University of Alberta

That's not my history! Examining the role of personal counter-narratives in decolonizing Canadian history for Mi'kmaw students

by

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In loving memory of Dr. Ottilia Chareka

Abstract

    This doctoral research examines personal narratives of current and former Mi'kmaw students to discover how they situate their own understandings and narratives of Canadian history alongside the content and teaching in the current curriculum in Nova Scotia's band-controlled and provincially-controlled schools. Using a decolonizing framework and methods of conversations and sharing circles, participants were asked how their social studies courses, particularly in Canadian history, connected (or did not connect) with what they had already learned in their homes and communities.

    After hearing the participants' candid recollections of connecting their experiences as Mi'kmaw youth to the mostly-Eurocentric curriculum, I analysed the data using the First Nations Holistic Learning Model and Schwab's four commonplaces. I examined how their school social studies experience affected their mental, emotional, spiritual, and physical well-being as they made connections between the curriculum and topics such as residential schooling, Mi'kmaw treaty rights, and Columbus' alleged 'discovery' of North America.

    I discovered that, according to the participants, it was the teachers, both Mi'kmaw and non-Mi'kmaw, who made the biggest difference in how the students made connections between their lives outside the classroom and the curriculum that was taught. Teachers who showed interest in the students' Mi'kmaw identity and added Mi'kmaw content to the prescribed curriculum promoted well-being for their students. The perception and reality of systemic

racism detracted from the students' well-being. Whether or not they were supported by their school environment, students persisted in their efforts to bridge the gap between the curriculum and the lived experiences of Canadian history narrated by members of their community.

Listening to the voices of my participants, I now advocate for a reconceptualised curriculum and a culturally responsible pedagogy, which will provide supports for non-Mi'kmaw teachers to create experiences for all students to foster understanding of and respect for Mi'kmaw cultural perspectives. Culturally responsible pedagogy will include promoting holistic social studies education, integrating Western and Indigenous knowledge in social studies, expanding the Mi'kmaq Studies 10 course, increasing access to Mi'kmaw resources, including residential school content, and promoting critical thinking in social studies education.

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*Anyone who has ever been able to sustain good work has had at least one person-
and often many- who have believed in him or her. We just don't get to be
competent human beings without a lot of different investments from others.*
– Fred Rogers

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Chapter One: Situating the Inquiry

The purpose of this chapter is to situate the inquiry I have undertaken. In

the first section I provide an overview of my personal journey to this research,

highlighting some of my experiences and the stories that have shaped my journey

to this topic. In the second section I examine some of the tensions around

curriculum for First Nations students. In the third section I look into the contexts

of Mi'kmaw[1] education in Nova Scotia in both band-controlled and provincially-

controlled schools. In the fourth section I further explain my research area and

outline my research question. In the fifth section I discuss the significance of this

work and list the ways in which this research will contribute to academic

scholarship. Throughout the chapter I supply a rationale for this inquiry and

discuss some of my wonders around Mi'kmaw students' experiences with social

studies curriculum in Nova Scotia.

My Personal Journey to This Research

"They call it Canadian history, but that's not my history." This statement

has haunted me since the summer of 2008. Josephine[2] was a Mi'kmaw woman in

a Bachelor of Education cohort program situated in her home community. I was

her instructor, there to teach her a course on inclusion. As the course progressed,

the students recounted numerous stories of how social studies curriculum was

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[1] I use Mi'kmaw as an adjective and Mi'kmaq as a noun, as is the convention in
the Atlantic Canada Mi'kmaw/Miigmao Second Language document (2002). In
some government documents and committee names Mi'kmaq is still used an
adjective.
[2] A pseudonym.

disconnected from their lives and experiences, from the very students it was intended to serve.

When I was a student I rarely struggled in social studies classes. I often connected with the history I was taught. A white, middle-class female, educated in private schools throughout most of my middle and secondary education, I felt strongly represented in the curriculum. I could see myself in the subject material and on some occasions I was given a window into the stories of others. My teachers neither taught nor encouraged me to question the stories in my history classes. This was my history and I was not too concerned with checking the accuracy of the history of others. I assumed that the material was correct. When I taught the Inclusion class, my taken-for-granted understanding of history was disrupted by Josephine's and others' stories. I began to understand that many of the Mi'kmaw students I was teaching did not feel represented by the history they had been taught in their public school education. In addition, no one involved in curriculum development seemed to be hearing their voices and no one seemed to be asking to hear them.

I came to the University of Alberta in the fall of 2008, a month after the end of the Inclusion course. Having completed a Master's degree in curriculum and instruction, I was interested in exploring more in the field of curriculum studies. As I kept coming back to Josephine's statement, my area of interest began to take shape. There are many issues that may be shaping Josephine's story of feeling left out of the prescribed curriculum, such as what she perceived to be systemic or institutional racism or the legacy of residential schooling in this

specific region. Does the curriculum allow the space for counter-narratives to exist alongside the dominant stories of the status quo? To begin to understand Josephine's experience I thought I should examine the role of curriculum in relation to Mi'kmaw learners as well as the role of counter-narratives and how these alternate perspectives can become more prevalent within formal social studies education. Furthermore, I could examine the complexities of how prepared teachers are to facilitate this infusion of Aboriginal[3] content. This might help me understand the shaping forces of Josephine's public school history experience.

Understanding the role of curriculum in the lives of students might be the key to unpacking the reasons behind Aboriginal students' perceived lack of success in school. Antone and Cordoba (2005) stated that "we are still not having Aboriginal people succeed in the mainstream education system; that's still not happening; the numbers have not changed, so something is not right" (p. 5). In my master's work on diverse children's identities and individual, community, and institutional narratives I found Schwab's (1978) definition of four curriculum commonplaces (teacher, learner, subject matter, and milieu) helpful in trying to understand the broader forces involved in curriculum (beyond a particular

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[3] Throughout this proposal I have chosen to use the term Aboriginal when referring to a larger context to represent First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples. I use First Nations and, more specifically, Mi'kmaw, wherever possible to keep this work focused locally and specific to the context in which I worked. In some cases I use the term Indigenous to refer to both a local and global context. When discussing literature I have reviewed I use the terminology that the authors of the literature have specified.

program of study). I also looked to the work of Dewey (1938) to help me make sense of the connection between the individual and school.

Dewey's (1938) definition of curriculum encompasses learning styles, society, the individual, and the social forces that shape individual experiences. In my master's work I connected the theories of Dewey and Schwab with my growing conviction that students' experiences are or should be central to the curriculum of any classroom (Tinkham, 2008). Schwab's commonplaces stressed that all four commonplaces were of equal importance and Dewey's theory of the critical role of continuity in successful learning might connect to Josephine's experience. Hearing Josephine's story shortly after finishing my master's work, I began to wonder if, had there been continuity between what Josephine was learning at home and what she was learning in school, she would have felt the disconnect with the curriculum? How might Josephine's teacher have established connections to prevent Josephine from feeling left out of the prescribed curriculum?

My master's research, rooted in Schwab's (1978) four commonplaces, enabled me to think about the relationship between home and school for children. My participants' experiences in school were influenced by the experiences of home and community that they brought with them. Subject matter and the teacher's knowledge and actions were key shaping forces behind this curricular experience. Prior to this work, I had rarely considered the milieu when thinking about how students experience curriculum in classrooms. My understanding of the notion of milieu is that it incorporates historical, political, gender, language,

cultural, and societal factors present in the context, along with other context shaping dimensions as brought to light by the participants. I found that the milieu had a great deal to do with how my participants learned and, because their experiences mostly fell outside of the often dominant Nova Scotian and Canadian narratives presented in the prescribed curriculum, tensions were evident on multiple levels. Connecting my previous work to the work I have completed here, I see many similarities. I wondered how the milieu might be shaping the experiences of Mi'kmaw students in regards to Canadian history. I was interested in finding out how Mi'kmaw students, in their school contexts, experience the subject material and how their own identities play a role in their learning of the material.

For this doctoral research I chose to focus on Aboriginal curriculum theories and curriculum reconceptualization, which I closely aligned with work on decolonizing curriculum. In order for me to conduct a research study in a Mi'kmaw community I felt that I must be committed to working under a decolonizing framework and at all times remain dedicated to respecting and honouring Mi'kmaw values and traditions. This research must also give something back to the communities in which I am working. A decolonizing paradigm allows my findings to be transferrable into a larger body of decolonizing curriculum work currently being done in Mi'kmaw communities throughout Nova Scotia around First Nations school success. Decolonizing curriculum and decolonizing methodologies are further delineated in Chapters Two and Three, respectively.

Tensions Around Content and "Curricular Assimilation"

When I returned to Nova Scotia from the University of Alberta in 2009, after my first year of doctoral studies, I was still thinking about Josephine's original statement. I asked her if she could tell me a bit more about being confronted with a history that she considered not her own. Josephine talked about her years as a student in a public high school, where she challenged her teachers on the content they were presenting in her classes. Time and time again, her concerns were generally ignored or chalked up to being just another take on Canadian history. When she explained that what she learned at home did not match with what she was learning in school, her high school social studies teacher reminded her of his qualifications as an educator. She was counseled to toe the line, memorize the material, and get good grades. The teachers said she could believe whatever she wanted to outside of this classroom context. Josephine referred to this as "curricular assimilation" and said she wished she had fought harder to resist it as a student. She wondered what might have happened if she had stood firm and kept talking until she felt that the teachers were hearing her.

Josephine worried that she had given up too quickly and taken the easy way out. As a self- identified "strong Mi'kmaw woman," she felt that it was her responsibility to locate and challenge inconsistencies in provincial curricula for Mi'kmaw students. As a newly certified teacher in a band-controlled school, Josephine was working hard to actively identify, confront, and resist this "curricular assimilation" in hopes that her Mi'kmaw students would not have to share her own experience with history education. She worried that this would not

be enough and reminded me that "one teacher can only change the lives of so many … what about the rest?" Building upon and connecting Josephine's story to my research interests, in this study I intended to establish whether other Mi'kmaw learners share Josephine's Canadian history curricular assimilation experience across both band and provincial contexts.

Josephine's story left me with more questions than answers. Growing up in Nova Scotia, why was I never presented with examples of early Mi'kmaw conceptions of democracy when we studied democracy in schools? What does being a Canadian mean if you do not identify with so-called *Canadian* history? Why did I learn about First Nations peoples as if they were living in tipis and dressed in traditional clothing all the time? This would have helped lessen the shock I experienced the first time I visited a Mi'kmaw community and did not see any of these things. Why was I under the impression that Mi'kmaw communities were formed by Mi'kmaw peoples and not the result of a government initiative in 1918 called centralization, which attempted to move all Mi'kmaw peoples in Nova Scotia to two locations, Eskasoni and Shubenacadie? Now, in 2013, I hear of centralization policies in Nova Scotia from a government perspective — what might the Mi'kmaw perspective be on this? These are just a few examples of the gaps I am finding in my own history education. I wondered if these gaps widen for Mi'kmaw students or if, as they are being colonized, they also miss these pieces in their history education.

My sociology and social studies backgrounds consistently encourage me to question what I am presented with, whose interests the material is intended to

serve, and where the gaps are in the stories being told. With this work, I hoped to get to the root of these wonders[4] by examining which, if any, counter-narratives existed in Canadian history for Mi'kmaw students and how they in turn were able to situate these counter-narratives alongside a larger, more dominant story. A main focus for this research was examining what role, if any, counter-narratives might play in decolonizing Canadian history for Mi'kmaw students, as well as how and if they can come to lie alongside what is presented in the prescribed curriculum.

The Context of Aboriginal Education

Connecting with Schwab's (1978) notion of milieu as representing one of the four "commonplaces" of curriculum, I believe it is important to begin with a brief overview of the past and present state of Aboriginal education. Through the Indian Act of 1867 (Department of Justice Canada, 1985) the Federal Government of Canada assumed the authority to provide education for Aboriginal students. In 1972 the National Indian Brotherhood (NIB, currently the Assembly of First Nations) produced a policy paper titled *Indian Control of Indian Education* (ICIE), which proposed recommendations for Aboriginal education. Indian control of Indian education would allow Aboriginal communities to take control of education and begin the task of reclaiming culture, language, and traditions. This vision called for the federal government to relinquish control of education for Aboriginal people, allowing communities to educate their children in ways

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[4] I use the term 'wonders' to describe the questions (outside of my specific research question) that I had around what I saw as potential tensions between indigenous knowledge and the prescribed curriculum as hinted at through Josephine's story.

that stay true to community values and practices. Furthermore, the NIB strongly advocated for the transfer of educational jurisdiction from the federal government directly to the bands rather than to the provinces. The understanding is that Band Councils taking control of the education for their communities would ensure that Aboriginal values, traditions, and cultural identity would be directly relevant to the needs of their Aboriginal students.

In order to understand the role of contemporary curriculum for Mi'kmaw students, I will give a brief overview of the context of Mi'kmaw education in both band-controlled and provincially-controlled schools in Nova Scotia. Some Mi'kmaw students in Nova Scotia currently attend schools located within their own Mi'kmaw communities. Since a 1997 federal government agreement, the jurisdiction of these schools falls to a newly-created school board called Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey, which seeks to create a holistic education rooted in community values and Mi'kmaw language and culture.

Mi'kmaw education in Nova Scotia. Advances have been made in Mi'kmaw Education within the province of Nova Scotia through the establishment of the Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey (MK) school board. Although band-controlled education has existed in some First Nations communities in Canada since the 1980s, the establishment of the MK school board in 1997 was a first-of-its-kind agreement with the federal government that gave the jurisdiction of Mi'kmaw education back to nine Mi'kmaw communities in Nova Scotia. The agreement now includes eleven communities and was renewed in 2012. It ensured that "education laws of the participating communities with respect to

jurisdiction … shall have paramountcy over Federal and Provincial education laws" (Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey, 2009, Section 6.3, p. 10). It is important to note that under this agreement, schools within the Mi'kmaw communities falling under the jurisdiction of MK use Nova Scotia provincial curricula. Highlighting one of the key concerns of this curricular agreement, Battiste and Henderson (2000) stated that

> Some Mi'kmaw communities have their own First Nations schools,
> which foster the values of the Mi'kmaw people and try to provide a
> Mi'kmaw curriculum; however, the mandated provincial
> curriculum continues to mandate a center that is not Mi'kmaq (p.
> 91).

While it might be assumed that being educated in a Mi'kmaw system is most culturally beneficial to Mi'kmaw students, it is important to note that not all Mi'kmaw students reside in Mi'kmaw communities and not all attend schools within Mi'kmaw communities. Throughout Nova Scotia many Mi'kmaw students live in urban areas and are educated in provincially-controlled educational institutions.

In 1993 the Nova Scotia Department of Education established a task force called the *Council on Mi'kmaq Education* (CME) to examine the state of education for Mi'kmaw students in the province. This group recognized the need for a Mi'kmaw education that respects Mi'kmaw ways of knowing and honours the identity of Mi'kmaw students. Some of the CME's goals in relation to curriculum were to advise the Minister of Education on the development of

appropriate curricula reflecting Mi'kmaw history, language, heritage, culture, traditions, and contributions to society. Calling upon the Minister to acknowledge the inadequacy of the information about the Mi'kmaq Nation and other First Nations in existing curricula, the CME provided suggestions for needed changes. One of the CME's priorities was to ensure that an accurate and mandatory course on Mi'kmaw history be included in the primary to grade 12 program of studies (See http://cme.ednet.ns.ca/about_priorities.shtml).

A more recent study conducted by the CME (2007) has demonstrated the overwhelming need for Mi'kmaw education to become a priority for the Government of Nova Scotia. In 2008 the Nova Scotia Department of Education responded with a call to action that sought to work with Mi'kmaw communities to identify the concerns for Mi'kmaw students within the province. The initial proposal from the CME called for the band-controlled school system, MK, to take a lead role in determining what is relevant and critical to the success of Mi'kmaw learners throughout both the MK and provincial systems. The Department of Education is unwilling to give MK the reins for implementation given that not all Mi'kmaw students attend schools under the MK system and many are served by the provincial system. Of the seven communities that currently have schools on reserve, four communities have primary to grade 12 education and three communities have schools offering primary to grade six. One of these three communities also recently established a grade 10-12 high school program.

Within the recent *Mi'kmaw Services Division Dialogue Sessions Project Report* submitted to the Nova Scotia Department of Education (2007), the CME

determined that promoting Mi'kmaw awareness should be encouraged at all times, not just during October as part of Mi'kmaw History Month. The report argued that the Mi'kmaw Service division must identify gaps within the school system for Mi'kmaw students living both on- and off-reserve and develop options for closing these gaps. Language is to be a priority with expansion to other grades and should be included in all communities, ensuring it meets specific community needs like that of the full immersion Eskasoni Language Program. Language teaching should be broader than just teaching how to speak; students should learn to understand the language through cultural knowledge. There was also a pressing concern that the Mi'kmaw information being taught in other grades still comes from history books that do not reflect Mi'kmaw culture. The CME specifies that more Mi'kmaw language and culture should be included in educational materials and curriculum, and that these resources will need to be developed and implemented in all schools throughout the province. In addition to these findings, the CME found that First Nations support workers in public schools can provide a communication link between bands, schools, and school boards. However, it was found that geographically they are spread much too thinly to meet the need of all Mi'kmaw students within the province.

In the government response provided by the Department of Education, the Minister of Education for Nova Scotia (2008) said that "in addition to language curricula, however, including Mi'kmaw content and perspective in the provincial curricula is a priority of the department" and "the department is also dedicated to finding and/or contracting the development of new texts and resources to support

and enhance teaching in [language and cultural content]" (p. 17). While the provincial response indicates a need to be more inclusive for Mi'kmaw students, some would argue that this does not go far enough. Battiste and Henderson (2000) highlighted the need for a Mi'kmaw-centered curriculum, stating, "although exposure to other cultures is valuable, it is critically important for Mi'kmaw children to be taught their knowledge and heritage through Mi'kmaw transmission processes" (p. 91). This is a point of tension for provincial curriculum in that a curriculum designed to serve the needs of Nova Scotia needs to be responsive to all learners in the province, not only Mi'kmaw students. Due to the fact that Mi'kmaw students must be educated under provincial curricula, regardless of the context within which they are learning, I wondered how these Mi'kmaw transmission processes that Battiste and Henderson describe above may come to exist within a provincial curriculum that is intended to serve the entire population of Nova Scotian students. I hoped to unpack this further as my research progressed.

As I moved into my work with my participants and began to form relationships, my understanding of the context for Mi'kmaw students, both provincially and within Mi'kmaw communities, shifted. I did not assume that there was one common milieu for all Mi'kmaw students. I was able to unpack this in conversation with each participant to establish a clearer understanding of the context in which he or she is living. My overview of Mi'kmaw education in this section is by no means assumed to be a complete description of the milieu of my participants.

The Research Question

Josephine's statement "that's not my history" continually led me to wonder what social and/or cultural factors, if any, were contributing to how Mi'kmaw students, like Josephine, interpret their experiences of the integration of Aboriginal perspectives into Canadian history curricula. I also wondered how the pedagogical decisions made by teachers in both band-controlled and provincially-controlled contexts contributed to how Mi'kmaw students interpret their experiences of the integration of Aboriginal narratives and perspectives. I felt it was important to establish an understanding of what impacts these curricular experiences might have on the cultural identities of the Mi'kmaw students in this research. I was particularly interested in how Mi'kmaw students resolve any tensions between what they learn at home about their culture and beliefs and what they learn in their history courses at school. Based on this interest I wanted to speak with Mi'kmaw students in both band-controlled and provincially-controlled schools to learn about their experiences of learning Canadian history. Specifically, my research investigated the following question: *How do Mi'kmaw students situate their own understandings and narratives of Canadian history alongside the content and teaching in the current curriculum in Nova Scotia's band-controlled and provincially-controlled schools?* This question allowed me to explore the relationship, if any, between students' personal narratives and the narratives that are presented in Nova Scotia's official social studies curriculum.

The Significance of This Research

In this section I highlight the ways in which this research contributes to the greater body of scholarship on First Nations education, specifically Mi'kmaw education in Nova Scotia. The Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey (MK) school board is currently engaged in school success planning. My work provides an overview of specific Mi'kmaw student experiences in Canadian history. The Nova Scotia Department of Education is also consistently engaging in curriculum redesign for social studies education. My work will help inform this process by providing empirical evidence of Mi'kmaw experiences within the current prescribed curriculum. In order to understand how the two contexts of band-controlled and provincially-controlled schools are serving Mi'kmaw students in Canadian history education, it is important to note that there is no solid evidence yet that determines whether or not band-operated schools staffed with Mi'kmaw teachers are better able to meet the needs of Mi'kmaw learners in social studies education. To date, no empirical or interpretive studies have been undertaken in Nova Scotia examining how the First Nations knowledge that has been incorporated into provincial curricula is being perceived by Mi'kmaw learners and their teachers in either band-controlled or provincially-controlled schools. Orr and Ronayne (2009) and Orr (personal communication, January 28, 2010) highlighted the need for an empirical study that examines individual experiences within band-operated and provincial school systems with a particular focus on social studies education for Mi'kmaw students in Nova Scotia.

Beyond all of the reasons stated above, I was motivated by Josephine's story, which was profound and real and still affected her many years later. She felt deeply these negative experiences with Canadian history. My work helped me to discover whether this was an experience shared by other Mi'kmaw students. This research allows me to join and add to the existing conversation around Aboriginal narratives in social studies education. As an educator working in close contact with Mi'kmaw communities in Nova Scotia, my hope is that this research will be of use to the Mi'kmaw communities as they continue to seek ways to provide a holistic education for younger generations of Mi'kmaw students.

This research will also contribute to furthering our understanding as educators and researchers of how students in general experience curriculum at a personal level. This study highlights the importance of allowing student voices to help shape curriculum development. While this study was done in a very specific context and the themes that emerged here may not emerge elsewhere, it is important that these questions get asked more broadly across the country and that people in other contexts can learn from this process and repeat it elsewhere, as appropriate to their context. Although this study was unique to the MK context, it exposes a number of issues. Examining social studies curricula elsewhere would lead one to conclude that similar issues might exist in other contexts, therefore it is important for others to value these experiences and refrain from seeing these voices as unique to Mi'kmaki. We can learn from this process and the words of these students and begin to think about what kinds of conversations need to be had with

students in other Canadian contexts.

Throughout this research, issues around identity, colonialism and race proved to be ever present for my participants. As identity, colonialism and race are complex and complicated ideas and deserve much more than a cursory review, I made the decision not to unpack these within this dissertation. Each one of these areas can be found within the data generated with participants, however, all require much deeper scholarly study than what this dissertation would allow for in terms of scope and length. I did not want to sacrifice in-depth focus for the sake of addressing each one of these topics within this dissertation.

Chapter Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to situate this inquiry by providing an overview of my personal journey and the wonders that have led me here. Josephine's story highlighted the tensions she experienced as a Mi'kmaw student learning from what she considered to be an assimilationist curriculum. Beginning with her story, I was able to find connections to my master's work on institutional, family, and personal narratives in the curriculum for diverse learners. I explored some of the tensions for First Nations students around curriculum content.

In order to begin to understand and contextualize a Mi'kmaw student's experiences with curriculum I provided an overview of the current state of Mi'kmaw education in Nova Scotia by fleshing out some of the band-controlled and provincially-controlled contexts in which Mi'kmaw students are enrolled. In explaining my research puzzle I defined a clear question for this study and listed

further wonders that have emerged from engaging in this writing. In the final section I focused on the significance of this work and how it may contribute to a broader scholarly conversation. In attempting to support the wonders I have explored in this chapter I focus the next chapter on a review of the literature where I examine some of the relevant literature around both Aboriginal education in Canada and some of the pertinent curriculum orientations that support this research.

Chapter Two: A Review of the Literature

The purpose of this chapter is to examine some of the research and policies pertinent to the development of culturally-responsive Aboriginal education in Canada. In the first section I discuss curriculum definitions and situate myself under a reconceptualist paradigm. In the second section I provide an overview of reconceptualist approaches to curriculum theory and discuss some of the conversation around reconceptualism as a curriculum orientation. In the third section I discuss the emergence of Aboriginal curriculum theories and provide an overview of the major themes behind this orientation to curriculum. I narrow my focus within Aboriginal curriculum theories to describe and discuss the premises behind a decolonizing curriculum. At the end of the third section I bring curriculum reconceptualization, Aboriginal curriculum theory, and decolonizing curriculum together in the context of this study. In the fourth section I describe Aboriginal content and perspectives within social studies as a field of study through an overview of the current research.

Curriculum

In order to engage in a discussion on curriculum, it is important to examine some key theorists interpretations of the term curriculum and their attempts to define it. As Jackson (1992) states,

> the most common complaint against the definition of curriculum is
> that it is too narrow, that its coverage is not broad enough. This
> complaint is not to be confused, however, with a similar one about
> the curriculum itself, though the word and its referent are so

closely related that it is easy to see how such confusion could

occur. (p. 5)

In 1902, Dewey wrote about the problems behind traditional definitions of

curriculum:

If we could only get rid of the notion of subject matter as being

something that is fixed and ready-made in itself and the allied

notion of the child's experience being hard and fast [it would be

apparent that] the child and the curriculum are simply two limits,

which define a single process. (p. 11)

Dewey's (1902) notions around experience as being key to education seem

to surmise that each curricular encounter with subject matter represents a specific

experience and that it is this experience, in itself, that constitutes the curriculum.

Dewey (1956) believed that in schools children are not given the space to use

their outside-of-school experiences; home and community knowledge are

considered separate from school knowledge. Dewey believed this disconnect

between school and home causes an isolating experience for students.

This understanding of how out-of-school forces may act as shaping agents

for a child within school is most relevant to my work on Aboriginal education, as

I have found that the education children receive in the home is often at odds with

the education they receive in schools for Aboriginal students (Hampton, 1995).

Witt (2006) deemed successful teaching of Aboriginal students as going beyond

just adding Aboriginal content and states that in order to consider the identity of

the culturally different student, teachers must be familiar with and have an

understanding of the cultural background of their students. Speaking from his

own experience as an Aboriginal student in Canada, Hampton (1995) claimed his

mainstream education was an add-on of contents. He received his *real* education,

an understanding of his values and worldviews—what he refers to as his

Aboriginal education—from being immersed in the culture of his father. I will

highlight this idea throughout this review of the literature on Aboriginal

curriculum theory.

In attempting to define curriculum for this dissertation I sought out

multiple definitions. Jackson (1992) reminded me that

[t]here is no definition of curriculum that will endure for all time

and that it is foolish to search for one … every definition serves the

interest of the person or group putting it forward …[I]t is always

appropriate to ask what the local consequences of adopting this or

that definition might be. (p. 10)

Kliebard (1995) explained that "curriculum in any time and place becomes

the site of a battleground where the fight is over whose values and beliefs will

achieve the legitimization and the respect that acceptance into the national

discourse provides" (p. 250). Greene (2004) noted that curriculum is often seen

as a program of study that rarely allows the learner to imagine possibilities for

making sense of his or her own world. Educators may see curriculum as external

to the learner, something for him or her to "discover, master and learn" (p. 135).

If the learner is to learn "he [*sic*] must identify what is questionable, try to break

through what is obscure. Action is required of him [*sic*], not mere gazing; praxis, not mere reverie" (p. 142).

Chambers (2003) has suggested that Canadian curriculum scholars are calling for a new location from which to approach curriculum issues. Chambers explained that curriculum scholars in Canada have begun "braiding languages and traditions, stories and fragments, desires and repulsions, arguments and conversations, tradition and change, hyphens and slashes, mind and body, earth and spirit, texts and images, local and global, pasts and posts, into a metissage" (p. 246). In searching through curriculum theories I was able to situate myself under a reconceptualist paradigm, where life experiences and autobiographical understandings of schooling are privileged. Rather than seeing the curriculum as various separate pieces needing to be woven together, reconceptualists believe in examining individual autobiography/ life history and life experience as a means for curriculum theorizing. Graham (1991) stated that "although itself not a principle or theory, autobiography provides access to valid sources of information that facilitate the recovery and inspection of ideas of great relevance to education and in the field of curriculum in particular" (p. 13). Slattery (1995) unpacked this idea, stating that autobiography is a way to "reclaim collective voices and redeem a lost sense of historical consciousness" that is extremely beneficial to focusing on hearing the voices emanating from minority groups.

Understanding curriculum to be a course of life and paying close attention to the experiences, contexts, stories, places, and times that make up a course of life, Pinar is a key figure in the curriculum reconceptualism scholarship. In Pinar,

Reynolds, Slattery, and Taubman (1995), Pinar defined curriculum using the term *currere* and describes this as being focused

> [o]n the educational experience of the individual, as reported by the
> individual … [C]urrere seeks to describe what the individual
> subject him or herself makes of these [experiences] … Currere
> communicates the individual's lived experiences as it is socially
> located, politically positioned, and discursively formed, while
> working to succumb to none of these structurings. (p. 414-417)

It is these lived experiences and the understanding that social and political forces act as shaping agents that drives much of the reconceptualist movement in curriculum. The next section provides an overview of a reconceptualist orientation to curriculum.

Reconceptualizing curriculum. Schubert (1982) stated that "curriculum scholars today … clearly [recognize] that aspects of human experience, not school experience alone, are the proper subject matter for curriculum inquiry" (p. 223). Following this, Pinar and Grumet (1988) found the traditional orientation towards curriculum too narrow and believed that in introductory university curriculum classes there had been a shift away from Greek approaches to wisdom (viewing practical knowledge as knowledge in its own right and theory as the cultivation of wisdom) and Christian views of practice following from faith. They found that the demand for knowledge of circumstances was most pressing and that "theory is no longer achieved through distance from human affairs" (p. 96).

Pinar and Grumet (1988) went on to state that "[c]urriculum theory seeks to restore the contemplative moment in which we interrupt our taken-for-granted understandings of our work and ask again the basic questions practical activity silences" (p. 99). Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, and Taubman (1995) said that "theory functions to provoke you to think … to help you reflect more profoundly … on your individual, specific situation" (p. 8). According to Pinar (1995), reconceptualizing curriculum is a shift away from traditional curriculum writing. He explained that the purpose of curriculum work from a reconceptualist paradigm is not to take a guiding stance, which differs from a directive traditionalist paradigm. For me, reconceptualism seems to be free from a pre-determined procedural orientation to curriculum work. According to Pinar this paradigm is largely focused on notions of understanding. This type of curricular position is prominent in social sciences and the humanities.

Critiquing the reconceptualist movement, Wraga (1999) wrote that "with curriculum reconceived as the course of one's life, virtually all phenomena qualif[y] as the subject of curriculum theorizing" (p. 5). He stated that the curriculum reconceptualist argument moves away from a long-standing priority in the curriculum field of improving the quality of education in school settings to privileging personal awareness. Wraga emphasized the failings in curriculum reconceptualization towards improved practice and discusses the theoretical nature of reconceptualist work. His main critique was that reconceptualists focus much of their energy on unpacking espoused theories rather than on finding practical solutions to problems. He explained that the reconceptualist movement

perpetuates problems in the field because of a hesitancy towards action. Finding

curriculum theory undertaken from a reconceptualist perspective to be irrelevant

in achieving change in educational institutions through the release of

responsibility in affecting a measured change in the quality of school life for

students and teachers, Wraga rejected curriculum reconceptualization as a sound

practice for theorists. Pinar (1999) responded to Wraga's claims, countering that

"schools are no longer under the jurisdiction of curriculum theorists. Multiple

stakeholders (not the least among them the text-book publishers) have created

something that may look like curriculum consensus but is more like curriculum

gridlock" (p. 14). Pinar went on to reject Wraga's understanding of curriculum

reconceptualization and stated that

> today it is clear that the curriculum is not only school-district
>
> guidelines, textbooks and objectives. Today it is now clear that
>
> curriculum is 'that complicated conversation' in which teachers
>
> and students engage each other as well as the textbook material in a
>
> caring, learning community. (p. 14)

As he further defined reconceptualized curriculum theorizing, Wraga

(1999) wrote this work was being characterized by "efforts to distance curriculum

theory far from school practice" (p. 4);

> The characterization of the 'reconceptualization' of the curriculum
>
> field as a shift from focus on developing curriculum to a
>
> preeminent concern for understanding curriculum and the
>
> proclivity to consider virtually all phenomena of life experience as

acceptable subjects of curriculum inquiry are examples of a

willingness to divorce curriculum theorizing from school practice.

(p. 4)

Pinar (2004) contended that rather than structured development and a

focus on 'practical' curriculum development, the curriculum field needs

understanding of the process that occurs between students, teachers and

curriculum, which would then form the basis for the curriculum

reconceptualization movement. He explained that "to a considerable extent, the

reconceptualization movement is a reaction to what the field has been, and what it

is seen to be at the present time" (p. 149). I agree with Pinar et al. in the sense

that the reconceptualist paradigm allows for an examination of the broader

definition of curriculum and encourages both teachers and students to attempt to

understand where they see themselves with regards to the curriculum. Wraga's

critique of the reconceptualization of curriculum is important in that it points out

how this vision differs from a technician's approach to curriculum. While I can

see how both could be valid in schools depending on the background you are

working from and your beliefs around the purpose of schooling, my background

and beliefs allow me to align with a reconceptualist approach.

Early curriculum, under a traditionalist paradigm, was characterized as

"technical rationality … [where] the curriculum worker is dedicated to the

improvement of schools. He [sic] honours this dedication by accepting the

curriculum structure as it is … and working to improve it, is what is meant by the

'technician's mentality'" (Pinar, 2004, p. 150). Pinar (2004) further stated that

[c]urriculum reconceptualists have participated in a conscious

abandonment of the 'technician's mentality', there are no

prescriptions or traditional rationales … because the difficulties

these reconceptualists identify are related to difficulties in the

culture at large, they are not problems that can be solved … [W]hat

is necessary is a fundamental reconceptualization of what

curriculum is, how it functions and how it might function in

emancipatory ways. It is this commitment to comprehensive

critique and theory development that distinguishes the

reconceptualist phenomenon. (p. 154)

Essentially, curriculum reconceptualization is largely uncharted territory because

it privileges what is not known (personal experience) over a body of knowledge

that is deemed as separate from the individual. It is through the development and

examination of the relationships between students, teachers and curriculum that

opens up the space for reconceptualizing curriculum.

Autobiography plays a large part in the curriculum reconceptualization

paradigm, yet D. G. Smith (1991) and Jardine (1994) each cautioned that beyond

autobiography there must be an understanding of context and place. Adding to

this, Chambers (2003) stated that "curricular theorists in Canada have a particular

interest in place — with its own curriculum from which we have much to learn if

we can listen" (p. 232). She further described this as follows:

We cannot understand ourselves if we do not understand our

relations with everything. The Cree, Blackfoot and Ojibway (as

well as others) say, "All my relations." This invocation of the

ancestors and all living beings — to close ceremonies or end

ceremonial talk — is a profound declaration of the extent and

necessity of one's relations and the inherent (inter)dependency of

the Universe, including story, memory, place and life. (p. 232)

Kanu (2011) echoes this, believing that it is only through "authentic

encounters with the other" (p. 203) that a reconceptualization may occur,

free from the limits of a traditional model to curriculum. Through these

encounters we can hear the voices from Aboriginal students as they

describe what learning is considered meaningful and empowering for

them. Kanu advocates for a "curriculum as conversation" (p. 208)

approach, which is a call for listening to and talking with Aboriginal

students as a way to transform understandings of teaching, learning and

subject matter. She also stresses the need to see "curriculum as

community" (p. 211) which would allow for the importance of relational

thinking and connections to place. Through a curriculum as community

approach, students and teachers are encouraged to engage in an

interpretive process rather than a simple transmission of subject matter.

This approach values the importance of contextual relationality.

Based on my ontological stance as an interpretivist/constructivist

(Creswell, 2008) my work aligns closely with a reconceptualist paradigm. My

understanding that reality exists in multiple and subjective ways and is

constructed in contexts allows me to see my work under a reconceptualist lens

towards curriculum. My epistemological belief is that people develop knowledge subjectively within their contexts. The key factors behind the reconceptualist paradigm around autobiography, place, and context allow me to see my research as being unique to the individual and context-dependent.

My master's work using Schwab's (1978) four commonplaces of curriculum connects to this reconceptualist paradigm. Schwab's understandings of the shaping forces of the milieu around curriculum are closely aligned with the autobiography, place, and context focus of reconceptualist approaches to curriculum. The ideas presented in this section around curriculum as a complicated conversation and the influences of autobiography, place, time, and context in a reconceptualist approach to curriculum are connected to the premises behind Aboriginal curriculum theory and decolonization. I explore these connections in the sections that follow.

Aboriginal curriculum theory. In a plenary address at the Canadian Society for the Study of Education (CSSE) conference, Battiste (2004) discussed curriculum theory from the emergence of the work done by Aboriginal scholars within the academy:

> Many Aboriginal educators are seeking higher education to help
> improve education with their own communities and draw on their
> own theory from their own languages and cultures and stories and
> knowledge. In their research is a focus on decolonizing strategies
> raising Indigenous voices, narratives and visions as foundational to
> change. New and on-going allies to this work have provided

important work in antiracist, anti-oppressive emancipatory

education. (p. 9)

Historically, Battiste (2004) found that "Eurocentric humanity has proved to be

not about being a universal human and whole, healed and empowered, but is still

located in social constructions of superiority and dominance" (p. 10). Based on

her earlier work on cognitive imperialism, she explains this as being "a form of

cognitive manipulation used to disclaim other knowledge bases and values" (p.

10). Cognitive imperialism, according to Battiste, has been an exclusionary

vehicle for denying existence and identity. She stated that "cognitive imperialism

denies people their language and cultural integrity and maintains legitimacy of

only one language, one culture, and one frame of reference" (p. 10). She also

emphasized that

curriculum does not address poverty, nor oppression amongst the

Aboriginal people that has resulted from colonialism. The images

and stories told in the public system portray the government,

settlers, and their policies that nearly eradicated the Aboriginal

culture, language and way of life in a manner that paints the

colonists in a positive light. (p. 6)

The above statements point to the need to critically examine how Aboriginal

people and groups are being portrayed in curriculum and what messages are being

delivered through the subject matter. Battiste's words stress the importance of

determining if the curriculum focuses on Aboriginal people and groups solely

through historical narratives told from a dominant perspective, with little

understanding given to the intent and effects of colonization. Based on Battiste's

understanding of cognitive imperialism and the uses of curriculum in achieving

this, her words also highlight the importance of exploring how curriculum might

be transformed so that it becomes as decolonizing force, rather than a vehicle for

perpetuating the status quo.

Battiste went on to state that "this lack of Aboriginal perception results not

only from a desire of the government and dominant culture to appear positively

but also comes from a lack of historical knowledge on the part of educators" (p.

7). Agbo (2004) cautioned: "educators, including those who are Aboriginal, must

be aware of the effects of historical racism because it is a contributor to the lack

of success of Aboriginal students" (275). In a 2012 study on academic

achievement and cultural identity development with Mi'kmaw secondary students

attending a provincial school in Nova Scotia, Orr, Robinson, Lunney Borden and

Tinkham (forthcoming) found that while the participants felt that their teachers

cared about them they felt that these teachers did not have enough understanding

of First Nations issues to help them and others unpack issues around colonialism

and racism. In speaking with teachers on their perceptions of the infusion of

Aboriginal content into curriculum, Kanu's (2005; 2011) work highlighted that

many non-Aboriginal teachers felt that they lacked resources and did not have the

knowledge, confidence and authority to teach about or for Aboriginal issues.

Battiste (2004) argued that it is the responsibility of educators, parents,

and school boards to seek out alternate stories that are respectful and

representative of Aboriginal history and incorporate them into the curriculum.

Battiste cautioned that "the real empowerment comes when non-First Nations people and their children, society as a whole, come to understand the purpose, intention, and legal obligations of national and international treaties" (p. 13). Battiste's words stress the importance of both First Nations peoples and all Canadians understanding their own purpose, intention, and legal obligations. She believes that until every member of Canadian society is able to understand the acts, values, and beliefs of the ancestors, the people of today, and the people around us globally, there can be no movement beyond the dominant perspective in education. For me, this connects with Josephine's experiences of not feeling represented in the curriculum. If alternate stories that were closely tied with Josephine's Mi'kmaw understandings of history had been included in her formal education, perhaps she may have felt that her history and her community knowledge had a more prominent position in her education. An increase of Mi'kmaw perspectives in the curriculum may have allowed her to feel less marginalized in school.

Battiste (1998) insists that provincial governments across Canada have historically been hesitant to reconceptualize curricula to reflect diverse groups. In order to do so effectively for Aboriginal peoples, she argued that "[Aboriginal people] must be actively part of the transformation of knowledge" (p. 24). Witt (2006) explained that "Aboriginal Education will always differ in details depending on the cultural context the individual derives from" (p. 354). He argued that these contexts also shift with the emergence of "altering cultures of Aboriginal peoples who moved to the cities" (p. 354). Witt claimed that in order

to teach Aboriginal children successfully, teachers, administrators, and curriculum developers need to be open and responsive to differing worldviews. They can then take a critical look at history education, using multiple perspectives and subjective realities. My understanding of this increased critical focus towards history education is closely aligned to my beliefs around epistemology and ontology as discussed in the previous section.

In research on First Nations students' perceptions of their learning, Kanu (2002) found that images are important in First Nations student success. In her study, research participants claimed that "curriculum should include Aboriginal perspectives, histories or traditions, and interests, all of which have foundations in their cultural heritage but which have been largely denied that in the formal school system" (p. 114). Kanu's participants also explained that positive representations of Aboriginal peoples need to be present throughout school curricula in order to help Aboriginal students " validate their identity, motivate them to participate more in class, and help them develop pride in their own culture and people" (p. 114). Witt (2006) argued that a key challenge for Aboriginal education in schools is to "conserve the traditional philosophy and worldview, which constitutes the educational basis for those who grow up in it, despite being educated in a different, yet dominant cultural setting" (p. 355). In thinking about ways to reinforce Aboriginal identity, Witt said educators must pay attention to "the identity that was built at home from birth to entering the school, within an education setting that bases in a different culture" (p. 355). Witt explained that some educators have tried to reinforce Aboriginal identity by

"teaching some Aboriginal history in university courses and adding so-called

Aboriginal contents to the existing school curriculum. However, mere adding of

Aboriginal contents, which might also be interpreted as such from a different

cultural point of view, will not be enough to reinforce Aboriginal identity"

(p.355). Witt argues that Aboriginal students need educators to transmit

knowledge in the same ways it is transmitted at home, through Aboriginal lenses

and Aboriginal cultural contexts. I think this is easier said than done; as I do not

come from an Aboriginal cultural context I wondered how teachers can be

expected to mirror Aboriginal knowledge transmission processes if this is outside

of their own experiences? I hoped that as I talked with participants in my study I

could begin to understand what this might look like. I understood Witt's point

that a mere add-on to curriculum is not enough to reinforce Aboriginal identity

but I wished that he had elaborated about how teaching may become more

reflective of these home and community contexts in ways that do not seek to co-

opt Indigenous ways of knowing. I was hopeful that conversations with

participants in this study could help me begin to see how home can be reflected

and lived in schools.

One study that provides insight into how teachers might connect

knowledge learned at home with that learned in school was conducted by Orr,

Paul, and Paul (2002). These authors spoke of reinforcing Aboriginal identity

through cultural practical knowledge in an article they co-wrote on decolonizing

Aboriginal education. They described the ways in which Mi'kmaw teachers

brought their cultural practical knowledge into the classroom using language,

activities that integrate a Mi'kmaw worldview, and conversations where children and teachers shared stories of their culture and communities. These authors saw the Mi'kmaw women they interviewed as providing important support for Mi'kmaw students in their schools through the cultural practical knowledge they wove into their teaching.

In speaking with Mi'kmaw teachers, Orr et al. (2002) found that although Aboriginal knowledge is not part of the official curriculum, the teachers were committed to upholding a collective Mi'kmaw identity through their understandings and privileging of Mi'kmaw values, such as respect and honesty, within the curriculum. Freda, one of the teachers in the study, stated that "in the curriculum, we don't learn enough of our own stuff. There's not enough culture or native studies, it's just their stuff, and the kids end up thinking Indians are bad" (p. 343). Orr et al. found that the teachers in their study brought Mi'kmaw perspectives to the center of their teaching and that "these teachers strive to overcome inequities by challenging the inaccuracies and inadequacies in school knowledge and making strong linkages between school knowledge and the wider society from which these students come" (p. 344). Orr et al. concluded that

> [a]s Mi'kmaw people these teachers believe Mi'kmaw identity can
> and must be placed in a more central way in schools. Their
> cultural practical knowledge helps them live in schools that are still
> struggling to fulfill the vision set out by Aboriginal leaders in
> 1972. They are political agents, choosing to teach from a
> perspective that embodies cultural practical knowledge in relation

to their students' lives in the present, remembering their collective

ancestral past, and imagining a different cultural future. (p. 332)

For me, the work of Orr et al. (2002) was hopeful in that it explained some of the

key pedagogical decisions made by Mi'kmaw teachers in reaching their Mi'kmaw

students. These stories of practice helped me to see how culture is lived in these

classrooms. But I was left wondering how non-Mi'kmaw teachers enact this in

provincial school contexts. I hoped that this would become clearer as I gathered

stories of curricular experience from Mi'kmaw students.

Orr et al. (2002) recognized that students are not empty vessels that come

to school waiting to be filled with 'official' knowledge. They suggested that a

decolonizing curriculum could begin by centering the curriculum and teaching on

the lives of the students, respecting and valuing the identities that were built from

birth in the home rather than forcing students to choose between what they know

and what they need to know. Much of the premise behind Aboriginal curriculum

theory lies in identity. The way in which curriculum can reinforce and validate

identity for Aboriginal students is paramount. I hoped that through the

conversations and analysis in my research project I could begin to see how this

might be lived and could begin to problematize the notion of a unified Aboriginal

identity. I was hesitant to define identity as I believe identity to be a concept that

is highly personal, varied, and often multiple. I believed that by listening to

students' experiences and explanations of their gaps and successes in education I,

as a white researcher, could begin to see where mainstream curriculum might

create these spaces for Mi'kmaw identity.

Drawing from a recent study on language immersion in Mi'kmaw communities (Tompkins, Murray Orr, Clark, Pirie, Sock & Paul Gould, 2011), I highlight the problematic nature of coming up with a definition for identity. Believing that "language, culture and identity are inextricably interwoven" (p. 23), I find it difficult to classify identity in ways that assume one aspect of a person's identity can be privileged over another. For example, Gee (2001) in reference to identity in relation to language and reading states: "Social languages are always integrally connected to the characteristic social activities (embodied action and interaction in the world), value-laden perspectives, and socially situated identities of particular groups of people or communities of practice" (p. 719). According to Gee, identity shifts in relation to the social situation that one is in. This further demonstrates that identity can be considered as constantly being in flux.

In terms of this study, I do refer to identity, and often this is in reference to the Mi'kmaw aspect of identity. According to Peck (2010) "the development of ethnic identity is both a personal and social process, which occurs through inter- and intra-group boundary formation" (p.576). This highlights and affirms my belief that there are individual and community based aspects to identity formation when it comes to identifying as Mi'kmaw. Peck (2011) argued that ethnic identity "may change depending on the social, political, and/ or cultural context in which one finds oneself" (p. 308). I agree with Peck and acknowledge that there can be no one essentialized notion of a unified Mi'kmaw identity because I believe that all aspects of identity are highly dependent on situation and context. I do

however, see the value in the work on ethnic identity (Abu-Laban & Stasiulus, 2000; Barton & Levstik, 2004; Barton & McCully, 2004; Epstein, 1998; Epstein, 2000; Hall, S., 2003; Peck, 2010, 2011) and agree that a student's ethnic background can influence his or her learning.

Abu-Laban and Staniulus (2000) refered to a hybridity that can develop within conceptions of ethnic identity and this notion is important in a Mi'kmaw context where Mi'kmaw people can consider themselves as having both a Mi'kmaw and Canadian nationality, due to historical and present day colonization processes. Barton and Levstik (2004) highlighted the importance of understanding ethnicity and ethnic identity in terms of history education because these concepts can directly affect the ways in which students view/ read/ interpret historical accounts. Simply identifying as Mi'kmaw can shape how a historical account is received and understood for that student (Barton & McCully, 2004). Furthermore, Hall, S. (2003) suggested

> "we all speak from a particular place, out of a particular history, out
>
> of a particular experience, a particular culture, without being
>
> contained by that position […] we are all in a sense ethnically
>
> located and our ethnic identities are crucial to our subjective sense of
>
> who we are" (p. 94).

It is important to note that if identity is where we locate ourselves socially, the participants in this study locate themselves within Mi'kmaw culture and can thereby be seen as having a Mi'kmaw ethnic identity

In addition to identity, also found within scholarly writing around

Aboriginal curriculum theory is the rationale that education is the key to Aboriginal success. The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples report clearly identified education as "the single most important issue facing the Aboriginal people" (INAC, 1996, p. 19). Wotherspoon and Schissel (2003) explained that "the expansion of self government means that it is essential that Aboriginal people have meaningful opportunities to broaden their education in order to fulfill expectations for their own personal and community development" (p. 6). They maintained that "schooling is oriented to provide individuals with capacities and skills required for social and economic success, but it also reflects and reinforces persistent patterns of inequality" (p. 25). Battiste and Henderson (2000) highlighted these patterns of inequality: "in most existing educational systems, Indigenous heritage and the transmission of that heritage are missing. Even if part of the heritage is present, it is presented from a Eurocentric perspective. Often this presentation is inaccurate and not very nourishing" (p. 88).

Dei, Hall & Rosenberg (2000) saw the initiation of Indigenous knowledge into the academy as one way "to rupture the sense of comfort and complacency in conventional approaches to knowledge production, interrogation, validation and dissemination" (p. 3). Battiste (2002), L. T. Smith (1999), and Dei et al. (2000) explained that Indigenous knowledge could decolonize the academy by challenging the dominance of the Eurocentric norm found in schools across Canada. Battiste (1998) insists that First Nations education should "draw from the ecological context of the people, their social and cultural frames of reference, embodying their philosophical foundations of spiritual interconnected realities,

and building on the enriched experiences and gifts of their people and their current needs for economic development and change" (p. 21). Bear Nicholas (2001) echoed this, saying that

> most community schools were thrust into the mode of trying to
> emulate non-Native Schools, rather than tailoring their own
> program to suit their particular communities and cultures. The
> result has been that in all but a tiny minority or 'band controlled'
> schools outside of the north, traditional culture is virtually ignored.
> (p. 9)

It seems as if those who discuss schooling for First Nations children believe that transmission practices, locally specific (in this case, Mi'kmaw) ways of knowing, and challenges to the dominance of Eurocentric norms are key to reinforcing and validating identity for First Nations students. But Bear Nicholas (2001) claimed that even band-controlled schools within Aboriginal communities are not always able to meet these needs because of their increased focus on trying to be like (or perhaps to keep up with) non-Native schools. I wondered if the mandate of provincial curricula in band-controlled schools causes traditional knowledge and heritage to be left out even in First Nations contexts. I hoped that speaking with students across both contexts (both band-controlled and provincially-controlled) would help me to see how Mi'kmaw students perceive this.

Taking this further by discussing an overarching framework of education, Saunders and Hill (2007) argued that curriculum has been the one constant since the start of formal education in Canada. They asserted that "regardless of the

position readers take on Native education, we believe that Western education of Native students has been generally unsuccessful" (p. 1031). In attempting to decolonize education for Aboriginal students in Canada it is important to understand that many scholars (Battiste, 2002, 2004; Bear Nicholas, 2001; Brant Castellano, Davis, & Lahache, 2000; Saunders & Hill, 2007; Wotherspoon & Schissel, 2003) have perceived curriculum to be one of the main utilities of what they describe as the present day assimilationist agenda.

A Decolonizing Curriculum

Wotherspoon and Schissel (2003) posited that "Indigenous people can regain control of their lives, identities and cultures only when they are able to achieve autonomy from Eurocentric thought and institutions" (p. 27). Decolonization attempts to do just this; scholars see it as a process of "deconstruction and reconstruction" (Battiste, 2004, p. 10) that "engages with imperialism and colonialism at multiple levels" (L. T. Smith, 1999, p. 20). This process of deconstruction and reconstruction requires educators to examine critically the hegemony of mainstream education structures that perpetuate the values of colonialism (Battiste, 2004; Bear Nicholas, 2001). Brant Castellano et al. (2000) described decolonization further as "Aboriginal people … translat[ing] the well-honed critique of colonial institutions into initiatives that go beyond deconstruction of oppressive ideologies and practices to give expression to aboriginal philosophies, worldviews and social relations" (p. 23). Brant Castellano et al. argued that a challenge for non-Aboriginal people lies in opening

up spaces for Aboriginal ways of knowing to be practiced and celebrated[5].

Adding to this, Dei and Kempf (2006) explained that anti-colonial educators work

to bring power to subordinate voices in order to challenge the dominant ones.

Dei and Kempf (2006) posed some key questions in decolonizing

curriculum regarding how to get around the "tokenization and binary making

tendency of competing perspectives and narratives. How do you avoid the liberal

tendency to bury concrete understandings in the grey area between black and

white — how do we get past simplistic two-sided analyses?" (p. 71).

Wotherspoon and Schissel (2003) cautioned that

> initiatives like the introduction of elements of Aboriginal cultural
>
> heritage into the curriculum or the devolution of control over first
>
> nations education from the federal government to bands or tribal
>
> councils are important steps … however, on their own they may
>
> perpetuate colonial processes insofar as they are framed within the
>
> language and institutional forms employed by the dominant culture
>
> and its agents. (p. 27)

This connects to the wonder I expressed within the Aboriginal curriculum theory

section about how a decolonizing curriculum can be enacted in ways that do not

perpetuate colonial education processes. This study is a preliminary inquiry into a

decolonizing education for Mi'kmaw students in that I sought to hear the

experiences of Mi'kmaw students in history education across both band and

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[5] I use the word *celebrate* or *celebrated* within this dissertation not to refer to a
tokenized approach to culture (i.e. foods, fairs and festivals), but rather to refer to
an integrated approach to knowledge, reflective of holistic learning.

provincial school contexts. According to the literature, it appears that in both contexts the dominant structure marginalizes Indigenous knowledge. Josephine's story gave this study a foundation but I was not sure if others shared her experience.

Saunders and Hill (2007) have described curriculum as "structured in a rigid compartmentalized plan" (p. 1033). They proclaimed mainstream pedagogy to be a barrier to "authentic and equitous education because teachers have been taught and trained that they are the masters of the content and are in place to teach students how and what to think" (p. 1033). Knowledge that does not implicate students in their own sense making does not allow them to experience the necessary rupture in decolonizing education. A key premise behind this study was to find out how Mi'kmaw students are being implicated in their own sense making within Canadian history. Did the content they experience allow for a mirror into their own home and community understandings? Are Mi'kmaw students engaged in what these authors say constitutes a decolonizing education?

Dei, Hall & Rosenberg (2000) explained that people in the academy and local communities are increasingly drawing attention to the fact that the voices, knowledge, histories, and experiences of minority groups in Canada have been and continue to be left out of or erased from curricula and pedagogy. He stated that "these hitherto silent and silenced voices are no longer willing to accept the status quo and are urging that the problems associated with the systematization and commodification of knowledge be addressed" (p. 3). The commodification of knowledge can be seen as another form of cultural imperialism that seeks to

restrict local social control of Aboriginal peoples and local power in the hope of leaving these in the hands of the dominant group for economic gain. In Mariah Jones' (n.d.) compilation of statements made by Native people on the subject of spiritual commodification, Russell Means of the Lakota tribe summed it up by saying that

> [t]he process is ultimately intended to supplant Indians, even in areas of their own customs and spirituality. In the end, non-Indians will have complete power to define what is and is not Indian, even for Indians. When this happens, the last vestiges of real Indian society and Indian rights will disappear. Non-Indians will then "own" our heritage and ideas as thoroughly as they now claim to own our land and resources. (para. 4)

This commodification of indigenous knowledge is an example of how dominant groups appropriate Indigenous culture to serve their own needs and agendas. Pewewardy (2000) stated "the colonizers' falsified stories have become universal truths to mainstream society and have reduced Indigenous culture to a cartoon caricature. This distorted and manufactured reality is one of the most powerful shackles subjecting Indigenous peoples. It distorts all Indigenous experiences, past and present" (p. 17). Battiste (2000) cautioned that many seek to define Indigenous knowledge but fail to realize that they cannot define Indigenous knowledge using Eurocentric categorization processes.

For the purposes of this work, I chose to use the understanding of Indigenous knowledge given by Dei et al. (2000) as their words speak to the

complexity of Indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing:

> We conceptualize an indigenous knowledge as a body of knowledge associated with the long term occupancy of a certain place. This knowledge refers to traditional norms and social values, as well as to mental constructs that guide, organize and regulate the people's way of living and making sense of their world. It is the sum of the experience and knowledge of a given social group and forms the basis of decision making in the face of challenges both familiar and unfamiliar. For millennia, many Indigenous cultures were guided by a world view based on the following: seeing the individual as part of nature; respecting and reviving the wisdom of elders; giving consideration to the living, the dead, and future generations; sharing responsibility, wealth, and resources within the community; and embracing spiritual voices, traditions, and practices reflecting connections to a higher order, to the culture, and to the earth. (p. 6)

Dei et al. were quick to point out that this understanding is their conceptualization of Indigenous knowledge, not a definition or a set of constructs that explain what it is and how to get it. Battiste (2000) said that "Indigenous knowledge is not a uniform concept across all Indigenous peoples; it is a diverse knowledge that is spread throughout different peoples in many layers" (p. 35). Even asking "what is Indigenous knowledge?" privileges Eurocentric thought, which has historically

equated mysticism with Indigenous ways of knowing and knowledge (Battiste, 2000).

O'Reilly-Scanlon, Crowe, and Weenie (2004) highlighted that historically "Indigenous knowledge has been relegated to the periphery, and Indigenous research is about making that paradigmatic shift to more inclusive and respectful practices" (p. 33). Haig-Brown and Dannenmann (2002) described Indigenous knowledge as being about relationships. Urion (1995) found that seeking a definition of Indigenous knowledge is problematic and stated that "the first problem is that it will be defined in comparison with western or European models for the acquisition of knowledge rather than on its own terms" (p. 56). Urion cautioned that comparing Indigenous perspectives with 'western' perspectives marginalizes Indigenous perspectives.

Rigney (1999) described Indigenous knowledge as inherently different from non-Indigenous knowledge: "Indigenous peoples think and interpret the world and its realities in different ways from non-Indigenous peoples because of their experiences, histories, cultures, and values. However, it is the epistemologies themselves that reproduce and reaffirm the cultural assumptions of the 'world' and the 'real' by the dominant group" (p. 113). His work spoke to a legacy of "racialization and its ideology" which continues to place Indigenous knowledge into "colonial ontologies, epistemologies and axiologies" (p. 114). Battiste and Henderson (2000) called for an inclusive approach to Indigenous knowledge within curricula:

The relationship between Indigenous knowledge and Eurocentric

knowledge in the educational system must be sensitive to both

ways of knowing. It cannot be a singular method of giving

information and developing calculative skills. An enhanced

curriculum would teach Indigenous students in a holistic manner,

offering them a way of living and learning in a changing ecology.

(p. 91)

The aim of a decolonizing curriculum is not to erase Eurocentric knowledge in the

attempt to integrate Indigenous ways of knowing. Including Indigenous content is

not about replacing but about allowing Indigenous and Eurocentric knowledge to

exist alongside each other. This is not to say that a decolonizing curriculum

strives for a peaceful coexistence between Indigenous and Eurocentric

knowledge. There is an active component to decolonizing work that vigorously

opposes the dominant position of Eurocentric knowledge by including Indigenous

knowledge that does not exist solely on the periphery. Including Indigenous

knowledge allows students and teachers to unpack inaccuracies in Eurocentric

curriculum without having to struggle over whose history matters more and what

defines truth (Stanley, 2006). Dei et al. (2000) addressed the complicated nature

of working with, learning from, and interacting with indigenous knowledge while

based in Eurocentric institutions, cautioning that "this makes our work more

complex and challenging. It is not enough to simply add a set of readings on

Indigenous knowledges to our reading lists … we must transform our way of

understanding knowledge, learning and teaching" (p. 7).

Key to understanding a decolonizing approach to curriculum is an understanding of what it is not. A decolonizing curriculum does not focus on the food, fairs, and festivals of a culture. Doige (2003) discussed the relationship between Aboriginal education and the Western educational system and deemed

> a focus on traditional [Indigenous] knowledge as consisting of only artifacts, dress, food, music and ceremonies to be a continual perpetuation of stereotypes and misinformation. Focusing on these aspects assumes that culture is static when in reality culture is dynamic and ever-changing based on people's thoughts, beliefs, feelings and values. (p. 150)

 Those who create a decolonizing curriculum do not believe that Aboriginal content and perspectives can be tacked on to Eurocentric curriculum in ways that continue to reinforce notions of this knowledge as being 'other' and 'exotic.'

Cartledge and Loe (2001) said that educators should not conform to a dominant standard. Rather, educators need to realize that the focal point of a decolonizing education should encourage students to define themselves and their ethnic identities on their own terms based on their understandings of their culture and their relationship to their larger community. Following this, Battiste (2002) wrote that "by animating the voices and experiences of the cognitive 'other' and integrating them into the educational process, it creates a new, balanced centre and a fresh vantage point from which to analyze Eurocentric education and its pedagogies" (p. 5).

A decolonizing curriculum is not about training missionaries to go into

classrooms to 'help' the Aboriginal students (Bear Nicholas, 2001). Rather, Battiste (2002) said that it is about creating a new center where Aboriginal students no longer exist on the margins of curriculum. A decolonizing curriculum, were it to go deeper in examining the relationships involved in the colonial process and allow the oppressed the space to speak for themselves and decide upon their own paths to healing and decolonization — moving beyond the label of 'other' — might allow Aboriginal voices to become an integral part of Canadian education.

This study is a preliminary inquiry into Mi'kmaw students' experiences from a decolonizing perspective in that it asks how Mi'kmaw knowledge can be or has been laid alongside 'western' knowledge. Josephine clearly did not experience a decolonizing curriculum, but I did not assume this to be common experience for all Mi'kmaw students across Nova Scotia. I believed it was of extreme importance to this research to know what a decolonizing curriculum is and is not so that I and my research participants could see whether this was happening in their education experiences.

Connecting Reconceptual, Aboriginal, and Decolonizing Curriculum Orientations

My understanding of how these three curriculum orientations connect lies in their shared focus on autobiography, place, time, and context. The notion that life experience is integral to curriculum under a reconceptualist paradigm connects closely with Aboriginal curriculum theory and decolonizing curriculum in that educators are encouraged to engage in conversations with their students to

make sense of their experience with a curriculum that was planned by others. The understanding that curriculum is more than just a program of study and that it is politically, socially, culturally, and contextually located is key to all three paradigms discussed in the preceding sections.

The shaping agents of personal narratives (autobiography), place, time, and context, along with social and political elements, have a direct effect on how students experience curriculum. The reconceptualist movement seeks to move curriculum away from a technician's mentality to being rooted in personal experiences and contexts. Aboriginal curriculum theory holds that Indigenous knowledge and Indigenous contexts are key to Aboriginal student sense making within curriculum. A decolonizing curriculum focus directly opposes a mainstream Eurocentric curricular focus.

These three areas — reconceptualization, Aboriginal curriculum theory, and decolonizing curriculum theory — are closely connected in that all three seek to locate the student in the curriculum. Positioning the student as central to the curriculum framed the basis of this study. I wanted to understand Mi'kmaw student experiences with Canadian history content in the social studies curriculum through each participant's re-telling of his or her encounters with curriculum. The shaping agents as described by the three curricular orientations are inseparable from these retellings.

Aboriginal Content and Perspectives in Social Studies

According to Sears (1997), social studies was introduced in the early twentieth century and was "very much rooted in the Deweyan notions of

progressive education" (p. 23). But not everyone embraced the issues-based

blending approach to history and geography. Clark (2004) discussed the child-

centered approach to education and states that in the 1930s social studies

education was to be focused on "the whole child who would grow physically,

emotionally, and spiritually as well as mentally" (p. 18). It was not until a 1977

study that the issue of social studies focusing on the dominant culture began to

shape conversation around social studies reform. The study found that "the

underlying value system is that of the dominant white and even middle class

culture" (p. 28). Sears explained further: "[t]he authors found that the mainstream

British and French cultural perspectives dominated most curricula, and where

other cultures were included at all, they are interpreted in terms of one or both of

these dominant groups" (p. 28). Clark outlined a shift in social studies education

in the 1970s and 1980s with studies that examined textbooks and curriculum

resources for societal bias. She stated:

> [T]hese studies were usually sponsored by provincial human rights
>
> commissions, provincial departments of education or groups such
>
> as Native organizations, which had particular concerns regarding
>
> the depiction of their constituents … [A]s a result of such studies
>
> each province developed social awareness criteria for use in
>
> assessing potential resources before they receive authorization
>
> status. The intention is to authorize only those materials accurately
>
> depicting the racial and ethnic pluralism of Canada and showing
>
> people of both genders and of various races, ethnic groups, ages

and abilities, all making positive contributions to Canadian society,

past and present. (p. 29)

Also referencing the shift in social studies education in the 1970s and 1980s,

Sears (1997) found that social studies curricula across Canada embraced multiple

cultural perspectives. For example, within the Framework for the Atlantic

Canada Social Studies curriculum (1999), one of the general curriculum outcomes

from grades P-12 is that Students will be expected to demonstrate an

understanding of culture, diversity, and world view, recognizing the similarities

and differences reflected in various personal, cultural, racial, and ethnic

perspectives.

Aboriginal scholars believe that educators must commit themselves to

examining the stories told within colonial curricula and Eurocentric structural

frameworks (Battiste, 2004, 2005; Henderson, 2000; Witt, 2006). Battiste (2004)

cautioned:

Rather, culture as the additive element to the current curriculum

suggests that Aboriginal students need a form of motivating

connection to the current Eurocentric curriculum in order to be

inspired and connected to the curriculum. On this level, cultural

content is transitional, a bridging mechanism to support the core

curriculum. It is not to support all students' learning of the

diversities in their nation that must be respected, maintained or

celebrated. Rather, cultural education has become the panacea of

all inclusivities involving Aboriginal children. The use of special

units on generic Aboriginal culture then become more and more

obscure to Aboriginal children, who receive authentic cultural

content in their daily lives at home. They also are subjected to a

'culture' of poverty and oppression that have come as a result of

their colonial history. These issues are not raised in the schools,

and the curriculum is sanitized to ensure that the picture of the

government, the settlers, and their policies that led to the loss of

their land and resources are not clouded with dispirited facts. (p.

11)

Battiste (2004) went on to discuss the difficulties of presenting Aboriginal history

in courses such as social studies:

We have found that teachers who attempt to bring forward the

oppressive historical and contemporary experiences of Indigenous

peoples in Canada through such courses as Native Studies and

social studies find that breaking the silence of oppressions is

fraught with pressures and emotional forces damaging to the

lecturers themselves and to First Nations students. (p. 8)

In addition to the pressures and emotional forces that Battiste describes above, St.

Denis (2011) found that there was a general resistance to privileging Aboriginal

history and knowledge through a course focused specifically on Aboriginal

studies (i.e. Native Studies, Mi'kmaq Studies 10, etc.). When discussing the

importance of having such a course she was met with comments like "Aboriginal

people are not the only people here" which she alleged expressed a dominant 'one

size fits all' attitude that lumps Aboriginal education into a "neutral multicultural space" (p. 306). Highlighting this, St. Denis (2010) found that "Aboriginal teachers in public schools often encounter the discounting of Aboriginal content and perspectives in favour of an 'existing multicultural curriculum'" (p. 35). Returning to what she felt was an all encompassing approach to education for diverse students she expressed "multiculturalism in schools makes it possible for non-Aboriginal teachers and schools to trivialize Aboriginal content and perspectives, and at the same time believe that they are becoming more inclusive and respectful" (St. Denis, 2011, p. 313). In summary, the additive element to curriculum, the generic approach, and a sanitized curriculum as described above by Battiste does little to connect with the authentic cultural content that Aboriginal students are receiving within the home and removing a course such as Native Studies that privileges Aboriginal education would simply be placing Aboriginal issues under a 'growingly contested' (Steinberg, 2009) multicultural education umbrella.

Another challenge facing social studies educators involves challenging past and present oppression, which is fraught with difficulty for both students and teachers. Kanu's (2005; 2011) work clearly delineated some of the challenges of integrating Aboriginal perspectives and content into social studies curriculum within a mainstream educational system. The study, conducted with both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal teachers and students in a large inner-city high school in Manitoba, found that including Aboriginal perspectives was often problematic for non-Aboriginal teachers. The results of this research suggested

that all of the teachers "believed that the integration of Aboriginal knowledge and perspectives into the school curriculum was absolutely crucial" (p. 54) on the grounds that curriculum needs to be culturally relevant for more than just the students of the dominant culture. Further, teachers believed that incorporating Aboriginal perspectives would allow Aboriginal students to improve their understandings of their identities and their backgrounds. Kanu argued that a high number of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students do not understand the issues affecting Aboriginal peoples and communities. A culturally relevant curriculum interwoven with authentic Aboriginal perspectives would promote complex analyses in schools, which could help all students work through the historical portrayal of Aboriginal peoples in the curriculum and in the media.

Although the teachers in Kanu's (2005) study generally supported integrating Aboriginal cultural knowledge and perspectives in the school curriculum, clear differences emerged among them in terms of how to do so. Non-Aboriginal teachers tended to add content to the existing Eurocentric curriculum with videos and some Aboriginal literature. Or, they focused on examining significant accomplishments of Aboriginal groups intermittently during the course of their regular social studies teaching. The study found that "on average each teacher had integrated Aboriginal perspectives into the social studies curriculum only six times over the entire academic year" (p. 56). Kanu stated that

> although these teachers were unanimous in their agreement that the social
> studies curriculum was assimilating aboriginal students through omission

or token additions of aboriginal perspectives, they unwittingly contributed to this process of assimilation by allowing the curriculum topics, not aboriginal issues/perspectives to remain at the center of their teaching. (p. 56)

Kanu found that the non-Aboriginal teachers within the study experienced challenges in integrating Aboriginal perspectives. Some teachers in this study relied on videos depicting Aboriginal experiences in Canada. Others taught about Aboriginal issues when they arose in the local and national news media. One teacher used outdated textbooks to examine stereotypes of Aboriginal peoples and the omission of Aboriginal perspectives from the mainstream educational materials. She remarked that "some teachers reported drawing on Aboriginal community members as an educational resource whenever possible [as guest speakers in their classrooms] but regretted that the pool of available community members known to them was limited" (p. 56). Overwhelmingly, teachers integrated Aboriginal perspectives in a tokenistic fashion. Although they recognized the importance and the need, many rarely moved beyond an additive approach to incorporating Aboriginal perspectives in their classrooms and curriculum through a limited use of Aboriginal-centered resources. As the teachers in the study outlined their reasons why they did not integrate Aboriginal perspectives holistically in their classrooms, it seems evident that many did not know how or where to begin.

The challenges that the teachers in Kanu's (2005; 2011) research identified included a lack of knowledge and familiarity with Aboriginal culture. More

significantly, teachers lacked confidence around teaching about Aboriginal

cultural knowledge, stating that, as non-Aboriginals, they did not feel that they

had the "right" to teach about Aboriginal culture (p. 59). Other problems

included school administrators' apathetic attitudes toward integration and racist

attitudes towards Aboriginal content. Kanu argued that the school board provided

the teachers with insufficient resources. She stated the

> negative, stereotypical images of Aboriginal peoples were cited by all the
>
> teachers as the main reason why Aboriginal students tended to deny their
>
> Aboriginal ancestry or identity and disconnect themselves from Aboriginal
>
> culture, a phenomenon that poses a major challenge to integration. (p. 60)

A major challenge that the teachers identified involved the perceived

incompatibility between the institutional structure of schooling and Aboriginal

cultural practices and values, particularly in reference to time structures. For

example, the school's rigid approach to time conflicted with the belief that

Aboriginal students held a more "flexible view of time" (Kanu, 2005, p. 63).

Some teachers referred to the "incompatibility between the regimentation of the

classroom experience and aboriginal peoples cultural value of noninterference in

some childrearing practices in some aboriginal communities" (p. 63).

Another complexity that emerged from Kanu's (2005) study was that the

teachers hesitated to use methods like the talking circle in classroom practices.

The teachers believed that the large class sizes in urban high schools did not allow

them to use methods like the talking circle. Tompkins and Orr (2008) discussed

the use of talking circles in their teacher education classrooms and find that while

talking circles can take time to work through, they are incredibly important in building a community in Aboriginal (and non-Aboriginal) education. Their work is aptly titled *It Could Take 40 Minutes or It Could Take 3 Days* in reference to what can occur during a talking circle depending on the people involved, the issues to be discussed, and the feeling emanating from the circle itself as Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students come together to discuss issues of importance to them. It seems that the teachers in Kanu's study were concerned with the amount of time a talking circle can take with such large class sizes and being able to balance this with the many curricular outcomes they are mandated to cover during their class periods. Tompkins and Orr explained that using a talking circle in classrooms covers important curricular outcomes, as students are encouraged to make sense of the world around them through dialogue.

The persistent lack of resources and funding were found to be barriers for non-Aboriginal teachers. More importantly, they had few or no connections to Aboriginal communities to begin to understand and learn about Aboriginal cultural knowledge.

> Agbo (2002) explained that
>
> in order for administrators and teachers to work successfully with Aboriginal children, they need to identify with traditional values of Aboriginal people. Because administrators and teachers occupy positions of trust, their understanding of the Aboriginal culture and way of life is crucial to student achievement. (p. 13)

Kanu's work (2011) highlighted the many challenges teachers face in

implementing the mandated integration of Aboriginal knowledge into curriculum in Manitoba and outlined numerous areas of concern for them. Agbo stressed that in order to successfully teach and connect with Aboriginal students, these concerns outlined in Kanu's work must be overcome.

In further highlighting the complexities present in Aboriginal education, Starnes (2006) described challenges in presenting Aboriginal content and positions from an American context, including defining the content when there are hundreds of distinct cultures and traditions. He stated "there is more than one tribe, more than one culture, and more than one set of traditions." Starnes explained that there is an effort to change the belief that there is just one Aboriginal nation, but the fact "we include Indians in the curriculum either as an afterthought or as they relate to Euro-American history, we cannot carefully study and learn from our historical errors" (p. 189). Starnes further described the challenge to teach Aboriginal history accurately because Aboriginals are rarely included in the image of the 'American' therefore they are not represented in a mainstream historical narrative, but rather included as a simplified and stereotyped addition to the dominant story.   Creating a culturally based curriculum for Aboriginal students is challenging for many reasons and, important among these, is the difficulty in moving away from a pan-indigenous view that lumps people from very different contexts and cultures into one image of an *Indian* that is more manageable to address.

In order to develop an inclusive curriculum for Aboriginal students that is reflective of both individual and cultural locations Hampton asserted that

> [n]ot only must [Native and non-Native students and teachers]
>
> contend with personal differences in viewpoint, language and
>
> experiences; not only must they contend with cultural differences
>
> in value, understandings of human relationships, and modes of
>
> communication; but they must contend with the world-shattering
>
> difference between the conquered and the conqueror, the exploited
>
> and the exploiter, the racists and the victim of racism. It is the
>
> historical difference of perspective that demands more than
>
> learning about each other's cultures. It demands that we change
>
> the world. (as cited in Fettes, 1998, p. 269)

Hampton specifically addresses the caution given by Starnes by delineating the

multiple complexities faced by teachers and students in developing an inclusive

curriculum that is not overarching and simplistic. Saul (2009) insists that if you

pay attention to what is being said by Aboriginal leaders across the country "you

will note that their underlying discourse is to a great extent about the need for

non-Aboriginal Canadians to embrace consciously the full implications of what it

means to come from a complex society and to understand the origins of that

complexity" (p. 686). Saul's words highlight that embracing the complexities of

our national history, and those involved, is beneficial (and necessary) to both

Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people as they try to make sense of the past.

However, not everyone embraced the need to recognize and understand

the complexities of Aboriginal people, knowledge and issues. Orlowski's (2008)

study with ten veteran White social studies department heads in British Columbia

provided some perspective on the challenges that exist in changing approaches to educating Aboriginal students. According to Orlowski, "Overall, the teachers refused to accept the suggestion that they should alter the curriculum to help make it more relevant for Aboriginal students. Instead they were almost unanimous in their support of the color-blind curriculum" (p. 126). The adoption of a color-blind curriculum negates the importance of embracing complexity and contradicts the work of Starnes (2006), Hampton (1995) and Saul (2009).

Orlowski's (2008) work asked what teachers can do to ensure Aboriginal student success, suggesting that "social studies education is at least part of the problem for the high drop-out rates of Aboriginal students from BC high schools" (p. 126). The teachers in Orlowski's study believed that the dominant society was not to blame for low Aboriginal student success. Some teachers enacted a 'cultural deficit' approach to their explanations as to why Aboriginal students were not succeeding in school. In summary, the responsibility for Aboriginal student success, according to the teachers in this study, rests solely on the shoulders of Aboriginal students and Aboriginal communities. This belief that Aboriginal education should be relegated to home and community is contradicted by the work of Orr (2004) who stressed the need for Aboriginal perspectives and content in social studies classrooms, stating that "a distinctive Aboriginal worldview and perspective on social studies issues enriches all social studies classes because it creates rich opportunities for exploring multiple perspectives and values" (p. 167). Orr's words stress that it is beneficial for all students to be given the opportunity to discuss and unpack multiple perspectives and multiple

values in the classroom. To me, the work of Orr, Hampton, Starnes and Saul is representative of democratic education that fosters civic and critical engagement in all students.

This section has briefly highlighted the shifting nature of social studies as a program of study and provided a discussion around the integration of Aboriginal content and perspectives within social studies curriculum. Drawing from the works of multiple Aboriginal scholars and relevant studies I have begun to establish some of the challenges and goals for Aboriginal content integration. The literature contains much conversation around what needs to happen in social studies education for Aboriginal students, but more is needed.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter I provided an overview of three curricular orientations that shape this proposed study. The reconceptualization of curriculum, Aboriginal curriculum theory, and decolonizing curriculum are all rooted in contextual and personal experiences of the student. It is this notion of experience that framed the context of this study and allowed 'personal' narratives to be located alongside 'official' narratives in the prescribed curriculum. In each of the curricular theories discussed in this chapter, individual ways of knowing are integral to understanding how students experience curriculum. Including Aboriginal content and perspectives in social studies has led to an increased focus on the experiences of Aboriginal students with prescribed curriculum. The gaps found in the studies reviewed in this chapter have highlighted a need for empirical research about how students experience the integration of Aboriginal perspectives. The continuing

call for action on Aboriginal education in Canada, the literature around integrating

Aboriginal perspectives into curriculum, and the premise behind a

reconceptualized, Aboriginal-focused and decolonizing curriculum gave me a

dominant theme: Aboriginal education must be rooted in the culture of the learner

and must work to "heal and transcend the effects of colonization" (Cajete, 2000,

p. 181). The next chapter will highlight the methodological approach used in this

study.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Determining a methodology for this research was not an easy task.

Having read about many methodologies during the course of my graduate work, I

could see several areas where this research could lie. Post-colonial theory and

critical theory were certainly possibilities. As I continued to read about

Indigenous research, talked with people in Mi'kmaw communities, and sought the

advice of those working in Mi'kmaw communities at the academic level, I

realized that I needed to locate this work under a paradigm that would be

welcomed and accepted by the community in which I hoped to work. Not being

of Mi'kmaw ancestry, I was concerned that the community would see my

research as a colonial endeavor, just another outsider coming into the community

to research 'the other.'

In keeping with my premise of using decolonizing curriculum, I began to

shape a decolonizing methodology that sought to work with Indigenous

knowledge, interests, and experiences. Rigney (1999) cautioned: "Indigenous

peoples' interests, knowledge and experiences must be at the centre of research

methodologies and construction of knowledge about indigenous peoples" (p.119).

I hoped to centre this research in Mi'kmaw values, knowledge, experiences, and

interests. I wanted this work to give something back to the community in ways

that are significant and relevant to the larger goal of decolonizing education.

In this chapter I provide an overview of my methodology and research

considerations. In the first section I explain what constitutes an Indigenous

methodology and highlight some of the literature surrounding this. In the second

section I explain and describe the method, research processes, and participatory element of this research study along with the research design for both the band-controlled and provincially-controlled contexts under a case study framework. I also discuss my data collection methods, such as conversations and talking circles to gather student experiences. In the third section I describe and explain the model I used for data analysis, which is rooted in First Nations design and understanding. In the fourth section I outline the ethical considerations concerning the protocols of Mi'kmaw Ethics Watch (2000) and highlight issues around participant and community anonymity. The fifth section deals with my role as a non-Aboriginal researcher.

What is an Indigenous Methodology?

An Indigenous methodology is very much still a work in progress. Weber-Pillwax (1999) said, "the notion of a distinct research methodology for and by Indigenous people is still at the beginning stages of scholarly discourse" (p. 33). An Indigenous methodology is rooted in critical, feminist, postcolonial, and constructivist theories (Denzin, 2005; Wilson, 2001) where knowledge is seen as contextual and constructed, and is tied closely to power, class, gender, location, and social conditions. The fundamental difference between these theories and an Indigenous paradigm is that an Indigenous paradigm is rooted in Linda Tuhiwai Smith's (1999) decolonizing methodologies and is considered to be local to an Indigenous context. Wilson (2001) described an Indigenous paradigm as coming "from the fundamental belief that knowledge is relational" (p. 176).

Going deeper into the roots of an Indigenous paradigm, it was important for me to establish why I chose it over other methodologies and theoretical frameworks. Bishop (2005) explained that critical theory's focus on self-determination and empowerment "perpetuate neocolonial sentiments while turning the Indigenous person into an essentialized other who is spoken for" (p. 935). I understood a large part of critical theory's focus as being political, rooted in relations of power and assumptions that power operates in the construction and perpetuation of patterns of reproductions and dominance. This understanding of power and power relations is well suited to work in an Indigenous community, yet was beyond the scope of this particular research. At this stage of my research program I was inquiring into the perceived or possible issue and not yet at a place where I was ready to work towards transformation. Rather than pushing back, I was simply attempting to find out what needs to be pushed in this area. I therefore chose to locate the methodology for this research in ways that are were specific to my question. In keeping with the local needs and requests of the larger Mi'kmaw community in which I was working, I situated this work under an Indigenous paradigm (also described as a decolonizing paradigm). I do not reject critical theory as a viable theoretical framework; mine was merely a choice that aligns much better with the wishes of my chosen research community.

Feminist theory looks at gender inequality and explores gender relations through gendered scripts, positionings, and stereotypes (Carey-Webb, 2001). Although this is important, it largely falls outside of the scope of this research. Postcolonial theories look at legacies of Eurocentricism, seeking ways to expose

and challenge colonial practices (Carey-Webb, 2001). This type of theoretical framework can be seen as key to my work, but it would have required me to set up an established binary before beginning the research. While I could have assumed that this binary already existed, this research was a way for me to discover it from the participants' stories of experiences. I was hesitant to pre-form this research before talking to my participants and I wished to align with the decolonizing work already taking place in Mi'kmaw communities across Nova Scotia. This was not a rejection of post-colonial theory as a valid theoretical framework. I chose an Indigenous/decolonizing methodology because it has specific roots in Indigenous research, developed by Indigenous people, under an established Indigenous paradigm.

As I explored what an Indigenous methodology would look like I remembered Wilson's (2001) caution that by using the 'western' research traditions, researchers may attempt to create an Indigenous perspective rather than an authentic Indigenous paradigm. Kovach (2009) wrote that "because so much of Indigenous ways of knowing is internal, personal, and experiential, creating a standardized, externalized framework for Indigenous research is nearly impossible and inevitably heartbreaking for Indigenous people" (p. 43). Articulating what an Indigenous research methodology should do, Porsanger (2004) stated:

> The indigenous approaches to research on indigenous issues are
> not meant to compete with, or replace, the Western research
> paradigm; rather, to challenge it and contribute to the body of

knowledge of indigenous peoples about themselves and for

themselves, and for their own needs as peoples, rather than as

objects of investigation. (p. 105)

Rather than an investigation or experiment geared towards discovery and an 'outsider' interpretation of facts or collection of information on a subject, research must move into a process of decolonization.

Porsanger (2004) described this decolonization process as requiring "new, critically evaluated methodologies and new, ethically and culturally acceptable approaches to the study of indigenous issues" (p. 107). Porsanger described an Indigenous methodology as being

a body of indigenous and theoretical approaches and methods,

rules and postulates employed by indigenous research in the study

of indigenous peoples. The main aim of indigenous methodologies

is to ensure that research on indigenous issues can be carried out in

a more respectful, ethical, correct, sympathetic, useful and

beneficial fashion, seen from the point of view of indigenous

peoples. (p. 107)

An Indigenous paradigm for research can sometimes be considered "threatening activity" (L. T. Smith, 1999, p. 140), which can lead the academic research community to consider it "as 'not rigorous,' 'not robust,' 'not real,' 'not theorized,' 'not valid,' 'not reliable'" (L. T. Smith, 1999, p. 140). To counter this, it is important to stress that an Indigenous paradigm that seeks to decolonize is a way to "research back to power" (L. T. Smith, 2005, p. 90). This approach to

research "is formed around the three principles of resistance, political integrity, and privileging indigenous voices" (L. T. Smith, 2005, p. 89).

Martin (2002) described the features of an Indigenous research methodology as recognizing Indigenous world views, knowledge, and realities as being distinctive and vital to existence and survival, honouring Aboriginal social mores as essential to ways of living, learning, and situating, and emphasizing the social, historical, and political contexts as impacting experiences, lives, positions, and futures. An Indigenous research methodology must privilege the voices, experiences, and lives of Aboriginal peoples and Aboriginal lands and must identify and redress issues of importance for Aboriginal peoples (as cited in Steinhauer, 2002, p. 70). Porsanger (2004) defined an Indigenous approach as an

> ethically correct and culturally appropriate, indigenous manner of taking
>
> steps towards the acquisition and dissemination of knowledge about
>
> indigenous peoples. Indigenous approaches are based on indigenous
>
> knowledge and ethics that determine the means of access to knowledge,
>
> the selection and use of 'theoretical' approaches, and determine in
>
> addition the tools (methods) for conducting research. (p. 109)

Porsanger (2004), Kanaqluk (2001), and Kawagley (1995) affirmed that researchers should not implement pre-determined theoretical and 'ready to use' methods 'as is.' Rather, they must reconstitute and redesign methods in consultation with the Indigenous members the research is intended to serve. Their work should be rooted in the ethical protocols that stem from the local culture (Porsanger, 2004, p. 110). This has been proven effective in the work of Lunney

(2001), Tompkins and Orr (2009), Orr et. al (2002) and Orr (2008). The above non-Aboriginal researchers grounded their work in the local Mi'kmaw culture and consistently used methods and models within their research that aligned with community protocols and values. I will further describe these methods, such as conversations and talking circles, in Section 3.4 of this chapter.

As I determined what might constitute an Indigenous methodology, Kovach (2009) reminded me that

> creating room for Indigenous methodologies is not solely about
> putting forth another research option on the buffet table. It is about
> acknowledging an Indigenous cultural worldview and identity,
> which has long been a site of contention in this land. It is about
> recognizing the unique situation of Indigenous people that
> differentiates this group from other minorities. To this end,
> historical relations must be acknowledged or transformative efforts
> will be blocked. (p. 158)

Keewatin (2002) stressed that in an Indigenous paradigm "the role of the researcher assumes the position of learner rather than expert" (p. 114). With regards to a research methodology and framework, Keewatin found that to design and make sense of the research the researcher must first decide with the community who the research will help and how the people want to be helped. Then the researcher can conduct the research in harmony with the people's ways and in consideration of future generations. Following this, the researcher must establish how the results can work to help the people and others in terms of the

people's view and how the integrity of the findings are considered in terms of the people and their way of life.

Kirkness (2001) and Urion (1991) explained that in conducting and designing research in Aboriginal communities "the major requirement is that subjects and the researcher should engage together in creating the discourse. This participatory research using tradition as a base for change, is a means of gaining our security as a people" (p. 6). Pidgeon and Cox (2002) cautioned that any researcher must understand that there is a vast cultural variation between Aboriginal groups. The first step in respecting Aboriginal peoples is to engage with them in determining whether a particular methodology will be relevant to their needs and wants. Pidgeon and Cox stated that "there are over 80 different Aboriginal groups in Canada, and each has its own unique cultural identity… Aboriginal peoples are not a homogenous group with similar histories, beliefs, cultures and more important, needs" (p. 102). I have already shown in Chapter One that through the work being done provincially and within the MK school system, this research is a local and articulated need from the Nova Scotian Mi'kmaw community.

Wotherspoon and Schissel (2003) explained that "Indigenous people can regain control of their lives, identities and cultures only when they are able to achieve autonomy from Eurocentric thought and institutions" (p. 27). After examining many possible frameworks I determined that a decolonizing frame (L. T. Smith, 1999; Battiste, 2004; 2002) would serve as a lens for approaching the question for this research and interpreting the data that results from this study.

The most notable work in decolonizing methodologies stems from the scholarship

of L. T. Smith. Smith's (1999) work in New Zealand described culturally

relevant approaches to Indigenous research and critiques the colonial methods of

research historically found in Maori communities. Smith described research as

follows:

> From the vantage point of the colonized, … the term 'research' is
>
> inextricably linked to European imperialism and colonialism. The
>
> word itself, 'research', is probably one of the dirtiest words in the
>
> indigenous world's vocabulary. When mentioned in many
>
> indigenous contexts, it stirs up silence, it conjures up bad
>
> memories, it raises a smile that is knowing and distrustful. (p. 1)

As I took on a new role as researcher in a Mi'kmaw community, I made sure to

take great care in demonstrating that I was not there to perpetuate European

imperialism and colonialism as L. T. Smith described above. My work could go

nowhere if the community and the participants were distrustful of my intentions or

purpose. I knew that I must not enter into the community claiming to know best

how to interpret the findings. Rather, as I took the time to learn what the

community wanted from this work, I discovered how best to proceed with it.

> L. T. Smith (1999) further cautioned:
>
> Sound conceptual understandings can falter when the research
>
> design is considered flawed. While researchers are trained to
>
> conform to the models provided for them, Indigenous researchers
>
> have to meet these criteria as well as Indigenous criteria which can

judge research 'not useful', 'not Indigenous', 'not friendly', 'not just'. Reconciling such views can be difficult. The Indigenous agenda challenges Indigenous researchers to work across these boundaries. It is a challenge which provides focus and direction which helps in thinking through the complexities of Indigenous research. (p. 140)

In order to begin to work across the boundaries L. T. Smith referenced, I had to understand and interpret my work as I engaged with the community, respecting and understanding the values, traditions, and protocols in Mi'kmaw culture.

To satisfy both the academic research community and the Indigenous research community, I, as a researcher, needed to first take on the role of learner, opening myself to the teachings of the Mi'kmaw community. Only after this had been accomplished in a way that both I and the community felt was appropriate and authentic could I begin to articulate findings for a dissertation that would also meet the needs of the academic research community. A decolonizing lens was specific to the community in which I worked, and so it was the participants who determined which areas were in need of decolonizing work as the research progressed. This formed the basis for the results of this research through careful conversations with each co-researcher.

Method

To determine a method through which the participants and I could evaluate their experiences of Mi'kmaw content in the curriculum with regards to the possible impacts on cultural identity, I chose to look at the Mi'kmaw Rules of

Protocol (Nova Scotia Department of Education, 1993), which stated that there are "unwritten rules which have been part of the Mi'kmaq culture for generations [and] while it is understood that not every Mi'kmaq person follows the rules at all times, most Mi'kmaq people try to respect them" (para. 1).

Pertaining to my research, one of the rules of protocol includes the Mi'kmaw philosophy of non-interference, which "implies respect and acceptance of the beliefs of others. An individual should never impose his/her beliefs on another" (para. 2). This protocol had a two-fold application to my work. Not only did it describe how I must operate as a researcher, respecting and accepting beliefs of participants and not imposing my own, it also served as a talking point for experiences with curriculum. How might this philosophy affect the ways in which students responded to narratives within the curriculum that they do not necessarily agree with? This local philosophy is one of the areas that allowed me to see how a decolonizing lens towards the curricular experiences of Aboriginal students, developed by Indigenous peoples for Indigenous peoples, was well suited for this type of research and would be supported by the communities. I outline in the next several sections how I used a decolonizing lens.

Research processes. Research is made up of processes. L. T. Smith (1999) explained that in an Indigenous paradigm "processes are expected to be respectful, to enable people, to heal and to educate. They are expected to lead one small step further towards self-determination" (p. 128). L. T. Smith demanded that researchers consider "Whose research is this? Who owns it? Whose interests does it serve? Who will benefit from it? Who has designed its questions and

framed its scope? Who will carry it out? Who will write it up? How will the

results be disseminated?" (p. 128). Only after answering these questions, in

agreement with the community and with a deep thoughtfulness towards the

relational aspects of the four Rs of Indigenous research (Kirkness & Barnhardt,

2001), can a researcher develop a methodology under an Indigenous paradigm. In

the following section I provide my answers in regard to Smith's questions. This

research inherently belongs to me, as I conducted the work through my role in the

academic community for the purposes of my personal academic credentialing.

The research also belongs to the community in that I have not used any data

without the full consent of the parties involved, and the research is being given

back to the community for purposes that they deem suitable.

     According to the spirit of a decolonizing methodology, I plan to publish

findings and scholarly work emerging from this research with community

members in a co-authored setting. Although I might claim that I own this

research for scholarly purposes, I am sharing ownership of this research with the

Mi'kmaw communities as a way to give back. It provides the relevant authorities

of Mi'kmaw education with empirical data that can be used in ways that are

specific to their needs (examples of this might lie in school success planning,

future funding and grant applications, or curriculum redesign). My wish is that

this research serves both my personal need for completing my Ph.D work and the

needs of the community. I sincerely hope that both of us will benefit from this.

     While I have designed the questions and the scope in accordance with the

protocol of scholarly research within my program at the University of Alberta, I

have not done so without carefully considering the communities in which I will be

working. I have deliberately used methods that are rooted in Mi'kmaw culture

and will allow participants to help direct this work and participate as co-

researchers throughout this process. I was the sole researcher from the academic

community and I was solely responsible for writing the dissertation. Seeking to

involve my participants within this work, I made sure that all results were

carefully disseminated each step of the way with each participant so that this work

may help to build research capacity, a key consideration in working in Mi'kmaw

communities in Nova Scotia (Mi'kmaw Ethics Watch, 2000).

 A vital aspect of doing research in Mi'kmaw communities in Nova Scotia

is that any study should build research capacity in the communities through co-

constructed processes and data interpretations (Mi'kmaw Ethics Watch, 2000).

Mi'kmaw research principles and protocols clearly state that

 all research on the Mi'kmaq is to be approached as a negotiated

 partnership, taking into account all the interests of those who live in the

 community(ies). Participants shall be recognized and treated as equals in

 the research done instead of as 'informants' or 'subjects.' (para. 17)

Specifically, "Mi'kmaw people are the guardians and interpreters of their culture

and knowledge system — past, present, and future" (para. 6). This was a key

guiding framework for this research. I did not use any results of this work in my

dissertation that the participants found to be erroneous.

 Research design. I used case study as a method for compiling the data in

both the provincial school context and the band school context. Merriam (1998)

defined a case study as "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context" (p. 27). Because this research can be what Merriam (1998) described as "intrinsically bounded" (p. 27) it qualified as case study research. She described assessing the boundedness of the topic by asking whether there is a limit to the number of people who could be interviewed, whether there is a finite amount of time for observations, and how finite the data collection will be. In this research the participants were limited to Mi'kmaw students who had had experiences in courses with Canadian history content, within a band-controlled school context or a provincially-operated school context. The observations came through the conversational approach to data collection and the themes for analysis focused on the personal experiences of connecting and/or disconnecting with the content found in the curricular experiences.

Stake (2006) noted that the "case researcher needs to generate a picture of the case and then produce a portrayal of the case for others to see" (p. 3) and "a case study is both a process of inquiry about the case and the product of that inquiry" (p. 8). Creswell (2009) described case study as being

> [a] strategy of inquiry in which the researcher explores, in depth, a
> program, event, activity, process or one or more individuals. Cases
> are bound by time and activity and researchers collect detailed
> information using a variety of data collection procedures over a
> sustained period of time. (p. 13)

According to Stake (1988), "a case study that portrays an educational problem in all its personal and social complexity is a precious discovery" (p. 254).

Yin (1994) defined a case study as "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (p. 13). He went on to state that researchers would use the case study method "because [they] deliberately wanted to cover contextual conditions — believing that they might be highly pertinent to [the] phenomenon of study" (p. 13).

To interpret data in context, Merriam (1998) said the researcher "concentrates on a single phenomenon or entity (the case), the researcher aims to uncover the interaction of significant factors characteristic of the phenomenon" (p. 29). As shown in the review of the literature in Chapter Two and through Josephine's story in Chapter One, the phenomenon is that in some instances, Aboriginal students are experiencing a disconnect with curriculum. What was not known in the Mi'kmaw context where this research was situated is the extent of that disconnect and, if appropriate, the reasons why it exists. The goal of this research was to find out if the curricular assimilation experienced and articulated by Josephine was shared by other Mi'kmaw students.

Referring to his own work with case study, Hampton (1995) said:

In the trade-off between depth and range of information, the

primacy of personal experience and observation … led me to

choose depth. I believe that at this stage I can make the greatest

contribution towards a theory of Indian education by careful work

with what is close to me rather than by an attempt to gather all

disparate tribes and communities into one grand model. (p. 11-12)

Hampton's focus on depth is exactly what I sought to accomplish in my research. I worked in two communities and compiled the data collected from each site into case form. The case study from the band school context was completed with participants from the Ni'newey First Nation with seven participants who attended Ni'newey Community School. The case study from the provincial school context was completed with participants from the Welte'temsi First Nation with five participants who attended East Coast High School. In depth information on the Ni'newey and Welte'temsi communities and the Ni'newey Community School and East Coast High School is found in Chapters Four and Five, respectively. In both research sites, the participants and I engaged in conversations and a sharing circle.

Context and selection of participants. Focusing this research into two larger distinct cases (provincial schools and band (MK) schools) allowed me to examine more fully the context of each. What was happening in provincial schools that reflected the question under study and what was happening in band-controlled schools that reflected the question under study? Examining how the two contexts differed and in what ways they were similar helped me to add to the scholarly conversation around how each system is serving the needs of Mi'kmaw students. A case study approach to each context also allowed me to use rich description to understand both sites. I found in my master's work that I could not assume that experiences existed alone without attendant social forces coming into play (Tinkham, 2008). A rich description of each context helped to make sense of the findings stemming from this research. One of the areas affecting the

trustworthiness of this research is the level of transferability that it produces. This research was an exploratory and preliminary study into Mi'kmaw experiences in Canadian history. I do not claim that this research project is transferable as this work is deep rather than broad. It is my hope that future study into this issue will lead to greater transferability as my research program continues to develop beyond this project. This is a beginning study that I hope will be part of a larger program of ongoing sustained research.

As participants in this study came from differing milieus, both in school and at home, it was prudent to consider each participant to be representative of a single case within a case. I compiled the information collected from students in the provincial school context into a case study form and considered it, for the purposes of this study, to be a source from the provincial school context for Mi'kmaw students. Similarly, I compiled the data from the Mi'kmaw community school context into case form and used it as a source of Mi'kmaw student experiences within a band school context. Following all data collection, I searched both the provincial school and MK school cases for themes surrounding school and cultural knowledge. This allowed me to compare the two contexts in order to further explore the data for themes and tensions relative to the phenomenon in question.

To establish credibility within this research I decided to interview five participants from each context. I chose this number of participants because I feel that it was a reasonable number to get a breadth of opinions and that too few participants would endanger the research if participants wished to leave the study.

Because of the descriptive nature of the conversations I anticipated having with participants (this is further outlined in the following section), I wanted to keep this study manageable by working with a small number of participants. Flick (1998) proposed that those interviewed "have the necessary knowledge and experience of the issue or object at their disposal for answering the questions" (p. 70). I also believe that people can claim a certain expertise over their own lives and that their reflections on their learning give rise to a certain level of dependability. My relationship with the participants allowed them to play an active role in the data collection and analysis, which also produced credibility for both the participants and the researcher. I did not produce any data about a participant without the explicit consent of that participant. Building trusting relationships between the researcher and participants had to include a level of participant involvement within this study, through which I intended to build research capacity within the chosen communities. For the methodology I chose, my research question, intended goals and the sample size of research participants were appropriate and provided sufficient data to achieve the identified understanding.

Finding participants for this study would have been problematic if I had limited the participants to those who have taken the specific grade 11 Canadian History course. Conversations with teachers who have been teaching this course for the last five years in Nova Scotia led me to understand that Mi'kmaw students generally do not enroll in this course. Throughout the primary to 12 grades in Nova Scotia there is a focus on Canadian history within the following courses:

Grade One (place and time unit); Grade Three (heritage unit); Grade Four (three

unit on exploration); Grade Five (Aboriginal societies unit); Grade Six (Canada as

a multicultural and multiracial mosaic unit); Grade Seven (economic, political,

cultural, societal, and national empowerment units); Grade Eight (Canadian

identity, geographic influences, challenges and related opportunities, decades of

change, and citizenship units); Grade 10 (Mi'kmaw Studies 10); and Grade 11

(Canadian History 11). The Canadian history content becomes much more

embedded beginning in Grade Seven with the course focus on empowerment and

continues through to the Grade 11 Canadian History course, with the exception of

the Grade Nine course on Atlantic Canada in the global community.

To recruit participants I worked with two people with whom I have

relationships. In Ni'newey, a teacher at the Ni'newey Community School who is

a former student of mine helped me spread the word about this research. In

Welte'temsi I worked with a former colleague who is a community-based ally. I

shared information about the study in a one-page document and invited interested

participants to larger information and conversation sessions. To ensure that I was

able to recruit enough participants I asked for participant volunteers who had

taken at least one of the courses described briefly above. I asked participants who

were willing to partake in the research to contact me via email or phone or

through the community representatives. This research was also open to students

who had recently graduated (within two years) providing they had taken one of

the social studies courses listed above. The range of students in each context was

from Grade 11 to two years after graduation. The cycle of data collection began

with a face to face individual conversation with each participant (40-60 minutes long). Once the initial individual interviews had been completed with each participant I invited all five participants to join me for a talking circle, which lasted between 60 and 90 minutes. After this talking circle I scheduled a follow-up individual face to face conversation with each participant (five to ten minutes long). This cycle was the same for each of the two contexts. In total, I conducted 13 individual conversations and one talking circle in each site.

Data collection methods. The main goal of this research is decolonization. As a researcher it was imperative that I follow data collection methods that contribute to a decolonizing agenda. Tompkins and Orr (2009) cautioned that "Mi'kmaw students, by virtue of having been colonized, are continuously forced to enter into the colonizer's world" (p. 270). As stipulated earlier in this chapter, I intended to ensure that this research was not just another colonial endeavor. The methods used in this study were conversations and sharing circles, both of which can be found in Aboriginal approaches to research (Carson, 1986; Friesen & Orr, 1998; Kouritzin, 2004; Kanu, 2002). My choice of conversations and sharing circles contributes to a decolonizing agenda in the sense that they give voice to the participants within an academic context and allow the use of the participant stories to speak back to the curriculum. I co-constructed this research with my participants in ways that stayed true to community values and community needs.

I recognized that I needed to approach this study in a way that made sense to me as a non-Aboriginal researcher. This study was situated in conversations

with Mi'kmaw students of Canadian history in both band-operated schools and provincially-operated schools within the same geographic region of the province of Nova Scotia. The data that I collected came from student participants who self-identify as Mi'kmaq in both contexts. As a starting point for my conversations with participants, I chose to focus on some pre-determined questions that came within reach of my larger guiding research question.

My research question, *How do Mi'kmaw students situate their own understandings and narratives of Canadian history alongside the content and teaching in the current curriculum in Nova Scotia's band-controlled and provincially-controlled schools?* intended to explore the connections and disconnections between home and school for the participants in my study. How did what the participants studied in social studies courses in Nova Scotia with Canadian history components connect with what they had learned in their homes and communities? Did this school knowledge differ from their cultural knowledge?

Hampton (1995) recalled that his mainstream education was an add-on of content, while he received his real education in values and worldviews — his Aboriginal education — through immersion in his father's culture. In thinking about how Hampton's experiences might translate into a Mi'kmaw context for students I approached the data collection with these guiding questions:

(1) *How does what you study in your social studies courses, particularly in Canadian history, connect with what you have learned in your home and community?*

(2) Does this school knowledge differ from your cultural knowledge? If so, in

    what ways?

I believed that these questions and examples would contribute to a decolonizing

agenda in that they ask for counter-narratives amidst the current backdrop of

mainstream media and education.

      I wanted to keep my questions broad so that within the conversations more

questions might emerge. However, in completing the ethics application for the

University of Alberta I was required to structure a script for interviews and focus

group conversations. I worried limiting the scope of my questions would limit the

responses. In practice, the questions I used in research meetings with participants

proved to be a beneficial guide to keeping the conversation moving. Similar to

what occurred in my master's work, I found that the majority of my data came as

the conversation moved in ways that were not structured solely by me as the

researcher. As my participants talked, new themes emerged and the conversations

embraced new turns, proving to be highly beneficial to my work and showing me

that had I gone in and only stuck to a set of structured interview questions these

pieces of data would have been missed. In this way, I and the participants co-

constructed the research. It is imperative when researching with Aboriginal

peoples that the study work to build research capacity within the communities,

which is why I chose to organize my data collection methods in the following

ways (conversations and sharing circles) that encouraged participants to actively

involve themselves in the data generation process.

Conversations. Gadamer (1984) explained that conversations are key to establishing authentic inquiry: "It is only during genuine conversation that the subject matter of the topic begins to emerge and take on recognizable meaning and adequate intelligibility. In this sense, conversation is not simply an incidental condition of inquiry, but … it is the very life of inquiry, discovery and truth itself" (p. 33). I held conversations individually with all participants at two points during the study. The first conversation occurred at the beginning of the study to help develop a sense of the participants' experiences with Canadian history content and some of the main themes that emerged from their social studies experiences. At the end of the data collection I invited participants back for a second individual conversation to discuss issues that may have come forward during the sharing circle sessions. I wished to provide a space for the participants and me to discuss issues in a private session, away from the other participants.

The need for the individual conversations in addition to talking/sharing circles comes from Bahktin's (1986) work on utterances and dialogue. In describing dialogic theory, Bahktin explained that "any understanding is imbued with response and necessarily elicits it in one form or another: the listener becomes the speaker …. Sooner or later what is heard and actively understood will find its response in the subsequent speech or behaviour of the listener" (p. 9). The individual conversations allowed us to discuss individual experience without relying on what others may have said within the sharing circle sessions. Friesen and Orr (1998) found that a conversational approach allowed them to collect data in ways that did not place them in a "position of privilege over and against the

participants" (Florio-Ruane, 1991, as cited in Friesen & Orr, p. 190) and that this conversational approach was well-suited to their work in an Aboriginal context because it emphasized personal relationships and connections.

Talking/sharing circles. Building upon the individual conversations with participants at the start of the study, I used themes that emerged as starting points to guide the talking circles to see how these themes might resonate with the larger group. For example, an important starting point for the data collection was to present the story of Christopher Columbus' discovery of North America as an example. This was an insidious narrative for Josephine. As I was attempting to see if her experience was common, this provided me with a place to start. A more recent and local theme that emerged included the story of centralization, told both from a government perspective and from a Mi'kmaw perspective. These themes are further outlined and unpacked in Chapters Four and Five.

I also discussed experiences of connectedness with content as a starting point. Tompkins and Orr's (2009) understandings of the talking circle, in combination with Graveline's (1998) work on circles and pedagogy, guided this explication of method. Tompkins and Orr (2009) stated:

> Our variation of the talking circle is guided by sacred Aboriginal
> traditions. It begins with participants sitting in a circle and one
> person holding a sacred object. The person who holds the object
> has the right to speak and may speak as long as the object is held.
> All other circle members become listeners. When the person has
> finished s/he passes the object in a clockwise fashion to the person

next to him/her. That person has the right to talk. Talking circles

allow for each member of the circle to speak without interruption

or feedback while speaking. People have the right to pass and the

circle may continue until the need to talk is exhausted. (p. 272)

While we did not structure the circle in such specifically sacred ways (example:

beginning with a smudging ceremony and passing around an eagle feather within

the circle), we followed the ideas of Tompkins and Orr by allowing each person

to speak without interruption or interjections of feedback and allowed the energy

to flow from speaker to speaker (Graveline, 1998) in a respectful manner. I

believe that we aligned with Graveline's (1998) ideas around how a circle should

function by providing a space that allowed each participant to have "more

personal authority [by sitting in a circle], compared to when energy is focused on

one person at the front, the expert, the authority, the one who is imparting to us

knowledge — what we 'need' to know" (p. 131).

To mitigate my obvious position of power as a researcher and my position

as a non-Aboriginal outsider, I chose to use a circle rather than a focus group.

This allowed the members of the group to structure the conversation instead of me

being the controller. Hart (2002) explained this further:

You know, here [focus groups] we have a hierarchical system, which to

me comes from the Europeans that clashed with tribes and their

philosophies that are in a cyclical system. Now if you look at it in terms

of the circle … well, it creates an atmosphere of cooperation. It creates an

atmosphere of equality … there's no hierarchy in the sharing circle.

Everybody is the same. Even the facilitator should blend into that. (p. 84)

I convened sharing circle sessions in each context once during the study. In these

sessions, participants took part in a circle to share their experiences around the

content of the curriculum (as raised by participants in earlier conversations) and

to discuss how the curricular materials and content connect or disconnect with

what they had learned about Canadian history within their community and home

lives.

The value that this held for the data collection and the research agenda for

this study is that the circle approach allowed for what Graveline (1998) described

as *establishing interconnectedness* among all participants, even the facilitator.

She stated, "everyone is equal in a circle, the point of reference is the middle

which is both empty and full of everything" (p. 130). I understood that for the

purposes of my academic research I needed to provide a jumping-off point for the

talking circles but it was not my intent to lead the conversation within the circle

by continually directing and redirecting the talking. My hope was that in using

the circle the conversation would flow authentically and participants would share

in it equally.

I audio recorded individual conversations with participants and transcribed

these myself. Initially I approached the circle sessions as sacred in a Mi'kmaw

context and I felt that including an audio or video recording device was

inappropriate for this type of ceremony. Immediately after each session I had

planned to construct an overview of the conversation within the sharing circle in

field note form and share these with participants for feedback and verification. When gathering with the participants in each context, I explained my reasons for not wishing to record the sharing circle session and both groups assured me it was fine to record our circle. In fact, given the choice, they wished to keep the audio-recorder on during our session. I provided the transcriptions of conversations and sharing circles to participants for 'member checking' (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Methods for Data Analysis

Battiste (1998) explained that "[non-Indigenous] scholars may be useful in helping Indigenous peoples articulate their concerns, but to speak for them is to deny them the self-determination so essential to human progress" (p. 25). My approach to data analysis built on my methodology and theoretical framework and stemmed from a decolonizing approach where co-researchers play an active role in interpreting the data under a co-constructed framework. In structuring a plan for this work, I struggled with developing a model for data analysis as a non-Aboriginal person. Because my research participants were unknown at that point and ethically I was unable to seek out the assistance of students with whom I may work, I recognized the need to determine data analysis procedures within my proposal for doctoral research and therefore chose an established Indigenous model to act as a framework for data analysis.

The model I chose is called the First Nations Holistic Lifelong Learning Model. According to the Canadian Council on Learning (CCL, 2007), it was developed "as a result of ongoing discussions among First Nations learning professionals, community practitioners, researchers and analysts" (p. 1). At least

three members of the Mi'kmaw community in Nova Scotia played a role in creating this model and I therefore assumed it to be representative of the community for the purposes of this work. This model was created as a means to redefine how success in measured in First Nations learning. It is rooted in a First Nations understanding of learning. I was immediately drawn to the circular style of this model because it does not privilege one area over another. Figures 1 and 2 below illustrate the model.

This model suited this study in that it provided a culturally-relevant tool to measure the relationship between learning processes and knowledge. The First Nations Holistic Lifelong Learning Model (Figure 3.1)

uses a stylized graphic of a living tree to depict learning as a cyclical process that occurs throughout the individual's lifespan. The learning tree identifies the conditions that foster cultural continuity and provide the foundation for individual learning and collective well-being. (p. 18)
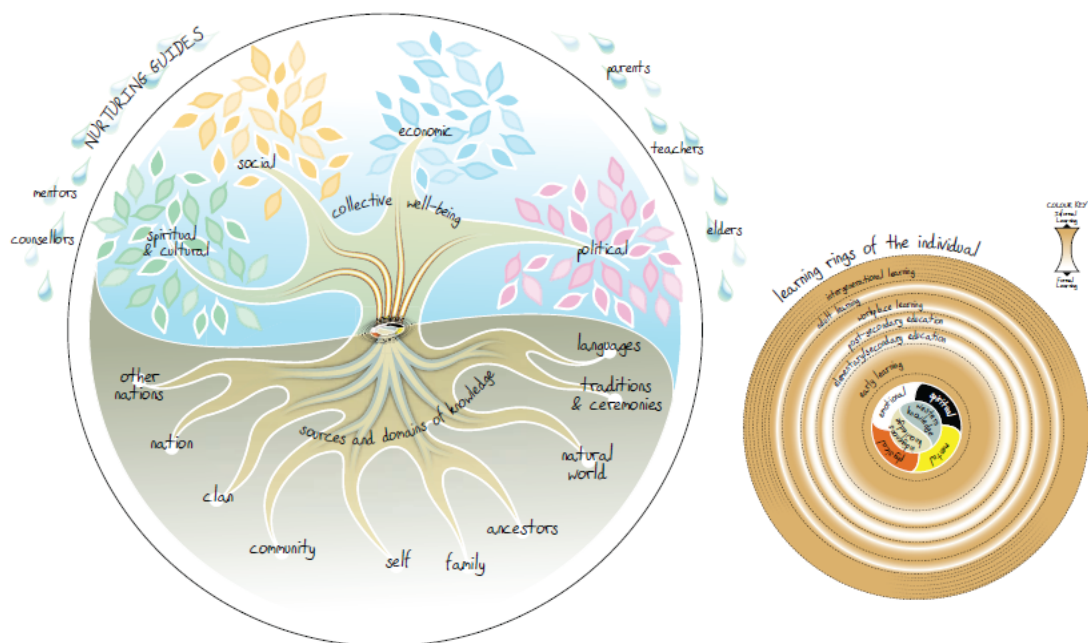
Figure 1. First Nations Holistic Lifelong Learning Model

Source: http://www.ccl-cca.ca/pdfs/RedefiningSuccess/CCL_Learning_Model_FN.pdf

Figure 2 represents the more specific model (the centre of the larger tree shown in Figure 1) aimed at individual learning. I intended to use this learning ring model for data analysis. While not all rings apply to this research study, the centre spiral consisting of mental, physical, spiritual, and emotional elements of personal development surrounding Indigenous knowledge and Western knowledge was useful for focusing the analysis. I approached the data (transcriptions of individual conversations and group talking circles) looking for the themes of mental, physical, spiritual, and emotional elements of personal development. I then continued by looking into the outer two rings surrounding this centre: early learning experiences and elementary and secondary school experiences. The first outer ring focused on early learning depicts how socialization experiences in the family and community shape Mi'kmaw participants before they enter formal schooling. Moving to the second outer ring, I was also interested in how formal schooling shapes Mi'kmaw learners' perspectives in elementary and secondary school. I considered the framework to have a rigid flexibility in that it gave enough support for my assertions and yet was flexible enough to allow for other themes which may not fall into the centre four categories of emotional, spiritual, physical, and mental to emerge.
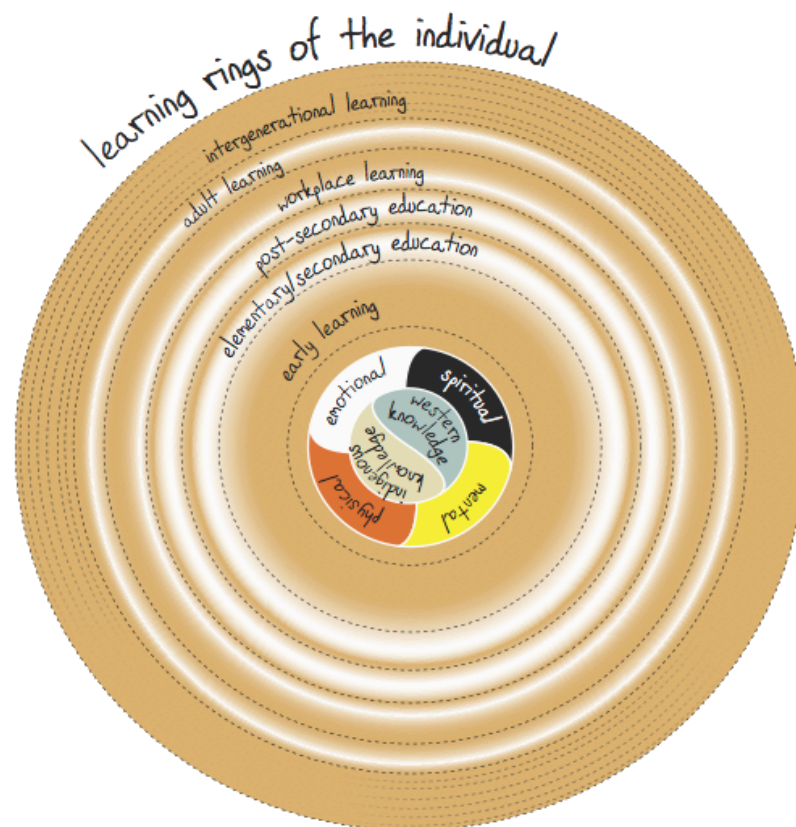
Figure 2. Learning Rings of the Individual

Relating to my research question, this model suggests that Indigenous knowledge and Western knowledge should be received in complementary ways, through a relational lens. While Jospehine's story appears to represent an oppositional approach to the relationship between Indigenous and Western knowledge, I hesitated in creating a binary approach within curriculum studies before exploring the experiences of my research participants. This is in keeping with the approach commonly used by Lipka, Mohatt, and the Ciulistet Group (1998), which advocated a *both/and* approach where Indigenous and Western

knowledge complement each other. The CCL model supports Lipka et al.'s

understandings of the relationship between Indigenous and Western knowledge.

The CCL (2007) stated, "at the trunk's core, Indigenous and Western knowledge

are depicted as two complementary, rather than competitive, learning approaches"

(p.18). I therefore structured my research question in a way that follows an

'alongside' approach to Indigenous and Western knowledge. I remained open to

exploring a binary between the two should I find that one exists.

For the purposes of this study, I chose to use the inner rings of this model

(the cross section of the tree), which focus on individual learning (Figure 2).

Surrounding the core are the four dimensions of personal development – spiritual,

emotional, physical and mental – through which people learn. The model depicts

learning as an integrative process that engages the whole person during any given

learning activity. Describing the outer rings surrounding the core, the CCL

(2007) explained:

The tree's rings portray how learning is a lifelong process that

begins at birth and progresses through childhood, youth and

adulthood. The rings depict the stages of formal learning,

beginning with early childhood learning and progressing through

elementary, secondary and post-secondary education, to adult skills

training and employment. However the rings also affirm the

equally important role of experiential or informal learning

throughout each life stage, as depicted by the lighter-coloured

shading within each ring (p. 18).

The outer ring of intergenerational knowledge is depicted as "learning

opportunities … [that occur in] a variety of contexts that include both informal

and formal settings such as in the home, on the land, or in the school" (p. 18).

These forms of intergenerational learning are expressed as "facilitating the

transmission of intergenerational knowledge to the individual from the sources

within the roots – from family members, community members and Elders" (p.

18). In order to limit the scope of the data analysis I chose not to focus on the

branches and leaves shown in Figure 1. I believed that searching the data for the

themes related to the cross section and rings in Figure 2 that I specified above

would allow me to form a descriptive understanding of the individual learning

experiences of each Mi'kmaw participant in this study. I examined the transcripts

and identified any utterances that fell under these themes. I then coded the

transcripts in a way that categorized the experiences shared by participants into

the four themes of emotional, spiritual, mental, and physical.

Within these themes there are key areas I was looking for to assist in coding the data. It should be noted that I follow Merriam's (2009) understanding of themes as being synonymous with categories. Following the examples provided by a medicine wheel model developed by Bopp, Bopp, Brown, and Lane (1984), which is closely aligned with the themes of the CCL model, I decided to break down the four themes (mental, spiritual, emotional, physical) to assist with coding. Under the mental category I looked for statements made by participants that had to do with thinking, idea formation, interpreting, contemplating, pondering, mediating, considering, regarding, conceiving, and imagining. Under the emotional category I looked for utterances relating to enjoyment, empathy, excitement, sentiment, sympathy, sensitivity, tenderness, moods, and emotions. Under the physical theme I looked for utterances around drawing, creating, acting, dramatizing, moving, travelling, imitating, building, grouping, telling, and presenting. Under the spiritual theme I looked for utterances relating to confidence, respect, love, humility, sensitivity, caring, awareness, enjoyment, happiness, and hope. I was also open to adding additional themes and keywords as they were brought to light.

I saw these four themes working together to represent the core of learning for Mi'kmaw participants. Within each theme I explored the presence of these factors in relation to the inner core relationship between Indigenous and Western knowledge. For the purposes of this study I have regarded Indigenous knowledge as being the 'personal' narratives developed and learned in the home and community and Western knowledge as being the 'official' narratives presented in

schools. How each of the themes — mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual — relate to each experience formed the basis of this data analysis. For example, when participants were discussing their experiences with Columbus being considered the discoverer of North America, like in Josephine's story, how did this story fit within the core of the tree? For Josephine, it created a binary between Indigenous and Western knowledge, causing an emotional and spiritual reaction. She described discussing this with her teacher and being ignored, left feeling as if her home and community knowledge was not of value. She talked of not wanting to engage in her schooling and not wanting to speak up. I saw this reaction as falling into both the mental and physical categories. Josephine's learning was stalled around this experience because the inner core of the tree was filled with opposition for her.

Drawing on Schwab's (1978) work, I examined each section of the ring in relation to the four curriculum commonplaces of teacher, student, subject matter and milieu. Once I had categorized the utterances under each theme I used Schwab's four commonplaces as a way to consider which aspects relate to students, teachers, subject matter, and milieu. For example, for utterances falling under the emotional category I considered the following questions: (1) How do the teachers factor into the student's emotional well-being? (2) How does the student bring emotion to his or her learning? How does the student protect his or her emotional well-being? (3) How does the curriculum enhance or inhibit the emotional development of the student? (4) How might the milieu help or hinder the emotional development of the student?

Under the physical category questions I considered were: (1) How do the teachers factor into the student's physical well-being? (2) How does the student bring physical well-being to his or her learning? How does the student protect his or her physical well-being? (3) How does the curriculum enhance or inhibit the physical development of the student? (4) How might the milieu help or hinder the physical development of the student?

I coded utterances falling under the spiritual category amidst the following questions: (1) How do the teachers factor into the student's spiritual well-being? (2) How does the student bring spiritual well-being into his or her learning? How does the student protect his or her spiritual well-being? (3) How does the curriculum enhance or inhibit the spiritual development of the student? (4) How might the milieu help or hinder the spiritual development of the student?

Under the mental category I sorted utterances under the following questions: (1) How do the teachers factor into the student's mental well-being? (2) How does the student bring mental well-being into his or her learning? How does the student protect his or her mental well-being? (3) How does the curriculum enhance or inhibit the mental development of the student? (4) How might the milieu help or hinder the mental development of the student? This lens allowed me to further sort within the categories and tie this analysis specifically to Schwab's 4 commonplaces of curriculum.

As this work falls under a case study framework, I used a deep rich description to provide depth in the writing about the experiences of each participant. Case study allowed me to keep a narrow focus (as shown through the

limited number of students I chose for each specified site) yet still provided a

broad overview of each context. The conventions of case study encouraged me to

'go deep' as described earlier by Hampton (1995) by providing a space where I

could engage in the previously described Indigenous methods and methodologies

and provide collections of rich description for the experiences of each participant

in each context. Within each context, I produced five 'portraits' (Lightfoot,

1983); one for each participant. The data for each portrait was organized

topically, according to the analysis themes and compiled in a case record

(Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2008). This phase of the data analysis was the within-case

analysis. Once I had analyzed the data for each portrait, I brought the five

portraits together into an individual case study. I used the same method for the

second context. Once the within-case analysis was complete for both the

provincial school individual case and the band-controlled individual case I moved

into a cross-case analysis. Merriam (2009) explained that "ultimately cross-case

analysis differs little from analysis of data in a single qualitative case study" (p.

204).

  I structured the dissertation chapters in terms of how these themes relate

both to the inner core and to the outer two rings of the tree. I merged analysis

chapters into the individual case studies for each context but split these into

categories of emotional, physical, spiritual, and mental based on participant

experiences. A discussion chapter explains how these experiences fit together to

give a picture of individual learning for these Mi'kmaw students. Within these

chapters I classified analysis according to those attending band-controlled and

provincially-controlled schools. The discussion chapter explores the differing or similar experiences of students in the two contexts.

As the primary researcher of this study I was responsible to analyze this data on my own. However, in keeping with the collaborative processes that need to occur in Mi'kmaw community research (Mi'kmaw Ethics Watch, 2000) I brought any analysis that I performed back to each participant for discussion. This allowed me to 'member check' the research, ensure validity, and ensure that this research remains representational for each participant. This collaborative approach to analysis was a way to help build research capacity, which is a key element to conducting responsible, reciprocal, relational, and relevant research in Mi'kmaw communities (Kirkness and Barnhardt, 2001).

Ethical Considerations

In addition to the ethical protocols that I was required to follow within my scholarly context at the University of Alberta there were specific locally-developed protocols for working within a Mi'kmaw community in Nova Scotia. I did not wish to conduct this research *in* schools, I did not partake in any classroom observations, and I did not speak with school staff. For this reason, I did not need to gain ethics approval from the school board in which the Mi'kmaw students studying in provincial contexts are located. This section highlights the ethical areas that I carefully considered throughout this research.

Mi'kmaw Ethics Watch. Mi'kmaw Ethics Watch (MEW), the governing body for ethics involving research in Mi'kmaw communities, has established clear protocols for research involving Mi'kmaw participants. MEW (2002) states

that "[a]ll research on the Mi'kmaq is to be approached as a negotiated partnership, taking into account all the interests of those who live in the community(ies)" (para. 17). To establish a negotiated partnership, I worked within the communities before starting any research activity. I clearly established the goals and purposes of the research project in conjunction with community members and participants to ensure that the study was both a beneficial and an ethically sound undertaking for all involved.

The ethical treatment and collaborative involvement of participants is a key protocol for research in Mi'kmaw communities. Participants must be regarded as equals within the research process rather than "informants or subjects" and "all research partners must show respect for language, traditions, standards of the communities, and for the highest standards of scholarly research" (MEW, 2002, para. 14).

Cultural protocols and representation. The MEW (2002) document states that all researchers must be committed to learning the protocols and traditions of the local communities in which they are working and that sensitivity and understanding towards cultural practices is paramount for conducting ethical research. The use of *member checking* as described by Lincoln and Guba (1985) is imperative to ensure that the study adheres to cultural protocols and is an accurate representation of the data being collected and written about. MEW (2002) reminded researchers that

> [a]ll research partners shall provide descriptions of research
>
> processes in the participant's own language (written and oral)

which shall include detailed explanations of usefulness of study,

potential benefits and possible harmful effects on individuals,

groups and the environment. All consent disclosures shall be

written in both Mi'kmaq and English, depending on the community

norms. (para. 20)

A pressing issue for me as a researcher in a Mi'kmaw community

involved my inability to speak Mi'kmaq. I committed to working closely with a

translator from the community, however, all the participants spoke English in our

discussions and none of the participants believed themselves to be fluent in

Mi'kmaq.

Community and participant anonymity. There is a concern around

anonymity and privacy when researching in a small province with only eleven

Aboriginal communities operating under the MK agreement. In using rich

description to describe the band-controlled and provincially-controlled schools

located in the same region, I could easily have exposed the location of the

community and in turn the identity of the participants. To prevent this, I

consistently shared my writing with participants and community members and

worked diligently to remove specific identifiers that could endanger anonymity.

Being an 'Outsider Researcher'

Banks (1998) highlighted differing types of cross-cultural researchers as

falling under four main categories. The first is the *Indigenous-Insider*, a

researcher considered to be a legitimate community member, grounded in the

culture and community, with the authentic authority to speak for the Indigenous

group. The second category is the *Indigenous-Outsider* researcher, one who has

been socialized within the community but has experienced levels "of cultural

assimilation into an outsider or oppositional culture" (p. 8). This type of

researcher is not usually considered an insider to the community. The third

grouping refers to the *External-Insider*. Banks explained this as follows:

> This individual was socialized within another culture and acquires
>
> its beliefs, values, behaviours, attitudes and knowledge. However,
>
> because of his or her unique experiences, the individual rejects
>
> many of the values, beliefs, and knowledge claims within his or her
>
> Indigenous community and endorses those of the studied
>
> community. The external-insider is viewed by the new community
>
> as an "adopted" insider. (p. 8)

The fourth and final category explicated by Banks is the *External-Outsider*, a

researcher considered to have been socialized within a community outside of the

research community, who has "little appreciation for the values, perspectives, and

knowledge of the community he or she is studying and consequently often

misunderstands and misinterprets the behaviours within the studied community"

(p. 8).

In no way did I consider myself an Indigenous-Insider researcher, nor was

I an Indigenous-Outsider researcher. I situated myself in the External-Insider

category because my work at St. Francis Xavier University (St. FX) from 2006 to

2012 had afforded me many opportunities to teach in highly collaborative

contexts with Mi'kmaw communities and students. I had participated in First

Nations school success planning and in developing a Mi'kmaw language conference in collaboration with my St. FX colleagues and representatives from the MK school board and larger Mi'kmaw community. I had taught and worked with many Mi'kmaw pre-service and in-service teachers where together we engaged in multiple conversations about cross-cultural issues for Mi'kmaw people and communities across Nova Scotia. I had taught in a Mi'kmaw cohort for Bachelor of Education teachers (located within a Mi'kmaw community) and worked in MK schools supervising Mi'kmaw student teachers across the province. I had developed strong relationships with community members across Nova Scotia and I was deeply committed to the success of Mi'kmaw students at the elementary, secondary, and post-secondary levels.

My university-level social studies, sociology, foundations, cross-cultural, educational research, and inclusion teaching has been rooted in Indigenous perspectives. I have consistently sought to decolonize my own practices and encourage my non-Mi'kmaw students to decolonize their own. Prior to my experiences at St. FX, which broadened my understandings and strengthened my critical, decolonizing lens, I would have been considered an External-Outsider researcher. This was not because I did not care about community values, perspectives, and knowledge, but because of my lack of understanding. My six years of highly collaborative experiences in Mi'kmaw communities and the trusting relationships I built with many Mi'kmaw friends afforded me an understanding and a commitment to community. I have had the honour of being welcomed into many Mi'kmaw communities. I did not undertake this research

lightly, nor did I assume that I could speak *for* Mi'kmaw participants and communities. I intended to use my positioning as an academic to speak *with* Mi'kmaw participants and communities. My work focused on gathering data that I hoped the communities would eventually be able to use. To me, this is the definition of collaborative research.

Chapter Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to situate the research inquiry under a methodological framework. Guiding this inquiry was an Indigenous methodology, specifically a decolonizing framework. This chapter described my reasons for choosing to locate my research under this Indigenous decolonizing framework by explaining the roots of an Indigenous decolonizing methodology and providing an overview of the notable scholarly work in the area. I provided an overview of how this decolonizing work framed my study and how the research processes were geared particularly towards working in a Mi'kmaw community. I described the participatory element of this research and highlighted some of my hopes for this study in the future should the results lead in an active direction. I provided an overview of case study as a research design and explained how I located and chose participants for this study.

I used data collection methods consisting of conversation and talking circles in conjunction with two guiding questions. I analyzed the data using a First Nations learning model framed around the individual's emotional, spiritual, physical, and mental development. I explained that this analysis was rooted in collaborative work with my participants, enabling them to be co-researchers and

helping to build research capacity within the communities. I gave an overview of some ethical considerations involved in this type of work, cultural protocol and representation considerations, and ways I ensured community and participant anonymity. The chapter concluded with a description of how I understood my positioning as a non-Mi'kmaw researcher in a Mi'kmaw community.

Chapter Four: Mi'kmaw Students' Experiences with the Nova Scotia Social Studies Curriculum in a First Nations Community School

The purpose of this chapter is to illustrate the research undertaken with Mi'kmaw secondary students at Ni'newey Community School in case study form. In the first section I provide an overview of the Ni'newey First Nation Community and Ni'newey Community School as well as a description of the participants who agreed to take part in this research. A subsequent chapter will look at the research results from participants in Welte'temsi First Nation attending a provincial high school. In the second section I outline the questions I used to guide my inquiry under the decolonizing framework outlined in Chapter 3 and present the participant responses. This section contains portraits of the participants based on the information they shared in our individual conversations. In the third section I discuss the responses to questions posed in the whole group sharing circle and outline: the participant descriptions of their community and their school; their understandings and articulations of being Mi'kmaw and their experiences with Mi'kmaw content in social studies; and their reactions to my pre-determined themes around Christopher Columbus' discovery of North America, residential schooling, centralization policies in Nova Scotia and Mi'kmaw treaty rights.

In the fourth section I summarize the results of my second individual conversation with the participants. In the fifth section I analyze the individual and group conversations using the First Nations Holistic Lifelong Learning Model (CCL, 2007) and Schwab's (1978) four commonplaces of curriculum, using the

themes of mental development and well-being, emotional development and well-being, spiritual development and well-being, and physical development and well-being, along with relevant sub-themes that emerged within these categories. In the sixth section I engage in a general discussion around the findings. I return to my initial research question to address the participants' understandings of the relationship between Western and Indigenous knowledge. Both Ni'newey Community School and Ni'newey First Nations Community are pseudonyms.

Community, School, and Participant Overview

In this section I describe the Ni'newey First Nation Community and the Ni'newey First Nation Community School and provide a general overview of the participants who agreed to take part in this research. Due to the small number of Mi'kmaw communities in Nova Scotia and the relatively small size of the province as a whole, I have attempted to give as much detail as possible while still ensuring anonymity for the participants in this study.

Ni'newey First Nation community. Ni'newey is a small community with a population of approximately 800 located in the eastern part of rural Nova Scotia. The Mi'kmaq have inhabited this region for well over 1000 years and the Ni'newey community has gone through many changes. In the 1940s the government developed centralization policies that urged Mi'kmaw peoples to move to central locations within the province. As a result, Ni'newey lost over half its community members. Most of those who left later returned, only to find their community drastically changed after orders from the Bishop were carried out (a direct result of centralization policies). Like many Mi'kmaw communities,

Ni'newey has recently reclaimed its original name although there is still some

debate over what the original name actually was. The community houses a

school, a church, a restaurant, a gas station, a medical centre, the band office, the

fisheries office, and an RCMP detachment. Currently the population data for

Ni'newey shows that 48.75% of the residents of the community are between the

ages of 0 and 19 and another 18% are between 20 and 40 years old. These

numbers are significant in a province like Nova Scotia where only 21.2% of all

residents are between 0 and 19 years of age (Statistics Canada Census Profile,

2011).

   Ni'newey Community School. Ni'newey Community School is located

in the heart of the community and has approximately 300 students. The school

falls under the Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey agreement, the staff is largely

Mi'kmaw, and the school is run by Mi'kmaw administrators. Ni'newey

Community School began as a one-room elementary schoolhouse built in 1953.

As the population of students increased additions were made to the existing

structure. In 1993 the Band Council began hiring Mi'kmaw teachers to teach in

what was then still considered a federal school. Eventually the Band took control

of the school in full and grade levels increased. The school now runs as a primary

to Grade 12 institution under the current MK agreement as described in Chapter 1.

   Participants from Ni'newey First Nation. The study participants from

the Ni'newey First Nation were current and former students from the Ni'newey

Community School. All the participants were Mi'kmaq and they ranged in ages

from 16 to19. Five participants had recently graduated and three were currently

enrolled at Ni'newey Community School. The participants had attended the Ni'newey Community School from grades primary to 12 and had never lived outside the community during their time in school. Some had lived elsewhere as young children but all the participants had started their school years at Ni'newey Community School and had finished or intended to finish at Ni'newey Community School. The participants knew each other and each other's families well and had strong bonds with each other prior to this research. Five participants talked with me in the individual conversation sessions but three of those initial participants were unable to attend the group conversation session.

During the group conversation meeting three new participants joined the session. To help these new participants become acquainted with what had already taken place in the study, I conducted individual conversations with them before the group session. The following sections provide an overview of the initial individual conversations with each participant and an overview of the group conversation session.

Initial Individual Conversations with Participants

Through Mali, a former Bachelor of Education student of mine, I was able to get the word out that I was interested in speaking with students in senior high school or those who had graduated from grade 12 at the community school within the last two years. I mentioned to Mali that I was interested in talking with students and asked her if she might know of any that would be willing to sit down with me and discuss their experiences. By 2 p.m. the next day I had confirmation that five participants were interested and the plans were put in motion for me to

visit the community. We scheduled the information session for the following Sunday and Mali secured the community hall as a place for us to meet.

I arrived with pizza to meet with the participants at the community hall on a sunny Sunday afternoon in July 2012. In nervous anticipation I arrived 40 minutes ahead of schedule and waited in the parking lot. During those 40 minutes I sat in my car and worried about what kind of data I would get from the participants. Would they be open to talking with me? Would they have anything to share that would benefit this research? Would any actually sign on as participants in the end? My fears, while seemingly pretty common amongst my graduate school friends, were unfounded. As 5:00 p.m. approached, parents and students started to arrive and I could see that there were some students who were quite eager to chat. As people were drifting in and out of the hall, I handed out the information letters and went through them individually with each person. By 5:30 p.m. I had signed consent forms and the participants were asking if we could do the first interviews right away. Initially I had planned to revisit the community the following week for individual conversations but could see that those who wanted to speak with me were willing to remain in the hall to do so.

The guiding research questions used in the individual conversations were:

1) *What classes at the high school level did you take in social studies (i.e. Canadian History, Mi'kmaq Studies, etc.)?*

2) *Tell me about your experiences in social studies. Do you like social studies? Why or why not?*

3) *What is the one thing you remember most from your social studies classes? Why do you think you remember this so well?*

4) *Do you feel like you have been represented in the social studies curriculum?*

5) How do you feel about the textbooks you have used in your social studies classes? What would you keep the same and what would you change about them?

6) Tell me what you remember about Canadian history based on what you learned in school. What kinds of topics did you study, or what kinds of topics did you teacher/textbook talk about?

7) If you were to tell someone else the story of Canada's past, based on what you learned in school, what would you say?

8) What have you learned about Mi'kmaw history in social studies?

9) What have you learned about Mi'kmaw history at home?

10) Does your Canadian history learning in school match with what you have learned at home? Why or why not?

11) What stories, if any, do you wish were included in your social studies classes?

12) If you could design a curriculum for social studies classes, particularly Canadian history classes, what would you make sure was included?

(a) What stories, specifically ones that you have learned at home or in the community, if any, are missing from the social studies curriculum? Why do you think this should be included?

13) Would you say that what you have studied in your social studies courses, particularly in Canadian history, connected with what you have learned in your home and community?

14) Did you learn anything in social studies in school that contradicted what you had learned at home? How did you deal with this?

15) Did you learn anything at home that contradicted with what you learned in social studies in school? How did you deal with this?

I met individually with each participant and asked all fifteen questions. Each individual conversation lasted, on average, 30 minutes. I audio-recorded each conversation with each participant. Following the sessions I transcribed each interview. The following sections contain portraits (Lightfoot, 1983) of

individual conversations with the participants taken from the transcripts from the audio-recordings with each participant. I chose to incorporate these questions into my reconstruction of the conversation in a holistic manner. Keeping with the tenets of my methodology, I chose to represent conversations as whole rather than as a series of responses to discrete questions. I gave each participant a copy of the questions before we began our conversation and I found that the participants easily moved through the topics without me necessarily having to ask each question. Often a question was answered while a participant was discussing another question. The five individual portraits that follow refer to my conversations with participants on July 8, 2012. Within each section, all words in quotation marks are attributed to the individual named at the start of the section unless otherwise indicated. Names of all participants are pseudonyms.

Carmie. As I situated myself in a private room in the community hall my first participant walked in and sat down. I was nervous as I sat fiddling with the audio-recorder and she could tell. She took hold of the audio-recorder, turned it on, and told me to make myself comfortable. She had a lot she wanted to discuss. As we began to talk I learned about Carmie, an 18 year-old transgendered female who grew up in the community and holds career aspirations of being a writer. As the research progressed Carmie shared her writing with me and I was impressed with the creative vision of her work. Carmie had taken many social studies courses over the course of her education at Ni'newey Community School, including Canadian History, Global History 12, and Mi'kmaq Studies 10. I asked Carmie if she enjoyed her experiences in social studies and she told me that she

had. She thought it was important to know about society and the environment and she firmly believes that knowing things from the past was of the utmost importance as "mistakes inform the future" (Carmie, 130 – 131[6]).

I asked Carmie to tell me if there was one thing she remembered most from her social studies classes and she said what she remembered most were the maps with "funky colouring" (Carmie, 140) to show population. She was intrigued by the population of communities nearby in relation to her own but was discouraged that it was rare to find her community on a map at all.   She believes that the teachers she had had to date had helped her to remember certain things in her social studies education. Hearing things firsthand from Mi'kmaw teachers seemed to "make it more legit" (Carmie, 155 – 156). While she credited her previous teachers, she made sure to let me know that the bulk of her knowledge had come from the community, from growing up there and from living amongst Mi'kmaw people in Mi'kmaw ways. I asked her to elaborate on this and she told me she couldn't, it was just who she was and how she lived. It was too hard to put this into words but I understood the essence of what she was saying so I didn't press further. I asked her if she felt represented in the social studies curriculum and her answer was a quick and empathic "no" (Carmie, 170). I paused to see if she would say more. She began to talk about how the curriculum wasn't really for her, how there was no mention of being two spirited[7], and how she struggled with this as she believes it to be much more common than one would assume.

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[6] Transcript line number.
[7] The Positive Space Manual (2003) developed by StFX and the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre defines two spirited as meaning: "a person possessing

Carmie also felt that Mi'kmaw history was portrayed as an afterthought and wondered why a separate course was needed to "study the Mi'kmaq" (Carmie, 188). She seemed to feel that having a course focused solely on Mi'kmaw Studies led to an exoticness of Mi'kmaw people and the Mi'kmaw way of life. She wondered why this wasn't just in all of the courses, after all "there is no separate course to learn about the white people" (Carmie, 200). At this point she paused and remarked "I guess that's every course though" (Carmie, 202). We both chuckled at this and she told me that she had enjoyed the Grade 11 Canadian History textbook because it seemed to try hard to show an understanding of Mi'kmaw people. There wasn't much she would change except for adding more Mi'kmaw content. I asked her what specific content she was referring to and while she couldn't pinpoint specific examples, she did say that "she learned more from being Mi'kmaw than [she] did in school from studying Mi'kmaw" (Carmie, 221-222). I asked Carmie to say more about this and she told me that there is little attention given to past practices that inform Mi'kmaw ways of life such as craftsmanship or the construction and uses of the bow and arrow. She felt that "white kids" (Carmie, 240) just don't get these things and she wished they did.

Carmie also believes that there is not enough attention paid to 'Columbus' misunderstanding' and she thought the history of the settling of North America

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qualities of females and males, with honoured roles in some Aboriginal cultures… an identity used by some LGBTQ First Nations individuals" (p.9). According to Fieland, Walters and Simoni (2007) the term two-spirited has multiple, contextual meanings: "To some, the term refers to a person with GLBT orientation. To others, it denotes an individual with tribally specific spiritual, social and cultural roles that are not defined at all by sexual orientation or gender role" (p. 271).

should be portrayed as much more violent. She suggested I ask any Mi'kmaw

person if contact was peaceful and she assured me that the answer would be no,

yet in schools and in the media it seems as if the original land inhabitants openly

welcomed the European newcomers and acted like "giant pushovers" (Carmie,

248).

Carmie went on to say that what she learned at home about being

Mi'kmaw greatly exceeded what she learned in school when teachers just read

from the text but the stuff she learned at home wasn't as needed in society. It was

more of a way of being than anything "useful in the world" (Carmie, 254). I

asked her to elaborate and she remarked that the Mi'kmaw way of being was

often misunderstood in "white society" (Carmie, 261). Mi'kmaw people were

often seen as slow or lazy when really they are just contemplating things before

they act. She believes this to be one of the main cultural differences between her

community and the neighbouring communities. She spoke about wishing there

were more stories about 'Cowboys and Indians' considering this is a game many

children play and isn't really included in schooling. She thought people could

greatly benefit from more exposure to the stories about the Great Spirit[8] and

Glooscap[9]. More of a focus on culture and religion would be helpful to anyone

looking to understand Mi'kmaw culture and Mi'kmaw people should be the ones

to impart this knowledge. She couldn't imagine having to learn anything about

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[8] The Mi'kmaq believe "that all life was created by one all- powerful being, the ultimate creator, known as Kji-Niskam" (Mi'kmaw Resource Guide, Council of Mainland Mi'kmaq, p. 6).

[9] Glooscap is believed to be the first human and appears in many Mi'kmaw legends (www.glooscapheritagecentre.com).

Mi'kmaw culture from a non-Mi'kmaw person and she wondered if a non-

Mi'kmaw person could really do the stories and the culture justice. She

understood that there is a set curriculum for courses like Mi'kmaq Studies but she

felt that just by being around Mi'kmaw people you could learn much more and

your experience learning about Mi'kmaw people and Mi'kmaw ways of life

would be much richer. Overall, Carmie felt that what she studied at Ni'newey

Community School matched up with what she learned in her home and in her

community. She said that through this conversation she had realized that her

teachers were actually doing a "pretty good job" (Carmie, 320) even when she

disliked them for pushing her hard to get her work in on time or at all.

We ended our conversation and Carmie rejoined the group in the main

room to eat pizza and socialize. I worried that the other participants would have

left by now but when I went into the main room all were waiting for their chance

to talk with me. I breathed a sigh of relief and asked the next participant, Lucy, to

join me in the conversation room. Carmie assured Lucy that the conversation

would be a breeze and off we went.

Lucy. Lucy was an 18-year-old student who had just graduated from

Ni'newey Community School. She appeared nervous when she sat down. She

looked around the room and asked if this was a test so I went over the information

letter again and assured her she would not be graded on anything and our

conversation would remain confidential. She then put down her iPhone and

decided we should get to work. Like Carmie, Lucy had taken Canadian History

11 and Mi'kmaq Studies 10. She had also taken Law 12, Global Geography 12

and Sociology 12. She had enjoyed learning about the history of different countries, especially the economies of different countries and regions. She had found the most interesting pieces in social studies involved learning about the "good things" and the struggles of different groups. She remarked that finding out about so many other places had been fascinating and learning about other cultures throughout the world had been surprising. I asked her what she meant by surprising and she told me that before learning about how other groups lived or how other cultures functioned she had thought "everything was just like out there" (Lucy, 160) and pointed west of Ni'newey.

Lucy felt that as a Mi'kmaw woman she had been "kind of" (Lucy, 174) represented in the curriculum; there was a "little bit in the books, especially Canadian history" (Lucy, 170-172) but the books and the curriculum need to be updated. She felt there were many "present-day contributions of the Mi'kmaq" (Lucy, 179) that need to be represented in schools, and that "it's not all about the past" (Lucy, 180-181). She suggested curriculum developers keep things like wars and struggles in "because those are interesting" (Lucy, 192) but maybe start to focus more on how treaties affect communities now. She wanted more people to understand that the Mi'kmaq have been taken advantage of for years and continue to be disregarded in the larger society. She wanted more people to know about Mi'kmaw connections to nature and local food sources and why these are important, along with the Mi'kmaw relationship to medicine. She informed me that there are "stories that have been passed down that show what really happened

in the local culture" (Lucy, 220-221) and she believes that anyone outside of the community would not know these.

When asked what she learned about Mi'kmaw history at home she told me that she had learned more about Mi'kmaw history in school but more about residential schools at home. She had liked her teachers at Ni'newey Community School and told me that when she had felt there wasn't enough coverage of something, like residential schools, she would tell them and most would make sure to add it to their lesson plans. She believes that what she had learned in school connected with what she had learned at home and when she learned something at home that wasn't being talked about in school she could tell a teacher and that teacher would work to help her find more information. She also felt that when she had learned something at school she could find more information about it at home or in the community. She was puzzled as to why some people would consider Mi'kmaw people uneducated because she had "definitely learned a lot from a lot of very smart Mi'kmaw people" (Lucy, 270) during her time in school.

Lucy felt that an ideal course for social studies would combine the elements of Mi'kmaq Studies 10 and Canadian History with Sociology. Through this course people could come to understand why cultures are the way they are and show others outside of Mi'kmaw communities that residential schooling and broken treaties greatly affect Mi'kmaw communities in the present day. Lucy believes that European settlers need to "stop stealing all the credit for this land and realize that there was a pretty good system happening here already" (Lucy

253-254). She worried that students in other schools weren't learning this like she was. Lucy and I chatted for a bit about the next steps of my research and she told me that she was excited for the next conversation as she always enjoyed listening to what "other Mi'kmaq say about being Mi'kmaw" (Lucy, 278-279).

As I ended the conversation with Lucy and headed out into the main room, I again worried that participants would have left but three people still waited to talk with me. Mali was there with her laptop and everyone was snacking on pizza and discussing the latest community news. I spoke to the full group briefly and told them that if they wished to head home I could contact them to set up an individual meeting. They all agreed that they planned on sticking around to tell me what they knew and help me with my project. Dani jumped up and claimed she was next. We walked together into the conversation room.

Dani. Dani was a 16-year-old female who had just finished her grade 10 year at Ni'newey Community School. She had already taken Canadian History 11 and Mi'kmaq Studies 10. She had found social studies to be quite boring with a lot of reading and writing and thought she could have learned better in a more oral setting. There was very little that she remembered from her social studies courses and when asked if there was anything she would change about the course she replied that the school needed "more supplies" (Dani, 150) but there was nothing in the content that she could think of to modify. I asked her to tell me what she remembered about Canadian history based on what she learned in school. She said that she had learned a lot about how the Mi'kmaq lived and if she were to retell the story of Canada's past she would tell people that they [the

European settlers] stole all the credit. She would also include issues surrounding residential schools. I asked her what issues around residential schools she would like to see taught and she remarked that she would like people to understand that the "stuff that happened at residential schools isn't just in the past, it's still really important today" (Dani, 177).

Dani said she would tell the story of Canada's past in a way that helped people make sense of contact and understand what led to the emergence of residential schools. She considered both instances to be the same thing. I asked her to tell me some more about this and she explained that "they came over and they took over and they made us change who we are and where we lived and they did the same thing when they took kids and put them in those schools … it's the same thing really, just in different ways" (Dani, 208-210). Dani felt that she learned more about Mi'kmaw history in schools than she did at home but wondered if maybe she didn't notice that she was learning about Mi'kmaw history at home because it was "just" stories passed down. In this moment she began to connect that those stories passed down at home and in the community were in fact helping her to learn about Mi'kmaw history. Before this moment, it seemed as if she felt learning had occurred solely in school. After this realization she opened up about how she often heard stories about her ancestors and said "that's learning too I guess" (Dani, 230).

After connecting this for herself, she observed that what she learned in school matched with what she learned at home but still felt that she learned the most from her teachers at Ni'newey Community School. Like Carmie, she felt

that stories about Glooscap and the Great Spirit deserved greater attention in the social studies courses as these "could help kids learn more about history" (Dani, 260). I asked her for more details but she began to talk about how too much of the Mi'kmaw history that is learned in schools is focused on the past and wanted to know why there wasn't a whole course dedicated to the life of Donald Marshall Jr[10]. Dani felt that a course on Donald Marshall Jr. would help people to see that Mi'kmaw people are often stereotyped and misjudged and it would help 'white' people to see that treaties do matter.

Dani felt that when she hadn't known something about her Mi'kmaw history and wanted to know more, her teachers had been knowledgeable and willing to help. She felt that "everyone should have to go to a school like Ni'newey Community School to understand the people that live around them" and "maybe if everyone did, there would be less racism" (Dani, 292-298). Dani saw no contradictions between what she had learned at home and what she had learned at school and felt that the school had done a good job of "allowing kids to be Mi'kmaw" (Dani, 236) and fostering a sense of cultural pride in the students. Dani's phone rang and she asked me if we were done. I assured her it was fine to take the call and thanked her for her contributions. She walked out of the room yelling "Next!" and Curtis hurried in.

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[10] Donald Marshall Jr. was a notable Mi'kmaw activist who, in 1999, challenged the federal government on fishing rights and, taking his case to the Supreme Court of Canada, won the right to earn a livelihood from fishing, in keeping with original Mi'kmaw treaties of 1760/61 (see R. v. Marshall). Donald Marshall Jr. was also imprisoned as a teen for the murder of Sandy Seale in 1981. It was later proven in court that he was wrongfully convicted. He spent over a decade in prison.

Curtis. Curtis came in, sat down and quickly gave me his phone number in case I needed to contact him for further details. Curtis was an 18-year old male who had just graduated from Ni'newey Community School and was looking forward to attending a nearby university in the fall. He said he had been talking to the other participants and figured there was a lot he could tell me. He told me with pride about how he had achieved a grade of 93% in the Mi'kmaq Studies 10. I asked him if he had taken Canadian History 11. He told me that he had no interest in learning "that version of Canadian history" (Curtis, 111) and much preferred to learn about history from his other courses or from home. He enjoyed his Mi'kmaq Studies course and when asked if he enjoyed the social studies courses he had taken in junior high he told me he felt "neutral" (Curtis, 117). He said he had learned a lot about World War I and World War II but he wished he had learned more about contact in his Grade 8 social studies course. This course focuses on Canadian identity so I asked him why he specifically mentioned the Grade 8 social studies course, to which he responded that the course focuses on Canada and Canadians and yet there was no talk about contact so how could anyone really be learning what Canada really was.

If Curtis were to teach a course in social studies on Canadian history he would tell people about the Aboriginal involvement in World War I and World War II and he would show others that "many Aboriginal people went to help back up the French" (Curtis, 170). He surmised that a lot of people probably didn't know this and cautioned that they should. I asked him what he had learned about Mi'kmaw history in his social studies courses and he told me that he had learned a

lot but that the specifics were faint. Curtis felt that his learning of Mi'kmaw history was ingrained in him. At home he was surrounded by the fluency of the language and he didn't need to "stop" this in school, like he would have had to if he had attended "white school"[11] (Curtis, 140-142). Curtis did not feel that anything was being contradicted between home and school but he imagined it would be if he were not attending Ni'newey Community School. When asked what he would include if he could design a curriculum for a Canadian history class, he stated that he would make sure people knew about "the old teachings of respect and the cultural protocols for Mi'kmaw people" (Curtis, 184) and he would try hard to make sure that people could see that Mi'kmaw people are "not so different" (Curtis, 186). Curtis told me that there was so much that needed to be included in the curriculum he didn't "know where to start" (Curtis, 260). I asked him if he could elaborate but he repeated that he "wouldn't know where to start" (Curtis, 265). Curtis then asked me about the group conversation and gave me his work schedule so I would make sure to schedule this at a time when he could be present. Curtis shook my hand at the end of the conversation and led me out to the room where the participants were still sitting and chatting.

Stephanie. When I entered the main room Stephanie hopped up and asked if it was her turn. I nodded and we went back into the conversation room. Stephanie was a 19-year old female who had graduated from Ni'newey Community School in 2011. She told me that she had taken Canadian history. She liked the course but felt there was a lot of information to remember. Her

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[11] Many of the participants referred to the provincial schools as "white school."

favourite topics to learn about in Canadian History 11 were the stories of the Jewish people and the Nazis. She said that this reminded her of residential schools and while it wasn't connected like that in her classroom she connected it herself.

Stephanie thought Glooscap should be talked about more in that course and she wished people knew that during the wars Aboriginal people used their own language to communicate. I asked her where she learned this and she said she couldn't remember if it was at home or in school because she "learns so much at both places" (Stephanie, 173). I asked her to tell me more about what she had learned about Canadian history. She talked about how people need to know how sweetgrass is used in Mi'kmaw communities and people need to understand medicine in Mi'kmaw communities. She thought every social studies course should show students how to make baskets. Stephanie worried that if schools didn't teach these kinds of things "they will be lost, just like the language" (Stephanie, 220-221). I asked Stephanie if what she had learned in school contradicted what she had learned at home and vice versa. She said "somewhat" (Stephanie, 276) but when I asked her to elaborate she couldn't think of an example.

This marked the end of the individual conversations with participants for the evening. Stephanie and I walked back to the main room and were surprised to see that everyone was still there, including Mali. The participants were sitting and chatting. We discussed when would be a good time for the group conversation and agreed that the following Sunday at the same time would work

for everyone. When I arrived at the community hall the next Sunday all the

participants had returned except Stephanie and Curtis. Mali told me that Curtis

was scrambling to get a ride home from one of the larger communities about an

hour and a half away and would be there if he could but it wasn't looking

promising that he would get back in time. She asked me if I could wait to get

started, as Carmie had to run out for a bit but very much wanted to be a part of the

group conversation. I asked the participants what they thought and they agreed

that they could busy themselves with pizza and I should talk individually with the

new people before we got started as a group. I was wondering what new people

they were referring to and was just about to ask when three new faces entered the

hall. Kyla, Eli, and Angelina had just shown up. After hearing about the

conversations we had had the previous week they wanted to participate.   Mali

had said it was okay. We took some time to go over the study, after which

Angelina took off with her consent form to get it signed by her mother. Kyla and

I decided to head into last week's conversation room and get started. The

following three sections describe my interviews with Kyla, Angelina, and Eli on

July 15, 2012.

     Kyla. Kyla and I sat down facing each other. She began by saying that

she had heard about the conversations last week and she thought there should be

more Mi'kmaw stories in the curriculum. She told me that her teachers had done

a really good job of that but she had sensed that they were adding them on their

own. Kyla was 19 years old and had recently graduated from Ni'newey

Community School. She had taken Canadian History in grade 11 and the required

social studies courses in grades 7, 8, and 9. She had not taken Mi'kmaq Studies 10. She had found the content of the Canadian History course boring but she remembered her teacher talking about Donald Marshall Jr., which she had enjoyed. It was a connection to the community that she could relate to but she found the textbook long and boring. She found it hard to remember the past and felt that this may be because she hadn't listened very well in class. She did recall learning about Mi'kmaw rights but she wasn't certain if this was in a social studies class. At home she had learned about residential schools, basket making, Waltes (a traditional Mi'kmaw game), and how to work with basket wood but most importantly she had learned the "real stories of survivors [of the residential schools]" (Kyla, 213). It was through these "real stories" that she had been able to understand what really happened. She thought that this was something that all classes should incorporate into the curriculum.

Kyla said she would like to see social studies classes, particularly Canadian History, focus on Mi'kmaw rights to show people that life isn't as easy as they think it is for Mi'kmaw people and there is a reason Mi'kmaw people have the rights they do. She went on to talk about how school wasn't really free for Mi'kmaw students and if they wanted to go to school off-reserve the band had to pay the provincial schools for them to attend. She wanted people outside of Mi'kmaw communities to know that Mi'kmaw people don't own the land they live on so maybe that's why the grass doesn't look as good as it does off-reserve. I asked her what she meant by this and she told me that her parents didn't bother to keep up with yard work when they knew their house could be taken away at

any point. I paused and she went on to say that centralization could happen again; if it did everyone would have to move. According to Kyla, her parents were very distrustful of the current Conservative government and often worried that Mi'kmaw rights wouldn't be upheld. Kyla informed me that residential school stories are key to understanding Mi'kmaw history and she felt it was very important for kids to be taught this. She believes that awareness around what the residential school survivors went through is the answer to ending racism. She believes that these stories were not really taught in schools as the "full details" (Kyla, 313) were often left out but that it was these "full details, however hard to hear" (Kyla 316-317) that people needed to be aware of.

Angelina. Angelina was a 17-year old female heading into grade 12 at Ni'newey Community School. She had taken Canadian History 11, Global Geography, Mi'kmaq Studies 10, and Sociology 12. Angelina had enjoyed her social studies classes, as she liked learning about other societies and other cultures. The one thing she remembered most from her social studies classes was learning about the Holocaust; she had been able to connect this to her understandings of residential schooling. She did not feel that she had been represented in the social studies curriculum and thought a way to get around this would be to add more information to the textbooks and curriculum about residential schools and centralization.   She worried that "natives" are viewed as strictly traditional and living in the past. She believes that outside of the "rez" people her age would have little understanding of present-day achievements and struggles. Angelina believes that people outside of the community focused on

things like drug and alcohol abuse when they described Mi'kmaw communities but had little understanding as to why drug and alcohol abuse are so rampant in the first place.

Angelina talked about her involvement with the recent (October, 2011) Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) meetings in Halifax, Nova Scotia and how much she had learned from listening to the survivors of residential schools discuss their experiences and the lasting legacy this had left in homes and communities. She believes that all schools should be teaching what really happened and she recalled a moment during the TRC meetings where a woman named Iris was recounting her experiences. After telling the group everything she had gone through, she told the group "my revenge is my happiness" (Angelina, 246). This really stuck with Angelina as she realized there is nothing people can do to give these survivors back those years and monetary compensation "is just a drop in the bucket" (Angelina, 269). Angelina wanted people to understand that the premise behind residential schools was wrong and the lasting effects were much larger than anyone outside of the Mi'kmaw communities could imagine. She talked about the loss of language and the broken relationships now found in Mi'kmaw communities and laments that "it's hard to be proud of your culture when it's surrounded by so much shame" (Angelina, 294-295).

Angelina talked about how cases such as the Donald Marshall Jr. case of false imprisonment and the Donald Marshall Jr. decision on fishing rights had had an effect on the communities across the province and how others outside of Mi'kmaw communities seemed to understand very little about the significance of

this court case on treaty rights and the significance of his false imprisonment on negative attitudes towards Mi'kmaw people. If schools were to teach this, she said, surely there would be more awareness of current "native" issues. Angelina talked about her grade nine social studies teacher who taught everything in relation to Mi'kmaw traditional beliefs; she had found this to be refreshing as it was so connected with Mi'kmaw ways of being that she could make more sense of the content. When asked to give an example, she told me she couldn't give me a specific example, "you just have to be Mi'kmaw to get that kind of teaching" (Angelina, 373-374). I asked her if she thought that kind of teaching might work in a provincial school and she said it would be wonderful for the Mi'kmaw students attending provincial schools but the other kids wouldn't get it and would probably make fun of it. She worried that teaching traditional beliefs to those outside of Mi'kmaw communities would continue to perpetuate the stereotypes that "all things native are super old and outdated" (Angelina, 403).

Angelina stated that she was tired of seeing pictures of Aboriginal people in headdresses and she worried that other people focused on this instead of on historical mistreatment. She believes that if schools were to teach about centralization from community perspectives rather than from a "here's what happened, here are the facts" (Angelina, 340) approach people would understand that many people from Mi'kmaw communities had been taken from their homes and promised "stuff that wasn't delivered and when they came back their houses and their church and their school was burned down" (Angelina, 355-356). It is these types of historical injustices that form the basis for understanding any

present day issues in Mi'kmaw communities according to Angelina. She ended our conversation by saying "don't you think if we're supposed to learn from history, schools better start talking about what really happened?" (Angelina, 450-451).

Eli. Eli was an 18-year old male who had recently graduated from high school at Ni'newey Community School. When we sat down together I asked him to tell me a bit about himself. He told me he was 18, he had recently graduated, and he was gay and left-handed. Eli hoped to go into Public Relations. He had taken Canadian History 11, Global Geography 12, and Mi'kmaw Studies 10. He had found his social studies experiences to be "alright" (Eli, 129); he loved history so he had found these pieces enjoyable. He had really enjoyed learning about World War II and concentration camps. I asked him what he found so interesting and he informed me that it is fascinating to think people could behave in these ways. He remembered learning a lot about Canada's involvement in both World Wars and the Cold War. If he were to tell someone the story of Canada's past he would simply say that people came, took land, gave diseases, killed the so-called savages, and forced everyone to be baptized to make them more human. He believes that Mi'kmaw history was found in all of his courses because his teachers had been Mi'kmaw and "teachers teach what they know" (Eli, 188).

Eli felt that by living as a Mi'kmaw person he had been surrounded by Mi'kmaw history both at home and in the school so his learning experiences matched in both contexts. He wished there had been more of a focus on residential schools, centralization, and the general mistreatment of the Mi'kmaw

people so that more people could come to understand the historical injustices. He felt that these types of things got ignored by non-Mi'kmaw people when taught by Mi'kmaw people so he thought that if things like residential schooling, centralization, and stories of mistreatment were found in the curriculum and in the textbooks it might seem "more true" (Eli, 358) to others. I asked him to say more about this and he told me that if it was in the books and taught to everyone, it would seem less like "just Mi'kmaw people whining to get free stuff" (Eli, 390). For Eli, if the history of Mi'kmaw peoples was more prevalent in the curriculum and in schools, it would seem more credible to others. He felt that "Mi'kmaw kids shouldn't be the only ones learning this, other people need to know it more" (Eli, 415). I asked him if he had anything else he would like to add. He didn't but promised that if he thought of anything else he would call me. In the next section, I provide an overview of the group sharing circle conversation with the participants.

Group Sharing Circle

The group sharing circle took place directly following the individual conversations with the three new participants. When Eli and I had finished our conversation we invited the whole group in for the focus group session. Everyone had arrived and we gathered in a circle. I explained again the purpose of the whole group sharing circle and we introduced ourselves again before I shared with them the guiding questions:

1) *What do you learn about being Mi'kmaq in your school? How do your teachers factor into this?*

2) *Should there be more Mi'kmaq in your social studies classes?*

3) What do you think when you hear that Christopher Columbus discovered North America?

4) Did you learn anything about residential schools in your social studies class? If so, what? What did you learn at home about residential schools?

5) What did you learn about centralization in Nova Scotia in your social studies classes? What did you learn about centralization in Nova Scotia in your home or communities?

6) Do you learn about treaty rights in school? Should every Mi'kmaw high school graduate know their treaties? Why or why not?

I had chosen to phrase some of these questions in ways that encouraged the participants to make a decision on whether or not they believed certain topics should be covered in school. This allowed me to understand how strongly they felt about these areas. It also allowed the participants to comment and make personal recommendations on topics and themes that may be affecting their educational experiences. The following sections provide an overview of the participant responses to these questions and the themes we focused on as a group.

Participant descriptions of Ni'newey and the Ni'newey Community School. To begin, I asked the participants to tell me about their school and their community. Everyone agreed that their school was a big part of their community. Eli talked about having attended the local provincial school for a week but feeling really out of place and deciding to come back to Ni'newey Community School. He said, "I don't feel out of place at our school, it's not as bad as public school, small schools are better for Mi'kmaw students than public schools anyway, they get who we are here, they get that some things are just in our blood, we have ways of doing things that they just don't get in a public school" (Eli, 1370-1372).

Angelina jumped in to say "the student-teacher relationship is the best. We all know each other, we know where everyone comes from and some of us are even related to our teachers" (Angelina, 1410-1414).

Carmie said that while she didn't particularly like school, she liked this school because she felt as if she fit there, even as a pre-operation transgendered male. People accepted her at Ni'newey Community School because it's similar to a family. Lucy and Stephanie agreed that their school was a pretty incredible place to grow up in. The participants then talked about the Ni'newey community and described it as being a big family. Lucy said that everyone watched out for everyone else and Stephanie jumped in to say that if Angelina was passed out in a ditch someone's mother would take care of her like she was her own. Angelina described it like this: "If one person's house burned down, the whole reservation would come out to help them" (Angelina, 1550). The other participants agreed. Carmie mentioned that "there are some that just don't fit in, like they're adopted or something" and Stephanie piped up to say "yeah, like that weird cousin everyone has." Comparing the school to the community, Angelina stated: "Our school, just like our rez [reservation] is like a family. The teachers aren't afraid to tell you the truth" (Angelina, 2102). Carmie agreed and said that one of the teachers had even told her once that her outfit made her look like a prostitute. I asked how she felt about that and she said she hadn't liked it at the time but looking back she was glad because "who wants to be goin' around lookin' like a prostitute" (Carmie, 2765). I asked the participants if they had anything to add.

Eli said, "nah, just that we're lucky we have this place, I guess" (Eli, 2983-2984).

The rest nodded their heads in agreement.

Next, I asked the participants if they thought schools were responsible for teaching worldviews (how to be, what to think, etc.). Angelina said, "That's a school and community responsibility but the schools teach you more about that I guess because you're there for more time" (Angelina, 3241). Stephanie jumped in to say, "That's common sense" (Stephanie, 3301). Carmie added, "Say you grow up in a racist school, you're probably gonna come out a racist, that's what you've learned so that's what you know… not just from the teachers, the students as well" (Carmie, 3408-3410). The participants agreed that their school had helped them to develop strong Mi'kmaw characters and to see that they should be proud of their culture. The participants did not think this would happen in a provincial school; they worried that their culture would be considered shameful in the local provincial school.

Being Mi'kmaq and Mi'kmaw content in social studies. I then asked the participants what they had learned about being Mi'kmaw and how the teachers had brought that out, if they brought it out at all. Eli said, "Everything in our school is Mi'kmaw, we do have a few non-Native teachers but they try so hard. Mr. X has been here for so long we all think he's native and Mr. Y tries so hard" (Eli, 3611-3614). Angelina believes that "teachers don't have to work to bring that out, they live it and we live it, it's in all of our blood" (Angelina, 3700). The other participants agreed with Angelina's statement. I then asked if there should be more Mi'kmaw in their social studies classes. Angelina said that in their

school there was "a decent amount" and in her courses "things were put traditionally so it was like learning extra Mi'kmaq" (Angelina, 3807). Lucy laughingly asked her what she meant by extra Mi'kmaq. Angelina explained: "Well we learn the stuff we need to know for school but we also learn the traditional ways too … so it's like a bonus" (Angelina, 3843-3845). Carmie said, "The good Mi'kmaw teachers will bring out the Mi'kmaw involvement in history. They work hard to show the Mi'kmaw in everything so that helps us understand more" (Carmie, 3504-3507).

Christopher Columbus' discovery of North America. I asked the participants what they had thought when they heard that Christopher Columbus discovered North America, which was something that had come up several of the individual conversations. Eli said, "He just came here and just basically, you know, found something that was already here, he was a racist and he treated us pretty awful … I tell people that when they bring up that guy" (Eli, 3890). I asked the participants how they had been taught about contact in their social studies classes. Carmie said, "Just like how Eli just said, they don't bullshit us here" (Carmie, 3965). Lucy, Stephanie, and Angelina nodded in agreement.

Residential schools. I asked the participants what they had learned about residential schools in their social studies classes. Carmie said that she felt like she had learned a lot about residential schools but she wasn't sure if this was from school or from her Grammie. Either way, she said, "We definitely talk about it a lot at school, I just don't know where I learned it first … probably Grammie" (Carmie, 3923-3925). Angelina talked about working on a project with other

classmates around the Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearings in Halifax and being supported by the school to attend the hearings. She said it "was hard to listen to, but it's important, those survivors need to talk about it, they need to know they can tell their story … one woman, I think her name was Iris, she talked about being happy was her revenge … is her revenge to the nuns […] I think Mi'kmaw people will … they would … learn to live and love again … they can talk about it and be open and learn from each other … it's hard though, it's going to take a while" (Angelina, 4180-4203). Angelina described making a video around this and travelling to the United Nations headquarters in New York City to present it. She had found the experience powerful; it had really helped her to understand more of her history. I asked her in which class she had done this project. It had been a media studies class that had come up with the idea but she assured me that "it's real connected to social studies" (Angelina, 4504). Eli said that the school had done a good job of letting them ask questions about residential schools and the teachers had used real examples from the community "like you know, Duce over there, she survived the Schools so think about being in Duce's position when she was your age … know what I mean? We can connect the people to what we're learning" (Eli, 4652-4655). Lucy and Stephanie both agreed with Eli that they liked the real examples.

Centralization policies in Nova Scotia. I asked the participants what they had learned about centralization in Nova Scotia from their social studies classes. Carmie told me they had learned that "they sent a bunch of reserves into one big reserve" (Carmie, 5010). Eli jumped in to say, "They tried to clear us out

and make us live far away" (Eli, 5020). I asked why they believed this policy had been put into place. Angelina said, "Well the story in the textbooks is that they wanted the land but the story here is that they just didn't want the Indians everywhere" (Angelina, 5103). I asked what she meant by this and Eli said, "[The government] wanted less natives around, scattered all throughout [the province] so the Cape Breton natives were sent to Eskasoni and the mainland natives were sent to Shubie [now the Indian Brook First Nation] … It was like they thought the place would be pure if they got all the Indians in one spot … They could control us there ... and then while we were gone they wrecked our communities … That's not really in the books" (Eli, 5111-5119). The participants felt that they had learned these 'real' stories from both community members and from their teachers but not from their textbooks.

Mi'kmaw treaty rights. I asked the participants if they had learned about treaty rights in school. Stephanie said they had been learning about their treaty rights since grade one at Ni'newey Community School, going on to say that in the younger elementary grades they had learned all about their rights but they hadn't talked much about them in high school. Eli agreed and Angelina said it would be helpful if they reviewed treaty rights in grade 12 so that they were fresh in students' minds when they entered the 'real world.' Lucy brought up the Donald Marshall Jr. fishing dispute and said the case had reminded her of fishing treaty rights, which she found to be helpful. I asked the participants if they felt that every Mi'kmaw high school graduate should know their treaty rights and the response was a resounding chorus of "YES." I then asked why and Eli told me

that "it's important to know your rights because then you can defend them" (Eli, 5307) and Angelina said, "If people know their treaty rights they can educate others" (Angelina, 5320). Carmie spoke up and said that "treaty rights causes a big misunderstanding between native and non-native communities" (Carmie, 5326-5327). When pressed for details she elaborated: "Well people, white people, don't get that we can fish and we can hunt and we have land rights and school rights and other rights like around taxes and stuff … they just don't know why we have these rights, they think 'Oh, that's in the past, get over it,' but it's really not in the past, it's now, we still get those things 'cause they were taken from us unfairly" (Carmie, 5332-5340). I asked the participants what they had learned about treaty rights at home and they agreed that it was nothing formal. Rather, they would just hear when people outside the Mi'kmaw communities were threatening their treaty rights

Second Individual Conversation

The second individual conversation was a check-in after the focus group sessions. I asked each participant the following questions:

1)   *How did you feel after the focus group conversation?*

2)   *Is there anything you would like to add?*

3)   *Is there anything you would like to discuss?*

All participants felt positive after the focus group conversation and all expressed gratitude for being able to discuss these topics in a group setting. No participants had anything to add or anything further that they wished to discuss. All promised to be in contact should something come up that they felt was

important for me to know. This section concludes the participant portraits and my

findings from the research conversations. The following section will consist of

the analysis of these findings using the data analysis model outlined in Chapter 3.

Analysis

This section focuses on the analysis of the individual participant

conversations and the larger sharing circle focus group session using the First

Nations Holistic Lifelong Learning Model (CCL, 2007) as described in Chapter 3.

I have included the diagram that guided this analysis. As discussed in my

methodology chapter, I focused deeply on the learning rings of the individual, in

particular the inner core of the tree that focuses on emotional, spiritual, physical,

and mental development and the relationship between Indigenous and Western

knowledge.
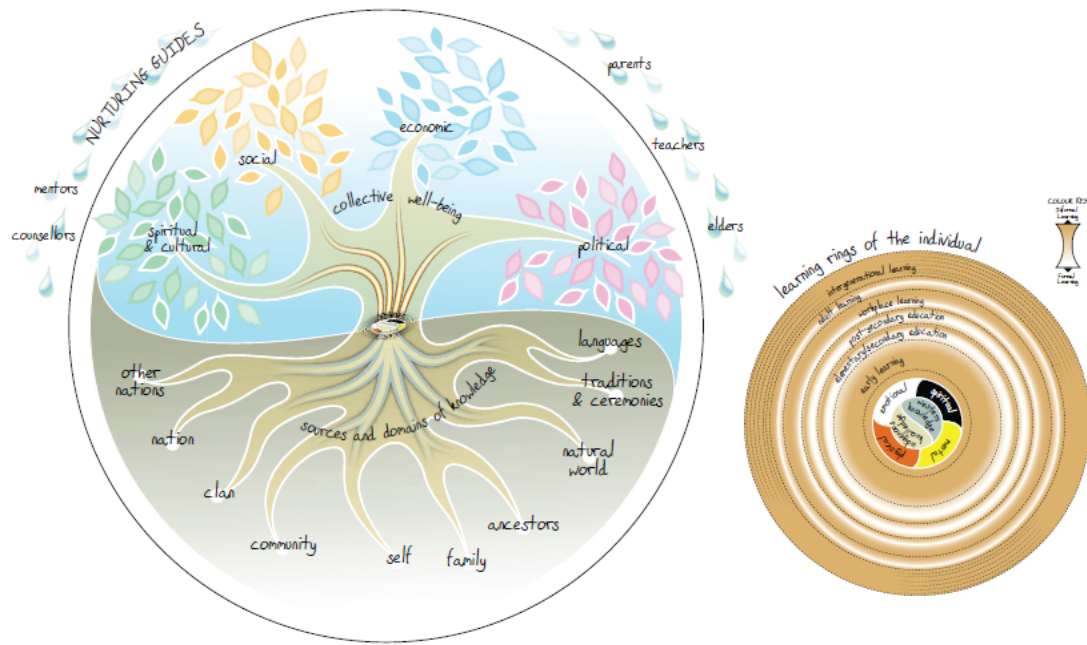
In terms of the First Nations Holistic Lifelong Learning Model (CCL, 2007), the participants exhibited traits from many of the categories chosen for analysis. By narrowing in to look at the learning rings of the individual and focusing deeply on the center spiral consisting of mental, physical, spiritual, and emotional elements of personal development I began to make sense of my conversations with Carmie, Eli, Kyla, Lucy, Angelina, Stephanie, Curtis, and Dani. I added to each theme with further analysis, drawing on Schwab's (1978) four commonplaces of curriculum (teacher, student, subject matter, and milieu). I begin by interpreting the results for my four pre-determined themes: mental development and well-being; emotional development and well-being; spiritual development and well-being; and physical development and well-being. Similarly, Schwab's (1978) work on curriculum commonplaces highlighted the need to see the four areas of teacher, student, subject matter, and milieu (sociocultural) as working together; one is not to be privileged over the other.

Westbury and Wilkof (1978) described Schwab's (1954) views on identity as being largely holistic. While Schwab did not define identity outright, he did say that "any exclusive focus on the intellectual denies the humanity which is integral to understanding man's [sic] search for understanding" (p.29) and he believes that curriculum must aim to align with the whole human. This fits well with the views on the First Nations Holistic Lifelong Learning Model of not privileging one aspect of personal development and well-being over another. The focus on the collective themes working together is what contributes to the holistic nature of this work. I do not view any of these themes or commonplaces as separate entities. Rather, I regard the themes as working together to examine the development and well-being of the learner. For the purposes of readability, I have chosen to group each theme separately in the sections that follow and have further organized the data under any sub-themes that arose. In some instances, these sub-themes overlap.

Mental development and well-being. The First Nations Holistic Lifelong Learning Model (CCL, 2007) and Bopp et al. (1984) described mental development as the thinking aspect of the four-part approach to complete or collective well-being. Under this theme I scanned the transcripts for utterances relating to thinking, idea-formation, interpreting, contemplating, pondering, mediating, considering, regarding, conceiving, and imagining. The participants exhibited numerous examples of interpreting Canadian history from Mi'kmaw perspectives, forming ideas and recommendations for social studies education for Mi'kmaw students. They showed evidence of conceiving and imagining a

different pedagogical approach that would begin to include various themes in social studies courses across the province. The mental development and mental well-being of these participants seemed to be structured around their capacity to imagine a different future for Mi'kmaw inclusion in social studies education. Within this theme, sub-themes about othering, exoticness and racism, community and school connections and the role of the subject matter emerged.

 Issues around othering, exoticness, and racism. Throughout our conversations, the participants made many statements about feeling 'othered' or provided examples of how they felt Mi'kmaw culture was being viewed as 'exotic'. They also listed examples of racism. There was a concern that Mi'kmaw history was portrayed as an afterthought within the larger social studies curriculum, but also a concern with the Mi'kmaq Studies 10 course, seeing this as contributing to an exoticness or othering of Mi'kmaw people and culture. Having essentially all of the substantive Mi'kmaw content and history taught in social studies found in one elective course can be seen as problematic and further leads to the worry that students outside of the MK school system, especially those not enrolled in Mi'kmaq Studies 10, were not being given the same learning opportunities around Mi'kmaw history and Mi'kmaw culture. Judging from the participant conversations, ignorance around Mi'kmaw history and culture can be seen as being directly tied to the development of racism and therefore, limited opportunities to learn about Mi'kmaw history and culture may be a contributing factor in racism being able to continue and thrive.

One area directly relating to thinking, contemplating, considering, and pondering that emerged in the data involved the misunderstanding around Mi'kmaw ways of being, such as when a Mi'kmaw person might be slow to react to a comment or question due to a cultural difference where Mi'kmaw people spend more time thinking or considering before acting than their non-Mi'kmaw counterparts. For me, this highlights an important consideration surrounding providing, and encouraging, increased time to think through ideas before responding, which may directly support the development of mental well-being for Mi'kmaw students. Connecting to this, a commitment to the idea that learning about Mi'kmaw culture must come from Mi'kmaw people was also reinforced within our conversations, which I believe highlight the need for a localized curriculum that contain elements of traditional Mi'kmaw teachings infused throughout. There was a general sense from the participants that if traditional teachings representative of Mi'kmaw culture were not explicitly taught, these teachings would be lost for future generations.

Community and school connections. There were many examples of the participants making connections between their home and communities and their school and teachers. The participants talked about how they had been able to connect their in-school learning, making connections between topics such as the Holocaust and residential schooling or relating historical narratives to people in their communities to help them understand. Dani felt that she had learned a lot about how the Mi'kmaq lived pre-contact and post-contact and suggested that the curriculum focus more on issues around residential schooling, highlighting the

need for more present day issues to be presented within the curriculum. It was through our conversation that Dani was able to recognize that the stories that were passed down orally at home were helping her to learn about Mi'kmaw history. She began to see the connections between her learning experiences at home and her learning experiences in school and showed how the bridge between the two milieus strengthened her learning of the content. The participants seemed to feel that their learning was strengthened by grounding Mi'kmaw history in connections to nature and traditional practices, such as Mi'kmaw relationships to natural medicines and providing connections to the community in class. I believe the participants connected these approaches to greater understanding of content because they fostered a cultural connectedness and allowed the participants to engage more fully with knowledge tied to the home and community, thus not creating a binary between 'school' knowledge and 'out of school' knowledge. I am also able to see this connecting with the idea from the First Nations Holistic Lifelong Learning model that Indigenous and Western knowledge should be receieved in complementary ways.

The milieu, in this case the Ni'newey Community School and the Ni'newey community, helped the mental development of the participants in that they had often been presented with what they considered to be the 'real' stories of Canadian history through examples like local stories from survivors of the residential schools. They were able to connect (sometimes with guidance from their teachers and sometimes on their own) community stories, community members, and the prescribed curriculum content, which helped them to see that

their learning was tied to their Mi'kmaw culture and history and the content a closer representative of themselves.

According to these current and former students, their teachers had factored in the participants' mental well-being into their teaching by being willing to extend the curriculum, rooting their teaching in Mi'kmaw traditions and by being available to help students make sense of their learning in social studies. In thinking about the curriculum that was taught in school, many participants felt that their teachers did a good job but believe that they were adding on to the existing curriculum when they taught Mi'kmaw-specific content in the social studies courses. Eli strongly believes that Mi'kmaw content was found in all of his courses because his teachers were Mi'kmaw. He felt that teachers taught what they knew and therefore it was easier for his Mi'kmaw teachers to bring this content into their classrooms. This gave the impression that he, and other participants who made similar statements, believe that Mi'kmaw teachers were better equipped to teach in holistic ways that respresent the four themes of development and well-being from the First Nations Holistic Lifelong Learning model. Most felt that their teachers teachers had easily been able to pair Mi'kmaw content with the prescribed curriculum content in ways that strengthened the content and allowed for them to connect to the material. The participants seemed to feel that her understandings were increased because their teachers at Ni'newey Community School had worked hard to bring out the Mi'kmaw involvement in historical accounts. Examples given throughout our conversations show that the participants clearly believe that the prescribed

curriculum was missing significant elements of Mi'kmaw culture and history but their teachers, rooted in Mi'kmaw culture and history, took additional steps to modify this content for them.

The participants worked to bring their mental well-being into their learning by remaining critically literate and engaged in finding and maintaining connections to Mi'kmaw culture. Teachers had encouraged this critical literacy and focus on connections but the participants had also worked hard at this, looking for ways to bring Mi'kmaw content to their learning and to approach content that they deemed problematic. The participants showed evidence of deep thinking around content, interpreting their learning, forming ideas about how to connect their social studies learning to community narratives and community experiences, contemplating future practices that might assist Mi'kmaw learners, and conceiving and imagining a new future for ways of sharing elements of Mi'kmaw history. It is through these avenues that the participants worked to protect their mental well-being, which is closely tied to the ways they protected their spiritual well-being. Schwab's four commonplaces of curriculum can be seen as working together in that the student, the teacher, the subject matter and the milieu are all coming together in harmonious ways to support the mental development of the participant.

The role of subject matter in mental development and well-being. Based on participant responses outlined in previous sections, the prescribed curriculum seems to have worked to inhibit more than enhance the participants' mental development. They often felt that pieces were missing from the prescribed

content or that their teachers left out or added on certain pieces. There were areas of the curriculum that participants had enjoyed and found useful, namely learning about other cultures, World War I, and World War II and the Holocaust. Whether through the curriculum or through their teachers, the participants had been able to connect this locally to their experiences living as Mi'kmaw people. The participants in this study did express concern that areas such as residential schooling and treaty rights, for example, were not formal pieces of the curriculum outside of the Mi'kmaq Studies 10 course.

Emotional development and well-being. This theme focuses on the emotional development and well-being the participants demonstrated in this study. This theme closely connects to mental development and well-being but has a stronger focus on the emotional aspects of learning and emotional responses to the content. The First Nations Holistic Lifelong Learning Model (CCL, 2007) and Bopp et al. (1984) defined emotional development as the feeling aspect of collective well-being. Under the emotional theme I scanned the transcripts for utterances relating to enjoyment, empathy, excitement, sentiment, sympathy, sensitivity, tenderness, moods, and emotion. Throughout the transcripts I found areas of empowerment and ambition as well as a few areas of struggle. The participants showed a strong emotional reaction to topics such as residential schooling, Columbus' discovery of North America, centralization, and treaty rights. They also had emotional responses to how Mi'kmaw culture may have been viewed by non-Mi'kmaw people outside of Mi'kmaw communities. Overall, the participants seemed to have enjoyed their learning in social studies

but some felt that there could have been more of an individual connection to the curriculum. Within this theme, issues around othering, exoticness and racism were also present and the sub-theme of resolving tensions between official and personal narratives emerged.

Issues around othering, exoticness, and racism. Similar to the mental development and well-being theme, I found numerous examples of issues around racism, othering and exoticness within the data. For example, Carmie felt left out by the curriculum in that she found no mention of transgendered (or two-spirited) issues in her coursework (I do imagine that this would be the same for other students that identify as LGBTQ)[12]. She also felt that Mi'kmaw history had been portrayed as an afterthought, having been added on to the curriculum rather than authentically ingrained. She felt that a course like Mi'kmaq Studies 10, while beneficial, leads to an exoticness around the culture and the people. She wondered why these aspects could not be included throughout all social studies curricula. Carmie had enjoyed the grade 11 Canadian History textbook (Orr & Lebel, 2003) because for her it seemed to make the effort to include Mi'kmaw stories and Mi'kmaw participation. However, she felt that this needed to go further. Even though their teachers seemed to work hard to infuse Mi'kmaw elements into the subject matter, the participants seemed to easily be able to recognize when Mi'kmaw content was added on to the curriculum rather than infused and showed a desire for a more integration of this throughout the curriculum and textbooks.

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[12] LGBTQ is an acronym that stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Questioning.

Many participants focused on how Mi'kmaw culture was being portrayed outside of the their communities. They made various connections to racism. They felt that racism could be solved through awareness and education and this would help the portrayal of Mi'kmaw people and Mi'kmaw culture to grow in a more positive way. Present-day contributions of Mi'kmaw communities also deserved greater focus in the curriculum, according to the participants, to help address misconceptions about Mi'kmaw peoples, most notably that Mi'kmaw people are lazy or uneducated. The participants reacted strongly to stories of contact in Canadian history with mentions of stealing land or mistreatment that the participants felt were not being given enough coverage and weight in the social studies curriculum. It seems that for these participants, strengthening and highlighting these issues would assist with their emotional development and well-being in that they would not have to consistently navigate through the act of creating counter narratives and correcting misinformation surrounding Mi'kmaw history.

On an emotional level the conversations kept coming back to feelings around racism, othering, loss, and exoticness. Misunderstandings around treaty rights and land ownership seemed (according to the participants) to cause others to have a negative perception of Mi'kmaw communities and Mi'kmaw people, which resulted in a larger perception that the communities outside of Ni'newey were representative of unsafe spaces for them. There was an overwhelming desire to see more education around Mi'kmaw history and culture in these communities. The topic of residential schooling also produced strong emotional reactions from

the participants in that they believe students needed to develop a greater understanding of the emergence and lasting legacy of this initiative. Adding to this was the idea that Mi'kmaw culture is sometimes viewed as shameful or something to hide rather than to celebrate. The participants also worried about how traditional practices might be viewed in non-Mi'kmaw settings.

The participants viewed the milieu of Ni'newey Community School and the Ni'newey community largely as an enjoyable place to be. The participants were proud of community accomplishments and of the work of their teachers. The milieu outside of this localized setting seemed to be more of a negative force for the participants. There was a lot of discussion around what the participants considered to be racist views and racist notions around Mi'kmaw culture and Mi'kmaw people. At the same time the participants took an empowering stance in that they seemed genuinely to believe that greater awareness and increased education would end this divide between Mi'kmaw and non-Mi'kmaw peoples.

Resolving tensions between 'official' and 'personal' narratives. The teachers of Ni'newey Community School seemed to factor positively in the emotional well-being of the participants. The presentation of Mi'kmaw role models, Mi'kmaw content, and Mi'kmaw achievements had brought an element of enjoyment to the participants' learning. The close relationships between students and teachers had allowed for an emotional connection and had helped the participants to work through some of their feelings around the legacy of residential schooling, historical mistreatment, and injustices. A trust in their

educators allowed the participants to view their learning as genuine or consistent with their worldviews.

The participants had been able to bring emotion into their learning and protect their emotional well-being through their spiritual connections to their home, community, and school and through their willingness to provide counter-narratives around information that they deemed to be inaccurate. The participants talked about educating others around the stories of contact, residential schooling, treaty rights, and centralization and also around Mi'kmaw culture in general. They seemed to view standing up and re-telling narratives based on their experiences and knowledge as extremely important to ending what they considered to be racism. This emotional and spiritual connection to their culture and its history produced an ambition to be more, expect more, and educate others more when it came to being Mi'kmaw. Empowerment seemed to be a key factor in their learning.

The participants felt a general sense of satisfaction with the social studies curriculum but also a sense of empowerment and ambition. This empowerment and ambition seemed to come from their knowledge of what they felt was missing from the social studies curriculum and what should be taught. As I sat with each person individually and then in a larger group setting, it was clear to me that they were willing and excited to think about how the curriculum could be shaped for more Mi'kmaw inclusion. They were pleased that they could teach me things that might result in a shift towards more Mi'kmaw-focused content in all of their courses.

Spiritual development and well-being. The First Nations Holistic

Lifelong Learning Model (CCL, 2007) and Bopp et al. (1984) defined spiritual

development as the connections aspect of collective well-being. Under the

spiritual theme I scanned the transcripts for utterances relating to confidence,

respect, love, humility, sensitivity, caring, awareness, enjoyment, happiness, and

hope. I found that in many areas the participants' discussion of their experiences

connected with this spiritual theme. I was able to organize the data under the

following sub-themes: sense of pride; community and school connections;

stereotyping, misinformation and racism; the role of the teachers in spiritual

development and well-being and resolving tensions between 'official' and

'personal' narratives.

Sense of pride. Pride factored strongly in my discussions with

participants. It is however, interesting to note that there is no word for 'pride' in

the Mi'kmaw language. The participants exhibited pride in their Mi'kmaw

culture and confidence in the abilities of their teachers and community members

to educate them with a strong sense of Mi'kmaw connectedness. The participants

were able to bring spiritual well-being into their learning and showed examples of

being proud of their culture and of developing a strong Mi'kmaw character. The

participants seemed to have a deep sense of pride in being Mi'kmaq and wanted

to see others educated about Mi'kmaw culture and Mi'kmaw history. For

example, many believe that sweetgrass, Mi'kmaw medicines, and basket making

are things to be proud of and should be celebrated and taught to others. There

seemed to be a collective sense that others should be made to better understand

historical Mi'kmaw experiences and contributions and that these aspects of being

Mi'kmaq should be represented in schools for everyone. Carmie, for example, in

discussing her experiences at Ni'newey Community School, believes that learning

from Mi'kmaw educators and her local community had helped her to see the

Mi'kmaw social studies content as being valuable and important to the study of

Canadian history in schools. These examples were important in spiritual

development and well-being in that they seem to foster elements of confidence,

respect, awareness, enjoyment and hope. Based on these examples presented

above and additional examples found in the data highlighted in this chapter, all

participants expressed confidence in themselves as Mi'kmaw people, as well as

respect for and connectedness to their culture.

Community and school connections. Many of the participants believe

that their education had not have any gaps when it came to being Mi'kmaq in

school. However, many felt that if they had attended the provincial school they

would have experienced a disconnect between their formal education and the

education the received in their homes. The participants seemed to enjoy attending

a school in their community and realized that they were able to 'be Mi'kmaq'

both inside and outside of school. Numerous participants spoke with pride about

the connections to the community they were able to make in learning Canadian

history. Examples like the Donald Marshall Jr. decision on fishing rights were

narratives they could relate to; they created a deeper connection to their learning.

The participants felt confidence in their community and their school for providing

them with the 'real' stories of centralization (namely, the stories from the

community). The participants seem to believe that by being immersed in Mi'kmaw culture they was easily able to connect what they learned at home with what they learned in school and I felt that I was really able to see how being Mi'kmaq and learning about Mi'kmaq history were connected for these participants.

In describing the school, participants talked about how Mi'kmaw ways of being were valued and supported, and discussed feelings of fitting in with their peers and teachers. All participants believe that the school operated much like a family. In fact, on more than one occasion the participants referred to their school and community as one big family. All participants felt that their school had helped them with character development and had inspired pride and confidence in their culture. In looking at experiences with Mi'kmaw content in social studies the participants felt that the teachers had done a good job of tying the content to Mi'kmaw traditional teachings, which helped them relate to the topics and strengthened them as Mi'kmaw people. The milieu, in this case the Ni'newey Community School and Ni'newey Community and the bridge created between them, was helpful in the spiritual development of the participants. The participants talked about easily transitioning between their school and community and not having to stop being Mi'kmaw in either location. They discussed how their learning in the community complemented their social studies education in school. It is clear to me that the school and the community have played a large role in the participants' spiritual well-being; both have been committed to ensuring their children develop strong Mi'kmaw characters.

The participants showed pride in their community and their school, love for their community members, teachers, and administrators, caring for one another, hope for the future instilled by teachers, administrators, and community members, enjoyment in their surroundings, and great respect for their elders and for each other. In a general discussion at the end of the group conversation, the participants talked about the things they liked about their school. Eli felt that Mi'kmaw students would face discrimination if they went to a provincial school. Angelina talked about how her teachers had been there forever; some of the teachers in Ni'newey Community School had also taught participants' parents. Highlighting this, Eli said that the current principal used to be his grade one teacher and with a big smile announced "she taught me how to tie my shoes" (Eli, 5647). Through our conversations I saw, in my participants' eyes, that the raising of these children was indeed a community responsibility with each member looking out for the other.

Stereotyping, misinformation, and racism. While connections between home and school were strong for these participants, there were still issues around stereotyping, misinformation and racism. Curtis showed respect for traditional Mi'kmaw teaching around respect and cultural protocols and believe that all people [in Nova Scotia] should be educated in these areas. He felt that this would help others become aware of Mi'kmaw ways of being and show them that Mi'kmaw culture is valuable, thereby reducing stereotyping from those outside the culture. He did not elaborate on how this education for non-Mi'kmaw people would accomplish a reduction in stereotyping. Angelina talked about finding it

hard to remain proud of the Mi'kmaw culture when the culture was "surrounded by so much shame" (Angelina, 294-295) but showed great enjoyment and respect for being Mi'kmaw. Stephanie talked about how a focus in the curriculum on the survivor stories from the residential schools would, in her opinion, lead to the end of racism for Mi'kmaw people through an increased sensitivity from others. All participants expressed hope that more awareness around residential schooling would lead to more awareness of current and historic Mi'kmaw issues, which would then in turn lead to less prejudice directed towards the culture as a whole. All participants agreed that treaty rights were covered extensively during their education and this fostered a sense of respect for people like Donald Marshall Jr., who worked to uphold the rights when they were being threatened. There was also confidence in knowing these treaty rights so that they too could defend them if needed and provide greater awareness for others, thereby lessening the conflict around treaty rights between Mi'kmaw and non-Mi'kmaw communities. When I posed a specific example, such as the story of Columbus, for the participants to discuss, Eli showed confidence in saying that he refuted the story when given the chance.

The major theme evidenced by the participant responses around subject matter was that the curriculum had some Mi'kmaw content but not enough. The participants felt that a stronger Mi'kmaw presence in the prescribed curriculum would lead to increased awareness around Mi'kmaw culture and a greater sensitivity from others. The participants seemed to feel represented in their social

studies classes but all credited their teachers for this; many were skeptical that this would be the case for them outside of a Mi'kmaw school.

The larger society outside of Ni'newey posed a problem for the participants. A few times in our conversations the participants referred to 'out there' with pointing or gesturing. They frequently imagined how Mi'kmaw content might be delivered in the provincial school social studies classes. They felt that outside of the Mi'kmaw communities there was a great deal of prejudice and racism being directed towards Mi'kmaw people and a lack of understanding about what it means to be Mi'kmaq. It is possible that the participants' views of what others outside of the community thought of them worked to hinder their spiritual development, against the efforts of the school and community.

The role of the teachers in spiritual development and well-being.

Teachers played a key role in the participants' spiritual well-being. The participants expressed that their teachers, being Mi'kmaq, were able to understand things that non-Mi'kmaw teachers would not be able to, such as Mi'kmaw ways of being. While not all teachers at Ni'newey Community School were Mi'kmaq, the participants believe that these non-Mi'kmaw teachers were connected enough to Mi'kmaw culture and community to be able to do a good job of this. Eli talked about the teachers being able to tie content to people the participants knew in the community. This was especially beneficial in terms of understanding the implications of residential schooling. This is important in that spiritual development is tied to a collective well-being, and one of the main aspects of this development is connections to culture and community. The participants believe

that teachers did not have to work to bring out elements of being Mi'kmaq

because, as Angelina stated, "they live it and we live it, it's in all of our blood"

(Angelina, 5874) and Eli believes that Mi'kmaw history was easily found in all of

his courses because his teachers were Mi'kmaw and, according to him, "teachers

teach what they know" (Eli, 5982). All the participants praised their former social

studies teacher, Mrs. X, for tying everything they learned into Mi'kmaw

traditional beliefs, which seemed to allow them to be able to maintain confidence

and respect for their individual sense of self as Mi'kmaw people while working

with content that wasn't necessarily developed with this in mind.

The participants felt that Mi'kmaw teachers had worked hard to bring out

Mi'kmaw involvement in history and consistently attempted to create a bridge for

students between being Mi'kmaw and the subject matter. Carmie and Angelina,

for instance, believes that the student-teacher relationship was beneficial because

teachers were not afraid to tell them the truth. The level of caring was similar to a

family atmosphere as evidenced in the sub-theme of *connections between school*

and community.

There was a sense that the teachers had done a good job of bringing in

Mi'kmaw content and tying it to the curriculum but there was also the belief that

these teachers were doing this on their own, without a provincial mandate to do

so. Even Carmie, who had often disliked her teachers for pushing her to submit

work on time, said that through our conversation about the connections between

content learned in school and content learned in the home or community she had

realized that her teachers had done a good job of bridging the content and

Mi'kmaw ways of being. Further to this, events and activities sanctioned by the school, such as attendance at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearings in Halifax worked to strengthen a connectedness to culture for the participants and in addition, helped strengthen the content. For instance, when Angelina returned from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearings, she felt that she a greater respect for and sensitivity towards the survivors of the system and a greater awareness of the lasting effects of residential schooling on her community and beyond.

The level of teacher involvement and teacher connectedness seemed to foster a sense of pride and confidence in the participants. They expressed hope relating to teaching social studies content with a Mi'kmaw focus and they said they felt cared for by their teachers. The family atmosphere seemed to create a safe space for the participants to be themselves in their school. They generally showed a high level of respect for their teachers and believe that they had done a good job of connecting with their spiritual beings, helping them to develop a strong Mi'kmaw character and sense of self.

Resolving tensions between 'official' and 'personal' narratives. It was evident to me that the participants worked hard to keep their spiritual well-being intact by merging content with traditional practices and by questioning areas of the curriculum where they felt they were not represented. The participants talked about seeking further information from teachers and community members in order to understand their past and imagine the future. Throughout this research, the participants made recommendations that would provide elements of hope for

future Mi'kmaw students, instill a sense of confidence for students, encourage increased awareness and sensitivity around current and past Mi'kmaw issues, and inspire respect and caring for the culture as a whole for Mi'kmaw and non-Mi'kmaw people. The participants spoke about enjoying their school's commitment to Mi'kmaw ways of being and being able to exhibit this at school and in their community. It was clear that they had developed and sought to maintain caring attitudes with one other and with their teachers and community.

The subject matter (or prescribed curriculum) in some cases enhanced the spiritual development of the participants. For example, being able to participate in events like the Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearings, hearing stories of the residential school survivors (many of them local community members), and experiencing things like hunting and traditional craftsmanship in school instilled a sense of accomplishment, pride, and confidence for them around being Mi'kmaw. While these activities were not in the prescribed curriculum, the teachers of Ni'newey Community School were able to take the mandated outcomes and make these aspects fit for students. Carmie believes that hearing things firsthand from Mi'kmaw teachers seemed to "make [the content] more legit" (Carmie, 155-156).

Examples of where the curriculum could be strengethed were made evident within our conversations. For example, Carmie believes that the curriculum in all schools should focus more on culture and religion, both of which are very important to her as a Mi'kmaw person. Several participants felt that the stories of Glooscap and the Great Spirit should be present in the curriculum, which would allow for greater Mi'kmaw representation in the content and

contribute to a greater understanding of some of the legends that have historically

shaped Mi'kmaw culture. Lucy recommended that curriculum developers start to

incorporate treaty rights education so that there could be an increased

understanding of how the treaties are relevant today, it seems as if a greater

understanding of the treaties would not only highlight the reasons behind these

treaties but also strengthen understanding around the legal rights belonging to

Mi'kmae people in the present day. Lucy also wanted more recognition given in

the social studies curriculum about historical mistreatment and accomplishments,

showing that she didn't wish to see a history curriculum that focused solely on

historic injustice suffered by Mi'kmaw people but rather a focus on past and

present day accomplishments that show Mi'kmaw people as being contributing

and beneficial members of the larger societal framework. For example, one of the

participants worried students outside of the MK school system would be unaware

of the important Aboriginal involvement in World Wars I and II. Another

example of this came from Lucy, when she stated that she wanted students to

know that her Mi'kmaw ancestors had had practices in place for community

government, land ownership, and general systems for thriving off of the land.

There was a general feeling that the prescribed curriculum did not express the loss

experienced by Mi'kmaw peoples at the time of contact and did little to highlight

the triumphs of Mi'kmaw people post contact. The participants expressed worry

about aspects that they felt were missing from the curriculum that would

contribute to greater understanding of Mi'kmaw culture such as educating

students on the old teachings of respect and the cultural protocols for Mi'kmaw

people and local Mi'kmaw practices. It seems that the inclusion of past and present day contributions of Mi'kmaw people within the prescribed curriculum would assist these participants in strengthening their spiritual development and well-being to an even greater extent.

Physical development and well-being. The First Nations Holistic Lifelong Learning Model (CCL, 2007) and Bopp et al. (1984) defined physical development as the movement aspect of collective well-being. Under the physical theme I scanned the transcripts for utterances relating to drawing, creating, acting, dramatizing, moving, travelling, imitating, building, grouping, telling, and presenting. This theme proved to be more difficult to analyze as physical development and experiences with social studies do not easily go hand in hand. I have therefore chosen to broaden my focus for this section to highlight the physical manifestations of well-being that the participants exhibited within our conversations. Most of the connections to the physical theme based on utterances were related to the three other themes of mental, spiritual, and emotional well-being. Throughout the participant transcripts I found connections to physical development such as craftsmanship, construction, games, contexts, physical settings, and connecting information. The participants showed their physical development when they told stories from their experiences or presented alternative viewpoints on dominant stories. For example, Angelina's work on a project about the Truth and Reconciliation hearings was also key to her physical development as she constructed a video, told stories, presented to members of the UN, and travelled. These are all important aspects of physical well-being and

development as outlined in my initial data analysis proposal. In this section I will mainly describe the physical manifestations of well-being of the participants, such as participation, action, and advocacy. Within this theme, I have grouped the data under the following sub-themes: making connections to the subject matter and experiential learning.

Making connections to the subject matter. The participants discussed connecting their learning to their broader community and connecting their learning about other cultures to their own culture. For example, Lucy made sense of the Holocaust through her understandings of residential schooling. The participants sought information to support their learning through conversations with their teachers and other Mi'kmaw people. Teachers seemed to factor into the participants' physical well-being as they had encouraged creative elements in learning social studies such as ties to traditional practices and beliefs and the active elements of presenting about and attending events around residential schooling. Mainly the teachers had encouraged an advocacy lens to the learning for the participants. They had shown the participants where they felt the holes were in the current curriculum and had provided them with more information, allowing the participants to see that these elements were important to the study of social studies. They had created a safe space for learning where students could question what they were being presented with in the curriculum. As a result, the participants demonstrated a willingness and desire for action. The participants sought out physical well-being in terms of action, advocacy and participation. All participants showed a strong sense of advocacy throughout this research, often

stating that they wished certain topics would be included in the curriculum so that misunderstandings, generalizations, and stereotyping could be assuaged. This focus on action and advocacy involved telling and presenting their stories and the stories that they felt were missing from the curriculum. The milieu of Ni'newey Community School and Ni'newey Community helped the participants develop a sense of physical well-being in that it encouraged the construction and promotion of counter-narratives that connected Mi'kmaw history to a largely Eurocentric portrayal of history. There seemed to be a broader community responsibility to getting the stories of residential school survival out into the open, which then inspired the participants to do the same.

Experiential learning. The participants felt that focusing on craftsmanship (basket making, working with basket wood, constructing bows and arrows), traditional games such as Waltes, or understanding and experiences with hunting were important to their physical development as they were able to physically express elements of their culture. The subject matter seemed to enhance the physical development of the participants when teachers added Mi'kmaw content to their lessons around traditional practices such as craftsmanship or encouraged them to present on issues. The prescribed curriculum on its own seemed to do little to enhance the participants' physical development. It is nevertheless possible that the prescribed curriculum fostered a sense of advocacy and action when the participants discovered and acted upon holes in the content or inconsistencies with their understandings of Canadian history.

Analysis summary. Through my analysis, I was able to find connections to all areas of development (mental, emotional, spiritual and physical) for these participants. By supplementing the analysis stemming from the First Nations Holistic Lifelong Learning Model (CCL, 2007) with Schwab's (1978) four commonplaces of curriculum I understood more deeply the relationships between these themes and the participants, their teachers, the subject matter, and the milieu. The above examples of the teachers' willingness to extend the prescribed curriculum through bringing in local examples, content, role models, off campus events (such as encouraging students to attend the Truth and Reconciliation hearings), and traditional methods and practices connected to Mi'kmaw ways of being closely align with Schwab's (1978) views on the commonplace of teacher as someone who is well versed in subject matter but who is also a learner.

Schwab (1978) believed that the student, representing another commonplace, must be involved in their learning through a process of deliberation. This deliberative approach to curriculum making allows for each commonplace to be valued and heard. The participants in this study contributed to curriculum making by being critically engaged, interpretive, and spiritually connected and sought out avenues promoting action and advocacy. The participants maintained the deliberative approach to curriculum as they guided the learning process with their inquiries and interpretations.

I consider the subject matter commonplace to be both positive and negative for the participants in this study. According to Fox (1985), "Schwab argues that it is not the role of curriculum to simplify or to parrot a favored or

accepted conception of a discipline, but to reflect on what contribution the various

conceptions within a discipline can make to the thinking, the feeling and the

behavior of the student" (p. 69). In some cases the subject matter allowed the

participants to engage in this reflectivity through the extensions brought forth by

their teachers (residential school survivor stories, attending Truth and

Reconciliation events, and traditional practices and connections to Mi'kmaw ways

of being). With the help of the other commonplaces of teacher, student and

milieu, the participants were able to see themselves within the curriculum. Subject

matter alone, without a consideration of teacher, student and milieu

commonplaces, would have resulted in a disconnect for these participants.

Engaging in a deliberative process, the participants voiced many

recommendations concerning subject matter (in this case the prescribed

curriculum). These recommendations are outlined in the next section.

Schwab (1978) referred to the milieu as the sociocultural environment,

both in school and out of school. According to Fox (1985), Schwab "claims that a

great deal can be achieved through schooling if educators find ways to exploit the

various milieus of the learner: the family, the class, the school, the teacher, and

the administration. Their understanding of the power of the milieu on the life of

the student will help them in establishing a learning community" (p. 71). The

milieus were of utmost importance in the participant descriptions of their learning

and well-being. Ni'newey Community School had provided a space for the

participants to connect to knowledge learned outside of school, bring in elements

of their family narratives, connect with classmates, feel a part of the school (a

sense of belonging), connect with their teachers and administration, and interpret and engage with the subject matter based on their experiences.

The four commonplaces worked together for the participants at Ni'newey Community School, as did the four elements of personal development from the First Nations Holistic Lifelong Learning Model (CCL, 2007). Each participant discussed engaging with all of the elements needed for collective well-being and engaging with all aspects of the four commonplaces. While there is still work to be done (see Chapters Six and Seven for further understandings of the implications of this study for practice and scholarship), positive curricular processes have occurred for these participants. In the following section, I dive deeper into some additional themes that emerged during our conversations and conclude the case study for this group of participants.

Conclusions

In this section I outline a general discussion around the research experiences with the participants of Ni'newey Community School and highlight some of the themes that emerged for me that were not part of the original intended analysis model, such as conceptions of place and belonging. I also discuss the participant understandings of the relationship between Indigenous and Western knowledge.

Overall, the participants felt that they had had good social studies experiences and while there were some boring times they thought their teachers had done a really good job of bringing in Mi'kmaw issues and traditions, which fostered a positive environment in which the students' identities as Mi'kmaw

people could develop. Most felt represented by the curriculum but not necessarily by the textbooks. All believe that they had learned their history thanks to their Mi'kmaw teachers. Eli stated, "I'm glad I graduated here, I'm proud to be going to University as a Mi'kmaq" (Eli, 8130). Angelina said, "If we had native teachers when we were younger, we'd be fluent" (Angelina, 7906) to which Carmie replied, "We have our traditional beliefs though, that's really strong in our school" (Carmie, 8221). Everyone agreed with this.

Returning to my initial research question of *How do Mi'kmaw students situate their own understandings and narratives of Canadian history alongside the content and teaching in the current curriculum in Nova Scotia's band-controlled and provincially-controlled schools?* I believe that the Mi'kmaw participants of Ni'newey Community School (the band-controlled school) showed a willingness to celebrate their history and their cultural narratives of Canadian history and situate these alongside rather than against the content and teaching in the current curriculum in complementary ways. The participants believe that Indigenous knowledge could complement Western knowledge and that both should be included in the prescribed curriculum.

For these participants, Mi'kmaw content would assist in lessening stereotypes and increasing understanding around both historical and present-day issues, but this content should be blended into the curriculum rather than being an add-on. The participants did not want to create a binary between Indigenous and Western knowledge; they wished to give both knowledge sets equal time and weight in the curriculum. There was no discussion about taking elements out of

the current prescribed curriculum but great discussion on what could be added to the current content. This fits with Battiste's (2002) assertion that "indigenous knowledge is far more than the binary opposite of western knowledge" (p. 5) and her belief that by "animating the voices and experiences of the cognitive 'other' and integrating them into the educational process, it creates a new and balanced centre and a fresh vantage point from which to analyze Eurocentric education and its pedagogies" (p. 5). This fresh centre seems to be what the participants from Ni'newey Community School were looking for in their recommendations; they did not wish to remove Eurocentric content from the curriculum but rather to add more localized information relevant to their histories as Mi'kmaw people. It was apparent to me that these participants strongly believe that Indigenous and Western knowledge could be received in complementary ways. I further explore these understandings in Chapter 6.

Chapter Summary

In summary, this chapter provided an overview of the research conversations held with the participants from Ni'newey Community School, the participant responses to questions asked during the individual and group meetings, and my analysis around the themes of mental, emotional, spiritual, and physical development and well-being based on their responses, along with additional themes and sub-themes that emerged from the data generation. The participants discussed their understandings and articulations of being Mi'kmaw and their experiences with Mi'kmaw content in social studies, as well as their reactions to topics such as Christopher Columbus' discovery of North America,

residential schooling, centralization policies in Nova Scotia and Mi'kmaw treaty

rights. Returning to my initial research question for this study, I explored the

relationship between Western and Indigenous knowledge based on my

understandings of conversations with the participants from Ni'newey Community

School.

Chapter Five: Mi'kmaw Students' Experiences with the Nova Scotia Social Studies Curriculum in a Provincially-Controlled School

The purpose of this chapter is to outline in case study form the research undertaken with five Mi'kmaw students from the Welte'temsi community attending a provincial school in Nova Scotia. In the first section I provide an overview of the Welte'temsi First Nation Community and East Coast High School as well as a description of the participants who agreed to take part in this research. In the second section I outline the questions I used to guide this inquiry and highlight the participant responses. Within this section I have created a portrait for each participant, showcasing our individual conversations. In the third section I provide an overview of the participants' responses to the guiding questions for the group sharing circle. The topics during the whole group conversation included the participants' descriptions of their school and community and reflections on their experiences being Mi'kmaq at East Coast High School. Participants also outlined their exposure to and experiences with Mi'kmaw content across the social studies curriculum and discussed their understandings of the pre-determined themes, such as Christopher Columbus' discovery of North America, residential schooling, centralization policies, and treaty rights.

The fourth section is an overview of the second individual conversation with the participants. In the fifth section I analyze the individual and group conversations using the First Nations Holistic Lifelong Learning Model (CCL, 2007) and Schwab's (1978) four commonplaces of curriculum, highlighting the connections to the themes of mental, emotional, spiritual, and physical

development and well-being. This is further layered by understanding discussion of the influences of the teachers, students, subject matter, and milieu and other sub-themes that presented within the data analysis on these themes. In the sixth section I provide a general discussion around the findings and problematic areas found within our conversations. Within this section I return to my initial research question to address the participants' views and experiences surrounding the relationship between Indigenous and Western knowledge. I have attempted to remove all non-identifying information within this case study; Welte'temsi First Nation Community, East Coast High School, and all participant names are pseudonyms.

Community, School, and Participant Overview

In this section I describe the Welte'temsi First Nation Community and the East Coast High School. I also give a general overview of the participants who agreed to take part in this research. As in the previous chapter and due to the small number of Mi'kmaw communities in Nova Scotia and the relatively small size of the province as a whole, I have attempted to give as much detail as possible while still ensuring anonymity for the participants in this study.

Welte'temsi First Nation community. Welte'temsi is a small community with a population of approximately 700 located in the eastern part of rural Nova Scotia. Like Ni'newey, this region has been home to the Mi'kmaq for well over 1000 years and the Welte'temsi community has gone through many changes. In the early 1900s Welte'temsi was ordered to move from its previous location to a more remote location so that the land could be redeveloped by the

government at the time. Welte'temsi remains in this location today and has grown significantly in land area and population size. Considered to be a thriving First Nation community, Welte'temsi is considered to be a center for economic development. Residents are proud of all they have accomplished. Welte'temsi gets its name from one of the original chiefs of the Mi'kmaq First Nation. The community houses a school, a restaurant, lodging for tourists, a gas station, a medical centre, the band office, and an RCMP detachment. As of 2006, the population data for Welte'temsi showed that 43% of the residents of the community were between the ages of 0 and 19 and another 28% were between 20 and 40 years old (Statistics Canada Census Profile, 2006). Although these numbers are similar to the current population data for Ni'newey, this population data is not as recent as the data obtained for Ni'newey (Statistics Canada Census Profile, 2011). These numbers are significant for Nova Scotia as a whole, where only 21.2% of all residents are between 0 and 19 years old (Statistics Canada Census Profile, 2011).

East Coast High School. East Coast High School is a grade 10 to 12 secondary school with a population of approximately 700 students located outside of Welte'temsi. The school has been in operation since the late 1800s and has undergone many structural changes since then as population has risen significantly. East Coast High School serves a large land area and many communities come together under the school's jurisdiction. The staff is largely non-Mi'kmaw (there is only one Mi'kmaw teacher) and the school is run by non-Mi'kmaw administrators. East Coast High School is one of the largest high

schools in the region and boasts a significant graduation rate. It is unknown how many Mi'kmaw students are included in these graduation numbers.

Participants from Welte'temsi First Nation. The participants from the Welte'temsi First Nation were current and former students at East Coast High School. All participants were Mi'kmaq and ranged in age from 16 to 18. One participant had recently graduated from East Coast High School and the other four participants were currently in grade 11 at East Coast High School. The participants had attended East Coast High School from grades 10 to the time of the research and only one participant, Kiptu, had lived outside of the community (and province) during his time in school, arriving in Welte'temsi in grade 8. Only Kiptu had lived elsewhere as a young child; all had attended their school years together at the feeder Elementary and Junior High schools closest to the Welte'temsi Community and had finished or intend to finish at East Coast High School. All the participants knew each other and each other's families well and had strong bonds with each other prior to this research due to their community connections. In the following sections I provide an overview of the initial individual conversation with each participant and the group conversation session.

Initial Individual Conversations with Participants

In October 2012 I was able to make a connection with Laura, a Mi'kmaw woman from the Welte'temsi First Nation, who works in an educational capacity. Laura and I had met a few times before through our work on various projects and we had a good friend in common. Through email I explained the project to Laura and asked her if she knew of any students who might like to participate. Laura

explained the research to her daughter Beatrice and Beatrice offered to meet with me to talk about her social studies experiences. Beatrice asked a few of her friends if they would like to join and four of them decided they would be willing to meet with me. Due to their busy schedules with school and extra-curricular activities, we scheduled a meeting for the following month. I had offered to the possible participants that I could come to Welte'temsi toexplain the research project further and possibly do both the interviews and the focus group conversation in one evening. They all agreed that this format would work best for them. Laura suggested we could meet at her house.

On November 5, 2012 I travelled to the Welte'temsi First Nation to meet with the five possible participants from East Coast High School. I arrived with pizzas from the local pizzeria and as Laura ushered me in a group of teenagers emerged from the basement. After introducing myself and individually meeting Beatrice, Alexandra, Kiptu, Augustus and Helen, I went over the research plans and goals and asked the possible participants if they had any questions. They assured me that they had read the information letter and understood the research. They had discussed the project with their parents and received consent, as well as indicated their assent on the consent/assent form. I had cleared a few days in my schedule to spend in Welte'temsi to complete this research but the participants were keen to work through the evening so we decided I would meet individually with each participant while the others played a game on the Wii in the basement. Once all the individual conversations were complete we would come together for a group sharing circle conversation. I explained that this could take a while and it

might go late but all wanted to at least try; they explained that this was much easier than trying to find another time when they could all meet as a group. Laura got me situated in the dining room for the individual conversations while the participants finished off the pizza in the kitchen.

The guiding research questions used for the individual conversations were:

1) What classes at the high school level did you take in social studies (i.e. Canadian history, Mi'kmaq Studies, etc.)?

2) Tell me about your experiences in social studies. Do you like social studies? Why or why not?

3) What is the one thing you remember most from your social studies classes? Why do you think you remember this so well?

4) Do you feel like you have been represented in the social studies curriculum?

5) How do you feel about the textbooks you have used in your social studies classes? What would you keep the same and what would you change about them?

6) Tell me what you remember about Canadian history based on what you learned in school. What kinds of topics did you study, or what kinds of topics did you teacher/textbook talk about?

7) If you were to tell someone else the story of Canada's past, based on what you learned in school, what would you say?

8) What have you learned about Mi'kmaw history in social studies?

9) What have you learned about Mi'kmaw history at home?

10) Does your Canadian history learning in school match with what you have learned at home? Why or why not?

11) What stories, if any, do you wish were included in your social studies classes?

12) If you could design a curriculum for social studies classes, particularly Canadian history classes, what would you make sure was included?

(a) What stories, specifically ones that you have learned at home or in the community, if any, are missing from the social studies curriculum? Why do you think this should be included?

13) Would you say that what you have studied in your social studies courses, particularly in Canadian history, connected with what you have learned in your home and community?

14) Did you learn anything in social studies in school that contradicted what you had learned at home? How did you deal with this?

15) Did you learn anything at home that contradicted with what you learned in social studies in school? How did you deal with this?

I met individually with each participant and each conversation lasted approximately 30 minutes. I audio-recorded each conversation. Following the sessions I transcribed each interview. The following sections contain the portraits of individual conversations with the participants taken from the transcripts from the audio-recordings with each participant. I had provided each participant with the questions prior to our conversation and asked them to scan them so they could have a sense of what I would like us to focus on during our meeting. I expected I would have to stick to the script, considering I was working with teenagers and was afraid that they would not want to talk with me or have anything to say, but all participants spoke freely and we often covered the questions without me having to ask them. A few participants looked at the sheet as they were talking and incorporated themes from other questions into our conversation. I tried not to rely on the sheet with the questions printed on them but I was glad to have it with me a backup for transitioning purposes. In writing up the portraits for the participants I chose not to represent this in a structured question and answer format but rather as a more holistic conversation as a way to showcase that these

meetings were conversations rather than interviews. The five interview

descriptions that follow refer to my conversations with participants on November

5, 2012.

      Beatrice. Beatrice was a 16-year-old female in grade 11 at East Coast

High School. She hoped to attend university and study Business Administration.

She enjoyed spending time with her friends, shopping, travelling, and exercising.

Her favourite thing to do was to attend sweat lodges with her mother and visit

family across the province. Beatrice and her mother had spent a lot of time

recently attending Mi'kmaw cultural events around the province, which Beatrice

said allowed her to feel more connected to her heritage. She wished these types

of opportunities were available at her school so her non-Mi'kmaw classmates

could experience the richness of her culture. Beatrice had taken the African

Canadian Studies 11 and Mi'kmaq Studies 10 courses, as well as completing

Grades 7, 8, and 9 social studies. She felt that due to her strong connectedness to

her Mi'kmaw roots she knew most of the content in Mi'kmaq Studies 10 prior to

taking the course. Beatrice liked social studies and while learning about other

cultures in her social studies classes didn't always directly correlate with her

experience growing up as a Mi'kmaw female, she had been able to make

connections between her learning in school and her learning at home and in the

community.

      The one thing she remembered most from her social studies classes was

learning about African Canadian and African American history, such as stories

about the Black Loyalists, slavery, Martin Luther King Jr., and Ruby Bridges[13].

For Beatrice, these historical stories and events were interesting and she could see

the connections to her own cultural past. She was able to relate the Black Loyalist

plight in Nova Scotia to stories of Mi'kmaw survival in Nova Scotia; she likened

slavery to residential schooling practices; and stories about Ruby Bridges

reminded her of strong Mi'kmaw advocates who stood up for what they believed

in, such as Donald Marshall Jr. I asked her if these connections had been made

for her in her schooling and she said no, she connected these things on her own so

that she could better relate to them and understand their significance.

Beatrice did not necessarily feel represented in the social studies curricula;

she felt that stories of Mi'kmaw struggles and triumphs should be "told from the

heart" (Beatrice, 187[14]) rather than through a textbook or grainy video. Beatrice

was not a fan of her social studies textbooks and coming from a culture that

values oral history, Beatrice preferred to learn orally and to be able to connect

with the storyteller. She reminded me that history is all about stories but the

storytelling in her social studies classes seemed a bit on the dry side. She thought

more attention should have been paid to Mi'kmaw history in her social studies

classes. While she enjoyed learning about African Canadian [and African

American] history and the Holocaust she wondered why Mi'kmaw history wasn't

given the same level of prominence in the curriculum. "After all" she said, "we

were here first" (Beatrice, 199).

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[13] Under a newly-developed National Association for the Advancement of
Colored People (NAACP) integration initiative, Ruby Bridges was the first black
child to attend an all-white school in New Orleans in 1960.
[14] Transcript line.

When asked what she remembered most about Canadian history based on what she had learned in school she told me she recalled learning about World Wars I and II in greatest detail and most recently, slavery. She told me that in Grade 2 she had the opportunity to meet Ruby Bridges at her school. She found this to be fascinating but she wondered why over the course of her education someone like Donald Marshall Jr. wasn't brought in to talk to her class. He was local and was a strong advocate for Mi'kmaw treaty rights. According to Beatrice, if her classmates had been able to hear Donald Marshall Jr. speak, maybe they would understand more about treaty rights and why they are important. She believes that in addition to people like Donald Marshall Jr. there were plenty of survivors of the residential schools in Nova Scotia who could educate others on what she called "the cultural genocide of the Mi'kmaw people" (Beatrice, 221).

If Beatrice were to tell someone the story of Canada's past based on what she learned in school she believes that Mi'kmaw stories would be largely left out. However, if she were to tell the story of Canada's past based on what she learned at home she would start by telling them about the legacy of the residential schools so that they could understand Canada's history of racism. She would also teach them about centralization so that "they could see how land was stolen and Mi'kmaw people were moved so they could be kept away from the whites and controlled" (Beatrice, 243-245). According to Beatrice, the bulk of her learning of Mi'kmaw history happened at home and in the community. She reported that she had been well-versed in stories of centralization, residential schooling, treaty

rights, language loss, and stories of Mi'kmaw struggles and success well before she enrolled in Mi'kmaq Studies 10.

Beatrice did not believe that her learning at home matched totally with what she had learned in school because her learning at home had "come from the heart" (Beatrice, 301). She had been able to sit down with real people to discuss these events and to see the grief on their faces when they discussed things like residential schools or losing land due to centralization. She wondered why information on her culture was not as readily available in schools as was information on other cultures. She wished more stories about residential schooling, Donald Marshall Jr., and the Grand Chiefs were included in the curriculum of the courses outside of Mi'kmaq Studies 10. A big concern for Beatrice was the loss of language among the Mi'kmaw population; she worried that without a strong connection to culture fostered among Mi'kmaw students, the language would totally die out.

Overall, Beatrice liked her school and generally liked her social studies teachers. However, she felt that if she had been taught by Mi'kmaw teachers throughout her education she would not have to have supplemented so much of her learning of Mi'kmaw history with resources from outside of school. At this point, Beatrice and I wrapped up our individual conversation. After looking at the questions I had brought with me, she assured me she would have lots to add when we met again for the talking circle. She jumped up from the table and yelled for Augustus to come upstairs. As she passed him in the stairwell I overheard her say to him, "Speak from the heart, it's the way we get our story heard."

Augustus. Augustus was a 16-year-old male student in Grade 11 at East Coast High School. He hoped to attend one of the local universities to study politics when he graduated from high school. Augustus had a strong interest in politics and hoped one day to become Chief of the Welte'temsi First Nation. He was extremely proud of his community and believes that Welte'temsi had overcome great odds to become a thriving, successful community. He planned to get a university education and return to the community to continue the good work that was happening there. Augustus had already taken Mi'kmaq Studies 10, completed Grades 7, 8, and 9 social studies and was to take Canadian History 11 during the 2013 winter term. He was looking forward to the Canadian history course, as he believes it would help him to make sense of Canada's past. I asked him to elaborate on this and he told me that he wanted to learn about what happened before and to understand why. I pressed him for more details but he could not give me specific examples.

Augustus had so far enjoyed his social studies classes, as he liked to learn about "stuff I didn't know about" (Augustus, 174). The one thing he remembered most from his social studies classes was that "racism is a big part of Canadian history" (Augustus, 204). I asked him what he meant by this and he talked about the Donald Marshall Jr. case of wrongful imprisonment. I asked him if he had learned about this in school and he said no, this was something he had learned at home. In school, he learned about Martin Luther King, Jr. but he had connected the Donald Marshall Jr. story to the stories about Martin Luther King, Jr. on his own. I asked him why he felt there was a connection between the two. He told

me that Donald Marshall Jr. was as much of a leader as Martin Luther King Jr. but was not as widely recognized. I asked him why he thought this was and he said, "because of racism" (Augustus, 232). He said that "people don't think the Mi'kmaq have anything to contribute, they think we're stupid and lazy and get everything for free, they don't want to hear the stories where we work hard to protect what's ours and get treated equal" (Augustus, 237-240). I then asked him to define racism for me so I could be clear about what he meant. He told me that "racism is when you think certain people aren't good enough because of who they are and where they come from, like with Mi'kmaqs, people think we're dumb because we're traditional. We're not dumb; look at everything we created here. We had to work even harder to get it too" (Augustus, 251-257). I asked him what he meant by traditional and he said that most Mi'kmaw people still held onto traditional beliefs and teachings and this had helped them to be more connected to the land and their surroundings.

For Augustus, the spiritual element of Mi'kmaw culture was important but he believes this was where people from outside of the Mi'kmaw culture began to judge his people because they did not fully understand it. I asked him what he had learned about Mi'kmaw spirituality in school. He said it was not talked about in any of his classes except Mi'kmaq Studies 10. At this point he paused and then remarked, "Wouldn't it be good if everyone had to learn about it though" (Augustus, 304). For Augustus, the Mi'kmaq Studies 10 course was the one place where he really saw his history and his culture represented. However, he found it upsetting that very few non-Mi'kmaw people took this course, and the ones who

did generally took it because they thought it would be an easy credit. Mi'kmaq

Studies 10 was the only course in school where he learned about residential

schooling.

At home, Augustus learned the language, learned about respect, and

learned how to mitigate the effects of racist attitudes. Augustus talked about the

stories he had heard about residential schools from his grandfather, a survivor of a

residential school in Nova Scotia. He talked about learning the Lord's Prayer

along with the Seven Sacred Teachings[15] at home. All these things had been

absent from his in-school learning outside of Mi'kmaq Studies 10. He recalled

one instance in Grade 8 where he had had a non-Mi'kmaw teacher who briefly

mentioned Aboriginal involvement in the war. Augustus appreciated this but

wished it had been elaborated on in greater detail. He also wished his teachers

had focused more on showing Aboriginal peoples historically as peacekeepers.

Augustus wished that more examples of racism would be taught in social studies

so "white people can begin to really understand the damage and the problem"

(Augustus, 365) and he wished for a greater focus on "how people used to stand

up" (Augustus, 370). I asked him why he thought this would be beneficial and he

said, "More awareness and information can't ever be a bad thing" (Augustus, 392-

393).

Augustus would also include more information about 'land' in social

studies courses so that other students could understand systems of land division in

Mi'kmaw culture. He would include more stories of centralization, why this

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[15] These are love, honesty, humility, respect, truth, patience and wisdom. Also
known as the Seven Sacred Gifts of Life (source: Albert & Murdena Marshall).

occurred, and how reserves came to exist. Overall, Augustus was satisfied with his Mi'kmaq Studies 10 course and had great respect for his teacher, Ms. K (a Mi'kmaw woman from Welte'temsi) but he wished teachers like Ms. K had taught all his courses so he could have felt more connected to his culture and history in school. Augustus told me that if he had to say where he had learned more about Mi'kmaw history, "it would definitely be home. My family is strong and proud and they make sure I know who I am and where I come from" (Augustus, 411-414). With a shy smile, Augustus asked if we were done. I assured him we were and thanked him for his time. He said he would send Kiptu upstairs and get his "brain ready for the sharing circle" (Augustus, 423).

Kiptu. As Kiptu joined me at the table I immediately noticed his t-shirt, which had a picture of a traditionally dressed Aboriginal man with the caption "Homeland Security: Fighting Terrorism since 1492." I complimented him on his attire and he said he "likes to keep it real" (Kiptu, 94). Kiptu was an 18-year-old male who had moved to Welte'temsi four years previously. He was currently finishing his Grade 12 year at East Coast High School, which "feels amazing" (Kiptu, 99). His future plans included heading to a nearby province to study cooking; he hoped to become famous as an Aboriginal chef. He found Bob Dylan to be an inspiring songwriter and storyteller in whose music he found comfort. He hoped someday to be a professional musician as well as a chef.

At the senior high level, Kiptu had taken Mi'kmaq Studies 10, a course which he found to be "a great review" (Kiptu, 116). He informed me that he knew his culture so he didn't really learn anything new in the Mi'kmaq Studies 10

course but was pleased to feel so connected to the topics in this course. He did not feel represented by the curriculum in his other courses. Despite this, he reported that he had enjoyed social studies, especially the geography aspects such as mapping and topography. I asked him what he thought of the textbooks that had been used in his social studies classes and he said his feelings towards the textbooks depended on where the texts had come from and when they were written. The textbooks he had used at East Coast High School to date had been extremely dated, often showcasing inaccurate information by leaving out the perspectives of marginalized groups. I asked him if he could recall a specific text that did this and he informed me that all of his texts in social studies had been this way but he could not recall any specific titles.

If Kiptu were to tell people the story of Canada's past based on what he had learned he school he would tell them that colonization was peaceful and beneficial to the Aboriginal population. However, if he were to tell people the story of Canada's past based on what he had learned at home he would tell them that "Europeans came from overseas to find land. They instead found different people. Unfortunately they carried disease but we helped them anyway and started trading with them until they got greedy and just took" (Kiptu, 173-176). The bulk of Kiptu's learning of Mi'kmaw history in school had come from his Mi'kmaq Studies 10 course, where he had learned about treaties, the importance of birthright and bloodlines, Mi'kmaw struggles, and physical geography important to the Mi'kmaq. At home, Kiptu had learned "language, myself, my people, my culture, great friends, great family … all of it … everything" (Kiptu,

294-297). Kiptu believes that his learning in school did not match up with his learning at home in that Mi'kmaw struggles had rarely been represented in the curriculum.

The stories Kiptu wished to see included in his social studies classes included more information on the uses of traditional medicines, hieroglyphs, Mi'kmaw music, language, art, poetry, and ceremonies such as sweat lodges. If he could design the curriculum he would include all of these things and focus on Mi'kmaw cultural protocols and friendship. Kiptu dealt with contradictory information by realizing there are always many sides to every story and independently seeking out the information that had not been presented. When he heard something in school, he went home and talked to friends and family members to find out more. Kiptu said that this happened a lot and when it did he made sure he was "never rude about it" (Kiptu, 341). He said, "I make an effort to teach the teachers and the students … if they are willing to listen" (Kiptu, 355-356). This marked the end of my individual conversation with Kiptu. He got up from the table and said he would send Alexandra upstairs.

Alexandra. Alexandra was a 16-year-old student in Grade 11 at East Coast High School. She hoped to attend university in Ontario when she graduated to study business and then eventually open her own boutique. The social studies courses Alexandra had taken were Mi'kmaq Studies 10, African Canadian Studies 11, and Grades 7, 8 and 9 social studies. Social studies was by no means her favourite subject but she did enjoy aspects of it, especially learning about people. The one thing she remembered most about her social studies education was

learning about racism and how people had historically been treated so badly. In studying African Canadian history in the African Canadian Studies 11 course she had been able to compare the experiences of African Canadians with the experiences of the Mi'kmaq and draw many parallels to inequitable treatment across the two cultural groups.

At times, Alexandra felt represented by the social studies curriculum but she doubted she would have felt represented at all if she had not taken Mi'kmaq Studies 10. She had found the textbooks to be uninteresting and disliked how her teachers used the texts, which was mainly to have students read parts of the text and then answer questions. Alexandra preferred to learn more orally and felt that by listening she could make more sense of her learning. She had learned about important historical events such as Confederation and found it fascinating to learn about Nunavut. She hoped one day to visit Nunavut to see it for herself. In school she had learned about residential schooling but this was limited to her Mi'kmaq Studies 10 course. Alexandra worried that students who did not take Mi'kmaq Studies 10 would graduate from high school without learning anything about residential schools. She believes residential schooling to be the most significant event affecting Aboriginal peoples in history (even more than initial European contact) and she wanted to see more coverage of it in all her social studies classes. She wondered why she seemed to have learned a lot about slavery but had heard nothing about residential schools. She remarked, "Aren't they pretty similar? I mean it's people forced to do stuff by white people and it's caused a lot of harm" (Alexandra, 214-216).

At home Alexandra had learned more Mi'kmaw history; her parents and grandparents had often talked about centralization policies and practices, stories of residential school survivors, treaty rights, and justice issues affecting the Mi'kmaq. Alexandra thought that if schools weren't teaching these topics in classes other than Mi'kmaq Studies 10 (which, in her opinion, is only taken by Mi'kmaw students at East Coast High School) then racism and misunderstandings would continue. She was shocked by the number of her peers who did not even know what residential schools were: "How do you get to high school without knowing that this happened in your own background? I mean, all of us here tonight have been affected by residential schools, it's part of us, it's — what's the word for it — … our … identity. You can't know us if you don't know that. [The non-Mi'kmaw students] don't seem to want to know it though" (Alexandra, 241-249). She liked to imagine what her school life would have been like if other students had understood issues of taxation, namely why and what it meant not to pay tax on reserve or what school would be like if powwows were respected instead of made fun of. These are all pieces that Alexandra would include if she were given the task of designing a new social studies curriculum.

Like Kiptu, Alexandra supplemented her in-school learning by asking questions of family and friends in her community. She found she was constantly "between two stories trying to figure out what really happened" (Alexandra, 271). Alexandra's phone rang at this point and she asked me if I would mind if she answered the call. I assured her it was fine and thanked her for taking the time to talk with me. She grinned and said she was looking forward to the circle talk and

warned me that I was going to hear a lot about being Mi'kmaq from a lot of strong Mi'kmaqs.

Helen. At 18 years old, Helen was the oldest of the five participants. She had graduated from East Coast High School in June of 2012. Helen had taken Canadian History 11, Mi'kmaq Studies 10, and Global History 12, along with Grades 7, 8, and 9 social studies. Helen was in her first year of an arts degree at the local university and was unsure of her plans upon finishing. She had just found out that week that she was 2 months pregnant so she was beginning to realize that her plans might need to shift. She was excited by this pregnancy and nervous about what the future might now hold for her but she said, "You can't quit your life; it's more motivation to do better" (Helen, 101). Overall, Helen enjoyed social studies, especially "learning different histories" (Helen, 110). She preferred the Global History course over the Canadian History course because she felt like there was "more going on in the world than just in Canada" (Helen, 123). She mentioned finding it hard to connect to Canadian history. I asked her to elaborate on this. She stated that Canadian history was not the history of her people that she knew; it was more generic, "almost cleaned up" (Helen, 128).

Helen recalled learning about the Holocaust in great detail in elementary and junior high school and had enjoyed studying people like Anne Frank. With a smirk she added: "Imagine if there was a diary like that from the residential schools" (Helen, 221). She disliked that her social studies courses all seemed to focus on the past with little attention paid to the present. She would like to have learned more about politics today and how European contact has shaped today's

society and changed systems of government for Aboriginal peoples. She found the textbooks she had used had covered very little in terms of Aboriginal peoples; they were rarely current and did not show Aboriginal perspectives. In some cases she found the textbooks did not show Aboriginal people in a positive light and wondered if this might change if Aboriginal people instead of non-Aboriginal people wrote the texts. She wished to see more information presented in schools on residential schooling and more importance placed on the damage done by European contact.

If Helen were to tell the story of Canada's past she would simply state that "white people came over, they shared stuff like blankets filled with disease and almost wiped out our people. Also, they weren't very nice, they took stuff and they took over and now they act like we're dumb and lazy" (Helen, 290-293). In her Mi'kmaq Studies 10 course she had learned about residential schools and the local effects of this. Most of her knowledge of Mi'kmaw history had come from school as her parents had rarely talked about this at home. Although she believes she had learned more about Mi'kmaw history at school, she said she had learned how to be Mi'kmaq at home. Helen informed me that the legacy of residential schooling has affected her household such that it was almost shameful to talk about Mi'kmaw history in her house. She believes her parents would prefer not to teach her these things because they worried she would somehow be penalized for "being too Mi'kmaq at school" (Helen, 323). Helen agreed with them to an extent in that she too worried that if she did not try to fit in with the non-Mi'kmaw students at school she would become an outcast. She had learned over the years

that others did not take Mi'kmaw history seriously and she deeply felt the effects

of racism directed towards Mi'kmaw people. I asked her to say more about this

and she told me that it's not always "in your face racism, it's the little digs or the

teachers thinking I'm not going to do good in their class because I'm Mi'kmaq or

I won't understand something because I'm Mi'kmaq … It's like they think we're

not as modern, [that] we still live outside and hunt for our dinners" (Helen, 352-

357).

If Helen were to create a social studies curriculum for students she would

make sure to include Mi'kmaw history taught by elders or Mi'kmaw teachers

rather than by non-Mi'kmaw teachers or mainstream textbooks. She found it

discouraging that non-Mi'kmaw teachers were taken more seriously, even by her

parents, as she did not believe that "your teaching is more accurate because you're

white … That's bullshit … My best teacher was Ms. K [Mi'kmaq Studies 10

teacher]. She's Mi'kmaq. She's the smartest person I have ever known but no

one seems to take her seriously or want to take her courses … besides the

Mi'kmaw kids, of course" (Helen, 381–388). Helen would make sure that

everyone knew the struggles and triumphs of Donald Marshall Jr. and she would

make sure everyone knew how reserves came to be by studying centralization.

She felt lucky to have learned some of the Mi'kmaw language from her elders

even though her parents disapproved of this. She wished that this was something

students, especially Mi'kmaw students, could learn at East Coast High School.

She talked about the shame around speaking the Mi'kmaw language and believes

that the only way around this is for the younger generation to learn it and begin working towards total language revitalization.

Group Sharing Circle

By the time I had finished the individual conversations with the participants two and a half hours had passed and I worried that there would not be time for the group sharing circle or that the participants would be tired or would have homework they needed to get to. I was preparing myself for trying to arrange another time to get together but when all five participants emerged from the basement they crowded around me and seemed eager to keep going. I asked them if they were okay to keep going and Beatrice practically shouted, "We have so much to tell you. Let's keep going. We're having fun. No one ever talks to us about this stuff" (Beatrice, 1076-1078). Thus began our sharing circle. I used the following questions to guide our conversation:

1) *What do you learn about being Mi'kmaq in your school? How do your teachers factor into this?*

2) *Should there be more Mi'kmaq in your social studies classes?*

3) *What do you think when you hear that Christopher Columbus discovered North America?*

4) *Did you learn anything about residential schools in your social studies class? If so, what? What did you learn at home about residential schools?*

5) *What did you learn about centralization in Nova Scotia in your social studies classes? What did you learn about centralization in Nova Scotia in your home or communities?*

6) *Do you learn about treaty rights in school? S hould every Mi'kmaw high school graduate know their treaties? Why or why not?*

As with the research with the participants from Ni'newey Community School, I chose to frame the questions for the sharing circle in ways that encouraged the participants to make decisions about their learning and the content found in their social studies classes. I wanted to know what they thought about certain issues. In the following sections I describe the participant responses from our discussion.

Participant descriptions of Welte'temsi and East Coast High School. As the participants looked at me eagerly I asked them to tell me about Welte'temsi. They looked at each other and smiled. Beatrice began by saying, "We have a lot to be proud of. Welte'temsi is amazing, actually" (Beatrice, 1094). Augustus jumped in and added, "We have a lot of land, we're getting a rink, we're pretty successful" (Augustus, 1100). Kiptu announced that Welte'temsi had won awards for community progress, though he was not sure which awards these were or where they were from. The participants talked about specific accomplishments that Welte'temsi had recently made. In keeping my promise to protect community anonymity within this research, I have chosen not to include this identifying information here.

In discussing East Coast High School the participants spoke positively about the increasing international population in the school. They saw the International Baccalaureate program as a valued aspect of the school, providing increased opportunities for university preparation. None of the participants were enrolled or planned to enroll in the International Baccalaureate program so I asked them why, if they felt it was such a great program, they were not enrolled. There

was a pause in the usually animated conversation as they exchanged glances.

Augustus replied, "It's not really for us, you know?" (Augustus, 1204). I

explained that I did not know what he meant and asked him to elaborate. He

looked down and as I scanned the room I could see that no one wanted to say

more about this. I paused briefly to see if anyone would elaborate. When they did

not, I let the subject drop and asked the students to tell me about their teachers.

The energy level seemed to shoot back up and Beatrice told me that "some

of them are alright" (Beatrice, 1456). Alexandra added, "It's just like a normal

high school. You like some [and] you don't like some" (Alexandra, 1466).

Augustus jumped in to say, "Some are strict [and] others just want to teach you.

Some teachers just do their job. Some like us, some don't" (Augustus, 1489). I

asked whether "us" meant students in general. Kiptu answered, "Native students.

Some teachers think we're smart enough and some don't" (Kiptu, 1499). The

other participants nodded in agreement. Helen reminded everyone about Ms. K,

their Mi'kmaq Studies 10 teacher, and said, "Tell her about Ms. K." (Helen,

1503). The participants all began to talk at once about their love for Ms. K.

Augustus said, "Everyone loves her [and] she loves us" (Augustus, 1510).

Beatrice added, "She connects with every student on a deeper level; she's there

for everyone" (Beatrice, 1515). Kiptu remarked, "She's like everyone's mom.

Even non-Native teachers go to her" (Kiptu, 1520). Alexandra said, "She's a real

native woman, she's very spiritual [and] that shows in her teaching. That's our

culture, that's our real culture, not just our history. Spirituality is so important"

(Alexandra, 1529-1532). All the participants murmured their agreement.

Alexandra then told a story about when she had told one of her non-Mi'kmaw teachers that she wanted to move to Toronto after graduation. His response had been to advise her to move to a First Nations community outside of Toronto. "He told me I should move to the reserve outside of Toronto because it's Six Nations or Four Nations or something and I was like, 'Why can't I just live in Toronto?'" (Alexandra, 1631–1635). The response from the participants after Alexandra shared her story was a mixture of disgust and contempt for this teacher. Kiptu added that some teachers only saw Mi'kmaq when they saw the participants. Helen interjected, saying, "Sure we're Mi'kmaq and we're proud of our culture but it's not all we are. We can be anything we want to be and should be allowed to" (Helen, 1652–1656). Augustus added "encouraged to" (Augustus, 1657). Beatrice patted Alexandra on the back and said, "You move to Toronto if you want to" (Beatrice, 1660).

Being Mi'kmaq and Mi'kmaw content in social studies. In reference to being a Mi'kmaw student at East Coast High School, Augustus said, "We don't pay taxes. That's all I hear" (Augustus, 1677). Helen groaned at this statement and Beatrice rolled her eyes. I asked what the response was when teachers overheard conversations about not paying taxes. Alexandra said, "Teachers just laugh when someone says something like that but Ms. K., she would talk about it with them and explain how it all ended up. She'd explain the politics. She is such an advocate for rights" (Alexandra, 1691-1695). Beatrice, Augustus, Kiptu, and Helen agreed with this.

Augustus then said, "Some teachers work hard at understanding Mi'kmaq, some are just meh [ambivalent], [and] some really care and try to learn Mi'kmaq" (Augustus, 1704-1706). Alexandra added, "My math teacher always tried to speak Mi'kmaq to me; we're like walking down the hall and he's saying hello in Mi'kmaq!" (Alexandra, 1713-1715). Beatrice noted that her non-Mi'kmaw English teacher had formed a close relationship with Ms. K, the sole Mi'kmaw teacher in the school, and "when his wife was sick he was practicing traditional stuff like going to sweat lodges to help her get well. He seemed to understand that white medicine wasn't working and he had enough respect to try traditional practices to help her get well … It changed him; he became more close to Mi'kmaw and he tried hard with us" (Beatrice, 1739-1748). All the participants considered this teacher's willingness to embrace Mi'kmaw views on healing as a compliment. Alexandra talked about the teachers who did not reach out or try to understand Mi'kmaw ways of being, saying, "The teachers who don't get it just don't care. They don't even try. They just expect us to be white" (Alexandra, 1824-1826). Augustus added, "I've told them this before: We don't have any goodbye in our language, it's 'see you again' but they still say goodbye and expect us to say goodbye" (Augustus, 1833–1836). Alexandra explained, "They really need to understand how the Aboriginal mind works to be able to teach us" (Alexandra, 1850).

Helen believes that there should be more Mi'kmaw in Social Studies courses and that the information should be updated. Beatrice added that her social studies teachers all relied on textbooks: "It's a lot of info written by non-natives.

They should have more stuff from the natives" (Beatrice, 1861). Alexandra

exclaimed, "They should include us more, celebrate us" (Alexandra, 1866). I

asked what she meant by this and she said, "You know how they have Black

History month? They don't do anything for Mi'kmaw History month and it just

doesn't seem like we're out there" (Alexandra, 1874-1881). Augustus added,

"Black History month … they have all the African Canadian students doing stuff

and having fun" (Augustus, 1888-1890). Kiptu immediately remarked, "We need

that for us. We could show things like powwows and make people understand"

(Kiptu, 1891-1892). Alexandra then said, "We need a presentation too but if it's

for the Mikmaw people, it's 'Okay! Come on class! I guess we're going on a field

trip'" (Alexandra, 1893-1895). Augustus said, "People would laugh at the

powwow though and they would skip class" (Augustus, 1899). Kiptu said, "Now

that, that would be offensive" (Kiptu, 1902). Beatrice pointed out that "they tried

to make everyone go to a sweat lodge once and non-natives got introduced to that

and it was a weird reaction. Ms. K. only tells people who might be interested

now" (Beatrice, 1911-1913). I asked what she meant by a weird reaction and

Augustus answered for her, saying, "You know, 'Oh great, a powwow, a bunch of

Indians dancing around' … like it's a free day and the other teachers were mad

because it took time away from their classes" (Augustus, 1920-1923). Alexandra

then said, "So now if they want to learn about native stuff they have to come to

the library at like lunch … so you know, not everyone learns it" (Alexandra,

1929–1932).

Augustus explained that with Welte'temsi becoming so much more connected to [the larger region] "native stuff is more known so they should teach more about it" (Augustus, 1940).   Helen commented, "I hated social studies most of the time because I had to hear stuff like 'Oh I want to be native. I don't want to pay taxes'" (Helen, 1951-1952). Augustus added, "We fought for that" (Augustus, 1953) and then Beatrice jumped in to say, "They don't get it. We have a really amazing culture" (Beatrice, 1954-1955). Alexandra reminded us that "we do sweats and stuff … It's really beautiful but all people see is we don't pay taxes [and have] free education. 'Oh I don't pay tax. Oh I get everything free'" (Alexandra, 1956-1960). At this point, Beatrice laughingly exclaimed, "A lot of people know about black people and African people but I travel a lot and this guy in Texas didn't even know about Aboriginal people. He thought we rode moose and lived in tipis. … Certain people from Europe are very interested in us, more than the people here in our own province" (Beatrice, 1962-1967). Alexandra cautioned, "Oh yeah, and Aboriginals outside of Canada, we don't hear about them either, like the Australian Aborigines and the Navajo and stuff" (Alexandra, 1970-1972). Beatrice agreed with this lack of knowledge surrounding other Aboriginal cultures and said, "When people think about our people they think we live in the woods. They talk about back in the day, not the present, so sometimes I tell people, 'You know Pocahontas, well that's me' and then I laugh" (Beatrice, 1977-1981).

Christopher Columbus' discovery of North America. When talking about Christopher Columbus' purported discovery of North America the

participants wondered why that story is still told. Alexandra laughingly said,

"Ummm … so where were the native people? They say in my class [African

Canadian Studies 11] that the Africans were the first people here and I'm like,

'Ahem, hello?' I refused to copy it down. Africans were not here first!"

(Alexandra, 2214). Helen added that "you can't correct them though. They just

roll their eyes and think, "Oh, here we go again'" (Helen, 2217-2219). I asked

who "they" referred to and she informed me that she meant the teachers and other

non-Mi'kmaw students. Kiptu said, "You can only push that agenda so far"

(Kiptu, 2231) and Augustus agreed, remarking, "It's too bad. They don't even

want to realize it or they do realize it and they just want their guy to be the hero,

the discoverer" (Augustus, 2232-2234).

　　　　Beatrice believes that more attention should be paid to the effects of

European contact. While she did not like the continual focus on Aboriginal

peoples being portrayed as historical figures she did believe that little had

changed since the days of contact so it was important for people to understand the

history in order to understand the present. When I asked her to say more about

this Helen jumped in to say, "It would help you understand treaties: why we have

them and why everyone keeps trying to take them away" (Helen, 2314). Kiptu

responded by saying, "It's not much different. The white man still brings us

smallpox wrapped up in a blanket. It's just in different forms … Like racism,

eventually that will kill our people too" (Kiptu, 2318–2322). Alexandra

exclaimed, "We're strong though, we are peaceful, but we aren't going to be

pushed around like before. Those treaties matter for a reason even if Mr. Harper

disagrees" (Alexandra, 2333-2334). Kiptu laughed and added, "The federal government – present day smallpox for natives" (Kiptu, 2335).

Residential schools. When I asked the participants what they felt they had learned about residential schools the response was a collective "not much." Helen said, "A little bit, when we have a Mi'kmaw teacher, … yes" (Helen, 2514). Augustus explained, "When we have to do projects, we chose to do [them] on native topics like residential schools" (Augustus, 2518-2519). I asked if these types of projects were received positively by their teachers and peers. He said, "It depends. Sometimes it's, 'Here we go again. They are still talking about this stuff. Just move on and get over it'" (Augustus 2524). Changing the topic slightly, Alexandra said that she had learned more at home about residential schooling and that "it was tough for families" (Alexandra, 2531). Beatrice interjected, "I learn about it from cultural camps and survivor stories … how it affected them" (Beatrice, 2533). Helen noted, "A lot of them turned to alcohol and drugs and that's why everyone thinks we're like that" (Helen, 2535). Beatrice continued, "But we really suffered. They don't understand where the drugs, alcohol and prostitution came from. Our people used to respect their bodies so much. It's just so different. This is the stuff we learn at home" (Beatrice, 2536-2539).

I mentioned to them that the Northwest Territories and Nunavut had just introduced a curriculum on residential schools. Kiptu said, "I heard that. It's a course in school on residential schools. It's hard to say if people would take it but it would be good to stop the racism and stuff. It should be in all the social studies

courses though, not just one course" (Kiptu, 2544-2548). Augustus jumped in to say that when he was presented with information on topics like the Holocaust in school he had made the connection to residential schools focused on how "the survivors silently acted out and tried to cope" (Augustus, 2550-2552). He went on to say, "You know, they [some Mi'kmaw students in residential schools] weren't really saying the Lord's Prayer. They were really telling them off" (Augustus, 2554–2556). Beatrice mentioned that she had learned from a survivor that students would be punished if they had to get up to go to the bathroom during the night and would up urinating in their beds. She said, "Some tried peeing out the windows and some would fall and they would die. We don't hear those stories in social studies" (Beatrice, 2561-2562). Alexandra added, "We don't really learn how awful it was to be Jews, how awful it was for Mi'kmaw people. It just wasn't in the social [studies] class stuff. I mean we kind of get the gist but they just say, 'Yeah it was bad and it was wrong'" (Alexandra, 2564-2570). Beatrice believes that stories from survivors could help people to learn about what really happened in concentration camps and residential schools. The other participants agreed and Beatrice added, "It's learning from the heart, you know. I talked about that before" (Beatrice, 2581). Helen then asked me if I knew about the "little girls being raped and stuff" (Helen, 2583). Augustus added, "And boys, boys were too" (Augustus, 2584). Alexandra interrupted to say, "There's a lot about the Holocaust [and] nothing about residential schools. Everyone loves learning about the Holocaust [but] they should know what happened in their own backyard" (Alexandra, 2585-2588). Beatrice added, "It's … closer than the

Holocaust. That was so long ago. Residential schools were still going 20 years ago. We know the people who went, we see what it did. It's awful for some of them and people need to see that. They need to know that" (Beatrice, 2589-2596). Judging by the body language of the participants I could sense that we were getting deep into an incredibly sensitive topic. Wanting to minimize any emotional risk to the participants I decided to see if I could shift the conversation a bit. Reflecting on this, I'm not sure if this was an appropriate time to move on to another topic. I am still unsure whether I should have continued this conversation.

Centralization policies in Nova Scotia. I asked if we could talk about centralization for a bit. The participants looked at each other and smiled. I could sense the mood begin to lighten. Augustus said, "You know our story right?" (Augustus, 2603). I asked him to tell me the story and he said, "They put us all in these communities. You know [Welte'temsi] used to be in [within the city limits of the larger urban area close to Welte'temsi]. They moved us up here" (Augustus, 2610-2612). Beatrice explained, "We started with like 5 acres and really built it up" (Beatrice, 2613). Helen interjected, "We have so many issues with land rights though. They try to say that native land wasn't native land" (Helen, 2615-2617). The participants knew the stories of centralization from growing up in Welte'temsi and claimed that they had not learned about centralization in school outside of their Mi'kmaq Studies 10 course with Ms. K.

The participants believes that all students should be educated on centralization policies and practices. They worried that non-Mi'kmaw students

might never learn how Welte'temsi came to be and why. According to the participants, it was important for non-Mi'kmaw students to learn about centralization because it was a significant part of Mi'kmaw history in Nova Scotia. It would help these students to understand that Welte'temsi had started as a small re-located community and had worked hard to build the community into what it had become. The participants talked about commonly-known specific issues related to Welte'temsi's relocation under the centralization policies but because discussing these issues within this dissertation would endanger anonymity I have chosen not to include this piece of our conversation.

Mi'kmaw treaty rights. When I asked what the students had learned about treaty rights in school Alexandra remarked, "We didn't learn anything. It definitely should be something we learn in school" (Alexandra, 2941-2943). Beatrice added, "Every Mi'kmaw graduate should know their treaties" (Beatrice, 2945) and Augustus quickly piped up to say, "Every *graduate* should know Mi'kmaw treaties" (Augustus, 2946). I asked why he believed every graduate should know about treaties and he said that this would be a key strategy in reducing racism. Kiptu suggested that every high school graduate should be able to "pass a test on treaties" (Kiptu, 2952). Treaties were important to these participants because they highlight collective Aboriginal rights around fishing, hunting, taxation, and education. As they expressed earlier and reiterated here, the misconceptions around taxation were a significant concern for these participants. They believe that being educated on treaties would help to

discourage what they perceived as constant comments from non-Aboriginal people about Mi'kmaw people not having to pay taxes.

I asked the participants what their general thoughts were on their social studies education, particularly Canadian history education. Beatrice instructed me to "tell people [not to] focus so much on the past. Focus on the future. It's important to know what's going on the Aboriginal communities now and how we got to where we are now" (Beatrice, 3106). Helen brought up the story of Donald Marshall Jr. and claimed that "people don't understand that story and they should" (Helen, 3114). Alexandra exclaimed, "I want to learn about other Aboriginals in the world – like different tribes, their culture, their traditions. All Aboriginals aren't the same" (Alexandra, 3121-3123). Beatrice added, "Back in the day all the tribes were against each other but now we're all working together, trying to make things better" (Beatrice, 3130-3132). Augustus said he was tired of the teaching approach that lumps all Aboriginal cultures into one or makes claims about Aboriginal culture. He explained, "You know, like, Aboriginal people are this or that. I also think there should be more good things about the Aboriginal people too" (Augustus, 3141-3143).

Kiptu wanted to see a greater focus on the Seven Sacred Teachings and "stuff about healing" (Kiptu, 3157). Helen added, "Yeah, and progress, sweatlodges, teepees and all that stuff" (Helen, 3158-3159). Augustus said, "You know, I want to be Chief. My grandfather was Chief at 22 years old … I'm going to make everyone proud. I'm going to do good. I'm going to be Chief and I'm going to change things" (Augustus, 3160-3165). Beatrice jokingly threatened

Augustus, saying that she too came from a long line of Chiefs and that she also

planned to run for Chief so he had better watch his back. The participants

laughed and the conversation shifted to a discussion of whose families were

connected in Welte'temsi.

At this point a friend of the participants who was playing Wii in the

basement popped upstairs and asked us how things were going. He had heard the

laughter from downstairs and wanted in on the fun. I took this as my cue to thank

the participants for their time and promised to be in touch for a follow-up

conversation.

Second Individual Conversation

I checked in with each participant and asked them the following questions:

4) *How did you feel after the focus group conversation?*

5) *Is there anything you would like to add?*

6) *Is there anything you would like to discuss?*

None of the participants felt that they had anything to add so we spoke

briefly about the research conversations. All participants felt that they had

contributed their knowledge and thoughts as best they could. They expressed

excitement that other people might read their words and begin to understand their

experiences as Mi'kmaw youth attending a provincial school. When asked how

they felt about the focus group conversation, all participants said that they had

enjoyed talking as a group and being able to discuss their ideas in a larger setting.

While they had enjoyed the individual conversations, they found the group

sharing circle to be more beneficial than the individual conversations because they had been able to play off of each other's ideas.

Analysis

This section outlines the different phases of my analysis of the individual conversations and the group sharing circle conversation with the participants from Welte'temsi, attending East Coast High School. I used the First Nations Holistic Lifelong Learning model (CCL, 2007) and Schwab's (1978) four commonplaces of curriculum. To reiterate, the First Nations Holistic Lifelong Learning model looks deeper into the learning rings of the individual. Within this analysis I have focused on the core of the tree to highlight the participants' connections to mental, emotional, spiritual, and physical development and well-being. This is the diagram of the model:
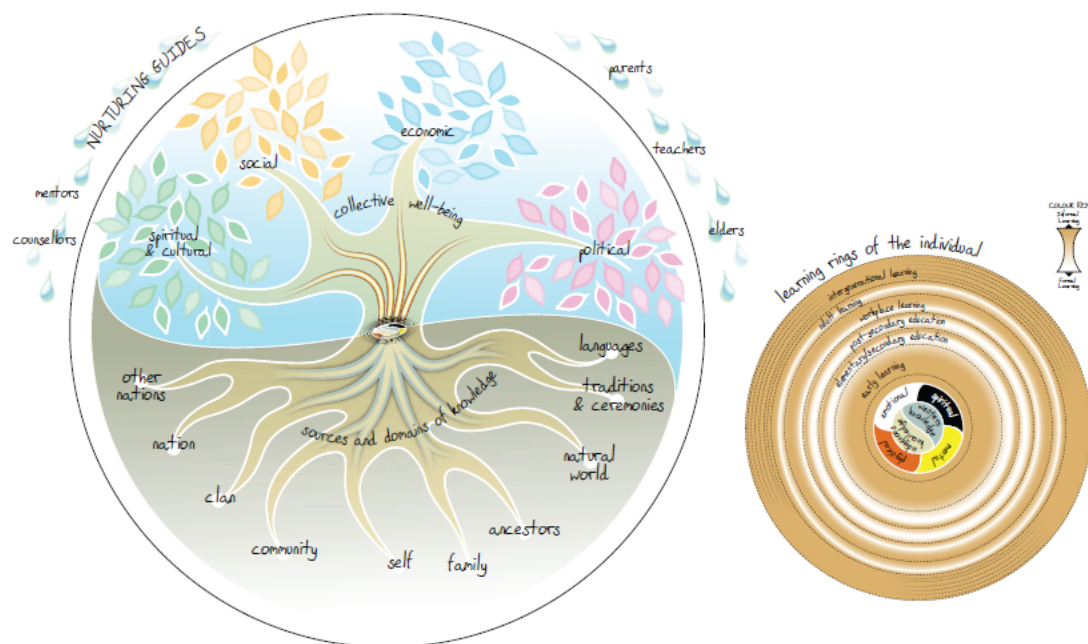
Schwab outlines four commonplaces of curriculum that are integral to curriculum development. These commonplaces are teacher, student, subject matter, and milieu. Within each First Nations Holistic Lifelong Learning model theme, I looked for the connections to these four commonplaces and grouped the data into relevant sub-themes.

Mental development and well-being. Under the theme of mental development and well-being I scanned the transcripts for utterances related to thinking, idea-formation, interpreting, contemplating, pondering, mediating, considering, regarding, conceiving, and imagining. Throughout the transcripts of participant conversations I found numerous examples of mental development and well-being. Aligning this theme with Schwab's (1978) four commonplaces of curriculum, I outlined the connections between teacher, students, subject matter, milieu, and mental well-being and development. Schwab's (1978) four commonplaces of curriculum did not always work in harmony for these participants in terms of mental development and well-being. I have grouped this analysis into relevant sub-themes that emerged from the data. These themes are: resolving tensions and seeking connections between 'official' and 'personal' narratives and issues around racism.

Resolving tensions and seeking connections between 'official' and 'personal' narratives. The social studies subject matter was mostly interesting to the participants but it was often problematic in that it did not make apparent connections between Mi'kmaw issues and global issues affecting other cultural groups. The participants dealt with this by creating these connections on their

own. The outdated textbooks and lack of information surrounding topics like

residential schools, centralization, treaties, and treaty rights required participants

to form ideas around how these topics related to other issues presented. This

seemed to be beneficial in developing a critical approach to learning social

studies. The participants' ability and willingness to make connections to their

own history and culture was key for these participants in understanding the

presented material. It is clear to me that the participants worked hard to protect

and develop their mental well-being by interpreting, contemplating, questioning,

conceiving, and imagining how the content they were being presented with fit

with their existing knowledge.

I observed that all participants demonstrated critical thinking and a critical

literacy approach to learning social studies content. Beatrice emphasized this

when she connected stories of Black Loyalists to Mi'kmaw survival in Nova

Scotia, stories of slavery to residential schooling practices, and stories of civil

rights leaders to local First Nations activists like Donald Marshall Jr. In an

attempt to relate to the material she was learning, Beatrice made connections on

her own to narratives with which she could identify. Like Beatrice, Augustus

made connections on his own, such as relating his learning about Martin Luther

King Jr. to his knowledge of and connection to Donald Marshall Jr. Like Beatrice

and Augustus, Kiptu made his own connections to his cultural narratives when

learning content in social studies, but he made a point of telling me that he

actively seeks out "other sides of the story" (Kiptu, 357). Kiptu took an active

role in his learning by seeking out family and friends and attempting to be

critically literate around the content that was presented. Alexandra had enjoyed her social studies experiences and remained curious about her learning, consistently seeking out additional knowledge on topics that interested her. She claimed that residential schooling was the most significant event affecting Aboriginal peoples. Like Beatrice, Augustus, and Kiptu, Alexandra used her knowledge of residential schooling to help her understand African Canadian issues such as slavery. Believing herself to be "constantly between two stories trying to figure out what really happened" (Alexandra, 271), Alexandra demonstrated a critical approach to her learning and thereby fostered positive mental development and well-being, taking an active role in understanding the content that was presented to her. Alexandra expressed a desire to learn more about Aboriginal peoples and issues across the world. The other participants supported and demonstrated interest in this.

The participants took an active role in their learning, seeking out additional information and questioning the content that was being presented. However, they did not always voice these questions aloud. It was evident to me that they worked hard to protect their learning and make sense of the curriculum using their prior knowledge, experiences, and community connectedness. The milieu of East Coast High School did not seem to affect the mental development and well-being of the participants in a considerable way except that they did not feel comfortable asking questions in class about what they perceived as inaccurate information. To mitigate this, the participants asked questions of family, friends, and community members and attended events such as cultural camps to help them

learn more about Mi'kmaw history and culture. In these cases, the milieu of the Welte'temsi First Nation was helpful in developing mental well-being for these participants by providing connections and counter-narratives with which they could identify.

The participants also expressed issues around historical accuracy within this sub-theme. Helen believes her learning in Canadian history had been "cleaned up" (Helen, 128) and presented in a more generic form that did not align with her previous knowledge. She showed a strong interest in politics and Aboriginal systems of government and had a strong desire to see texts written by Aboriginal people, showcasing Aboriginal perspectives. She wanted to see Mi'kmaw history taken more seriously by others and taught by community Elders and Mi'kmaw teachers. She explained feeling discouraged by negative views held towards Mi'kmaw teachers, labeling these teachers as not as "accurate" (Helen, 390) as their non-Mi'kmaw counterparts. According to Helen, a shift in attitude might result in more non-Mi'kmaw students enrolling in courses focusing on Mi'kmaw history and culture. Both Beatrice and Helen believe that because their teachers relied heavily on textbooks in their social studies classes, the textbook information should be updated to reflect Aboriginal voices.

Alexandra also struggled with content presented in her African Canadian Studies 11 course around the first peoples of Nova Scotia, specifically the claim that African people occupied the land in Nova Scotia before the Mi'kmaw people arrived. In response to this contradiction, she simply refused to copy down the information but did not speak out in her class. Helen believes that students and

teachers would not appreciate being corrected on issues like this. Kiptu also found it problematic to bring up contradictions or counter-narratives, remarking that "you can only push that agenda so far" (Kiptu, 2231).

Issues around racism. There were instances of racism depicted by the participants throughout our conversations. For example, Augustus made claims as to why he believes Mi'kmaw content had largely been left out of his social studies classes outside of Mi'kmaq Studies 10; he believes racist attitudes towards Mi'kmaw people and communities were responsible. He believes that with more awareness around Mi'kmaw culture these attitudes could be diminished. Alexandra thought that Mi'kmaw content needed to be taught outside of Mi'kmaq Studies 10 to expose a wider range of students at East Coast High School. She believes that to understand and relate to the identities of Mi'kmaw learners, one must understand the legacy of Residential Schooling and issues of treaty implementation and justification. Augustus believes that presenting information on topics such as Christopher Columbus discovering North America stemmed from an unwillingness to give up credit for land discovery or refusing to acknowledge rightful land claims belonging to Aboriginal peoples. Beatrice believes that more attention being paid to the effects and legacy of European contact would help others understand present-day and past issues, specifically around treaties.

All participants expressed a great desire for more awareness and information around Mi'kmaw culture, history, and present-day contributions in the hopes that this might end racist attitudes they believes were currently held by

some non-Mi'kmaw people. According to the students, the teachers were sometimes problematic in terms of the development of these participants' mental well-being. Ms. K, the only Mi'kmaw teacher at East Coast High School, was held in high esteem but the participants did not view the non-Mi'kmaw teachers so positively. The participants did not always connect with their teachers. They believes that non-Mi'kmaw teachers saw Mi'kmaw students differently and held them to a lower standard. It was extremely problematic for these participants that teachers did not give the participants' cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986) very much weight.

Emotional development and well-being. Under the theme of emotional development and well-being I scanned the transcripts for utterances relating to enjoyment, empathy, excitement, sentiment, sympathy, sensitivity, tenderness, moods, and emotion. Throughout the transcripts I found areas of empowerment and ambition as well as quite a few areas of struggle. This theme was the most apparent when I was coding the transcripts and scanning for utterances. The theme of emotional development and well-being was clearly represented by participants in my conversations with them. This is the dominant theme emerging from the core of the tree (First Nations Holistic Lifelong Learning Model, CCL, 2007). I found that all of Schwab's (1978) four commonplaces of curriculum (teacher, student, subject matter, and milieu) as they pertain to emotional development and well-being were represented in our conversations. As with other themes, various sub-themes emerged while I was analyzing the data. These sub-themes consist of: stereotyping/misunderstandings and racism; issues around

subject matter; participant perceptions of teachers' attitudes and differences between milieus.

Stereotyping/misunderstandings and racism. The participants had worked hard to protect their emotional well-being and development by remaining positive and hopeful. They expressed hope for change around issues such as racism, misconceptions, and stereotypes surrounding their culture. They protected themselves by speaking out only when they felt they were in a safe place. They remained strongly committed to success despite some misguided notions they had heard from others concerning their ability to live outside of First Nations communities or to understand material presented in class. The participants were sensitive to stereotypical understandings of Mi'kmaw culture and contradictory material presented in their courses but did their best to educate people when they felt it was safe to do so. Overall, as students, the participants appeared to be self-aware, capable of deeply feeling and responding to issues of inequity and inequality.

Augustus expressed an emotional reaction to what he felt were commonly-held beliefs about Mi'kmaw people, showing a sensitivity towards stereotypical depictions of Aboriginal people and making a point to refute these during our discussion. He showed interest in promoting awareness in all social studies courses of issues and historical narratives taught in the Mi'kmaq Studies 10 course. Augustus voiced a strong desire to eliminate racist attitudes towards Mi'kmaw people and believes that information and awareness were key in addressing this problem.

Alexandra enjoyed aspects of social studies such as learning about people. She was thankful to have learned about historical accounts of racism. This helped her to make connections to her own experiences, such as drawing parallels to the African Canadian experience in Canada. Alexandra demonstrated an emotional reaction when she discussed misconceptions around taxation and the lack of respect given to traditional gatherings such as powwows and sweat lodges. Misconceptions and misinformation surrounding treaty issues were a significant problem for the participants, as were the negative reactions from students and teachers when the participants tried to educate others on issues or raise awareness.

The milieu inspired both negative and positive reactions from participants. They considered East Coast High School to foster elements of racism and stereotypes and they felt left out and not represented. The lack of celebrations around Mi'kmaw history month was problematic for the participants. They wondered why their culture was not as celebrated within the school as African Canadian culture seemed to be. The participants discussed how there were numerous events connected to Black History Month at East Coast High School that promoted student involvement. No events were connected to Mi'kmaw History Month and so the participants felt left out and ignored. Helen discussed feelings of shame, specifically referring to the Mi'kmaw and history. Her parents worried that Helen would be seen as "too Mi'kmaq at school" (Helen, 323) and Helen shared this worry. She discussed the risk of becoming an outcast by not fitting in with the non-Mi'kmaw students at East Coast High School and she deeply felt the lack of respect for Mi'kmaw history.

On the other hand, the participants considered the milieu of Welte'temsi to be a positive environment. They expressed being able to talk with family, friends, and community members about narratives found in school that they deemed to be problematic or unsettling. It was clear to me that strong ties to the Welte'temsi community assisted these participants in remaining hopeful, confident, and positive about their learning and their futures.

Issues around subject matter. The subject matter at times caused the participants to feel left out. When they had to make connections to their history on their own they were left wondering why these topics had not been included in the curriculum in the first place. They were frustrated by the lack of understanding around Mi'kmaw history and issues and were offended by the lack of respect towards Mi'kmaw traditions and cultural practices. The role of Mi'kmaq Studies 10 was perceived by the participants as very important in raising awareness of Mi'kmaw history and culture. Augustus wished that Ms. K would have had more teaching opportunities outside of Mi'kmaq Studies 10 because he had experienced more connection to his Mi'kmaw history and culture through her teaching. Alexandra believes that she would not have felt represented in the curriculum without having taken the Mi'kmaq Studies 10 course. The subject matter in Mi'kmaq Studies 10 allowed the participants to feel connected and represented in the curriculum; participants wished to see these course elements in their other social studies courses.

Kiptu felt extremely connected to the topics covered in Mi'kmaq Studies 10 but this was not the case for the other social studies courses he had taken. He

did enjoy the geographical aspects of social studies, such as topography and mapping. Kiptu believes in speaking up about issues that he found contradictory after gathering more information but he was careful to maintain a respectful attitude and demeanour when approaching these topics. He expressed a dislike for the textbooks used in his social studies classes, which he believes were outdated and lacking in Aboriginal perspectives. Alexandra also expressed a dislike for the textbooks and their uses in her social studies courses.

Alexandra seemed to display an emotional reaction when she questioned her lack of learning around residential schooling in comparison to the curricular focus on slavery. She was upset by non-Mi'kmaw students' lack of interest in the topic of residential schooling and was angry that students could get to high school without knowing what residential schools are. For Alexandra, residential schooling formed a piece of her identity. Without any real understanding around this topic she felt no one could understand who she was. The participants further expressed emotion when they discussed issues around the legacy of residential schooling, referring to the effects of residential schooling practices on individuals, families, and communities, highlighting the suffering for those involved. These participants were genuinely concerned that non-Mi'kmaw students were not gaining enough awareness and information on Mi'kmaw history and culture to understand traditional practices, spiritual beliefs, treaty rights, and historic and present-day struggles and triumphs. I elaborate on this in the recommendations from participants section at the end of this chapter.

Participant perceptions of teachers' attitudes. In talking about their teachers, the participants remarked that they liked some of them and did not like some of them. There seemed to be a correlation between how well they liked their teachers and how well the teachers liked them as students. Kiptu explained that some teachers viewed Mi'kmaw students as "smart enough" (Kiptu, 1499) and some did not. Helen felt that some of her teachers believes that she would not do as well in their classes or understand the material because she was Mi'kmaq. She talked about the lack of respect she felt was often given to Mi'kmaw teachers and she wished more elements of Mi'kmaw history and culture had been present in her social studies courses.

All the participants expressed great love for Ms. K, their Mi'kmaq Studies 10 teacher and the sole Mi'kmaw teacher at East Coast High School. The participants felt their love for Ms. K was reciprocated and were comforted by her ability to connect with students on a deep level and her willingness to stand up for Mi'kmaw students. The participants appreciated Ms. K's willingness to arrange learning experiences to promote awareness of Mi'kmaw culture as well as her decision to invite only interested parties to cultural events after negative responses by non-Mi'kmaw students to events like sweat lodges. For the participants this was both good and bad; non-Mi'kmaw students were not exposed to Mi'kmaw history and culture but offensive reactions to history and culture were mitigated through selective invitations to participate. The commonplace of teacher was evident in discussions around how the participants felt their teachers promoted or inhibited their emotional development and well-being. According to the

participants, some, but not all, teachers were well-respected and held high standards for Mi'kmaw students.

The participants held a positive view of the teachers who took time to engage with the participants, learn Mi'kmaw words or phrases, or take an interest in Mi'kmaw spirituality or traditional practices. Conversely, they had a negative view of the teachers who did not understand general Aboriginal culture or specific Mi'kmaw issues and did not inspire student voices. The one teacher everyone could all agree on was Ms. K, who participants described as "like everyone's mom." Ms. K's ability to challenge stereotypical or offensive notions around Mi'kmaw culture or history showed a deep level of care for the participants as individuals. The participants felt that Ms. K loved them. They said they could trust Ms. K and could go to her for whatever they needed in school. The participants described her as a strong Mi'kmaw advocate and defender of rights. It seems that the participants also viewed her in a protective role, safeguarding the sacredness of their traditions and culture by allowing only those who showed genuine interest in the topics to attend information and awareness events put on at the school. By doing this, Ms. K had helped to avoid negative or offensive reactions to things like sweat lodges and powwows, allowing participants to enjoy their experience fully.

Differences between milieus. Beatrice wished schools would allow students to hear firsthand the stories and experiences of people like Donald Marshall, Jr. She seemed to feel that hearing the stories orally told by a Mi'kmaw person would allow for more empathy and sensitivity from the listener and

prevent misunderstandings and misinformation. She had connected more with her learning at home because she felt that this learning "came from the heart" (Beatrice, 194) and she could witness the emotion in the storyteller when the stories were shared. Kiptu discussed his strong ties to his at-home learning, believing this to be the place where he learned "all of it, everything" (Kiptu, 297).

Spiritual development and well-being. Under the theme of spiritual development and well-being I scanned the transcripts for utterances relating to confidence, respect, love, humility, sensitivity, caring, awareness, enjoyment, happiness, hope, and expressing a connectedness to Mi'kmaw culture. Turning to Schwab's (1978) four commonplaces of curriculum (teacher, student, subject matter, and milieu) I see elements of all these themes for the participants when looking at spirituality.

Connections between home and school. The larger milieu of Welte'temsi, representing the homes and community of the participants, was where they made sense of contradictory information and connected with their history and culture. Beatrice outlined her experiences attending cultural camps and events across the province to learn more about her culture; her favourite thing to do was to attend sweat lodges. She felt that prior to taking Mi'kmaq Studies 10 she had had a firm grounding in the content of the course and described herself as feeling connected to her Mi'kmaw roots. It was through this connectedness that she was able to make links between content she learned in social studies and her own experiences as a Mi'kmaw person. Beatrice was interested in local stories of Mi'kmaw advocacy and wished more people had been brought in to her courses

to discuss issues around treaty rights and residential schooling. Beatrice believes that her learning at home outweighed her learning in school because she had been able to connect with the storyteller and witness the emotions involved in sharing the experience. She was deeply concerned by language loss and she advocated for a strong connection to culture for Mi'kmaw students.

Augustus, who hoped to become Chief of Welte'temsi, came from a self-described strong, proud Mi'kmaw family, who always made sure he knew who he was and where he had come from. Like other participants, Augustus connected stories from his social studies classes to his understanding of Mi'kmaw history, linking people like Martin Luther King Jr. to Donald Marshall Jr. He took great pride in his culture and was an advocate for equal and equitable treatment. He believes that by holding onto traditional beliefs and teachings, Mi'kmaw people could become more connected to their surroundings. He believes the spiritual aspect of Mi'kmaw culture was important and wished everyone had the opportunity to learn more about it. He also wished he had learned more about Mi'kmaw spirituality in his social studies classes beyond Mi'kmaq Studies 10.

Kiptu had learned elements of spirituality at home and felt that he had entered Mi'kmaq Studies 10 with a strong grounding in Mi'kmaw culture and history. He advocated for examples of traditional medicines, heteroglyphs, Mi'kmaw music, art, poetry, language, and ceremonies such as sweat lodges to be included in the social studies curriculum. Alexandra, like Beatrice, connected more with her learning when she had the opportunity to learn orally. She believes that Mi'kmaw history was strongly connected to Mi'kmaw identity and believes

that in order for others to understand her they must understand her cultural background. Like Augustus, Kiptu, and Beatrice, Alexandra went to family and friends to supplement her in-school learning. Helen believes that learners would benefit both from paying more attention to present-day Aboriginal issues and systems of government as well as from using textbooks written by Aboriginal people. The majority of her learning about Mi'kmaw history had come from her Mi'kmaq Studies 10 course, as this was rarely talked about in her home. While Helen felt that she did not learn *about* Mi'kmaw history from her parents, she learned how to *be* Mi'kmaw at home. Helen had learned some Mi'kmaw language from Elders in her community and expressed the importance of Mi'kmaw language revitalization. She believes this could be accomplished by engaging the younger generation in learning the language.

The role of the teachers. The participants talked about their great connections with their Mi'kmaq Studies 10 teacher, Ms. K, proudly speaking about her spiritual nature and its importance to their education. They were impressed with her willingness to help another teacher in need and the willingness of the other teacher to seek out Ms. K for help. Some teachers had been able to foster elements of spiritual development and well-being in the participants. This was largely limited to their Mi'kmaq Studies 10 teacher, Ms. K., but the participants did express a fondness for another teacher at East Coast High School who had made the effort to greet them in Mi'kmaq and tried to learn Mi'kmaw words. The participants also showed respect for the teacher who sought out Ms. K for help with traditional Mi'kmaw healing practices when his wife was ill.

While our conversations did not contain many instances of teachers fostering spiritual development and well-being, the participants clearly valued and respected the consistent work of Ms. K. Her desire to connect with students on a deeper level, her work to provide information and awareness on Mi'kmaw culture, and her ability to protect this information and awareness from students who may not be respectful can be seen as encouraging connectedness to spiritual elements of Mi'kmaw culture.

Issues around racism, misconceptions, and feeling like outcasts. The milieu of East Coast High School was problematic for the participants in terms of their spiritual development and well-being. The participants' claims of racist attitudes towards Mi'kmaw culture highlighted a hindrance to their spiritual development and well-being. These attitudes did little to instill a sense of pride in their culture and resulted in a lack of information and awareness around Mi'kmaw culture and traditions within the school. The participants showed respect and connectedness to their culture but also demonstrated protectiveness when talking about traditional ceremonies and practices. While the participants wanted non-Mi'kmaw students to understand more about these things, they worried that this exposure could lead to ridicule. There were both positive and negative elements for these participants in showcasing elements of their culture to non-Mi'kmaw people. Overall, the participants showed that they welcomed the opportunity to provide more information and awareness and wished to be celebrated more at East Coast High School.

Sense of pride and connectedness to culture. The students worked to protect their spiritual development and well-being by consistently questioning their learning in school, cross-referencing the content with narratives from home and in the community. Their desire to see things like powwows and sweat lodges present in schools, along with increased information and awareness around Mi'kmaw culture was a direct reflection of their connectedness to their Mi'kmaw culture. Recommendations from participants focusing on teaching topics like the Seven Sacred Teachings, treaties, residential schooling, centralization, and traditional healing methods and ceremonies showed a spiritual connection to Mi'kmaw culture and highlighted the desire to engage others. In addition to feeling connected to and proud of his Mi'kmaw culture, Kiptu cautioned that being Mi'kmaw should not be viewed as limiting. In defining his identity, he said he was more than just his Mi'kmaw culture.

The subject matter in Mi'kmaq Studies 10 allowed participants to engage in spiritual development and well-being by focusing on cultural aspects, protocols, and traditions and by fostering a strong connection to culture. The Mi'kmaq Studies 10 course can be seen as having inspired pride and confidence in the participants. However, the content in other social studies courses does not appear to have done the same. The lack of Mi'kmaw perspectives and content was problematic for the participants because it did not directly engage them in fostering a connectedness to spirituality. The participants fostered their own spiritual development and well-being by making connections to Mi'kmaw culture and traditions external to the content they were presented with. The participants

felt proud of their community and spoke repeatedly about its success, mostly in terms of economic progress.

Physical development and well-being. Under the theme of physical development and well-being I scanned the transcripts for utterances relating to drawing, creating, acting, dramatizing, moving, travelling, imitating, building, grouping, telling, and presenting. This theme proved to be a bit more difficult in terms of analysis as physical development and experiences with social studies do not easily go hand-in-hand. I chose to broaden my focus for this section to highlight the physical manifestations of well-being that the participants exhibited during our conversations. It was hard to find connections to this theme within the transcripts.

The participants did not express examples of craftsmanship, games, construction, and physical settings. They did, however, give multiple examples of connecting information, as shown within the previous three themes. I see this as being a manifestation of physical development and well-being through examples of participation, advocacy, and action. The participants showed evidence of participation in their willingness to explore subject matter outside of the prescribed curriculum. Beatrice's attendance at cultural camps across the province also showed evidence of participation and action. The participants in this study detailed numerous recommendations but did not show evidence of action when it came to changing their educational experiences. Most felt uncomfortable speaking up in front of other students and teachers.

The participants did not necessarily work to protect or enhance their physical development and well-being in any concrete way, with the exception of telling and presenting. I found some examples of the participants educating other students and teachers but this was not a common theme in the transcripts. Most expressed that they remained quiet when presented with contradictory narratives. However, they did show evidence of choosing to research Mi'kmaw issues and present these to classmates. I did not find significant evidence of the teachers, with the exception of Ms. K., working to help the participants develop and maintain physical well-being. Ms. K offered opportunities for travel to powwows and sweat lodges, which are both key to maintaining and protecting physical development, but this was not a common occurrence in classes other than Mi'kmaq Studies 10.

The subject matter, with its lack of focus on traditional ceremonies, practices, and games, also did little to enhance the participants' physical development and well-being. The participants did not feel that they were given opportunities within the curriculum, outside of Mi'kmaq Studies 10, to work on areas such as drawing, creating, acting, dramatizing, moving, travelling, imitating, building, grouping, telling, and presenting. This is not to say that these elements were not presented in their other courses. We did not discuss the other courses so it is not possible for me to determine whether or not this was evident in their other social studies courses, outside of being given the choice of topic for presentations (residential schooling, etc.).

According to the participant transcripts, the milieu of East Coast High School did little to enhance the development of their physical well-being. The participants felt that they had often been left out of school-wide events and celebrations because there were no celebrations of their Mi'kmaw culture. Perhaps if Mi'kmaw History month or other events had been encouraged at the school, the participants would have been able to engage in aspects of physical development such as craftsmanship, construction, and games. A possible example of this could be if during a Mi'kmaw cultural celebration the participants had been able to teach others how to play a traditional Mi'kmaw game such as Waltes or how to perform traditional Mi'kmaw dances. A celebration of culture where the Mi'kmaw participants could take ownership would have helped them to work on physical development and well-being. It should also be noted that students at East Coast High School did not have a school-sanctioned opportunity to attend the Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearings. The milieu of Welte'temsi seems to have allowed participants to enhance their physical development and well-being by encouraging the participants to attend sweat lodges and powwows. I found it interesting that Beatrice, when discussing respect for the body, mentioned the differences between past and present practices, believing her ancestors to have been more focused on protecting and taking good care of the body, viewing it as sacred. According to Beatrice, drug and alcohol use and abuse, along with prostitution were a direct result of years of suffering for Mi'kmaw people. This seems like an important consideration under the theme of physical development and well-being. Teaching about past practices

of respecting the self could be intregrated into social studies curriculum, keeping in line with the approach that social studies should teach *for* First Nations issues, rather than *about* (Orr, 2004).

Analysis summary. Throughout each theme I found evidence of the four commonplaces of curriculum (teacher, student, subject matter, and milieu). However, these did not always work together the way Schwab (1978) intended them to. Using the four commonplaces to advise curriculum development, Schwab emphasized that no one commonplace should be privileged or neglected within this process. In thinking about the participants' experiences from a curriculum development perspective, there were some gaps. Within all four themes of mental, emotional, spiritual and physical development and well-being, the participants expressed a disconnect in terms of the teacher commonplace. Ms. K was the only teacher who helped the participants to foster their development in these four areas. The subject matter did not always provide the participants with opportunities for mental, emotional, spiritual, and physical development. The participants expressed a disconnect with the curriculum when it came to the mental theme because they had to seek out additional information. On the other hand, the gaps in the subject matter encouraged the participants to think more deeply and critically about what they were learning and why. The subject matter, through omissions and inconsistencies in the content, provoked an emotional reaction from the participants. Although I initially believed that the subject matter did not assist participants with emotional development and well-being, I am beginning to see that the participants' negative responses to the subject matter

in fact gave them more opportunities to express emotion in their learning. The subject matter in only one course, Mi'kmaq Studies 10, allowed the participants to learn spiritually and feel connected to their learning. Based on our discussions, the subject matter did not encourage the participants' physical development and well-being.

The participants were able to connect to each area of development and work to foster well-being in all themes of the First Nations Holistic Lifelong Learning Model (CCL, 2007). The milieu of Welte'temsi ensured development and well-being across the four theme areas. By contrast, East Coast High School did not foster positive development in those same areas. For example, East Coast High School did not appear to foster development and well-being for the physical theme, as it provided few opportunities for movement and visual representation, while the milieu of Welte'temsi encouraged this.

The First Nations Holistic Lifelong Learning Model (CCL, 2007), like Schwab's (1978) four commonplaces of curriculum, is intended to work in unity with no privileging of one theme over the other. It is based on a medicine wheel model. In 2012, a team of curriculum writers from the Ontario Secondary School Teachers Federation used the medicine wheel as a tool for organizing lesson development. The curriculum planners defined the themes thus:

> [T]he physical aspect of a topic includes those things that we can touch, feel, see, hear. These are the topics that appeal to our senses and lend themselves to a kinesthetic and visual approach to learning. The emotional aspect of a topic includes those issues that cause us to feel or to

empathize. The mental aspect pushes us to know more, to think deeply

about a subject. The spiritual aspect challenges our beliefs and pushes us

to a deeper 'way of knowing.' (OSSTF, 2012, p. 4)

Using their definitions along with my own analysis coding practices I was able to

think more deeply about the gaps in this model for the participants.

The mental theme of the First Nations Holistic Lifelong Learning Model

(CCL, 2007) was clearly represented when the participants showed evidence of

wanting to know more and think deeply and critically about the topics that were

presented to them. I saw the emotional theme of the model when the participants

described feeling, empathizing, and bringing emotion into their learning. There

were many examples of emotional reactions in our discussions. The spiritual

theme was represented when participants connected with Mi'kmaw ways of

knowing and highlighted their deep connections to Mi'kmaw culture, especially

when presented with information or practices that threatened this connectedness.

Finally, the physical theme, the moving and doing quadrant of the medicine

wheel, was not clearly evident in the learning experiences discussed by these

participants. The lack of connection to physical development and well-being is

troubling and shows a need for social studies learning to take into account

elements of physical development to keep the circle full and whole.

Conclusions

Within this case study analysis, I tried to find connections to all of the

themes of the First Nations Holistic Lifelong Learning Model (CCL, 2007) and

Schwab's (1978) four commonplaces. I have examined the gaps in these

participants' social studies learning experiences. Overall, the participants expressed enjoyment with their social studies courses but highlighted multiple problem areas. They did not always feel represented in the social studies curriculum, with the exception of Mi'kmaq Studies 10. They showed deep affection and respect for their Mi'kmaq Studies 10 teacher, Ms. K., and appreciated her efforts in trying to educate others on Mi'kmaw culture and history. The participants expressed negative reactions to the social studies textbooks, describing them as outdated and lacking in Aboriginal perspectives. All the participants outlined their experiences with supplementing their in-school learning with learning from their homes and communities. In instances where they did not feel represented by the curriculum or believed a narrative to be contradictory, they sought out family and friends to help them make sense of their learning. The participants actively sought out additional information on issues and also made connections to their Mi'kmaw history and culture to assist them in making sense of other cultural histories and narratives. One thing that became clear to me over the course of this research is that these participants would very much like to have experienced social studies courses with a localized curriculum focusing on Mi'kmaw history and culture.

Returning to my initial research question of *How do Mi'kmaw students situated their own understandings and narratives of Canadian history alongside the content and teaching in the current curriculum in Nova Scotia's band-controlled and provincially-controlled schools?* I believe that the Mi'kmaw participants of East Coast High School (the provincially-controlled school)

showed a willingness to situate their own understandings and narratives alongside the content in the prescribed curriculum by seeking out these narratives. When the participants felt that there was a binary, they did not challenge the narratives that they found contradictory within their classes. They often refrained from speaking up to educate non-Mi'kmaw students and teachers because they feared a negative reaction. I did not get a sense that these participants believe Indigenous knowledge should replace Western knowledge. They simply felt that the curriculum should include more Indigenous knowledge. The participants believe that this exposure to increased Mi'kmaw content would lessen stereotypes, generalizations, misconceptions and misunderstandings, and racist attitudes. Although the participants did not specifically address the issue of teaching Mi'kmaw content using an add-on approach, judging by their desire to see greater importance placed on their culture and history I can assume that they did not wish to see Mi'kmaw content taught from the periphery. I further explore these understandings in Chapter 6.

Chapter Summary

In summary, this chapter provided a detailed account of the research conversations held with participants from the Welte'temsi First Nation Community who attended (or had recently graduated from) East Coast High School. I gave an overview of the participant responses to questions and topics discussed during the individual and group conversations. I then detailed my analysis around the themes of mental, emotional, spiritual, and physical development and well-being stemming from the responses, along with additional

themes that emerged from the data generation. The participants discussed their

experiences being Mi'kmaq and encountering Mi'kmaw content in a provincial

school, as well as their reactions to topics such as Columbus' discovery of North

America, treaty rights, residential schooling, and centralization policies in Nova

Scotia. Returning to my initial research question, I explored the relationship

between Indigenous and Western knowledge for these participants.

Chapter Six: A Cross-Case Analysis of the Participants' Experiences with the Nova Scotia Social Studies Curriculum Across Provincially-Controlled and Band-Controlled School Contexts

The purpose of this chapter is to explore similarities and differences in the data generated in the band-controlled and provincially-controlled school contexts. In the first section I provide an overview of the contextual similarities and differences between the Ni'newey First Nation and the Welte'temsi First Nation, along with the significant distinctions between Ni'newey Community School and East Coast High School. In the second section, I highlight the similarities and differences in analysis themes. In the third section, I discuss the role of the teachers in helping students to make meaning of the social studies content and the connections to their surroundings. In the fourth section, I provide a discussion of the Mi'kmaw perspectives found in social studies classrooms across both contexts, along with the challenges for the participants in relation to the prescribed curriculum. The fifth section outlines the participants' conceptions of belonging and racism and the contextual conditions that affect these areas. The sixth section concludes the chapter.

Contextual Similarities and Differences

To recap, the participants from both contexts ranged in age from 16 to 19. Except for Helen, who had recently graduated, all the participants from Welte'temsi were in grade 10 and had not yet graduated from East Coast High School. Of the participants from Ni'newey, three were currently enrolled at and five were recent graduates from the Ni'newey Community School. All participants from Ni'newey had attended Ni'newey Community School since

grade primary and had known each other from an early age. The participants from Welte'temsi had attended East Coast High School together since grade 10 and all except Kiptu had attended school together at East Coast High School's feeder elementary and junior high schools. In both contexts the participants knew each other and each other's families well.

Throughout this research I noticed similarities and differences between the communities of Ni'newey and Welte'temsi and the school landscapes of band-controlled Ni'newey Community School and provincially-controlled East Coast High School. Ni'newey and Welte'temsi are located within the same geographic region and both have relatively small populations. Both communities were ordered to move from their original locations due to centralization policies. While Welte'temsi remained in its new centralized location, many members of the Ni'newey community returned to their original community location in 1949 when the Federal Government shut down the centralization program. Welte'temsi, while still located within roughly the same region as Ni'newey, is in a more urban setting and has exhibited more economic development in terms of local businesses and services. Ni'newey defines success on another level by housing its own First Nations school, staffed almost exclusively by Mi'kmaw teachers and administrators, that boasts a high graduation rate for its community youth. There is no data on Mi'kmaw student graduation rates for East Coast High School.

The participants in both contexts described their communities positively. The participants in Welte'temsi were extremely proud of their community's accomplishments. For the participants in Ni'newey, the milieu was strongly

represented in their learning and assisted their mental development and well-being through access to local stories from community members and Elders. These community connections helped them to connect and extend their learning of the prescribed curriculum in ways that enhanced Mi'kmaw representations. For the participants in Ni'newey there was little separation between the school and community; the participants often described the school when discussing their community. This was not the same for the participants in Welte'temsi attending East Coast High School as the milieu was rarely represented in their learning and the participants were given little access to local stories from community members and Elders within the school.

In order to begin to make sense of the differences the participants described with regards to connections to their school, it is important to note the differences in populations that each school serves. Ni'newey Community School is a grades primary to 12 institution and all of the students are Mi'kmaw. There is no senior high school located in Welte'temsi so Mi'kmaw youth must attend East Coast High School, which is a large provincial school that is strictly a senior high school for Grades 10 through 12 and located outside the community. By Nova Scotia standards, the school hosts a large international population, therefore, the students at East Coast High School come from a variety of backgrounds and only a small number of the student population is made up of Mi'kmaw students. There is only one Mi'kmaw teacher on staff at East Coast High School, while, with the exception of two teachers, everyone on staff at Ni'newey Community School is Mi'kmaw.

The participants in Welte'temsi felt that the school should be more willing to educate others on Mi'kmaw culture and provide more opportunities to celebrate being Mi'kmaw. These participants felt that engaging in traditional ceremonies was sometimes problematic as other non-Mi'kmaw students were prone to making offensive remarks or disrespecting traditional practices such as powwows or sweat lodges. The participants in Welte'temsi felt that misconceptions around issues of taxation were one of the most problematic topics for them at East Coast High School, while the students in Ni'newey did not discuss any misconceptions around taxation within their school. The participants in Ni'newey had multiple opportunities to engage in powwows and sweat lodges, which are common practices at Ni'newey Community School. This is likely because all students at Ni'newey Community School are Mi'kmaw, as are the majority of the teachers. In fact, the Mi'kmaw teachers at the Ni'newey Community School grew up in Ni'newey, left to pursue their educational goals, and immediately returned to work and live in the community.

All the Ni'newey participants felt that they fit in at Ni'newey Community School and described both the Ni'newey community and the school as being like a big family. The participants in Ni'newey believe that the school had been partly responsible for helping them develop strong Mi'kmaw characters and pride in their Mi'kmaw culture. The participants in Welte'temsi were not as positive about their school and did not express any feelings of fitting in well at East Coast High School. In contrast to the participants in Ni'newey, the participants in Welte'temsi did not feel connected to their teachers, with the exception of Ms. K,

the only Mi'kmaw teacher on staff at East Coast High School. This teacher had been important to their development as students and had helped them feel welcome and included at the school.

In terms of holistic learning, I found many connections to spiritual development and well-being in the transcripts from the conversations with the participants from band-controlled Ni'newey Community School. Battiste and Henderson (2000) explained that "an enhanced curriculum would teach Indigenous students in a holistic manner, offering them a way of living and learning in a changing ecology" (p. 91). Similarly, the First Nations Holistic Lifelong Learning Model demonstrated that holistic learning is based on the learner's engagement with all areas of the tree. The Canadian Council on Learning (CCL) (2007) described holistic learning as a learning process that "simultaneously engages and develops all aspects of the individual – emotional, physical, spiritual and intellectual – and of the collective" (p. 5). These are considered key attributes of Aboriginal learning:

> [L]earning is holistic, learning is a lifelong process, learning is experiential in nature, learning is rooted in Aboriginal languages and culture, learning is spiritually oriented, learning is a communal activity, involving family, community and Elders and learning is an integration of Aboriginal and Western knowledge. (CCL, 2007, p. 5).

The participants in Ni'newey showed great pride in their community, in their school, and in being Mi'kmaw people. They felt very connected to their spirituality in school and in the community and wished to see more spiritual

content in places outside of Ni'newey and Ni'newey Community School. The participants exhibited great confidence and respect for themselves and their culture. They believe that their school and their community fostered respect and pride in Mi'kmaw culture. The spiritual development and well-being of the participants at Ni'newey Community School was strongly fostered in their school. This was found to be seriously lacking for the participants at East Coast High School outside of their community and their experiences with Ms. K.

The participants in Welte'temsi did not feel that East Coast High School had encouraged their spiritual and physical development and well-being because there were no school-wide events pertaining to Mi'kmaw culture. They felt that more exposure to Mi'kmaw culture and history might promote a greater respect for themselves, which might in turn contribute to a greater respect for their physical being. This view was not held by the participants in Ni'newey, who felt that Ni'newey Community School and the Ni'newey community encouraged them to maintain a respect for self through engagement in traditional practices and ceremonies and a commitment to expressing counter-narratives.

The participants in Ni'newey also demonstrated a strong connection to advocacy while the participants in Welte'temsi described few opportunities for advocacy, feeling that the other students and teachers did not necessarily welcome this. They provided evidence of attempts to educate other students and teachers that were not usually well received. As learners, they felt uncomfortable engaging in action and advocacy and they tied this directly to a negative atmosphere at East Coast High School that did not respect Mi'kmaw culture. This

is vastly different for the participants in Ni'newey, who felt that as learners they had been consistently encouraged to demonstrate action, advocacy, and participation.

Conceptions of belonging and place factored significantly in my research with the participants from Ni'newey Community School. For example, Carmie felt that an understanding of Mi'kmaw ways of life would be strengthened by physically living amongst or being in close contact with Mi'kmaw people. Lucy felt that learners would benefit from being connected to nature and from examining the uses of local food sources and the relevance of traditional medicines. She found that her teachers had been able and willing to make connections for her to the lessons she had learned in her community. Her context of living in Ni'newey helped her to connect her learning in social studies on multiple levels. For Dani, Ni'newey Community School allowed her to be Mi'kmaw in that she was surrounded by Mi'kmaw people and Mi'kmaw traditions and ways of being. Curtis and Eli also shared this idea. Curtis felt that he did not need to stop being Mi'kmaw while in school; this allowed him to live more authentically as a Mi'kmaw person. The fluency of the language was key for Curtis, who felt that being able to converse in Mi'kmaw was important to his understanding of the material in school.

Place also proved to be important for Stephanie, who worried that if schools were not teaching things like Mi'kmaw uses of sweetgrass and basket making these practices may be lost, similar to the Mi'kmaw language. Kyla felt that the physical act of learning for her was sometimes shaped by her inability to

listen in class; she found it hard to remember the past because she did not pay close attention in her classes while attending Ni'newey Community School. However, she was able to connect her learning to her home context and saw the value in learning things like basket making and working with the basket wood, Waltes, and hearing and learning from the stories of residential school survival. Kyla talked more about the physical location of her home and community and what she viewed as a constant threat of her home and community being taken from her. For Eli, living in a Mi'kmaw community and attending a First Nations School allowed him to be surrounded by his history, which allowed for little contradiction in his learning between home and school. Eli also believes that the size of Ni'newey Community School was beneficial because he felt that small schools are better for Mi'kmaw learners. The closeness of the community and the school helped the participants feel permitted to be their authentic selves within the broader setting of Ni'newey. The importance of and connections to place allowed them to create strong Mi'kmaw characters and connect their learning both inside and outside of the school walls. It is interesting to note, that while the East Coast High School participants lived in Welte'temsi, which is a First Nations Community, positive conceptions of place did not factor into our discussions.

Similarities and Differences in Analysis Themes

The analysis for this research data was modeled on the inner core of the tree represented by the First Nations Holistic Lifelong Learning Model (CCL, 2007). As outlined in Chapters Three, Four and Five, I looked into participant experiences based on mental, emotional, spiritual, and physical development and

well-being. According to the First Nations Holistic Lifelong Learning Model, these four areas should work together in harmony to establish the development and well-being of the First Nations learner. For the participants in Ni'newey, attending band-controlled Ni'newey Community School, I was able to see connections to all areas of development and well-being represented in their learning. What I found in the data from the Welte'temsi participants at provincially-controlled East Coast High School was that the themes of mental, emotional, spiritual, and physical development and well-being did not come together in alignment within their social studies learning experiences.

In the data, I found examples from the themes of mental and emotional development and well-being for both participant groups. For example, with regards to mental development and well-being, the participants from Ni'newey Community School relied on experiences with traditional practices and connections to nature to assist them and the participants from Welte'temsi showed intellectual curiosity by seeking out additional information. They used critical literacy skills to help them manage contradictory narratives in the prescribed curriculum. The participants from Ni'newey also worked hard to protect and enhance their mental development and well-being through critical thinking and critical literacy skills. For the participants from Ni'newey, mental and emotional development and well-being was considered to stem from more positive experiences than for the participants in Welte'temsi, who largely reported engaging with these themes in response to negative experiences at East Coast High School. For instance, the theme of physical development and well-being

was largely left out for the participants from East Coast High School and the connections to spiritual development were not as strong as they were for the participants in band-controlled Ni'newey school.

While I have focused exclusively in my analysis on the inner core of the tree, the CCL (2007) stated that "individual learning is viewed as but one part of a collective that extends beyond the family, community and nation to Creation itself" (p. 5). These aspects are represented in the roots of the tree in the First Nations Holistic Lifelong Learning Model. Shifting beyond the individual learning rings, it is important to look at the tree as a whole for the participants in both contexts. For this purpose, I have included the model here.
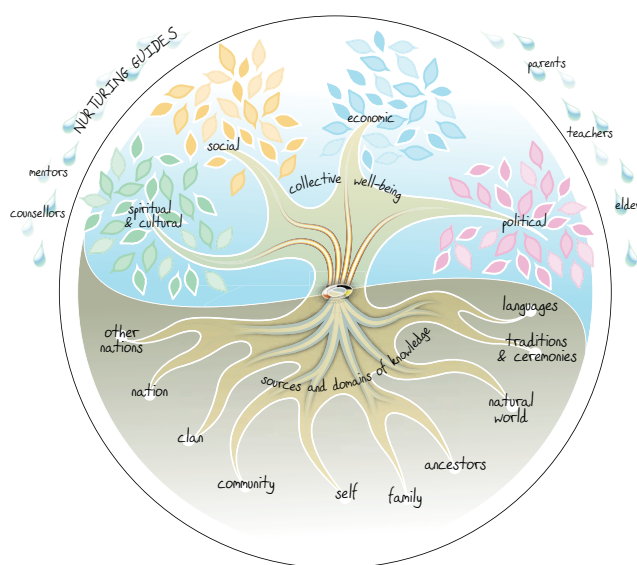
The participants attending Ni'newey Community School had multiple opportunities to engage with the sources and domains of knowledge represented by the roots of this tree. They were encouraged to connect with community, self, family, ancestors, the natural world, traditions and ceremonies, language, nation, and clan. I did not find any evidence of connecting with other nations but this

does not mean that this did not happen for these participants. Some of the participants from East Coast High School expressed wanting to learn about Indigenous groups in other countries. The participants from Ni'newey Community School had plenty of access to the nurturing guides of mentors, teachers, and Elders (I found no evidence in the data of engaging with counselors but the participants may have had access to this nurturing guide). The data generated with participants showed evidence of collective well-being through multiple connections to spiritual and cultural well-being, social well-being, and political well-being. Economic well-being was outside the scope of this research so I cannot comment on this area of collective well-being for the participants at Ni'newey Community School.

The participants in Welte'temsi, who attended East Coast High School, presented a vastly different picture. Although the participants described feeling connected to the sources and domains of knowledge from nation, clan, community, self, family, ancestors, relationship to the natural world, traditions and ceremonies, and language, they felt that these sources and domains of knowledge were unwelcome on their school landscape. The participants also expressed wanting to connect more with other nations within their learning. The nurturing guides for these participants were parents, Elders, mentors, and no more than three teachers. I found no evidence of a counselor as a nurturing guide but this does not mean that this guide was missing, it is possible that the participants saw Ms. K as taking on this role. In terms of collective well-being, the participants showed evidence of spiritual and cultural connections, social

connections, political connections and economic connections but these were specifically relegated to the off-school landscape.

In terms of Schwab's (1978) four commonplaces of curriculum, the participants in Ni'newey described the four commonplaces as working together in harmony to help them see themselves represented within the prescribed curriculum. The teachers and the milieu were greatly beneficial in establishing an inclusive learning environment for the participants in Ni'newey. For the participants in Welte'temsi attending East Coast High School, the four commonplaces were present but did not necessarily align in a harmonious way. Specifically, the participants described feeling disconnected from the teacher and milieu commonplaces. These differences are further highlighted throughout this chapter. The following sections have been organized into dominant themes that appeared within the analysis data across the two case studies.

The role of the teachers in making meaning. Curriculum reconceptualization asks students and teachers to determine how they see themselves making meaning in light of their own experiences and understandings with regards to the curriculum. This study did not branch out to include teachers but did provide multiple opportunities for students to voice their experiences. What I found in talking with the participants in both contexts was that the participants at band-controlled Ni'newey Community School saw themselves represented in their learning as a result of action on the part of the teachers and community. The participants at provincially-controlled East Coast High School did not see themselves represented in their learning outside of Mi'kmaq Studies

10, which they believe was a result of inaction on the part of the teachers. The work of Ms. K in the Mi'kmaq Studies 10 course allowed the participants of East Coast High School to experience a mirrored approach in their learning, where they could see themselves and their community in the content.

For the participants at Ni'newey Community School, the teachers were strong Mi'kmaw role models who worked hard to bring in Mi'kmaw content and celebrate Mi'kmaw culture. These participants discussed their close trusting relationships with their teachers. The participants from Welte'temsi in the provincially-controlled school did not have this experience with their teachers, with the exception of their experiences in classes with Ms. K, their Mi'kmaq Studies 10 teacher. For the participants from East Coast High School Ms. K served as a key person who fostered their emotional development and well-being. The participants also described two other teachers who tried to connect with them and their Mi'kmaw culture. They did not view all teachers positively.

The two non-Mi'kmaw teachers at Ni'newey Community School were considered to be adopted members of the community and participants reported that they worked hard to understand and respectfully represent Mi'kmaw culture in their classrooms. The participants in Welte'temsi expressed some negativity towards their non-Mi'kmaw teachers because of how they felt the teachers viewed their Mi'kmaw students. The transcripts of conversations from Welte'temsi provide evidence of students' perceptions that some teachers at East Coast High School did not understand Mi'kmaw culture and Mi'kmaw learning styles. There were some positive responses to teachers who tried hard to understand Mi'kmaw

culture and to learn the Mi'kmaw language, but these teachers did not form the majority of the staff at East Coast High School.

Students' understandings/ perceptions of the pedagogical decisions made by the teachers in band-controlled Ni'newey Community School contributed to the participants' understanding of the curriculum and their spiritual connectedness to their Mi'kmaw culture. The open relationships between the participants and their teachers allowed them to question the curriculum and ask for more information. The participants in Ni'newey described their teachers as knowledgeable and helpful. According to one participant, the Mi'kmaw teachers at Ni'newey Community School added to the existing curriculum by bringing out historical Mi'kmaw narratives and Mi'kmaw connections.

The teachers at Ni'newey Community School had brought creative elements into their teaching, encouraged an advocacy lens, and provided support for action. For the participants of Welte'temsi, Ms. K was the only teacher to engage in this pedagogical approach at East Coast High School. Throughout the transcripts I was unable to find many examples of teachers fostering spiritual development and well-being for these participants. On the other hand, the participants in Ni'newey believe that their teachers had played a key role in supporting Mi'kmaw ways of being, tying content to Mi'kmaw culture, supporting attendance at cultural events and bringing out the Mi'kmaw aspect of everything.

This was not the case for the participants attending East Coast High School. According to Witt (2006), teachers must be familiar with the cultural

backgrounds of their Aboriginal students. The participants at East Coast High

School did not believe that their teachers were committed to this principle of

Aboriginal education. This disconnect meant the participants had to make their

own connections between the content they were learning and the content they

already knew. There are numerous examples in the data of the Welte'temsi

participants trying to make sense of African Canadian, African American, and

Jewish history by relating events to local Mi'kmaw narratives. At times it seemed

as if the participants were desperate for some local content in their social studies

courses and most requested that the content of Mi'kmaq Studies 10 be found in

their other social studies courses. The participants in Ni'newey attending

Ni'newey Community School also showed evidence of making these connections

to other cultural content but this did not seem to be as much of a requirement for

understanding as it was for the East Coast High School participants. The

participants in Ni'newey felt that the additions and extensions provided by their

teachers had allowed for spiritual development and well-being. They wondered

how this might look in a provincial school with few to no Mi'kmaw teachers on

staff, showing that they understood that the cultural practical knowledge of the

teachers played a large role in their approaches to curriculum.

Thinking in terms of cultural practical knowledge (Orr, Paul, & Paul,

2002), it is clear to me that, at least according to the students' perceptions of their

learning environment, the teachers at Ni'newey Community School relied on this

to help foster their students' cultural identities. Using the Mi'kmaw language

within the school, doing activities that integrated a Mi'kmaw worldview, and

making continuous connections to local people and their narratives supported

these Mi'kmaw students in all areas of development, as described by the First

Nations Holistic Lifelong Learning Model (CCL, 2007). Following the logic of

Orr, Paul, and Paul, the curricular decisions made by these teachers classify them

as "political agents" (p. 332) helping to create and foster change in schools and

beyond. The teachers at Ni'newey Community School spent considerable time

and effort to extend the curriculum for the Ni'newey participants, consistently

bringing traditional practices into their teaching, remaining available to students

in and outside of the classroom, enacting their cultural practical knowledge (Orr,

Paul, & Paul, 2002), and maintaining and fostering close relationships which

allowed for open and honest dialogue in the classroom. The Welte'temsi

participants, however, believe that the teachers at East Coast High School did not

always respect the participants' cultural capital. The participants felt that they

could not connect with all of their teachers and described a general lack of

relationship with the majority of their teachers. The exception to this was the

relationship between the participants and Ms. K.

In terms of respecting and valuing cultural capital, Lipka et al. (1998)

described a culturally negotiated pedagogy. They explained this must be rooted in

a both/and approach rather than an either/or approach. They stated that

> this either-or way of viewing the present scene in some ways continues the
>
> oppressive colonial legacy, by suggesting that indigenous communities
>
> have to fully assimilate, that is, accept Western schooling 'as is' or resist
>
> and be isolated in 'traditional' indigenous learning. (p. 30)

They added that an either/or mindset "seriously constrains the educational possibilities, limiting and disempowering the community" (p. 30). Lipka et al. indicated that "indigenous teachers and student teachers possess cultural knowledge that can point to better ways of teaching" (p. 85). The Mi'kmaw teachers at Ni'newey Community School clearly demonstrated an approach to teaching that is tied to cultural knowledge, as reflected in the participants' reflections on their schooling.

By focusing their teaching to include traditional practices and Mi'kmaw ways of knowing, the teachers at Ni'newey Community School encouraged the participants to connect with their Mi'kmaw history and culture in ways that did not place Mi'kmaw knowledge on the periphery. When asked about being Mi'kmaw and Mi'kmaw content in social studies, the participants in the band-controlled school in Ni'newey felt that their teachers had been able and willing to approach social studies content from a traditional perspective, using practices that were rooted in Mi'kmaw culture and representative of Mi'kmaw history, which had helped them further their connections to Mi'kmaw culture. The participants in Ni'newey felt that their teachers had been able to "show the Mi'kmaq in everything", which had in turn helped them to better understand the content.

Other jurisdictions in Canada are responding to the increasing need to better respond to Aboriginal students in their classrooms through the development of teaching resources and supports, often in collaboration with local Aboriginal elders and scholars. One such resource guide, produced by Alberta Education, to support teachers in their attempts to infuse Aboriginal perspectives in education is

called *Our Words, Our Ways*. Alberta Education (2005) stated:

> Regardless of their heritage, students learn best when they learn
>
> in context—when they can relate what they are learning to their
>
> own experience. In this sense, Aboriginal students are often at a
>
> disadvantage because many aspects of Aboriginal culture are not
>
> reflected in their classrooms. (p. 19)

The incorporation of traditional practices enabled the students at Ni'newey

Community School to be more fully engaged with their Mi'kmaw culture. The

participants appreciated their teachers' work in doing this. They talked about

feeling like they belonged in their school and credited this in part to their

relationships with their teachers. The participants in Welte'temsi, attending

provincially-controlled East Coast High School, expressed feeling the opposite.

They appreciated the pedagogical decisions made by Ms. K. at East Coast High

School, because she fostered an inclusive atmosphere and sense of connection for

these participants. As learners, the participants in Ni'newey showed pride in their

culture and the development of strong Mi'kmaw spirituality by welcoming

content taught through traditional practices and wanting others to learn this

outside of Ni'newey.

Returning to beliefs around band-controlled schooling as discussed in

Chapter Two, Bear Nicholas (2001) felt that community schools were virtually

unable to meet the needs of Aboriginal students because of their desire to emulate

non-Native schools. I argue that the Ni'newey Community School is in fact able

to meet the needs of the Mi'kmaw students it services. Bear Nicholas stated that

"in all but a tiny minority of band-controlled schools outside of the North, traditional culture is virtually ignored" (p. 9). The Ni'newey Community School has worked hard to bring traditional culture into their classrooms and celebrate traditionally-rooted practices in their teaching, increasing spiritual connectedness for students.

While the Ni'newey Community School falls under a provincial curricular mandate, according to the students I interviewed, its teachers have made it a priority to incorporate traditional culture into all curricula. Ni'newey Community School is grounded in First Nations education and aligns with Battiste's view that education should

> draw from the ecological context of the people, their social and cultural
> frames of reference, embodying their philosophical foundations of
> spiritual interconnected realities, and building on the enriched experiences
> and gifts of their people and their current needs for economic development
> and change. (p. 21)

This approach to education depicts how Indigenous knowledge should be addressed within schools. Based on what my participants described, it seems that the educators at Ni'newey Community School have incorporated this Indigenous knowledge by extending their teaching and highlighting Indigenous knowledge in ways that complemented the Western knowledge found in the prescribed curriculum. Ni'newey Community School has opened up a space for Mi'kmaw ways of knowing to "be practiced and celebrated" (Brant Castellano et al., 2000, p. 23). Lipka et al. (1998) felt that "teachers must have the power to structure

classroom organization, curricula, and social interaction and the relationships between parents and the school in culturally congruent ways" (p. 87). Based on the participant responses, I believe that the teachers in Ni'newey had been given and were using this power to create an inclusive setting for their students. Similarly, based on participant responses, I do not believe that the teachers at East Coast High School had been given opportunities to determine what the cultural compatibility might be for their pedagogy in relation to their Mi'kmaw students.

Mi'kmaw perspectives in social studies curriculum. In most instances the content the Ni'newey participants experienced in social studies allowed for a mirror into their own home and community understandings. I believe that these participants are engaged in a decolonizing educational process thanks to the work of their teachers. Haig-Brown and Dannenmann (2002) emphasized that Indigenous knowledge is explicitly linked to relationships. The relationships the Ni'newey participants formed within their school community fostered a climate where Indigenous knowledge was represented and valued throughout their courses. The participants at East Coast High School, on the other hand, did not experience education as a process of decolonization. These participants lacked the relationships that might have fostered a climate that respects and values Indigenous knowledge. Many felt that the dominant structure of East Coast High School marginalized Indigenous knowledge. For the participants in both contexts, the key to a mirrored curriculum was a relational approach to Indigenous and Western knowledge along with a space in the curriculum for Indigenous and Western knowledge to coexist peacefully.

The participants in Welte'temsi believe that history is connected to identity. The lack of connections to their culture in their social studies courses at provincially-controlled East Coast High School, outside of their Mi'kmaq Studies 10 course, did not, they reported, respect their identities. They expressed that they did not feel represented in the curriculum and on the school landscape. They did, however, believe that their connectedness to culture had allowed them to create spaces for representation within their learning, and through this they connected school material to their out-of-school experiences and knowledge. The participants in Ni'newey believe that their teachers had modified the subject matter to allow for greater connections to Mi'kmaw culture and history and they were aware of pieces missing in the curriculum. The participants felt that topics of importance to them had not been represented in the social studies courses outside of Mi'kmaq Studies 10 but that their teachers added on or left things out to create more Mi'kmaw representation. In contrast, the participants from Welte'temsi felt that the subject matter was problematic, as there were few connections to Mi'kmaw history and culture and students used outdated textbooks.

In terms of mental development, I believe the four commonplaces of curriculum worked together to encourage the participants to take an active role in their learning but this was not necessarily an intentional curricular decision. The participants described protecting their mental development and well-being by engaging in critical literacy when it came to the content found in the prescribed curriculum. They did this because they felt that there were gaps in the subject

matter rather than because they were being encouraged to examine the narratives from a critical literacy perspective. The teachers in Ni'newey provided a great deal of scaffolding and support with this, while the teachers at East Coast High School, with the exception of Ms. K, did not appear to provide the same supports. Participants from East Coast High School seemed rarely to have been asked to consider alternate narratives to the 'official' stories presented in the prescribed curriculum. These participants usually did not feel comfortable noting and discussing the gaps they encountered in their learning, believing this to be an annoyance for others.

The participants in both contexts expressed emotional connections and, in some cases, emotional reactions to some of the content in their social studies courses. The participants from band-controlled Ni'newey Community School were quite concerned about how Mi'kmaw content was viewed in schools outside of Ni'newey. The participants from provincially-controlled East Coast High School demonstrated sensitivity towards stereotypes and misconceptions they believe were found in their social studies courses. As learners, the participants in Welte'temsi continually questioned their learning, wished for more connections in school, and outlined numerous recommendations to help foster spiritual development and well-being for Mi'kmaw students in social studies. The participants in Welte'temsi felt that only Mi'kmaq Studies 10 had allowed for spiritual connectedness; in their other courses the learner had to bridge this gap.

The participants in the band-controlled school in Ni'newey provided many examples of opportunities for physical development through craftsmanship,

hunting trips, traditional games, projects, and travel, such as attending the Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearings.   The participants in Welte'temsi described no examples of opportunities to engage with craftsmanship, traditional games, hunting, projects, and travel at provincially-controlled East Coast High School. For the participants in Welte'temsi there were no traditional practices in the social studies curriculum to foster their physical development and well-being. Outside of Mi'kmaq Studies 10 there was no focus on respecting themselves and their bodies, a traditionally important practice for Mi'kmaw people as described by Beatrice in the group sharing circle. Likewise, the prescribed social studies curriculum presented in Ni'newey did not encourage physical development and well-being. The difference for the participants in Ni'newey resulted from the work of their teachers and administrators in offering these opportunities. The participants unanimously believe that more Mi'kmaw content should be woven into their social studies courses and that textbooks should be updated and more reflective of Mi'kmaw culture and Mi'kmaw perspectives. The following sub-sections deal with specific themes that emerged during the data generation with participants. Participants in both contexts discussed issues around what they believe to be historically inaccurate content and outlined significant gaps within the social studies curriculum.

Historical accuracy. Thomas King (2003) advised, "once a story is told it cannot be called back […] so you have to be careful with the stories you tell, and you have to watch out for the stories you are told" (p. 10). King's words are a warning, reminding teachers and curriculum developers to be careful about what

it is that is being taught and stresses the need to be responsible for the content that is brought forward in classrooms. King (2012) also cautioned: "most of us think that history is the past. It's not. History is the stories we tell about the past. Such a definition might make the enterprise of history seem neutral. Benign. Which of course it isn't" (p. 2). Believing that stories are "not chosen by chance" (p.3) and overwhelmingly represent "famous men and celebrated events" (p.3) King encourages teachers and curriculum developers to examine the narratives using a critically literate approach which calls for the examination of historical accounts for logical inconsistencies, omissions, oversimplifications, errors and distortions (Ada, 1988). History is not static or neutral; rather it is made up of collected stories about the experiences of individuals and collectives, and is therefore subject to perspective. Teachers and curriculum developers need to consider from whose perspective the stories emanate and who benefits, and who loses from the portrayals they present to students.

The participants from Ni'newey Community School and Welte'temsi have been presented with historical accounts, such as the story of Columbus discovering North America, that force them to consider the accuracy of what it is they are being taught. Knowing from a Mi'kmaw perspective that the story of Columbus' discovery of North America is filled with errors, the participants are required to engage with or build a counter narrative that is more reflective of their prior knowledge. The participants in Ni'newey had little to say about Columbus and felt that their teachers had taught them accurate representations of European contact. The idea that Christopher Columbus discovered a place where

Aboriginal people already lived was brushed off as an annoying joke. The

participants felt that they had been taught using an approach that realized the

problematic nature of 'discovering' land where people already lived. On the other

hand, the participants from Welte'temsi had quite a bit to say about the Columbus

narrative. It appears that the Columbus narrative had been given more weight in

East Coast High School than in Ni'newey Community School. The participants

in Welte'temsi felt that this narrative was hard to problematize in their school.

They expressed discomfort with annoyed and exasperated reactions from non-

Mi'kmaw students and, in some instances, from their teachers when they

attempted to share a counter-narrative to the story.

Another historical account that is found in the social studies curriculum

that required students to develop a counter narrative is the story of centralization.

In discussing centralization policies, the participants in Ni'newey seemed to have

a more sophisticated understanding of the reasons behind the policies than the

Welte'temsi participants did. The participants in Ni'newey believe the policies

had been an attempt to assimilate and collect Mi'kmaw people into a specific

location, while the participants in Welte'temsi did not expand on their

understandings of the reasons behind the centralization program and largely

focused on the achievements made by the community after centralization (which

they felt were absent from their learning). After my conversations with

participants, I was curious as to what was 'out there' in relation to centralization

so I searched for more information on centralization (told from an Aboriginal

perspective, rather than a government perspective) and I only found one example.

King (2012) wrote about Mi'kmaw centralization stating the following:

> Relocation of the Mi'kmaq began in 1942. By 1944, only ten new
>
> houses had been built at Eskasoni and Shubenacadie. By 1946,
>
> many of the families who had been moved to the two reserves
>
> were still living in tents. By 1948, unemployment at Eskasoni and
>
> Shubenacadie was rampant, even for the original residents, and
>
> the entire community was on welfare. By 1949, the government
>
> finally admitted that relocation hadn't been the money-saver
>
> they'd hoped it would be and shut the program down, leaving the
>
> Mi'kmaq worse off than they had been before the program began.
>
> (p. 94)

The Ni'newey participants felt that the bulk of their knowledge on centralization

had come from their teachers and community members which mirrored King's

words above and they felt that the textbooks offered a more sanitized explanation,

which they unanimously rejected. When I asked about centralization practices in

Nova Scotia during the data generation process in Welte'temsi, the participants

recalled learning about this from Ms. K but claimed not to have learned anything

about the centralization program outside of their Mi'kmaq Studies 10 course. I

have included King's words above in full because I believe it deserves retelling.

As he stated "the truth about stories is that's all we are" (King, 2003, p.2),

including this story in an academic dissertation allows me to add my voice to the

many others, including my participants, who are looking for more perspectives on

the dominant stories we are told. Returning to the words of King (2003):

> [This story is] yours. Do with it what you will. Make it the topic
>
> of a discussion group at a scholarly conference. Put it on the
>
> Web. Forget it. But don't say in the years to come that you would
>
> have lived your life differently if only you had heard this story.
>
> You've heard it now. (p. 60)

In addition to issues around historical accuracy, the participants in both contexts

pointed out what they believed were gaps or omissions in the social studies

subject matter. The following sub-section outlines the missing pieces for these

participants.

Gaps in the curriculum. Two significant gaps in the curriculum emerged

from the data generation and analysis. The first omission identified by participants

was around the lack of content around residential schooling. The second omission

identified by participants was the lack of content concerning treaties and treaty

rights. Both of these topics were seen as necessary to understanding Mi'kmaw

culture and history and participants believe that more awareness and

understanding around these topics would significantly lessen a lot of

misconceptions and misinformation held by non-Mikmaw people.

Residential Schooling. On the topic of residential schools, the

participants in Ni'newey felt that they had learned a great deal about residential

schooling at home and in the community and had been given opportunities to

participate in events such as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearings.

Angelina, a participant from Ni'newey, had taken part in the creation of a video on residential schooling that was presented at the United Nations headquarters. The participants in Ni'newey felt that their school was an open place for them to discuss residential schooling. The topic was closely tied to the community; their teachers had used real examples from survivors living in Ni'newey. These students had benefited from learning about this from people they knew; they had connected the course content to stories of real people from their community.

The participants in Welte'temsi had much to say about the lack of coverage of residential schooling at East Coast High School. While they believe they had only learned about residential schooling in a class with Ms. K, they showed a desire to expand their learning as they had chosen to do projects on residential schools when given the option. All the participants from Welte'temsi felt that they had learned more about residential schooling from their homes and community than from school. The participants discussed connecting school topics like the Holocaust with their community stories of residential schooling practices. This helped them understand the content on a more personal level. The participants in Welte'temsi wanted to learn more about residential schooling and wished to see this topic covered on a deeper level that encourages students to learn from the stories of survivors.

According to the interim report from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) hearings (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2012), teaching about residential schools is of extreme importance. The report underscored the importance of understanding the issues behind residential

schooling and the resulting legacy believing that this will help students

understand issues of family breakdowns, addictions, physical and sexual abuse,

poor achievement in schools and poor health, all of which are currently present in

many Aboriginal communities across Canada. Believing that, "reconciliation will

come through the education system" (p. 12), the people who attended the hearings

made direct requests. One of these is that "they want control over the way their

children and grandchildren are educated" (p. 12) and "they want the full history of

residential schools and Aboriginal peoples taught to all students in Canada at all

levels of study and to all teachers, and given prominence in Canadian history

texts" (p. 12). The Truth and Reconciliation Commission outlined numerous

formal recommendations within the interim report, notably:

> The Commission recommends that each provincial and territorial
>
> government undertake a review of the curriculum materials
>
> currently in use in public schools to assess what, if anything, they
>
> teach about residential schools (p.28)

Judging by the responses of participants in both contexts, this curricular

examination needs to happen in Nova Scotia. The TRC also recommends the

development of "age-appropriate educational materials about residential schools

for use in public schools" (p. 28), which is in keeping with the recommendations

from the participants in this study. It is however, important to highlight that the

participants in both contexts wished for this content to be localized and rooted in

community perspectives that are reflective of a Mi'kmaw worldview. It is not

enough to borrow content from other provinces or territories because this content

would inherently be unable to speak to local Mi'kmaw issues and contexts.

Mi'kmaw Treaty Rights. On the topic of Mi'kmaw treaty rights, the participants in Ni'newey felt that they had been covered in greater detail in the elementary grades than in their senior high courses. The participants in Welte'temsi felt that treaty rights had not been covered at all during their schooling. Both groups felt that treaty rights were significant and should be covered in their secondary school courses. The participants in Ni'newey suggested that treaty rights should be reviewed in Grade 12 to ensure students leave school with these fresh in their minds. The participants in Welte'temsi felt that all students should know Mi'kmaw treaty rights, with Kiptu suggesting that students should be tested prior to graduation. The Ni'newey participants believe that an understanding of treaties would help Mi'kmaw people educate others and defend these rights. The Welte'temsi participants believe that an understanding of treaties would significantly reduce misconceptions and racist attitudes, especially around taxation. Both groups felt that a lack of understanding around treaty rights caused a divide between Mi'kmaw and non-Mi'kmaw communities in Nova Scotia.

Teaching about treaties can begin to help non-Mi'kmaw students to see that they are also implicated in, and affected by, these treaty rights. Tupper and Cappello (2008) indicated, "non-Aboriginal students do not have a sense of how their own economic and social privileges can be connected to, and produced through, treaties" (p. 566). Similarly, Saul (2009) also pointed out that there is a need for all Canadians to be educated on treaties. He stated:

we inherit the treaties along with everything else that we inherit

through our history, and everybody in this room is a treaty

person. If you immigrated to Canada three and a half years ago

and became a citizen today, you are a treaty person. (p. 674)

Saul highlighted the importance of understanding the history of how Canada

became a nation-state and asserted "you only have a civilization if you are willing

to come to terms with its fundamental roots" (p. 676). Beyond the reasons around

misunderstandings, misconceptions and misinformation surrounding treaties

given by the participants in this study, Saul (2009) insisted that understanding

treaties is pertinent to the study of Canadian history. There seems to be little

reason not to include treaty education in the prescribed social studies curriculum.

However, Tupper and Cappello (2008) caution that before any inclusion of

treaties and treaty rights is brought into the curriculum there must be a

commitment to ensure that this is taken up from a critically literate approach and a

commitment to full inclusion: treaties should not enter the curriculum as a mere

add on to existing content. They instruct teachers and curriculum developers to

ask the following:

Is it [this inclusion] merely cursory? Does it advance superficial

and limited understandings of treaties? Does it continue to

support the dominant narrative of settlement and progress (over

and against the continued marginalization of First Nations

peoples)? (p. 573)

Paying careful attention to the questions outlined by Tupper and Cappello will

assist in keeping Aboriginal content from being relegated to the periphery or hastily included on the margins and rather show treaty education to be valued as 'mainstream' content.

Thinking in terms of curriculum theory in relation to the gaps in the curriculum found by the participants and described above, I return to the work of Pinar (1995) who described curriculum as a course of life, based on the premise that experiences, contexts, stories, places, and time should inform curricular decisions. In terms of this research, the participants in the band-controlled Ni'newey school were encouraged and supported to connect with their experiences, their context was represented, and stories, place, and time were valued. Participants felt that when these pieces were absent from the prescribed curriculum their teachers seamlessly brought them forward. This was not the case for the participants attending provincially-controlled East Coast High School, where the social studies subject matter outside of the Mi'kmaq Studies 10 course seemed fixed, allowing little room for Mi'kmaw culture and history. This is at odds with Dewey's (1956) belief that education should allow the space for home and community knowledge and school knowledge to align and exist in harmonious ways. Drawing from the experiences of the learner would allow the curriculum to become a less isolating experience for the student.

It seems that the curricular experiences of the participants at East Coast High School were similar to Hampton's (1995), who described his mainstream education as being a collection of content add-ons. The participants at East Coast High School did not view their education as being rooted in Mi'kmaw culture and

history, with the exception of Mi'kmaq Studies 10. The absence of content in their social studies courses around residential schooling, treaty rights and education, and values and worldviews was at odds with the participants' experiences. It is important to note that the participants in Ni'newey also felt a need to address the gaps in the prescribed curriculum.

Belonging, Stereotyping, and Racism

One significant difference between the two contexts was in the conceptions of place and belonging. The participants from band-controlled Ni'newey Community School felt that they belonged and had a close connection to place, while the participants from Welte'temsi attending the provincially-controlled school did not. I unpack the importance of place-based education in Chapter 7 and therefore will focus this section on issues around belonging and othering. For the participants in Ni'newey the milieu represented a place of enjoyment. They discussed their strong connections to the community and school and demonstrated a sense of belonging in both contexts. They had a negative view of the greater milieu beyond Ni'newey, but it is not apparent how much experience they had with places such as provincial schools beyond Ni'newey. For the participants in Welte'temsi, East Coast High School was a place that was connected to feelings of racism, stereotyping, and generally feeling not included and not represented. On the other hand, the Welte'temsi community had helped these participants to remain hopeful, positive, and confident. For these participants there was a big separation between the school and the community, which was not the case for the participants in Ni'newey.

For the participants in Ni'newey the school and the community complemented each other; they could easily transition between the two contexts. This was not the case for the participants in Welte'temsi, who, as discussed earlier, very much felt a separation between home and school. They found the milieu of East Coast High School to be problematic, with little focus on Mi'kmaw history and culture and few Mi'kmaw role models. They found the transition between home and school difficult at times due to racist attitudes and stereotyping but felt that Welte'temsi had fostered their spiritual development and well-being. For some, attending cultural camps had helped with this.

The safe space of Ni'newey Community School and the close relationships with teachers allowed the participants to ask questions, explore counter-narratives, and gain additional information. The participants in Welte'temsi did not feel comfortable asking questions or exploring and sharing counter-narratives at East Coast High School. However, their strong ties to the Welte'temsi community allowed them to make connections on their own, explore and discover counter–narratives, and gain additional information on topics from a Mi'kmaw perspective. The participants in Welte'temsi stressed that they wished to be celebrated and represented more at school and wished to see more local Mi'kmaw advocacy and activism stories and examples in the curriculum and in school celebrations. A commitment to respecting a traditional Aboriginal worldview which reflects a sense of "power-with" rather than "power-over" would increase the full inclusion of Mi'kmaw learners within East Coast High School. Referring back to *Our Words, Our Ways*, Alberta Education (2005) explained:

"Power with" is a dialogue, where everyone stands on the ground,

face to face. The image for "power over" is a pyramid, with those

at the top holding the greatest power. "Power over" is a hierarchy,

where the few stand above the many. (p. 18)

Including Mi'kmaw content and practices and allowing Mi'kmaw students to be

celebrated and represented more within the school would show that their cultural

capital is being acknowledged and held to the same level of value as their non-

Mi'kmaw counterparts. This is similar to the premise behind the use of a circle

that I described in Chapter Three. Alberta Education (2005) also emphasized that

"Aboriginal students are more likely to do their best work in classroom

communities where they experience a sense of safety and belonging, and feel

respected and valued as individuals within the group" (p. 47). They suggest that

schools and classrooms should seek out ways that would allow students to feel a

sense of home within the classroom.

Under the theme of emotional development I found many instances of

participants describing their experiences with perceived racist attitudes and beliefs

towards Mi'kmaw culture and history. Participants in Welte'temsi were upset and

angry about topics that were not covered or topics that people outside of the

Mi'kmaw culture did not understand. Similarly, the participants in Ni'newey

talked about misunderstandings and misconceptions surrounding Mi'kmaw

culture and history. The participants in Ni'newey also described various

connections to racism and racist attitudes. They voiced a need for more

information and awareness in schools across the province. The participants in

both contexts described how other people's lack of respect towards Mi'kmaw culture and history caused them to be more sensitive to racist attitudes and beliefs. One significant difference between the two contexts is that the participants at Ni'newey Community School encountered racist attitudes and beliefs outside of the school and community but for the participants at East Coast High School these beliefs and attitudes were very much present within the school.

Racism was a significant factor in participants' experiences with social studies. I also believe that by not acknowledging racism and addressing some of the issues around this I would not be acknowledging the lived realities of these participants. Tupper and Cappello (2008) cautioned:

> To pretend that students do not experience racism, or to create
>
> curricula that obfuscates these experiences, is to yet again
>
> privilege the vantage point of the dominant (white) students who
>
> do not experience racial discrimination, and who can remain
>
> unaware of the privilege they carry. (p. 576)

Similarly, St. Denis (2007) pointed out that "the argument that addressing racism and doing anti-racist education is too negative and that we need to focus on the positive often results in tinkering with the status quo" (p. 1086). I believe that for other students, teachers, administrators, teacher educators and researchers, etc. to ignore racism as a present condition and pressing concern for Mi'kmaw students contributes to the fear of and resistance to talking about and interrogating race. I further explain my reasons behind this, and a possible solution, in Chapter Seven.

The participants in both contexts were positive and hopeful for change but the participants in Ni'newey showed more evidence of feeling empowered and possessing emotional and spiritual connections to culture both inside and outside of school. The participants in Welte'temsi were resilient, working to overcome stereotypes and maintaining a positive and hopeful attitude in the midst of what they described as racism towards their culture. Although the subject matter elicited emotional reactions in both contexts, only the participants in Ni'newey felt empowered and excited for the possibilities for social studies education. They were keen to share their ideas on what should be taught. The participants from East Coast High School largely felt left out of the curriculum and, for the most part, only saw themselves and their culture reflected in the content of Mi'kmaq Studies 10. They often made Mi'kmaw connections to other topics on their own but they wondered why they should have to do this by themselves. The Welte'temsi participants did not demonstrate the same sense of empowerment and excitement for generating change in the teaching of social studies.

Conclusion

Lipka et al. (1998) felt that "teachers must have the power to structure classroom organization, curricula, and social interaction and the relationships between parents and the school in culturally congruent ways" (p. 87). Based on what I learned from my participants, I believe that the teachers in Ni'newey had been given and were using this power to create an inclusive setting for their students. I do not believe that the teachers at East Coast High School had been

given opportunities to determine what the cultural compatibility might be for their pedagogy in relation to their Mi'kmaw students.

Perhaps if provincially-controlled schools were given the tools to establish a culturally negotiated pedagogy the gaps would lessen for Mi'kmaw students. A negotiated partnership between Indigenous and Western knowledge would represent what Lipka et al. describe as a "third reality" (p. 197) where cultures in contact are represented not by an either/or approach but rather as both/and, lessening the struggle over whose knowledge is of most worth.

This third reality aligns with the views expressed by the developers of the First Nations Lifelong Learning Model (CCL, 2007), who indicated that Western and Indigenous knowledge should be presented and received in complementary ways. I believe the participants in both contexts in this study were committed to this idea. Neither group wanted to replace one knowledge base with the other, but rather wished to experience more Mi'kmaw content and narratives so that their education could be more well-rounded and representative of their culture and history.

In Chapter One I described how Josephine expressed a disconnect between Indigenous and Western knowledge, very much believing that they constituted a binary. The participants I worked with in both contexts did not seem to share Josephine's experiences. Thanks to close relationships with their Mi'kmaw teachers both groups had found a space in which they could speak back to the curriculum when needed. Their main goal seemed to be to add to the existing narratives, not to discard them. When Josephine attended school there

were no Mi'kmaw teachers with whom she could have formed close relationships and who could have helped navigate this binary. The school that Josephine attended still employs no Mi'kmaw teachers so I imagine this research would have yielded different results had I conducted it in Josephine's home community.

My initial research question asked: How do Mi'kmaw students situate their own understandings and narratives of Canadian history alongside the content and teaching in the current curriculum in Nova Scotia's band-controlled and provincially-controlled schools? The participants in Ni'newey were willing to allow Mi'kmaw history and the content found in the prescribed curriculum to co-exist in complementary ways. The participants wanted to see more Mi'kmaw content woven throughout the social studies curriculum alongside, not against, Eurocentric (or Western) content. The participants in Welte'temsi also showed a willingness to lay Mi'kmaw content alongside Eurocentric (and, for them, sometimes contradictory) content. The main difference between the two groups was that the participants from East Coast High School had been left to bridge these gaps on their own. I did not get a sense that the participants wished to replace Eurocentric content with Indigenous content. Rather, they wished simply to be included in the curriculum in ways that did not marginalize their culture and history. Both groups of participants recommended including more Mi'kmaw content, especially localized content, in the social studies curriculum.

In the following chapter, I introduce a term I call *culturally responsible* pedagogy, which I believe will address how non-Mi'kmaw teachers in provincial schools can create experiences for students similar to those of students in band

schools taught by Mi'kmaw teachers. Teaching in a culturally responsible way requires a deeper level of commitment on the part of teachers, schools and curriculum developers. Until curriculum is Nova Scotia is changed to reflect the infusion (not addition) of Mi'kmaw perspectives, teachers will have to dig deeper into curriculum topics to ensure that all students can see themselves and their experiences within it. Ignoring culture and context is not an option just because incorporating this is challenging (Kanu, 2011; Orlowski, 2008). Based on the words of their students, the teachers in Ni'newey Community School demonstrate that culture, community, and education have to work in concert in order for all aspects of the First Nations Holistic Lifelong Learning Model (CCL, 2007) to occur.

Chapter Summary

In order to examine the similarities and differences between the participants' experiences with the social studies curriculum across the two different contexts I provided an overview of the Ni'newey First Nation and the Welte'temsi First Nation, along with an overview of band-controlled Ni'newey Community School and provincially-controlled East Coast High School. I focused on the similarities and differences found within the analysis themes based on the participant data from each context. In explaining the varying responses to teaching and content for the participants, I highlighted the gaps, connections and challenges for participants between contexts. To address the wonders I began to explore in the beginning of this dissertation, I have engaged in a discussion throughout this chapter that connects the data with a larger body of literature and

the pertinent curriculum orientations that support this research, In the next chapter

I present the significance of these results in relation to Aboriginal education in

Canada through a series of implications and future directions.

Chapter Seven: Implications and Future Directions

I initially set out on this research path with an interest in how Mi'kmaw students were resolving any tensions between their learning at home and in school. My findings were context-dependent. For the participants in band-controlled Ni'newey Community School there was very little evidence of having to choose between two knowledge systems and few tensions between their home and school learning. This was largely due to the close connections between the school and the community and the work of their teachers to create a more holistic educational experience for them in social studies. When problematic narratives were presented, such as the story of Columbus discovering North America, their teachers were there as a nurturing guide to help them navigate[16]. The participants in the provincially-controlled school system told a different story. Those attending East Coast High School under provincial jurisdiction had to take an active role in resolving any tensions between contradictory home and school knowledge. They sought out connections on their own and had little support outside of their relationship with Ms. K. As shown through the case study in Chapter Five and subsequent analysis and discussion, the education for the participants at East Coast High School could not be considered as being representative of holistic learning.

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[16] This is not to say that the curriculum need not be changed for these participants; they were well aware of the gaps in the prescribed curriculum for social studies and credited their teachers for helping to smooth this for them.

This study has been beneficial to me as a teacher, researcher and learner. I was able to examine some of my own taken for granted assumptions and through my interactions with the participants in Ni'newey and Welte'temsi I am beginning to paint a clearer picture of what social studies education might look like for Mi'kmaw learners in provincially-controlled and band-controlled school contexts. As the participants from Ni'newey Community School shared their experiences, I heard them say they felt represented in their social studies courses and they thanked their teachers for this. Writing up and analyzing the data generated in Ni'newey was largely a positive experience for me. When I moved to writing the case study for East Coast High School I felt discouraged as I reflected on some of the participants' experiences. As a teacher and teacher educator, it was not easy for me to hear stories about feeling ignored and silenced. The silver lining in these narratives from the participants from East Coast High School was their commitment to a hopeful future for Mi'kmaw representation in social studies. Another positive piece for me within the provincially-controlled school case study was seeing the benefits of the relationship between the participants and Ms. K. Through this I was able to inquire further into the importance and impact of teachers who enact their cultural practical knowledge in their classrooms.

As I worked with the case studies from Ni'newey and Welte'temsi, I was able to group the data into relevant sub-themes within the analysis. What kept recurring in both cases were instances of othering, exoticness, misinformation, stereotyping and racism. The East Coast High School participants in particular discussed feeling excluded on multiple occasions and the Ni'newey Community

School participants discussed their experiences of these issues outside of their school and community. Both groups reflected on their ability to navigate between official and personal narratives in their social studies education. Specific to the band school case study was the theme of place and belonging, while specific to the provincial school case study was a higher level of feeling like an outcast within the school. As I reflected on these themes, I kept coming back to thinking about culturally relevant and culturally responsive education practices and I began to wonder how this could help negotiate some of these sub-themes, especially tensions around race, prejudice and misinformation, for Mi'kmaw students. While I pondered this I reflected on the findings from Kanu's (2002, 2005, 2011) and Orlowski's (2008) research and realized that it is not as simple as just asking teachers to be culturally relevant or responsive in their classrooms. There needs to be a stronger commitment to this type of work at all levels and there needs to be considerable support available for the development of this.

I began to think through what I felt was missing from these approaches and how I could address the needs of my participants in the midst of the realities of non-Mi'kmaw teachers struggling to meet the needs of their Mi'kmaw students with limited support and resources. It was through this reflection and questioning that I developed the term *culturally responsible* to replace *culturally relevant* and *culturally responsive* approaches to education. I have structured my recommendations around this idea. The following section outlines what I mean by a culturally responsible approach and discusses the supports that I feel are needed to make this a reality in schools. In the second section I focus on the implications

of this study on social studies education, paying particular attention to specific recommendations made by the participants in this study and sub-themes that arose during data analysis. The third section provides some ideas for future research and the fourth and final section focuses on general conclusions from this study.

Culturally Responsible Social Studies Education for Mi'kmaw Students

There has been a continuing call in education to teach from a culturally based approach. Two key pedagogical approaches aimed at reaching diverse learners in the classroom are culturally responsive teaching and culturally relevant teaching (Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1995). Ladson-Billings claimed that the majority of classrooms do not adequately teach African-American students and advocated for what she calls *culturally relevant pedagogy* in education. She stressed that a key idea within culturally relevant education is the connection between the school and the culture and believes that "educators traditionally have attempted to insert culture into the education, instead of inserting education into the culture" (p.159), thereby privileging the school over the home. In explaining culturally relevant pedagogy she described it as "a pedagogy of opposition […] specifically committed to collective not merely individual empowerment" (p.160). Ladson-Billings explained that "culturally relevant pedagogy rests on three criteria or propositions: (a) students must experience academic success: (b) students must develop and/or maintain cultural competence; and (c) students must develop a critical consciousness through which they challenge the status quo of the current social order" (p.160). Gay (2000) believes that culturally responsive teaching is made up of six characteristics. A culturally responsive pedagogy

should be validating, comprehensive, multidimensional, empowering,

transformative and emancipatory and she believes that these characteristics should

be rooted in cultural knowledge, prior experiences and learning styles. Both of

these pedagogical approaches are quite similar in their intentions – both wish to

see learning for minority students rooted in culture and context.

Going deeper into the etymology of the words *relevant* and *responsive* I

look to the work of Nicol, Archibald, and Baker (2012). According to Nicol et

al.,

> [t]he word relevant stems from "relevare" meaning "to lessen, lighten" and
> "congruity" meaning "agreement." It is associated with the words "relieve"
> and "appropriate." Responsive, on the other hand, is related to "respondre"
> meaning to "respond, answer to, promise in return" and stems from the
> meaning "back" and spondere "to pledge." Thus culturally relevant
> education can be considered as an "appropriate relief" of an educational
> problem prompting questions of whose problem, where it is located, what
> should be done and who should be involved. Alternatively, culturally
> responsive education emphasizes the reciprocal relationship that exists
> among those who constitute an educational community. Considering
> culturally responsive education emphasizes the collective responsiveness to
> problems making it more difficult for culturally responsive education to
> simply be a more expedient way of acculturating students to dominant
> social norms. (p. 3)

It is fine to agree on the problem and work to address it but where is the urgency

in these approaches? The problem has been established and many scholars across Canada have been writing about the need for a culturally responsive approach to Aboriginal education yet it seems little has changed for Aboriginal students (Antone & Cordoba, 2005). Nicol et al. further stated:

> There are numerous calls for curriculum that is more responsive, relevant, sustaining, and connected to students' lives, community, and culture (Gay 2000; Ladson-Billings 1995; Greer et al. 2009; Paris 2012). In addition there are multiple calls for the inclusion of culturally responsive teaching practices (Gay 2000; Greer et al. 2009; Villegas and Lucas 2002). Demmert and Towner (2003) in their review of the literature on culturally responsive teaching report that there is little evidence that indicates a relationship between achievement and culturally responsive practices. (p. 3)

The work of culturally responsible education is not necessarily focused on achievement by present-day standards, usually meaning grades and scores. My overarching concern is around Mi'kmaw representation within the social studies curriculum, holistic and inclusive practices for Mi'kmaw education that support the four themes of development and well-being, and the decolonization of the social studies field for these learners. For me, this is the great responsibility to which curriculum developers and other educational stakeholders must be committed. Although I do not reject any of the principles behind culturally responsive or culturally relevant education, I seek to add urgency to these

pedagogical approaches and suggest this as a formal mandate for provincially-controlled schools in supporting Mi'kmaw education.

After completing this research, I advocate for what I will call *culturally responsible* teaching. Rather than trying to exact cultural proficiency, which is a current focus of the Nova Scotia Department of Education that is considered to be problematic for people outside of the culture (Aylward, 2006), I ask educators to adopt a lens of cultural responsibility. The word proficiency implies mastery, but can a non-Mi'kmaw person outside of the Mi'kmaw culture ever be considered culturally proficient? If teachers are responsible to all students and responsible for engaging students in conversations about their learning and respecting students' experiences and histories in teaching, how can they not be responsible for maintaining and fostering cultural identity? I argue that culturally responsible teaching is as important as, if not more important than the current drive around achievement-based initiatives in Nova Scotia.

I believe that a *culturally responsible* approach would represent the themes of development (mental, emotional, spiritual and physical) for the Mi'kmaw learner in social studies education. I have one chief reason for changing the terminology from *culturally responsive* or *relevant* pedagogy to *culturally responsible*. The literal meaning of responsive is to react quickly and positively, responding readily with interest and enthusiasm. The literal meaning of relevant is closely connected with or appropriate to the matter at hand. These terms do not express the imperative nature of this work. For me, the terms responsive and relevant imply suggested or voluntary work, while responsibility

means having a duty to deal with something and remaining accountable. Making

pedagogy for Mi'kmaw learners imperative is, in my opinion, key to enacting

change under a decolonizing paradigm for these students.

Pewewardy (1994) first coined the term *culturally responsible*

pedagogy in relation to his work at an American Indian school. The mission of

this school was to "place education into culture rather than continuing the practice

of placing culture into education" (p. 78). I believe my understanding of culturally

responsible pedagogy is different from Pewewardy's in that I use the term to

imply an imperative nature to this work and I am specifically writing about

supports needed for a Mi'kmaw context. Being careful not to generalize to other

cultural groups and develop a one size fits all approach, I remain committed to

local issues and contexts and developed my ideas with specific Nova Scotian

contextual factors in mind. The major differences between my work on culturally

responsible pedagogy and Pewewardy's is that he believes "designing culturally

responsible pedagogy may amount to nothing more than a change of names and

faces of those who decide how and what will be learned by Indian students" (p.

81). Because all school curricula in Nova Scotia falls under a provincial

framework, I have gone deeper into this idea of culturally responsible pedagogy

and provided spaces for this form of teaching to exist in a non-Mi'kmaw school

setting. Pewewardy and I both agree that:

> Culturally responsible pedagogy involves providing the best possible
>
> education for children that preserves their own cultural heritage,
>
> prepares them for meaningful relationships with other people, and for

living productive lives in the present society without sacrificing their

own cultural perspective (p. 83).

In addition to this, we both believe that teacher education has a role in developing

culturally responsible pedagogical approaches in classrooms. I expand on my

recommendations for culturally responsible teacher education and further develop

my approach to a culturally responsible pedagogy later in this chapter.

Based on the data generated with participants, I believe that band-

controlled Ni'newey Community School is doing an excellent job of enacting a

culturally responsible pedagogy. The teachers appear to value and extend their

work to foster the intellectual, emotional, spiritual, and physical development and

well-being of the learner in spite of the limitations of the prescribed curriculum.

However, it is important to note that this may be significantly easier to

accomplish given the connections of the educational stakeholders to their

surroundings and the cultural practical knowledge of the teachers and

administrators. This can be further established by looking at the experiences of

the participants at East Coast High School. Within their provincially-controlled

school context they were able to make a deep connection with Ms. K, the one

Mi'kmaw teacher on staff. Her cultural practical knowledge (Orr, Paul, & Paul,

2002) created an inclusive space for the participants and her work on developing a

holistic learning environment within the school further supported these learners.

Nicol et al. (2012) stated that "culturally responsive pedagogy is responsive to the

cultural environment in which students and schools are situated" (p. 10). I have

shown that the cultural environment of East Coast High School is not Mi'kmaw

and the culturally responsive pedagogy that may be taking place there is not necessarily geared for Mi'kmaw learners. The participants from Ni'newey Community School had a strong sense of place and belonging that the participants from East Coast High School lacked.

> Nicol et al. (2012), looking to the work of Cajete (1999), explained that A sense of place leads to an understanding of historical, cultural, emotional, and genetic links to one's surroundings. It offers possibilities for experiencing the deeply interconnected nature of the human and non-human worlds. A pedagogy of place or place-based education then strives to help students develop a sense of place that is grounded not only in knowing and understanding communities, neighbourhoods, or local regions but also in understanding the interrelationships between our local places and other places in the world. (p. 10)

Based on what I have learned about holistic education for Mi'kmaw students, I believe that place-based education is also significant for the Mi'kmaw learners in provincially-controlled schools. Our Words, Our Ways (Alberta Education, 2005), an Alberta resource designed to support teachers in infusing Aboriginal perspectives in their teaching, highlights the importance of place and belonging in Aboriginal education. The authors state the importance of understanding that Aboriginal worldviews grow out of a connection to the Earth and that these worldviews encompass connections to place and belonging. Alberta Education (2005) states: "the Earth provides the land on which people

build communities—land and community dictate a way of life" (p. 16). Mi'kmaw

communities are filled with knowledge and culture that can't always be found in a

curriculum document. Educators and curriculum developers should look to the

communities as a significant resource in Mi'kmaw education and provide a

welcoming classroom space for students, families and community members to

come together to share their knowledge. Orr (2004) concluded that

> teaching social studies for understanding of First Nations issues
>
> can be a very enriching and rewarding experience for both students
>
> and teachers … [I]t is important that as teachers we strive to
>
> cultivate an informed citizenry who have explored and clarified
>
> their place in honouring, respecting and advancing the place of
>
> Aboriginal peoples within Canadian society. (p. 174)

A pedagogy that focuses on place and belonging is also a way to unpack some of

the issues present for First Nations learners and allow community and place to

help inform practices within the classroom. Focusing on place and allowing for

local content to enter into the classroom can allow for more discussion and

understanding of First Nations issues.

> Orr (2004) cautioned
>
> we must recognize that few teachers have been adequately
>
> prepared to bring this perspective into the social studies
>
> classroom on a regular basis … when teachers have a limited
>
> understanding of Aboriginal issues, they tend to teach about
>
> First Nations peoples as an abstract perspective and often with

little empathy for how Aboriginal peoples might see the issues.

So the first challenge for social studies teachers who come to

their work with these limitations is to awaken to the need to

expand their knowledge. Only then can they educate

themselves through reading and viewing resources written from

Aboriginal perspectives and getting to know Aboriginal people.

(p. 167)

It is important to note that I do not believe that teachers should be thrown into this

kind of work without significant preparation and support. In the following section

I present some recommendations for the supports needed to achieve a culturally

responsible approach to Mi'kmaw social studies education.

Supports needed for culturally responsible social studies education.

Drawing from the work of the developers of the First Nations Holistic Lifelong

Learning Model (Canadian Council on Learning [CCL], 2007), social studies

education can begin to focus on lifelong learning. It can respect and value the

knowledge learned in the home and community and encourage experiential

learning tied to lived experiences that is "structured through regular community

interactions, such as sharing circles, ceremonies, meditation or story telling and

daily activities" (p. 6). Social studies curriculum rooted in Aboriginal culture can

help to maintain Aboriginal knowledge systems and foster learning as a

communal activity that supports the needs of Mi'kmaw learners. The Canadian

Council on Learning [CCL] (2007) stated that "parental and family involvement

in community learning can entail diverse roles: parents and family as the first

educators in the home, as central partners with the school and as advocates and key decision makers for all children and youth" (p. 7). According to the CCL (2007), connecting to the role of Elders in Mi'kmaw communities is paramount as they

> transmit the community's culture through parables, allegories, lessons and
> poetry, presented over a long period of time. They play an important role
> in fostering culturally affirming school environments that link students,
> staff, families and community to Aboriginal cultures and traditions. (p. 7)

In keeping with Schwab's (1978) premise of curriculum commonplaces, the teachers, students, subject matter, and milieu should be given equal consideration and weight in the curricular process. Forming community connections and involving Elders in helping to extract the rich Mi'kmaw knowledge that exists across this province would help to bring in more of the commonplace of milieu and contribute to a more inclusive curriculum for Mi'kmaw learners. The best way to decolonize Mi'kmaw social studies curriculum is to listen to Mi'kmaw people as they deconstruct their social studies experiences and within this dissertation 13 Mi'kmaw students have shared their experiences and asked for more community connections. They have specified that they would like to learn more from Mi'kmaw people and they have specified that they would like to learn more Mi'kmaw content. This is also reflected in the premises behind place-based education as described in the previous section. Listening to and valuing these voices can begin the process of reconstruction necessary in decolonization work.

The results of this research contain many implications for teaching and teacher education. There is a call and a demonstrated need for increased teacher training of Mi'kmaw teachers in Nova Scotia. Based on the stories of success connected to the work of Ms. K at East Coast High School, I assert that it is necessary to increase the number of Mi'kmaw teachers working in provincially-controlled schools. More Mi'kmaw history and cultural content can and should be taught by Elders. Mi'kmaw students should be supported in learning to speak Mi'kmaw. Mi'kmaw language learning and tools for retention should also be a priority in both provincially-controlled and band-controlled schools.

I also recommend the development of a course in teacher preparatory programs that focuses on aspects of Mi'kmaw learning, building connections in communities, and a relational approach to Indigenous and Western knowledge. Such a course would assist teachers in meeting the needs of Mi'kmaw learners across all subject areas. Building upon a recommendation made by Orr (2004), I believe another area for consideration in teacher education is the addition of courses that prepare teachers for teaching Aboriginal students. According to Orr, teachers are not always adequately prepared for teaching social studies from a First Nations perspective. These courses should focus on readings and resources rooted in Aboriginal perspectives, understandings of Aboriginal ways of learning as described by the First Nations Holistic Lifelong Learning Model (CCL, 2007), and opportunities to ask questions about and engage with Aboriginal content and issues. With a course such as this, teachers would be supported in their preparation and increase their understandings of Aboriginal issues. Professional

development opportunities for in-service teachers, certificate programs, or a stream in Masters of Education programs across the province would also be helpful. A positive step might be for the provincially-controlled schools in Nova Scotia to negotiate a formal partnership with the Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey (MK) school board for added support.

In terms of school climate, the participants from the provincially-controlled school demonstrated the need for more celebrations, presentations, information and awareness sessions, and opportunities to attend traditional ceremonies such as powwows and sweat lodges. However, this needs to be handled in ways that highlight respectful attendance and engagement. Having these types of learning experiences mocked by others will do little to foster a positive school climate for both Mi'kmaw and non-Mi'kmaw youth. Creating an inclusive school environment that is welcoming and supportive of Mi'kmaw learners will require engagement with Mi'kmaw educators, students, families, Elders, and community members. These close ties to Mi'kmaw contexts will allow students to *be* Mi'kmaq in school and draw upon their connections to home and community.

The current research in Nova Scotia on the achievement gap in math and literacy (Thiessen, 2009) for Mi'kmaw and African Nova Scotian learners shows that there is a disconnect for these students in school. The fact that very few students would self-identify as African Nova Scotian or Mi'kmaq in the study was also problematic (Thiessen, 2009). For me, this connects to Helen's worry about being 'too Mi'kmaq at school'. If the school is not a welcoming and supportive

environment and trusting relationships have not been built and maintained

between students and teachers, I fear that Mi'kmaw students will continue to be

unwilling to self-identify and celebrate their cultural identities.

The participants in Ni'newey felt like the school and community were one

big family and they believe that their school was partly responsible for their

development of strong Mi'kmaw characters. The school allowed them to *be*

Mi'kmaq. For these participants there was no separation between school and

home; both were viewed as safe spaces in which to learn. Educators and

administrators can learn from the stories of the participants in Ni'newey and

Welte'temsi and from the holistic practices of teachers in the MK school system.

Creating an inclusive school for all learners is one of the main goals of education

in the 21st Century and so it is important to hear the experiences of the various

stakeholders in Aboriginal education.

In order for the schools to be respectful of the contexts that shape identities

and subjectivities of learners, there must be a commitment to knowing and

understanding the life experiences of these students. The participants in

Welte'temsi would begin to address this and participate in the reconstruction

phase of a decolonizing agenda by incorporating more Mi'kmaw history and

culture within the school, allowing more engagement with cultural ceremonies,

and fostering more partnerships with local community members who can best

share narratives of Mi'kmaw experience in Nova Scotia. Reflective of the

premises behind curriculum reconceptualization, notions of place, autobiography,

time, and context must be taken into consideration because without these, the learner will be unable to connect with the curriculum on a meaningful level.

It is also important to acknowledge that engagement with aspects of Mi'kmaw identity is constantly shifting for many students. Peck (2011) cautions:

as identity, and ethnic identity in particular, is in constant flux, so must be attempts to define these concepts. Any definitions or other such understandings of ethnicity and related concepts must always be considered tentative and open to discussion and elaboration. Otherwise, we run the risk of returning to the problem of essentialized definitions of identity. (p. 319)

Culturally responsible education does not seek to create an essentialized definition of identity but rather a pedagogical stance that allows for engagement with the cultural (or ethnic) aspect of identity. I am not suggesting that Mi'kmaw identity is static and fixed or even shared by all Mi'kmaw people. As shown in my findings, when I deliberately left questions open and did not include the word Mi'kmaq, I allowed the participants to engage with whichever aspect of their identity that they saw fit. Some chose to discuss their experiences as Mi'kmaw people while others did not. I do not see culturally responsible education as being a way to simply transmit Mi'kmaw content and knowledge but rather as a way to create the space for students to engage with this content and knowledge in ways that make sense to them.

Implications for Social Studies Curriculum in Nova Scotia

I have expanded on the recommendations that the participants identified during our conversations in Chapters Four and Five for future curriculum development tied to cultural identity. These are learner-generated ideas that stress the importance of valuing the history and the culture of Mi'kmaw students. The social studies curriculum can reflect the lives of Mi'kmaw students by focusing on the identities that were built from birth in the home (Witt, 2006), celebrating these and creating greater connections between home and school. I believe the curriculum can help to reinforce and validate identity for Mi'kmaw students by supporting and encouraging teachers to provide Aboriginal perspectives in their teaching. One of my earlier wonderings in this dissertation questioned how non-Mi'kmaw teachers might accomplish a similar level of respect for the identities of the Mi'kmaw learner. Initially, I believed that the most important avenue that non-Mi'kmaw teachers should consider is simply to listen to the Mi'kmaw students. However, I realize that this isn't always so simple and teachers often feel unprepared, unsupported and undereducated in contexts unfamiliar to their own (Agbo, 2004; Orr, 2004; Kanu, 2002, 2005, 2011; Orlowski, 2008; den Heyer, 2009; St. Denis, 2011). Below, I have listed a few supports that must be put into place to help teachers navigate this shift.

Teachers should seek out curricular materials with strong Aboriginal content and perspectives, use local connections and people, focus on present-day Aboriginal issues, highlight past achievements and understandings, and encourage all aspects of development and well-being (mental, emotional, spiritual, and

physical). I do not expect non-Mi'kmaw teachers to enter into social studies

classrooms and teach authentically from a Mi'kmaw worldview. However, I do

expect non-Mi'kmaw teachers to support their Mi'kmaw students by fostering

local connections and by encouraging and valuing the voices of Mi'kmaw

learners and educators. This is where the term *responsible* over relevant or

responsive comes into play. By making this an imperative, the Department of

Education and provincial school boards would be committed to assisting social

studies teachers in meeting the goals specified above. Resources should be

provided across the province and a formal partnership between the Department of

Education and Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey should be established. In addition to

this, partnerships between local Mi'kmaw communities and school boards should

be developed. Consistent engagement with the Mi'kmaw Services Division at the

Department of Education would also help schools and teachers evaluate the

quality of social studies education delivery for Mi'kmaw students and assist in

locating and securing relevant resources that are reflective of Mi'kmaw history

and culture.

I, through the words of my participants, have established throughout this

dissertation that education about indigenous peoples is not only for indigenous

peoples – this is important for all students. Kanu (2011) believes that "refusal to

access the knowledge and wisdom of others produces self-fragmentation in us" (p.

15) and she concludes that this self-fragmentation denies the learner the

development and understanding needed to understand the world and "impair[s]

the capacity for informed action" (p. 15). Social studies education, by its very definition, should produce the capacity for informed action in all students.

A holistic social studies education. In terms of holistic learning for Mi'kmaw students, I recommend that curriculum developers, educators, and administrators create learning that is rooted in Aboriginal approaches to education and focuses specifically on Mi'kmaw learning styles. Education professionals can demonstrate their commitment to the development of the whole person in schooling by making sure the themes of mental, emotional, spiritual and physical development and well-being are represented in social studies curriculum and pedagogy. Through this research I have been able to visualize what social studies education might look like if teachers and curriculum developers adopted a holistic learning approach.

Based on this study, I have some ideas for how social studies content can contribute to the development and well-being of Mi'kmaw learners in all four areas. In terms of mental development and well-being, curriculum developers should focus more on encouraging critical literacy among perspectives presented as well as ensuring that multiple perspectives are presented. I believe that the social studies outcomes for Nova Scotia allow for students to take an active role in their learning by encouraging thinking, decision-making, idea formation, interpreting, and contemplating. What is important within this theme is that Mi'kmaw students be encouraged and supported to engage in critical questioning and imagining within their social studies courses. In order to connect with learners' mental development, social studies curriculum should continue to focus

on a critical and analytical approach that allows counter-narratives to be shared and examined in a safe setting.

To foster emotional development and well-being, I believe that the social studies curriculum can provide more enjoyment, sentiment, sensitivity, and emotion. An emotional connection to the curriculum should not stem from misinformation, misconceptions, and holes in the content. Emotional development for social studies learners can be tied to "exemplifying the individual's self-esteem or the extent to which he or she acknowledges personal gifts" (CCL, 2007, p. 19). The participants in both contexts in this study provided many recommendations for social studies curriculum development that would increase their emotional ties with the subject matter in positive ways. I believe that if social studies curriculum focused more on celebrating Mi'kmaw culture and history, self-esteem for the Mi'kmaw learner would increase.

Fostering spiritual development and well-being for Mi'kmaw students involves building confidence, awareness, and hope around Mi'kmaw culture, history, and issues. Addressing spiritual development and well-being in social studies requires more Mi'kmaw content, practices, and connections to community and home. The curriculum can achieve this by increasing Mi'kmaw content that is representative of community perspectives and understandings within the courses outside of Mi'kmaq Studies 10 (see section on Expanding the reach of Mi'kmaq Studies 10 for further recommendations). Physical development and well-being is a bit more tricky to connect to the social studies curriculum. However, I believe that physical development and well-being can be accomplished through social

studies education by encouraging and supporting experiential learning: learning by doing. Inquiry-based approaches to social studies content would be extremely beneficial for Mi'kmaw learners and would encompass all areas of development and well-being. In addition to this, providing opportunities for experiential learning such as traditional games, craftsmanship, ceremonies, and advocacy could achieve this for Mi'kmaw learners. These suggestions all incorporate kinesthetic learning styles and engagement with visual representations. I also think that a greater focus on the other three themes of mental, emotional and spiritual development would help Mi'kmaw students with their respect for self, which might contribute to increased respect for their physical bodies.

The integration of Western and Indigenous knowledge in social studies. A key premise behind successful learning for Aboriginal students according to the CCL is that learning must integrate Aboriginal and Western knowledge: "Aboriginal learning is not a static activity, but rather an adaptive process that derives the best from traditional and contemporary knowledge… [L]earning that integrates Western and Indigenous knowledge, research shows, can counteract the effects of cultural mismatch" (p. 7). I have determined that although the participants from the band-controlled school experienced some similarities with Josephine's story in Chapter One, they did not feel the effects of a binary between Indigenous and Western knowledge as deeply as did the participants from the provincially-controlled school.

Rather than having Mi'kmaw students try to form home and community connections to the curriculum on their own, as evidenced by the experiences of

the Welte'temsi participants who worked to make sense of cultural history of other groups by connecting to their own, curriculum developers should form negotiated partnerships with Mi'kmaw communities, families, Elders, Mi'kmaw educators, Mi'kmaw counselors, and Mi'kmaw students. The Mi'kmaq Studies 10 development team has already accomplished this type of partnership and it would be a useful approach to curriculum development in other social studies courses. Future curriculum development can surely be informed by the successful partnerships that currently exist. This could also be a consideration for future research that asks: How do these partnerships work? What are the costs and benefits of this type of work? As I have shown by my research, Mi'kmaw students feel connected to the Mi'kmaq Studies 10 curriculum. Working with the development team, what areas can be woven into the other social studies courses to help strengthen the connections between indigenous and western knowledge?

Expanding the reach of Mi'kmaq Studies 10. I recognize that there is an ongoing discussion about whether or not a course like Mi'kmaq Studies 10 should exist as a stand-alone social studies course (see Ermine, 1995; Battiste, 2000; Orr, 2004; Tupper & Cappello, 2008; St. Denis; 2011) and I see the merit in advocating for a specific course that privileges Mi'kmaw history and knowledge and resisting 'lumping' Aboriginal education into a "neutral multicultural space" (St. Denis, 2011, p. 306). I also see the merit in making the content of a course like Mi'kmaq Studies 10 accessible through all social studies courses, thereby fully including the content within the mainstream curriculum. Without the requirement that all students must take Mi'kmaq Studies 10 as a graduation

requirement, thereby mandating that they receive content on Mi'kmaw history and culture before they leave school, there is no guarantee that students will be given any exposure or access to the themes found in Mi'kmaq Studies 10. Regardless of where any of us stand in this debate, with the changing nature of graduation requirements in Nova Scotia and an increased focus on trade-based subjects, as per the *Kids and Learning First* initiative brought forth in 2012, it is highly unlikely that the Mi'kmaq Studies 10 course will become a graduation requirement. However, there is an alternative. As the participants in both contexts wished to see more inclusive subject matter in their social studies courses, they believe this could be achieved by weaving the themes of the Mi'kmaq Studies 10 course into other social studies courses across the secondary grade levels.

Based on their experiences at Ni'newey Community School the participants in Ni'newey advocated for an increased reliance on traditional practices, teachings, and ceremonies within the prescribed curriculum, beyond Mi'kmaq Studies 10. They believe that this would benefit both Mi'kmaw and non-Mi'kmaw learners. The Welte'temsi participants from East Coast High School advocated for more connections to spirituality within curriculum and schools. They wished to see content focusing on the Seven Sacred Teachings, Mi'kmaw cultural protocols, and increased expression of culture, language, music, art, poetry, and ceremonies reflective of the Mi'kmaw culture. For example, they believe that all learners would benefit from greater understandings

of the uses and history of hieroglyphs and the uses and benefits of traditional medicine.

The participants in both contexts wished to see more focus on recent accomplishments of Mi'kmaw people and communities and more local connections to important Mi'kmaw advocates like Donald Marshall Jr. Curriculum that helps portray the importance and role of the Grand Chiefs was also important to the participants in Welte'temsi. Both groups felt that hearing the stories of centralization told from community perspectives would help others understand the historical and present-day impacts of the relocation policy. The participants also believe that more content and teaching around Mi'kmaw treaty rights would help lessen misunderstandings and misconceptions around many issues that Mi'kmaw people face in their relations with non-Mi'kmaw people. They expressed a need for culture to be portrayed as present rather than focusing strictly on Mi'kmaw history, where traditional practices appear to be situated only in the past. These are all topics that are currently present in the Mi'kmaq Studies 10 course.

In order to achieve a meaningful connection between the Mi'kmaw learner and the curriculum, the design must not focus on a generic understanding of Aboriginal issues and content. I argue that all content should be localized and representative of the Mi'kmaw culture and history, as lived by Mi'kmaw community members. A large concern voiced by the participants in both contexts was that students not taking Mi'kmaq Studies 10 were missing this information.

As I have established earlier in this chapter and in chapter 6, this knowledge is beneficial to all students.

Along with numerous participants in this study, I propose that the content of this course be woven into other areas of the social studies curriculum. The Mi'kmaq Studies 10 course was developed locally by Mi'kmaw educators in partnership with some non-Mi'kmaw educators who have demonstrated commitment to strong Mi'kmaw representation in the curriculum. It provides an excellent starting point in understanding Mi'kmaw culture and history in schools and has recently been re-evaluated by a team of the aforementioned educators, with a focus on quality resources.

Access to Mi'kmaw resources. Developing a localized curriculum with resource and teacher support will help represent Mi'kmaw knowledge. The East Coast High School and Ni'newey Community School participants wished to see updated textbooks written by Aboriginal authors and showcasing Aboriginal perspectives, however, it is important to note that most of the participants wanted to learn more content orally, rather than from textbooks. Beyond engaging with community members and Elders as recommended by the participants, I believe rolling out the Mi'kmaw Studies 10 resources into all schools and providing professional development opportunities about how to use these materials in all social studies classes can also accomplish an increased access to local Mi'kmaw resources. As of early 2013 these resources have been presented to the Nova Scotia Department of Education's Mi'kmaq Services Division in the form of a jackdaw (a collection of materials) but have not yet been released into schools. I

believe that significant professional development should also accompany the release of this content in schools across the province.

        Residential school content. The most important concern the participants in both contexts raised was the need for a curriculum that focuses on residential schooling. For the participants at East Coast High School, information about residential schooling policies and practices was the most significant aspect that they wished to see included in their social studies courses. The participants from Ni'newey Community School echoed this. Both groups specifically wished to see this taught through the stories of local survivors. This type of curriculum has recently been developed in the Northwest Territories and can serve as a model for future curricular development in the East. I do not suggest that educators teach from this curriculum as is, but rather that curriculum developers use this framework as a guide to developing a locally-based curriculum focused on residential schooling. It should include the voices of survivors, Elders, and community members. The Nova Scotia Department of Education will soon be providing classrooms across the province with a set of DVDs titled *100 Years of Loss*, which is a national initiative of the Aboriginal Healing Foundation. Teachers will be encouraged to use the DVDs in their social studies classes. I think this is a good first step but I worry that without adequate teacher preparation and support, as well as community input, their pedagogical practices could resemble those of the teachers in Kanu's (2005) study, who relied strictly on video to transmit content. Until a localized residential school curriculum can be developed, the use of these DVDs in classrooms should be supported by

community building in classrooms, support for teachers and students, and collaboration with counselors, Elders, community members, and families. Most of all, the participants in this study have demonstrated that the stories of survivors of the residential schools are the most important and authentic pieces that can be used to teach about residential schooling.

A safe space for critical thinking in social studies. Kanu's (2005) and Orlowski's (2008) studies show that teachers are struggling with how to incorporate Aboriginal content, perspectives, and issues into the social studies curriculum. With regards to the teaching of controversial issues — controversial in this case meaning any content that may provoke an emotional response — I come back to the words of Battiste (2004):

> [T]eachers who attempt to bring forward the oppressive historical
> and contemporary experiences of Indigenous peoples in Canada
> through such courses as Native Studies and social studies find that
> breaking the silence of oppression is fraught with pressures and
> emotional forces damaging to the lecturers themselves, and to First
> Nations students. (p. 8)

Teaching about issues connected to residential schooling is emotionally-laden for many people. In order to address some of the recommendations described in the previous section, teachers across the province should be provided with the tools for addressing controversial issues in the classroom and educated on safe practices in education for dealing with value-laden content. Hess (2009) explained that discussion of controversial issues in the classroom builds democratic skills

necessary in social studies classrooms. Believing that the teaching of controversial issues increases students political and civic engagement, Hess (2009) posited, "we must concentrate our efforts on ensuring that all students have access to what we know enhances political and civic participation. High-quality education that does not serve the goals of equality is really not high quality at all" (p. 172). Further to this, she stated:

> schools have not just the right, but also the obligation, to create
>
> an atmosphere of intellectual and political freedom that uses
>
> genuine public controversies to help students discuss and
>
> envision political possibilities. Addressing public controversies in
>
> schools not only is more educative than quashing or ignoring
>
> differences, it also enhances the quality of decision-making by
>
> ensuring that multiple and competing views about controversial
>
> political issues are aired, fairly considered, and critically
>
> evaluated. (p. 6)

I, and my participants in this study, have established that teaching about residential schools is needed within the Nova Scotia social studies curriculum and it is clear that schools have a responsibility to provided avenues for exploring this issue, among others. However, I strongly believe that teachers must be well supported to deal with this content before it is added to the curriculum.

I see the work of educational counselors fitting in to this process. An understanding that this content for many is largely personal and traumatic is paramount. This does not mean that it should be avoided but rather that the

narratives should be presented in a safe space for the learner and the teacher. Addressing controversial topics in the classroom can be considered dangerous teaching but this would allow teachers to take up difficult knowledge rather than focusing on safe or lovely knowledge (Britzman, 1998). Knowledge that does not implicate students in their own sense making does not allow for the experience of rupture that is necessary in decolonizing education. According to Tupper (2005) social studies educators should be committed to a process of *re(hi)storation* which would allow students to examine a historical narrative for gaps. She explains this as follows: "Re(hi)storation is about restoring something that already existed in the first place but that has been neglected, abandoned, and forgotten" (para. 8). For Tupper (2005) this can be accomplished by encouraging students to critically examine the content they are presented with and focus on determining what it is they know and what they feel is missing. Following this, students must then engage in questioning why the gaps in the narrative are there and how this missing information or perspective affects present and future understandings. If education is to be decolonized then there are ethical implications for encountering difficult knowledge that seeks to rupture a dominant story or understanding. Teachers must allow students to self-author their understandings of this difficult knowledge and encourage emotional responses that call the self to the forefront.

If social studies should address First Nations issues and teach *for* them rather than *about* them, as recommended by Orr (2004), teachers and students should be given adequate supports in and outside of the classroom. Teachers require the pedagogical skills to create a community in their classrooms before

beginning this type of work. I see an important role for teacher education and in-service teacher professional development that focus on community-building and developing and maintaining trusting relationships between student and teacher and among students. Some sources of guidance for strategies to deal with the sensitive content around residential schooling are the counseling field, community advocates, allies in Mi'kmaw education, experienced educators, and Elders. In the following section, I outline several avenues for future research that could build on and extend this work.

Future Research

If knowledge can be tied to personal development and well-being, it is clear to me based on the data analysis that there are significant gaps within this holistic learning process for Mi'kmaw learners. This research was unique to the individual and it was context–dependent; it did not provide a sweeping one-size-fits-all perspective on Mi'kmaw education. However, the experiences of the participants in both contexts have provided a starting point for taking these conversations further. Curriculum developers, policy makers, teacher educators, teachers, administrators, and future scholars can benefit from hearing the voices of these participants and reflecting on existing practices.

It is important to note that this research focused on the learner's experiences with curriculum (subject matter) and their connections to the milieu and to teachers. A major limitation in this study is that I did not explore the voices of the teachers in relation to the experiences of the participants. The teacher voice could speak to the experiences described by the participants. I think

there is much to be learned from the teachers at Ni'newey Community School in regards to holistic practices for Mi'kmaw education and there is much to be learned from the teachers at East Coast High School in relation to the gaps experienced by the participants from Welte'temsi. In order to build on this research and increase their understanding of the current state of social studies education for Mi'kmaw learners in Nova Scotia, researchers must talk with teachers in both provincially-controlled and band-controlled school contexts.

A study of teachers could also provide insight into teacher cultural practical knowledge and its applications for non-Aboriginal educators. Further insight into the development and maintenance of positive school climates for Aboriginal students is also needed. Locally, researchers could look into the holistic practices exhibited by teachers from the band-controlled school system. They could investigate negotiated school and community partnerships and build upon the existing work surrounding these partnerships.

Recently, I had a conversation with a colleague where we were discussing our thoughts around both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal teachers being educated within a Eurocentric dominated system and how best to prepare teachers for the diversity of students in the classroom. She told me about a presentation given in her undergraduate education course by two Aboriginal students to a crowd of non-Aboriginal pre-service teachers. The presenters focused on the importance of respecting and valuing Aboriginal identity in the classroom and they discussed their learning to date in their B.Ed program. Both stressed that they felt supported teaching Eurocentric content to white students and ended their presentation with

the following words: "we are prepared to teach your children; are you prepared to teach ours?" (C. Martineau, personal communication, May 1, 2013). This statement stuck with me as it asks both pre-service and in-service teachers to consider their preparedness, comfort level and confidence in teaching Aboriginal students. There will always be non-Mi'kmaw teachers in classrooms with Mi'kmaw students and there are some that do feel prepared, confident and comfortable teaching Mi'kmaw students. It is important to establish that we can also learn from the non-Mi'kmaw teachers in schools that are doing 'boundary-crossing' work and successfully creating spaces for the holistic education of Mi'kmaw students in their social studies classrooms by establishing how they too serve the needs of Mi'kmaw students.

Another future project could focus on teachers' approaches to addressing controversial issues in their social studies classrooms, focusing on how best to support teachers in this process. This would be extremely beneficial before introducing any deep work around topics like residential schooling. I plan to further develop the concept of culturally responsible pedagogy, investigate further how best to support teachers and students in enacting it, and its implications for social studies curriculum and policy development in Nova Scotia.

Finally, as this study represents only the beginning stage of decolonizing research, I propose that an action research project be undertaken to engage in the process of *reconstruction*. In classrooms in both provincially-controlled and band-controlled schools, teachers should weave the themes of the existing Mi'kmaq Studies 10 curriculum into other social studies courses across the

secondary levels, incorporating the recommendations of the participants in Ni'newey and Welte'temsi. Researchers should use a participatory action research spiral to measure the impact of this work so it aligns with the premise of decolonizing education.

Conclusions

When I began this research I imagined it as the starting point of a much larger project. I will extend my work in ways that support Mi'kmaw learners across Nova Scotia. I intend to share this work with both the provincial education authority and the Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey school board. I plan to form a negotiated partnership that will address the gaps for Mi'kmaw students and contribute to a greater body of knowledge around this topic. Working with the two school contexts, I aim to find ways to support the Mi'kmaw student population across the province. The authentic Mi'kmaw student voices in this dissertation form a foundation upon which educators, researchers, and policymakers can begin to build an inclusive and holistic social studies education for Mi'kmaw students.

It is important to note that for some of these participants, racist attitudes and beliefs seemed to be a barrier to mental, emotional, spiritual, and physical development and well-being. In order to address this, the curriculum can be used as a vehicle for awareness and information. In particular, the Mi'kmaw philosophy of non-interference encourages the respect and acceptance of the beliefs of others. The Mi'kmaw Rules of Protocol (Nova Scotia Department of Education, 1993) specifically state that "an individual should never impose

his/her beliefs on another" (para. 2). To address and problematize racism is well beyond the scope of this dissertation; the issue is big enough to constitute an entire dissertation in itself. For this reason, the implementation of many of my recommendations will require much more scholarly engagement and research to address the effects of systemic, institutional, and individual racism for Mi'kmaw students in Nova Scotia. St. Denis (2007) urged that schools must begin conducting an interrogation of race and racism and be committed to the principles of anti-racist education. She cautioned that

> Instead of doing anti-racist education that explores why and how race matters, educators can end up doing cross-cultural awareness training that often has the effect of encouraging the belief that the cultural difference of the Aboriginal "Other" is the problem. Offering cultural awareness workshops can also provide another opportunity for non-Aboriginals to resent and resist Aboriginal people. (p. 1086)

I do think that it's time to talk about race, and why and how it matters, beyond a cursory approach, *within* the Nova Scotia social studies curriculum. I believe that understanding racism is also key to understanding history and participating in a dialogue about race can help students to begin to see why some stories have been privileged over others and why some historical events, like residential schooling or centralization, took place. It can help everyone to begin to point out racist practices, beliefs and attitudes.

In summary, this study has become about much more than I had initially anticipated. Talking with the participants in both contexts helped me to refine my understandings of Mi'kmaw education, the goals for holistic learning, and the contextual importance of the on- and off-school landscapes for learners. Engaging in this research has allowed me to see gaps in social studies education for Mi'kmaw learners but they were not necessarily the gaps I was expecting to see. As Kanu (2011) states "it is in this negotiating of passages between ourselves and our students that a new curriculum spirit is born" (p. 205). It is my hope that a reconceptualization of curriculum can begin in Nova Scotia for Mi'kmaw students that will allow for a privileging of student voice, for all students, and a commitment to respecting and valuing their contexts and autobiographies in ways that shape how curriculum is lived in classrooms.

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Appendix A: Letter of Initial Contact

May 1, 2012

INFORMATION LETTER and CONSENT FORM

Study Title: The Role of Counter-Narratives in Learning Canadian History for Mi'kmaw Students

Research Investigator:	**Supervisor:**
Jennifer Tinkham, PhD Candidate	Carla Peck, Associate Professor
4 Xavier Drive	Dept. of Elementary Education,
Antigonish, NS, B2G 1G6	University of Alberta
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902-209-9487	780-492-9623

Dear Participants:

The purpose of this letter is to invite you to provide your approval, or consent, for you or your child to take part in a research project. This research will examine the personal stories of current and former high school students to discover how they situate their own understandings and narratives of Canadian history alongside the content and teaching in the current curriculum. I am very interested in the school experiences of Mi'kmaw youth, particularly in terms of their learning of Canadian history. Using conversations and sharing circles, participants will be asked how their social studies courses, particularly in Canadian history, connected (or not) with what they had already learned in their homes and communities. Further, participants will explore whether this school knowledge differed from their cultural knowledge, and in what ways. I will analyze the data using the First Nations Holistic Lifelong Learning Model developed by the Canadian Council on Learning. The results of the study will be used in my doctoral dissertation. The findings will be returned to the Mi'kmaw communities with the intent that it be used as they see fit to enact the educational changes they desire to enhance Mi'kmaw students' experiences of Canadian history studies in school.

Purpose
This project has 2 goals: (1) to describe Mi'kmaw youth experiences in learning Canadian history, and (2) to explore how Mi'kmaw students think about and understand their Canadian history experiences in classrooms in relation to the knowledge they bring with them from home. It is important for you to know that I am not interested in "right" or "wrong" answers; I am interested learning more about your experiences with the Canadian history you were taught in school. The results of this study will hopefully help educators develop strategies for improving the teaching of Canadian history in Canadian schools.

Study Procedures
The research will be carried out in three sessions between June – August 2012. The <u>first session</u> will involve an individual conversation related to experiences in learning Canadian history. This conversation will last 30 - 40 minutes. For instance, you or your child may be asked to recall moments where your or their in- school learning did not match with what you or your child had learned at home or in the community, or you may

be presented with a Canadian history narrative and asked to describe how this relates to the stories you have learned at home and in your community. The <u>second session</u> will consist of a group debriefing in the form of a sharing circle with other participants (approximately four other participants), facilitated by me, during which time I will ask all participants to talk about their experiences in Canadian history classes and also ask for your ideas regarding the teaching of Canadian history in classrooms. This session will last no more than 60 minutes. The <u>third session</u> will consist of a follow-up, individual conversation. This should last approximately 20- 30 minutes. <u>Total time for data collection:</u> **130 minutes (maximum).** All sessions will be audio-recorded and all transcripts and writing surrounding the interviews and focus group (including observations made by me) will be brought back to participants to check for accuracy and obtain permission for use.

Benefits
A benefit that participants may receive from participating in this study is that the conversations and sharing circle discussion may be one of few opportunities to speak frankly about your learning of Canadian history in schools and in the community, which could be cathartic or energizing. The reasonable benefits to society for completing this study is that this work will provide an overview of specific Mi'kmaw student experiences in Canadian history. The Nova Scotia Department of Education is also consistently engaging in curriculum redesign for social studies education. This work will help inform this process by providing some empirical evidence of Mi'kmaw experiences within the current prescribed curriculum. This research will allow me (and you, if you wish) to join and add to the existing conversation around Aboriginal narratives in social studies education. As an educator working in close contact with Mi'kmaw communities in Nova Scotia, my hope is that this research will be of use to Mi'kmaw communities as they continue to seek ways to provide a holistic education for younger generations of Mi'kmaw students. There are no costs to participating in this research.

Risk
One possible risk associated with this study is that a participant may feel emotionally triggered by historical events discussed during this research. The questions posed to participants will be open ended and participants are encouraged to refrain from answering any questions that cause them discomfort. During the interviews I will consistently check in with you to see how you are feeling and assess your level of comfort with the discussion. It is important to note that there may be risks to this study that are not known. If I learn of anything during the research that may affect your willingness to continue being in the study, I will inform you right away.

Voluntary Participation
You or your child are under no obligation to participate in this study and your participation is completely voluntary. You are also not obliged to answer any specific questions even if participating in the study. Even if you agree to be in the study, you can change your mind and withdraw at any time during the course of the study without penalty. To do so, you must notify me that you wish to be excluded from the study. The last point at which you may withdraw is within two weeks after the completed dissertation has been provided to you for review. If you wish to withdraw from the study the transcripts of your conversations will be destroyed and any group interview transcripts will be altered to exclude your responses.

Confidentiality & Anonymity

Students' identities will be kept strictly confidential. Each student will be given a pseudonym. Participating students will be asked to avoid talking about the group discussions with anyone not included in the group, but it is important to note that confidentiality amongst students participating in the small group task cannot be guaranteed simply due to the fact that the students will hear each others' responses. However, student statements and all research materials will be identified only by pseudonym and no computer files will include any student's names. All documents will be kept in a locked filing cabinet and all computer files will be password protected. I, along with my supervisor, will be the only person with access to the data. All data will be destroyed five years after the last publication emanating from this study. It is important to note that over the course of the writing up of the research a transcriptionist may have access to the audio-recordings. This transcriptionist will sign a confidentiality agreement. This research will be used in my doctoral dissertation and also may be published as educational research articles and presented at educational conferences. Students will not be identified by name in any reports or conference presentations of the completed study. You will be provided with copies of all materials resulting from this study.

Further Information
If you have any questions or want more information about this study please do not hesitate to contact me at 902-735-2155 or tinkham@ualberta.ca.

If you have any questions or want more information from my supervisor, please contact Dr. Carla Peck at 780-492-9623 or carla.peck@ualberta.ca.

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines by a Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Research Ethics Office at (780) 492-2615.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Tinkham, PhD Candidate

Appendix B: Consent/ Assent Form

CONSENT/ ASSENT FORM

Please complete the following form. Your signatures below indicate that you have received a copy of the information form for your own records. (Please keep the first two pages for your records.)

NOTE: In order for a student to participate in the study, a parent/guardian AND student must indicate their consent/assent by signing this form.

---

(1) <u>For Parents/Guardians</u>: Please circle <u>one</u> of the following options:

YES, I consent (or, agree) to my child's participation in the research study, "The Role of Counter- Narratives in learning Canadian History for Mi'kmaw Students."

OR

NO, I do not consent to my child's participation in the research study, "The Role of Counter- Narratives in learning Canadian History for Mi'kmaw Students."

_____

Parent or Guardian signature   Date

_____

Printed name of Parent or Guardian signing above.

---

(2) <u>For student</u>: Please circle <u>one</u> of the following options:

YES, I assent (or agree) to participate in the research study, "The Role of Counter Narratives in Canadian History for Mi'kmaw Students."

OR

NO, I do not assent (or, I do not agree) to participate in the research study, "The Role of Counter Narratives in Canadian History for Mi'kmaw Students."

_____

Student signature   Date

_____

Printed name of student signing above.

---

(3) If you would like a summary of the research findings, please print your mailing address here:

_____

Appendix C: Initial Individual Conversation Questions

Individual Conversation # 1

1) What classes at the high school level did you take in social studies (i.e. Canadian history, Mi'kmaq Studies, etc.)?

2) Tell me about your experiences in social studies. Do you like social studies? Why or why not?

3) What is the one thing you remember most from your social studies classes? Why do you think you remember this so well?

4) Do you feel like you have been represented in the social studies curriculum?

5) How do you feel about the textbooks you have used in your social studies classes? What would you keep the same and what would you change about them?

6) Tell me what you remember about Canadian history based on what you learned in school. What kinds of topics did you study, or what kinds of topics did you teacher/ textbook talk about?

7) If you were to tell someone else the story of Canada's past, based on what you learned in school, what would you say?

8) What have you learned about Mi'kmaw history in social studies?

9) What have you learned about Mi'kmaw history at home?

10) Does your Canadian history learning in school match with what you have learned at home? Why or why not?

11) What stories, if any, do you wish were included in your social studies classes?

12) If you could design a curriculum for social studies classes, particularly Canadian history classes, what would you make sure was included?

> (a) What stories, specifically ones that you have learned at home or in the community, if any, are missing from the social studies curriculum? Why do you think this should be included?

13) Would you say that what you have studied in your social studies courses, particularly in Canadian history, connected with what you have learned in your home and community?

14) Did you learn anything in social studies in school that contradicted what you had learned at home? How did you deal with this?

15) Did you learn anything at home that contradicted with what you learned in social studies in school? How did you deal with this?

Appendix D: Group Sharing Circle Questions

1) What do you learn about being Mi'kmaq in your school? How did your teachers factor into this?

2) Should there be more Mi'kmaq in your social studies classes?

3) What do you think when you hear that Christopher Columbus discovered North America?

4) Did you learn anything about residential schools in your social studies class? If so, what? What did you learn at home about residential schools?

5) What did you learn about centralization in Nova Scotia in your social studies classes? What did you learn about centralization in Nova Scotia in your home or communities?

6) Do you learn about treaty rights in school? Should every Mi'kmaw high school graduate know their treaties? Why or why not?

Appendix E: Second Individual Conversation Questions

1) How did you feel after the focus group conversation?

2) Is there anything you would like to add?

3) Is there anything you would like to discuss?

Appendix F: Mi'kmaw Ethics Watch Approval

June 11, 2012

Jennifer Tinkham
4 Xavier Drive
Antigonish, NS
B2G 1B1

Dear Ms. Tinkham,

I wish to inform you that the Mi'kmaw Ethics Watch committee has reviewed and approved *"The Role of Counter-Narratives in Learning Canadian History for Mi'kmaw Students"*.

As your project moves forward with the approval of the Mi'kmaw Ethics Watch, I must note that individual communities have their own perspective on research projects and it is your responsibility to consult them to ensure that you meet any further ethical requirements. Governments, universities, granting agencies, and the like also have ethical processes to which you might have to conform.

When your project is completed, the Mi'kmaq Resource Centre at Unama'ki College would be pleased to accept the results in a form that could be made available to students and other researchers (if it is appropriate to disseminate them). Our common goal is to foster a better understanding of the Indigenous knowledges.

Reviewers' comments related to your application are below:

"I have read the application, and it is interesting, as long as parents or bands know of this study going on with their students. I have read the entire application and I am approving this research application."

If you have any questions concerning the Mi'kmaw Ethics Watch review of your project please do not hesitate to contact me and I will forward them to the committee members.

Sincerely,

Rod Nicholls, PhD
Dean of Arts & Social Sciences
Acting Principal, Unama'ki College
Cape Breton University

Appendix G: University of Alberta Ethics Approval

Notification of Approval

Date:	June 8, 2012
Study ID:	Pro00030516
Principal Investigator:	Jennifer Tinkham
Study Supervisor:	Carla Peck
Study Title:	That's not my history! Examining the role of personal counter-narratives in decolonizing Canadian history for Mi'kmaw students
Approval Expiry Date:	June 7, 2013

	Approval Date	Approved Document
Approved Consent Form:	6/8/2012	Information Letter and Informed Consent/ Assent

Thank you for submitting the above study to the Research Ethics Board 1. Your application has been reviewed and approved on behalf of the committee.

A renewal report must be submitted next year prior to the expiry of this approval if your study still requires ethics approval. If you do not renew on or before the renewal expiry date, you will have to re-submit an ethics application.

Approval by the Research Ethics Board does not encompass authorization to access the staff, students, facilities or resources of local institutions for the purposes of the research.

Sincerely,

Dr. William Dunn
Chair, Research Ethics Board 1

Note: This correspondence includes an electronic signature (validation and approval via an online system).