the community should be something you would want to do versus have to do. Also, respecting the Elders, knowledge keepers, advisors, or community members would need to be considered to the fullest. I personally would not take anyone into a ceremony or community if I felt they seemed “forced”. I do not believe that Elders would want it that way. “You’d have to want to do it and experience it [. . .] wanting it makes it significant” says Jessica. Learning *with* means that you are *coming in* and entering a respectful and reciprocal relationship; this is not an invitation to take the knowledge and run.

Teacher Comfort and Confidence

In speaking of confidence, Jessica mentioned that her experience learning with Indigenous people helped to give her confidence in classroom application. Having heard that story or learning from this Elder, Jessica was then able to "gather other people's experiences" in order to become more experienced herself (van Manen, 1990, p. 62). However, Jessica still grappled with the question she's always faced such as, "am I giving these teachings the respect they deserve?" or "I want you to know but I don't know if I'm the best person to teach you." The "daunting tasks" (of implementing Indigenous content) makes non-Indigenous teachers feel uncomfortable because we don't know what to do and we don't want to get it wrong" (Carroll et al., 2020, p. 13). As a researcher, I am faced with more questions. Is teacher comfort in teaching Indigenous content truly possible without the presence of confidence?

Conflicting Worldviews

Jessica said: *Another barrier I found was the conflicting nature of the Indigenous worldview with the European worldview. It seemed like the divisive nature of history, curriculum, and society made it look like one worldview simply couldn't exist with the other. I think many teachers feel compartmentalized by their subjects and the curriculum, and it's challenging to embrace a holistic form of education within a society that doesn't embrace holistic living. This division can filter down to the classroom, and thus my confidence is confronted in looking for a meaningful balance. I still make mistakes because it's a different worldview that I'm trying to understand.*

This feeling of Jessica's was echoed in a few of the studies done with white teachers engaging in Indigenous content. Some of the participants in Higgins et al.'s (2013) study said, "I teach from a white perspective, that's all I know" or "how many people from a historical white background understand the seven grandfather teachings?" (p. 258). Another participant in their study said, "I felt hypocritical . . . who am I to do a good job if I myself don't know myself culturally?" (Higgins et al., 2013, p. 258). Jessica, positioned in the dominant cultural group, was like many teachers in Higgins et al.'s study, a "cultural stranger to themselves" (2013, p. 260). For educators, it will never be possible to capture a "true essence," nor can white teachers become experts in epistemologies that are not their own (Carroll et al., 2020). It is certain that mistakes will be made. The real work in teacher practice will be understanding that perfection is not necessary or required. What is necessary and required is a willingness to be imperfect.

Replicating this study would need follow up or to be provided supplementary support in challenging colliding worldviews. I refer back to the holistic approach and would encourage educators to learn the benefits of both Indigenous and Canadian worldviews through a balanced approach. Confronting colonized worldviews and attempting to understand a holistic mindset will be a lengthy commitment on the part of many educators. Working together to teach holistically does not mean that we will immediately be able to align our understanding. We get better at collaborating by collaborating. As we learn to work together, we will be able to bring different knowledges to education in a more balanced way (Koleszar-Green, 2019).

Timing

One of the biggest challenges for Jessica and I was the issue of time and our normalized need to worship it. Jessica acknowledged that this experience was a timely process. “It takes time away from your family and is a sacrifice,” she said. The times where Jessica and I had met were often times away from our day jobs and away from our family. It took many hours of commitment on Jessica’s part to make this research possible. Meeting me to purchase protocol for ceremony, attending ceremony, having conversations about ceremony, and writing about her experiences are examples of the things that Jessica had to do to “become the world” (van Manen, 1990) that we, as Indigenous people, live in. The concept of time was brought up in every experience and became a constant reminder of how much we as Canadians are attached to it. In planning the pipe ceremony, I was unable to give Jessica or other attendees a timeframe because “it happens when it happens” most ceremonialists would say. Clock in Cree is *pisimohkan*. This translates to “fake sun” which demonstrates linguistically that our people did not follow time, they followed the sun. It is important for others to know that many Cree people still rely on their historical time sense, especially when it comes to ceremonies, feasts, and family gatherings. Krahn (2021) speaks of Mi’kmaq scholars Downey and Whitty (2020), who speak of time by saying “nothing ever happens until it is meant to, or until the spirit moves us” (p.251). Growing up knowing that timelines are different in First Nations culture, I still, as a professional, navigate my linear ways. I go back to balance. I am constantly trying to find balance in how I engage with time as a colonial construct. I suggest that systems that govern education challenge the ways in which we teach children to value, honour, or follow time. As educators, we rely heavily

on time for planning. Scheduling and knowing timeframes helps us anticipate processes in comfortable ways. This was something that both Jessica and I noticed too, the intense value that many teachers place on the clock. There is an obvious need to “dislodge ourselves from the colonial logics” of time (Krahn, 2021, p.255). Jessica and I talked about typical teacher thinking and a phrase which we hear all the time, “I would like to do that, but I don’t have time.” One of the events I chose for this project happened within days of the Christmas break. I caught myself thinking, “why did I pick this time? This is a terrible time for teachers.” Jessica and I later realized that it was the perfect time to learn as it was a reminder for many of us that family and security are blessings not to be taken for granted. Jessica and I caught ourselves asking then, is there really a bad time to learn?

Between synchronizing moon times and finding more learning opportunities for Jessica, it was difficult to plan for events that I knew were not typically planned in colonial ways. Although there was social media to create more awareness, I found that I would discover community events within a day of them occurring. Asking Jessica, a day or two before something was happening always seemed to present a conflict of time since her and I both were busy mothers. Round dances, women’s ceremonies, sage picking, and a sun dance were a few of the events we originally planned to attend but had to cancel mainly due to poor timing, the times of the events, moon times, or it just was not the right time. Even though this research took more time, because of timing, I am at peace with how everything came to be and I honour and recognize all experiences we had. I welcomed each one into our story and affirm that we learned exactly what we were meant to learn. I would suggest for future educators and researchers wanting to learn with

Indigenous people that they acknowledge and release their own personal attachments to time and begin to view time as sacred and holistic (Krahn, 2021, p. 238/255).

Being Connected

Jessica's ability to participate in events and ceremonies was dependent on my ability to connect with Indigenous people in community. Much of what was planned was made possible through the already existing relationships I have maintained with Indigenous people in this area. This is important because in order to learn from and with Indigenous people you must be connected to them in some way. This means that you have formed or are currently forming relationships or know someone who has formed and maintained those relationships. Weber-Pillwax (2004) says "it can take many years to establish the kind of relationships and acquire the kind of knowledge that permits a researcher to actually access and participate fully in the experiences of community as Indigenous peoples experience community" (p. 86). Jessica mentioned in our conversations that one of the most memorable times in the research was the time with the women before we entered the sweatlodge. While the men prepared at the site of ceremony, the women stayed in a separate area. In this space, women were arranging and setting out food, changing into ceremony attire, tending to the fire, and naturally, engaging in conversation. Listening to the women speak openly about their life or the struggles they have as Indigenous women was eye-opening for Jessica. Jessica spoke of these moments and said, "I never get to hear things like that" and "I got to learn what that experience might have been like without it being from the Aboriginal Studies 30 textbook." This memorable and privileging experience for Jessica was made possible

because of her positionality as a visitor. “Visiting” or “calling in” as Youngbear-Tibbets (1996) names it (p.25) can be described as being privilege to “community discourse” (p.18), much like Jessica was. As an insider experience, this “kitchen table discourse” allows visitors to witness or partake in peoples “hearts and sensibilities” (p.16) in an intimate way. The “calling in” experience for Jessica or the exposure to “intimate knowledge” (p.25) was enacted by the research, led by myself, an Indigenous person who has spent years making these connections.

What happens to the thousands of educators who do not know Indigenous people or know Indigenous people involved in research in this way? What happens when we realize that healthy relationships such as this rarely exist? I strongly believe that a *withness* model is possible for *some* educators, but is it sustainable for all? Further to these thoughts, there is also a need to keep many things sacred in our communities. Keeping Indigenous knowledge in the places where it was sustained for centuries is imperative in maintaining connections to land, language, and people. If I were to replicate this research, I would include the voices of the many Indigenous people that have taught me along the way. The question surrounding this inquiry intrigues me: what are the opinions of Elders and Knowledge Keepers about learning *with Canadians*?

Learn as You Go

It was difficult to prepare Jessica for this kind of learning. “I was experiencing it as it was happening,” Jessica said. A lot of times I did not have answers because I, too, was in the process of learning. After years of learning, I still have questions. I was preparing Jessica for certain events in the same way I was prepared: with very little

information. When Jessica said, “I would have liked to know more about the sweat lodge teachings prior to going” and “I was experiencing it as it was happening,” I couldn’t help but smirk, as most Cree people would. I came to the realization that “I can’t even prepare you because I’m still learning too.” There is a need to dismantle our inner desire as teachers to know it all and address the “tensions of being and becoming” (Britzman, 2003, p. 49). I imagined that prior to contact, First Nation children went out to pick berries, and as they did, they listened to stories from their aunties. Their aunties probably did not explain why they needed the berries nor were the children told the moral of the story. This way of knowing and learning is still active for Cree people in what is now known as Alberta. Some people may relate this type of interaction as the ethic of non-interference. According to Wark et al., (2019) an Indigenous person “will not interfere in any way with the rights and privileges of another person” (p.420). Indigenous people believe that all people are to be respected and deserve freedom and personal autonomy (Wark et al., 2019, p.422). Therefore, gentle persuasion in the form of a story would be preferred over imposing meaning on to someone. In my experiences, I was never given answers. Instead, I was told a story or asked questions, in this way, it was “up to you” to understand what it meant (Hoffman, 2010, p.25).

Jessica and I talked and laughed about having a “do over.” “Knowing what I know now, what would I do differently? What would another opportunity feel like?” I hope for Jessica that her “do-overs” include her children. For our research, I suggested that Jessica attend on her own to ensure she could focus on her unique experiences. We agreed that this might be the best approach; however, I would suggest that since she has

now lived it, she includes her family in the next chapter. My favourite moments in community and in ceremony were with my family; my daughter right beside me.

Suggestions for Policy and Research

"I left there with more questions than I came with" Jessica said. As I looked at the complexities of this research, I was reminded that my question was not a problem to be solved, but a question "to be inquired into" (van Manen, 1997, p. 24).

Existing and Future Research

In Finney and Orr's 1995 study of pre-service teachers in Saskatchewan, they spoke out about their lack of education about Indigenous people. At enrollment, students "lacked specific information, experiences, and general understanding" and had little or no background knowledge of Indigenous people (p. 328). At the closing of the study, the pre-service teachers who participated said they gained an appreciation for the strength of First Nations peoples' character which led to an increased respect for Indigenous people overall (Finney & Orr, 1995). Having little understanding of the course content and the level of learning with Indigenous people, it is hard to say whether students benefited in this study the same way that Jessica did. Although dated, this study shows the transformation that is possible when given meaningful learning experiences in teacher preparation programs.

Looking at professional development, Parding's (2013) research of non-Indigenous teachers working in Indigenous schools revealed a lot about the benefits of learning with Indigenous people: "Learning with (actively forming), rather than from

(passively receiving)" was crucial in developing better strategies for teachers (p. 249). They also noted the importance of recruiting teacher trainers from the Indigenous population itself (Parding, 2013). The same should be said for professional development organizations and government institutions across Canada who employ non-Indigenous professionals to take up space in Indigenous education roles. Organizations and institutions continue to disservice teachers and students by intentionally leaving Indigenous people out of Indigenous education initiatives and discussions. By replicating a separatist system, we will continue to perpetuate an education dedicated to about*ness*.

Regalla (2016) makes use of *comfort zones* and explains how service-learning (community service combined with instruction and reflection) can be a means to "challenge one's cultural stereotypes" (p. 66). Service-learning for pre-service teachers is an immersive experience that addresses community needs while promoting student learning (Jacoby, 1996, as cited in Lavery et al., 2014). Service learning focuses on reciprocity and enacts in the spirit of giving back to community. The hyphen in the word service-learning symbolises the balance of both the service and the learning that come from the experience. Boyle-Gaise and McIntyre (2008) explain that service learning can also allow teachers to "work with and learn from local people" (as cited in Yuan, 2018, p. 9). Reciprocity as a part of service-learning intrigues me as I wonder what this might actually look like for pre-service teacher programs at the post-secondary level. I think about the act of reciprocity in First Nations teachings and gain excitement for the value it would have in teacher preparation programs. Community-based approaches, or learning from place, helps to form place-based attachments that connect the learner to the actual content itself. Pratt and Danyluk (2017) say, "we must move learning beyond the

classroom to include meaningful community-based experiences. In doing so, pre-service teachers witness the implications of a colonial past and are prompted to examine the privileges of their own positioning within Canadian Society" (p.21).

Earlier I described Helms (1990) as designing the *Six Stages of White Racial Identity,* a framework which helps to develop positive racial identity in white preservice students (as cited in Bollin & Finkel, 1995). The stages move from number one (Contact/Naivete) to number six which is Autonomy/Transculturalism. In their study, Bollin and Finkel (1995) reveal that pre-service students who had direct, sustained contact with people of colour were the only students to reach the fourth stage in the *White Racial Identity* framework. "Often, these experiences were field experiences related to the course, but students also mention events in their lives independent of their university experiences" (Bollin & Finkel, 1995, p. 28). This validated some of my own curiosities and assured me of the power that lived experience(s) have on teacher confidence.

The literature and research related to learning with Indigenous people is minimal. I would suggest that future research be enacted that would look deeper into the lived experience of teachers and school leaders learning with Indigenous people. Further to this, there should be additional research that speaks to the lived experience of Indigenous people working with white and non-Indigenous educators.

Decolonizing Teacher Preparedness and Professional Development

In her writing, Jessica said that having experience in professional development sessions over the past 3 years and through the cultural lessons she experienced with me, she felt she had enough knowledge, stories, and experiences to share with students. For

Jessica one of the biggest barriers to teaching Indigenous content with confidence was confronting her own privilege and

> *reflecting on the negative perspectives my parents and family members spewed into my head as a youth [. . .] challenging myself to learn and listen to Indigenous people. After hearing the stories from survivors, listening to Elders, and experiencing parts of culture, I felt connected to my history and privilege I had as a result of [these] injustices*.

For Jessica and I, learning in community was an act of decolonizing professional development. The outcome of Jessica's experiences would not have been the same, or even possible, had we invited someone into the schools. By coming into the community, Jessica became witness to the beauty that is Indigenous culture and ceremony. This is something that cannot be visualized in a public-school classroom or a government approved textbook.

To clarify, Indigenize and decolonize are not used interchangeably. Indigenization is about bringing Indigenous knowledge, people, and theories into spaces where Western forms of thought have been centralized (Koleszar-Green, 2019). For Jessica, Indigenization means that she could continue to challenge her own pedagogical practices by ensuring that the resources and experiences she includes have Indigenous voices. Strong-Wilson (2007) says that decolonization is the political process of Indigenous people regaining territory and voice and, according to Smith (1999), has to directly benefit Indigenous people. For Jessica and other white educators, their work in decolonizing practice is to unlearn and challenge subconscious and conscious notions of superiority (Battiste, 2013), so much so, that their efforts are actualized and felt by the

Indigenous students they teach. (2007). In order to shift their horizons, white teachers need a decolonizing education that involves "bringing forward" the storied history presently subsumed within their teaching but in relation to post-colonial or counter-stories (p. 119). Jessica became aware of the relationships she had with colonialism and began the process of challenging her own "master story" (Strong-Wilson, 2007, p. 124). The process of "*re*writing and *re*righting" (Smith, 1999, p.28) for Jessica will be the beginning of her journey in claiming teacher confidence.

My role in decolonizing professional development will be to uphold the ways in which my ancestors taught: hands-on, through story, on the land, in relation, with food, full of laughter. I long to restore these ways and will attempt to disrupt the ways that school districts lead learning. Deconstructing learning for teachers is more than just working against those structures; it is a complete overturning so that something different can be done (Higgins, 2015). There must be balance, and this cannot just happen at the school district level; this starts in post-secondary programs for teachers. In addition to Indigenous perspective courses in universities, Madden (2015) suggests a "pedagogy for decolonizing" in response to teachers' lack of knowledge (as cited in Dharamshi, 2019, p. 31). In asking teachers to decolonize pedagogy, we are asking educators to teach in a way they have never taught. Introducing and immersing pre-service teachers in Indigenous practices helps them to bridge theory and practice and develop strategies for their own future classrooms (Harrison & Greenfield, 2011, as cited Dharamshi, 2019).

In addition to Indigenizing and decolonizing education, we can look to Indigenous worldviews to guide institutions. It is certain that spirit and heart practice can enhance current education models. This needs to be actualized so that we can reclaim what has

been taken away. Cajete (1994) says that we learn through our bodies and spirits as much as through our minds (as cited in Miller, 2019). An education inclusive of heart and spirit completes the circle, thus making it holistic. As a teacher educator, I can start to model holistic practice by including heart and spirit pedagogy into teacher learning. This fragmented education (Miller, 2019) that we offer creates an extreme imbalance in individual and collective wellness in schools today as wholeness gives rise to well-being and happiness (Miller, 2019).

A Withness Education

The absence of relationship in teacher preparedness and professional development is glaring and I am led to reimagine and suggest a more relational process, a with*ness* in teacher education.

The TQS (Government of Alberta, 2018a) asks teachers to use the programs of study to provide opportunities for all students to build a respect for the history, cultures, languages, contributions, perspectives, experiences, and contemporary contexts of Indigenous people. However, the program of study would be the last place I would look to seek out “opportunities” or try to “build a respect for” Indigenous people. Educators will also need to think about the lack of Indigenous presence in education. Further to looking at the systemic roots of racism, poverty, and trauma, school divisions will also have to investigate the political barriers when it comes to working with Indigenous people. What commitments will schools make so that other teachers can *come in* (in the same way Jessica did). I would suggest that teachers and school leaders think first about how they want to begin building and maintaining positive and ethical relationships with

Indigenous people. Further, institutions will need to unpack their historical situatedness and how it has hampered meaningful relationships and opportunities from happening.

Section one of the TQS (Government of Alberta, 2018a), *Fostering Effective Relationships,* requires teachers to build positive and productive relationships by "(d) inviting First Nations, Métis and Inuit parents/guardians, Elders/knowledge keepers, cultural advisors and local community members into the school and classroom" (p. 3). Let me point out, it says "inviting" and "into the school and classroom." What commitments will school leaders make to bring teachers *out* of the classroom and *in* to the spaces where Indigenous people exist and thrive?

Donald (2009) uses forts as a concept for understanding the blatant reality of our current "divisive and dispiriting" curriculum and pedagogical challenges (p. 20). Forts, as national symbols, were designed to separate and assert sovereignty over an area or people (Donald, 2012, p.42). The mythic sign of the fort does not allow for outsider presence as well as outsider knowledge (Donald, 2012, p.42), Donald (2009, p. 20-21) explains:

> The space of the fort has been claimed and expanded-geographically, politically, psychically, and ideologically-in the interests of a Canadian nation and nationality founded on correlated myths of modernity and colonial frontier logics. These myths work together to seemingly justify and maintain cultural and civilizational divides, and thus produce them as acultural and ahistorical representations of pre-existing realities. Colonial frontier logics are those epistemological assumptions and presuppositions, derived from the colonial project of dividing the world according to racial and cultural categorizations, which serve to naturalize assumed

divides and thus contribute to their social and institutional perpetuation. Schools and curricula are predicated on these logics and have both served to enforce epistemological and social conformity to Eurowestern standards established and presumably held in common by *insiders.*

The ongoing colonial past in present-day education is replicated in academic circles and continues to ensure that the colonial insider/outsider binary lives on (Donald, 2009, p. 25) . The fort mentality, as Donald (2009) calls it, also has worked to deny relationships connecting Indigenous peoples and Canadians both inside and outside of the institution of education. The notion of Jessica *coming in* and learning *with* is contrary to historic Canadian fort integration tactics where everyone must be kept inside. The with*ness* education that Jessica experienced did not require her to conform; rather, it required her to have courage, an open mind, and a willingness to learn. With*ness* as an experience was a way for Jessica to understand and witness the effectiveness that Indigenous practices and ways of being can have on learning and teaching.

Remembering our Treaty Obligations

With*ness* for Jessica and I was an attempt to reunite and repair historically broken relationships. In a professional and personal development endeavour, with*ness* became a contemporary example of the true spirit and intent of the treaty agreements. According to Donald (2009), we must face each other across historic divides, deconstruct our shared past, and acknowledge that our present and future are similarly tied together (p.5). For a with*ness* education, educators need to also acknowledge that colonialism is not only something in which Indigenous peoples are involved, but also a reality in which

settlers are implicated (Cannon, 2012 as cited in Nardozi et.al., 2014, p.111). For pre-service teacher Canadians, this means "it is necessary for them to explore their relationship with Indigenous peoples" including unpacking the history and present reality of colonialism (Nardozi et.al., 2014, p.111). When I speak of colonialism, I speak to the interactions that occurred and are *still* occurring between Indigenous people and Canadians. The signed treaties are not historic but living, sacred documents that our ancestors agreed to. The treaties were arrangements "between nations intended to recognize, respect, and acknowledge in perpetuity the sovereign character of each of the treaty parties, within the context of rights conferred by the Creator to the Indian nations" (Cardinal & Hildebrandt, 2000, p. 41). For Cree signatories, the relationship can be described as *wîtaskê-osihcikêwin,* an agreement to live together in peace and harmony (Cardinal & Hildebrandt, 2000, p. 53). Canadians, as living inheritors and beneficiaries of those treaties are also implicated in these definitions. When Elders speak of the treaties negotiated by their nations, they say that the negotiations came from the teachings and prophecies arising from their spiritual traditions. Hence when Elders speak of the treaties, they are also describing the spiritual principles, traditions, protocols, and ceremonies held sacred in the treaty negotiations and agreements (Cardinal & Hildebrandt, 2000, p. 6). For Jessica, she became witness to the ceremonies and processes that were present and deemed necessary by First Nations people in the treaty-making process. Jessica was able to gain a deeper understanding of the "nature and character of the treaty" which is contrary to the Crown's colonial focus on the written legalities of the Treaty agreement (Cardinal & Hildebrandt, 2000, p. 25). I relate this to Jessica seeing the pedagogical and

spiritual benefits of with*ness* (process) versus her extracting the aboutness (content) of her experiences in the research.

Miyo wîcéhtowin, having or possession good relations, is a core value that Cree people are required to establish (Cardinal & Hildebrandt, 2000, p. 14). According to Elders, the treaties were founded upon the doctrines of *miyo wîcéhtowin,* an essential element of an enduring and lasting relationship between the First Nations, the Crown, and her subjects (Cardinal & Hildebrandt, 2000, p. 15). *Wîtaskêwin,* a multidimensional translation for "living together on the land", is also integral to the treaty intent as this word embodies the act of sharing the land with one another. Contrary to what many Canadians believe, the treaties are not just about land but are about the deep, spiritual connection that First Nations people had with our Mother Earth, *kikawinawaskiy.* So, when Elders speak of sharing the land, they are also referring to sharing the knowledge and sacred understanding of the land. This is something that Jessica will now be able to take back into her practice: a deeper connection to the land, and in-turn, her obligation as a treaty person.

bell hooks, cited in Kovach (2013), says that engaging in dialogue is one of the simplest ways we can begin as teachers and scholars in erasing barriers linked to race, gender and class (p. 121). Kovach (2013) says that treaty, as a relationally sacred document, "at its core is dialogic and talking *with* is powerful" (p. 121). Kovach (2013) suggests teaching *from* and *through* treaty as transgressive pedagogy or critical citizenry schooling (p. 116). I echo Kovach's suggestions for treaty. What Kovach calls for is exactly what Elders and many of my mentors have been requesting for decades. I would

strongly suggest a treaty education be enacted for pre-service and practicing teachers, one which holds up a with*ness* experience present in this research.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

Pihtikwe

Anxiety, insecurity, nervousness, and worry are just a few of the mixed emotions that Jessica encountered in her experiences. This discomfort was a part of her learning something new or trying something different. Jessica's experiences gave life to the term *stepping out of your comfort zone*. Jessica said one of the more difficult parts of this process was challenging herself and being able to put herself "in a vulnerable situation [. . .] Can I do this?" Jessica asked herself. Carroll et al., (2020) says that as imperfect accomplices, teachers must overcome their discomfort and move through the feeling to the other side, realizing that it was in fact possible.

For Jessica, coming into community in this way was a new experience. For her, feeling like an outsider was unsettling as she navigated her white presence. White presence is abundant in textbooks, curriculum, and media representations, but whiteness is not common in First Nations communities. This is not to say that white people do not live, work, and engage in community; simply put there are far fewer white people in day-to-day settings in First Nations communities than in an urban setting. Diangelo (2012) says that white people stay in the comfort of white spaces (Hines, 2016) and for Jessica, her upbringing, her educational experience as a child, and her teacher preparation programs had not prepared her to leave her comfort zone. Although she felt welcomed in every situation, coming out of her comfort, for Jessica, was an awkward experience.

I read an article in the NY Times titled, "What If Instead of Calling People Out, We Called Them In?" This was a story about a university professor named Lorretta J.

Ross who decided to have uncomfortable conversations with her post-secondary class about the "cancel culture" movement. Professor Ross says that the "call-out culture" mentality takes away a perfect learning opportunity and turns it into emotional abuse and public shaming on social media, YouTube comments, and even college spaces (Bennet, 2020). I imagine that the cancel culture movement brings another level of anxiety to already fearful teachers. In an endeavour to stop public shaming, and hopefully ease tension, *calling in*, as described by Ross, is "calling out" but with love; a polite way of encouraging societal progress. I related a lot of this article to what teachers leave out or abandon or "absolve themselves of" based on their consistent fears of getting it "wrong" (Carroll et al., 2020, p. 13). I see *calling in* as an invitation for (willing) Indigenous people to provide sites for (willing) teachers to learn and grow, in solidarity.

I realized the courage it took for Jessica to accept my invitation and come into these experiences. Jessica reminded me of the strength it takes to learn in this way. Wilson (2015) speaks to the term "coming in," which is contrary to what mainstream LGBTQ society calls "coming out." Describing her work with Cree and Ojibwe two-spirit people, Wilson (2015) says that "*coming in* is an act of returning, fully present in ourselves [. . .] in connection with all our relations" (p. 3). I know that Jessica is not returning in the same way that Wilson (2015) speaks of. However, I appreciate the positive, strength-based terminology that Wilson uses to describe a seemingly scary identity event. Rather than seeing Jessica's experience as coming out of her comfort zone, I choose to see it as her *coming in*. By her coming in—to ceremony, to community—she was not just physically present, but was more aware of her holistic presence, including the spiritual. In Cree we use the term *pihtikwe* to invite our friends

and family into place, “come in!” I saw Jessica’s experience as a beautiful transition, one which contradicts the fort mentality; instead of me coming into the fort, Jessica was stepping out of it and into an experience, with Indigenous people, with me.

Expanding the Circle

In this thesis, I have described Jessica’s lived experiences in the hopes of opening up “an already-familiar way of belonging in the world” (Jardine, 1992, p. 56). Using Gadamer’s (1986) words (as cited in van Manen, 1990), I merely *pointed at* and *pointed out* (p.26) Jessica’s experience of *learning with* Indigenous people in the hope that there would be other educators who could relate to her stories or experiences. I anticipate that other educators will find kinship in hearing Jessica’s story and find solace in her experience of *coming in*.

What I learned from this research is that one has to be willing to step out and come in. Although Jessica was hesitant at times and questioned her own ability, she was still eager to attend. I have learned that this is a reflexive process. Jessica needed to unpack her own personal story and connect that story to her current status as an educator. Constantly being aware of her own story and biases was a gift that Jessica kept reminding herself of. I learned that her own identity as a white person has been a barrier in Jessica’s educator confidence and through that we discovered that with*ness* experiences provides a layer of pedagogical impact that has assisted Jessica in her own educator insecurity.

The negotiations and the signing of the treaties are said to have expanded the First Nations sovereign circle (Cardinal & Hildebrandt, 2000, p. 41). Through this research, my own sovereign circle has expanded to include Jessica. Opening up my own circle was not difficult; I simply extended an invitation for Jessica to come in to

ceremony with me and she graciously accepted. In order to turn her personal experience into practice and pedagogy in pre-service and teacher professional development, we have to think about how to do so on a macro-level. If we, as an Indigenous collective extend the invitation, who will graciously accept and on whose terms? Stepping out and coming in will mean that post-secondary institutions will need to expand their own policies to include experiences that establish a with*ness* relationship, one which is embodied in the spirit and intent of the treaties. For school districts, senior administration will need to expand their policies, budgets, and mindsets to allow for a with*ness* education. This expansion will allow for their own teachers to step out and come into processes held sacred at the time of treaty signing, thus renewing and/or repairing our current relationship status. I think about the treaty medal, its symbolic significance in education. On the medal there is two figures, a white man and a First Nations man, and they are engaging in a handshake. The handshake is at the center of the medal but if you look closer, it appears as though the First Nations man is extending his hand out further. This image is symbolic, both historically and today. Our people extending our arms and extending the invite. When we did so, we were met with four walls. The four walls, first a fort and now a school. A with*ness* education provides balance: an equal handshake with equal willingness.

From Inside the Circle

"We don't fully know what it is because we don't yet know what will become of it. And we don't know this *because it is still coming*." (Jardine, 1992, p. 57)

I wish to give Jessica the last words. This is to honour Jessica's with*ness* experience. She entered as one, in her own way and now she may exit as one, a changed human being.

Learning with Indigenous people during ceremony created a sense of community. When I was learning with Indigenous people, it was more intimate and connected than learning about Indigenous people in a classroom. It also felt more authentic because we were learning in a way that was meaningful to First Nations. [. . .] The visits made me question Eurocentric systems [. . .] Hearing [the Elder] share some knowledge on holistic education was eye-opening as I needed to reaffirm ways of knowing as the foundation for teaching in every class I teach. Attending the sweat and the pipe ceremony allowed me to experience some of the spiritual sides of culture that I couldn't have done justice to from reading in the textbook. It helped create more empathy and understanding for what was taken under the Indian Act and connect with Indigenous students who share their own stories. [. . .] I remind myself that learning is a journey; I need to invest time in continued Indigenous education. [. . .] I'm still wondering what a time of reconciliation will look like and if I'm part of the problem or solution. As part of the research, I wasn't sure what was expected of me other than to learn and take in the events, listen to the teachings, learn about the culture. I'm still unsure if my answers will help accomplish anything or show any insight into a teacher's experiences with Indigenous people. It was strange having an Indigenous person ask my perspective; I didn't feel like I deserved to attend these events, but I always felt welcome. I found that I don't have to be comfortable

to enjoy this experience. It's a mindset. For the time being, this needs to be a lifelong learning journey -Jessica

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Appendix A:

Information Letter and Consent Form

Study Title:
Coming Into Comfort: The Process of Learning "Foundational Knowledge"

Research Investigator	**Supervisor**
Mrs. Etienna Moostoos-Lafferty Master's in Secondary Education University of Alberta moostoos@ualberta.ca	Dr. Dwayne Donald University of Alberta Associate Professor Faculty of Secondary Education ddonald@ualberta.ca

Background

Starting with the creation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, there have been several initiatives and policies created to actively engage teachers in understanding and learning about Indigenous histories. *The Calls to Action*, the on-going curriculum redesign by *Alberta Education*, the *Teacher Quality Standard (5)* are all examples of policy that is motivating educators to learn more about Indigenous history and themes to better their practice as professional teachers.

Purpose

Through this research, the story of one participant will be told, it is through this story that other educators will come to understand the benefits of engaging in "foundational" and Indigenous knowledges. It is my hope that educators will seek the same experiences to increase their own awareness, not just for the betterment of their professional practice, but for their own personal progression.

Research Question
What is it the process of learning "foundational knowledge" like for a practicing educator?

Research
The data that I plan to collect will be a series of interviews with the participant (after they engage in/with Indigenous community and ceremony). Each one of the activities they engage in are aimed at increasing their knowledge and awareness of Indigenous history, culture, and contemporary lifestyles. The four learning opportunities will be informal and off-site, taking the participant away from the traditional district office professional development setting. Having discussions with Elders, participating in a sweat lodge ceremony, taking part in a pipe ceremony, and/or attending a Pow Wow or Round Dance are examples of what the participant may encounter. As a participant-researcher, I will be

present at all of these learning opportunities which will provide a level of comfort and familiarity for the participant.

Commitment
It is expected that the participant will commit to approximately 4-6 days of learning and collaborating. An example of a learning experience for the participant may look as follows:

1. Meet with researcher to discuss thoughts and feelings prior to participating in a pipe ceremony (1 hour)
2. Participate in a pipe ceremony (1 hour)
3. Complete interview after pipe ceremony and discuss feelings, thoughts, conclusions, etc. (1-2 hours)

Some events will take longer, this is why 4-6 days is necessary. I am also factoring in the time it takes you to review and revise transcripts or final thesis.

Risks and Benefits
Through these proposed experiences, the participant may experience low to moderate stress during times of inexperience such as entering a sweatlodge or attending and participating in a pipe ceremony. The benefits of entering into these experiences will give them a head start in understanding what many teachers do not have the privilege of learning. The *Teacher Quality Standard (5) Applying Foundational Knowledge about First Nation, Metis and Inuit* asks that teachers help their students develop a respect for Indigenous history, languages, and culture (to name a few), by participating in the research events, the participant will develop a respect that they can talk about from personal experience.

Voluntary Participation
Participation is voluntary. Refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits that participants are otherwise entitled to. Participants may also discontinue participation at any time up to the final review of thesis. You may discontinue up to this point without penalty or loss of benefits.

Confidentiality and Anonymity
Since I am only involving one participant, it is difficult to provide total anonymity. By participating in the study, the participant is accepting that others in their cohort, and potentially school's division, will know of their involvement in the research. If the participant chooses, we will create an alias or pseudonym to use in the final thesis that will protect their identity from other districts who do not know the participant personally. The data collected will be kept confidential and will only be accessible by myself and my supervisor, Dr. Dwayne Donald. Upon conclusion of this research, the printed data will be stored in a locked cabinet in my home office for five years at which point it will be shredded and destroyed. The participant may request a copy of the final thesis as well as transcripts, recordings and field notes obtained in the study.

Further Information

For further information and questions, please email me at emoostooslafferty@ecsrd.ca

If you are interested in being a participant, please contact me via email within one week of receiving this letter.

The plan for this study has been reviewed by a Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta. If you have questions about your rights or how research should be conducted, you can call (780) 492-2615. This office is independent of the researchers

Appendix B:

Recruitment Letter to Future Participant

Invitation to Participate in Research

Tansi. Hello.

You are invited to participate in a study titled, Coming Into Comfort: The Process of Learning “Foundational Knowledge”

The study will be conducted by Etienna Moostoos-Lafferty, a Masters in Secondary Education student at the University of Alberta under the supervision of Dr. Dwayne Donald. The plan for this study has now been reviewed and approved by the Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta and I am now able to start the research process.

Through this research, the story of **one** participant (an Indigenous Education Lead Teacher) will be told, it is through this story that other educators in Alberta will come to understand the benefits of engaging in "foundational" and Indigenous knowledges. It is my hope that educators will seek the same experiences to increase their own awareness, not just for the betterment of their professional practice, but for their own personal progression. My research question is: What is it the process of learning “foundational knowledge” like for a practicing educator?

Research
The data that I plan to collect will be a series of interviews with the participant (after they engage in/with Indigenous community and ceremony). Each one of the activities they engage in are aimed at increasing their knowledge and awareness of Indigenous history, culture, and contemporary lifestyles. The *four* learning opportunities will be informal and off-site, taking the participant away from the traditional district office professional development setting. Having discussions with Elders, participating in a sweat lodge ceremony, taking part in a pipe ceremony, and/or attending a Pow Wow or Round Dance are examples of what the participant may encounter. As a participant-researcher, I will be present at all of these learning opportunities which will provide a level of comfort and familiarity for the participant.

Commitment
It is expected that the participant will commit to approximately 4-6 days of learning and collaborating over the time span of 2-3 months. An example of a learning experience for the participant may look as follows:

1. Meet with researcher to discuss thoughts and feelings prior to participating in a pipe ceremony (1 hour)
2. Participate in a pipe ceremony (1 hour)
3. Complete interview after pipe ceremony and discuss feelings, thoughts, conclusions, etc. (1-2 hours)

Some events will take longer, this is why 4-6 days is necessary. I am also factoring in the time it takes you to review and revise transcripts or final thesis.

Risks and Benefits
Through these proposed experiences, the participant may experience low to moderate stress during times of inexperience such as entering a sweat lodge or attending and participating in a pipe ceremony. The benefits of entering into these experiences will give them a head start in understanding what many teachers do not have the privilege of learning. The *Teacher Quality Standard (5) Applying Foundational Knowledge about First Nation, Metis and Inuit* asks that teachers help their students develop a respect for Indigenous history, languages, and culture (to name a few), by participating in the research events, the participant will develop a respect that they can talk about from personal experience.

Voluntary Participation
Participation is voluntary. Refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits that participants are otherwise entitled to. Participants may also discontinue participation at any time up to the final review of thesis. You may discontinue up to this point without penalty or loss of benefits.

Confidentiality and Anonymity
Since I am only involving one participant, it is difficult to provide total anonymity. By participating in the study, the participant is accepting that others in their cohort, and potentially their school division, will know of their involvement in the research. If the participant chooses, we will create an alias or pseudonym to use in the final thesis that will protect their identity from other districts who do not know the participant personally. The data collected will be kept confidential and will only be accessible by myself and my supervisor, Dr. Dwayne Donald. Upon conclusion of this research, the printed data will be stored in a locked cabinet in my home office for five years at which point it will be shredded and destroyed. The participant may request a copy of the final thesis as well as transcripts, recordings and field notes obtained in the study.

Further Information

If you are interested in being a participant, please contact me via email within ***one week of receiving this letter.***

For further information and questions, please email me at emoostooslafferty@ecsrd.ca

In kind spirit,
Etienna Moostoos-Lafferty

Appendix C:

Consent Statement

Consent Statement

(By providing your signed initials, you are stating "yes" to all of the following questions)

I understand that I am accepting full participation in this research. ___yes___

I have read and reviewed the information letter. ___yes___

I understand the risk and benefits involved in participating in this research. ___yes___

I have been given sufficient time to consider and ask questions about this study.
___yes___

I understand that I can withdraw at any time without consequence, and that my personal information or data collected from me can be withdrawn at my request. ___yes___

I understand that I will be given the opportunity to review transcripts and read the final thesis prior to submission/completion. ___yes___

Confidentiality has been explained and I understand that full anonymity cannot be provided in the circumstances of this study. ___yes___

I wish to have an alias provided for me in the the final writing of the research___yes or no___ The alias I am suggesting is ___Lucy Jung___

Participants Name (Printed and Signed) Date: April 25 2019

Jessica Staudinger

For further information and questions, please email me at emoostooslafferty@ecsrd.ca

If you are interested in being a participant, please contact me via email within one week of receiving this letter.

The plan for this study has been reviewed by a Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta. If you have questions about your rights or how research should be conducted, you can call (780) 492-2615. This office is independent of the researchers.

At a later date, Jessica decided that she was fine with sharing her first name.