

UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

Stories of Empowered Alberta Teachers: Enacting Responsibilities in Indigenous Education

by

Sarah M. Meade

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE
DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

GRADUATE PROGRAM IN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

CALGARY, ALBERTA

APRIL, 2023

© Sarah M. Meade 2023

Abstract

Teachers in Alberta are tasked with adhering to the Truth & Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action (2015b) and the Teaching Quality Standard (Alberta Education, 2018) related to Indigenous education, despite having little formal Indigenous education in their formal schooling. In this action-based qualitative study, I employed a decolonizing methodology, grounded in the principles of participatory action research and oriented by critical pedagogy to explore how teachers are enacting their responsibilities as champions of Indigenous education. Using Photovoice and sharing circles as methods, the findings that surfaced in the data revealed that, in enacting their responsibilities in Indigenous education, Alberta teachers in this study are: encountering resistance and racism, embracing a pedagogy of discomfort (Boler & Zembylas, 2003), engaging in critical reflection and navigating oppressive structures in the education system. The methodology employed in this study can be replicated in future studies and could be used to develop professional learning for teachers in Indigenous education.

Preface

This thesis is original, unpublished, independent work by the author, Sarah Meade. This research was covered by the Ethics Certificate Number REB22-0381, issued by the University of Calgary Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board for the project titled “Stories of Empowered Alberta Teachers: Enacting Responsibilities in Indigenous Education” on June 7, 2022.

Acknowledgements

It is important to situate this work in Treaty 7 where I live, work and attend the University of Calgary so that the work is connected to the land and history of Indigenous peoples who are of this land and Indigenous peoples who reside in this urban centre. In prioritizing the original occupants of these lands, I would like to honour the original caretakers and contemporary home of the Blackfoot Confederacy: the Siksika, Piikani and Kainai. This territory is also home to the Tsuut'ina Nation, the Stoney Nakoda First Nations, including the Wesley, Chiniki and Bearspaw, and Métis Nation (Region 3). I also acknowledge all people who make their home in this territory.

I have endless gratitude for those who stood alongside me during this journey, reminding me of my purpose and offering encouragement to keep moving forward. First and foremost, my mother, Karen Meade, has always been the anchor of my life, thank you for your ongoing love and support- this accomplishment is both of ours. My parents and grandparents have always shown me how to work hard and persevere, I hope to honour all of them with this work. I would also like to thank my beautiful sisters by birth, Emily Meade and Megan Kellogg and by choice: Stephanie Anastasiadis, Michelle Finley, Michelle Ranger and Michelle Scott, for all the good medicine they bring to my life. Thank you to Lauren Cunningham for being in my corner - you have seen the highs and lows of this process firsthand and have set me back on course many times. Thank you to my dear beloveds: Kim Rae, Kara Hafliidson, Julia Singer and Heidi Lytwyn for celebrating every step of the way over the last four years. To Siksika Elder Frank Turning Robe, thanks for being my teacher and sharing your wisdom with me. To Huck, thanks for being underfoot this whole time, reminding me to be grounded in what is good.

Dr. Yvonne Poitras Pratt, you are a brilliant and kind hearted Métis scholar, I am forever grateful that you were put in my path to show me how to be fierce. Words are truly not enough to thank you. To my incredible committee, Dr. Mairi McDermott and Dr. Gabriela Alonso-Yanez, thank you for sharing your many gifts with me.

To the courageous educators who supported this study - you are leading the way for teachers everywhere.

Dedication

To all students who were forced to attend Indian Residential Schools and their ancestors
and to those gone too soon: Alex Hurst, Troy Spotted Eagle and Leslie Sunwalk

List of Figures

Figure 1 Visual of collaborative process.....	87
Figure 2 Three students in a circle outdoors with arms around one another.....	104
Figure 3 Students seated in a circle on the land.....	105
Figure 4 A tree surrounded by a cage with a white flower growing at the base.....	106
Figure 5 An opalescent creature under water.....	107
Figure 6 A classroom with chairs set up in a circle.....	108
Figure 7 Books, rocks and bricks laid on the land with sunlight breaking through....	108
Figure 8 A handmade dreamcatcher decorated with natural items.....	110
Figure 9 Prairie crocus in bloom.....	111
Figure 10 A screen shot of orange shirts for sale.....	112
Figure 11 A yarrow plant in bloom.....	113
Figure 12 A painting of an anatomical heart.....	114
Figure 13 A tobacco tie on the ground at the base of a tree.....	115
Figure 14 A cross section of a tree trunk.....	116
Figure 15 A trail in the forest.....	117
Figure 16 A buffaloberry plant.....	118
Figure 17 Multiple books laid out on the grass.....	119
Figure 18 A sunset on the lake.....	120
Figure 19 A dandelion gone to seed.....	121
Figure 20 Beaded water droplets.....	122
Figure 22 Two hands stringing a hand drum.....	123
Figure 22 Students walking along a snowy path.....	125
Figure 23 An orange beaded moccasin on a chain link fence.....	126
Figure 24 Hands holding a heart shaped rock.....	127
Figure 25 A stunning visual of a forest with Indigenous books over top.....	128
Figure 26 A paper with student writing on a table.....	129
Figure 27 An uprooted plant with Kimmerer’s book Braiding Sweetgrass.....	130
Figure 28 A child looking out at a mountain lake.....	131
Figure 29 Crab apples in a basket.....	132
Figure 30 A screen shot of an anti-Indigenous racist comment online.....	133
Figure 31 People standing together after a ceremony.....	134

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	1
From Achievement Gap to Educational Debt	4
Background and Context	6
<i>Recoveries of Student Bodies on Residential School Grounds</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>Traditional Indigenous Learning</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>Colonial Forces</i>	<i>9</i>
Residential Schools	11
<i>Impact of Indian Residential Schools into the Present Day</i>	<i>15</i>
Closing Residential Schools, White Paper, Indian Brotherhood/ Assembly of First Nations....	16
First Peoples' Agency and Self-Determination as an Early Form of Decolonizing.....	18
<i>Attempts at Indian Control over Indian Education</i>	<i>19</i>
<i>The Royal Commission of Aboriginal Peoples</i>	<i>20</i>
Contemporary Times.....	22
<i>Residential School Survivor Initiatives</i>	<i>22</i>
<i>Federal Apology</i>	<i>23</i>
Federal Response to Indigenous Rights	24
<i>United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples</i>	<i>24</i>
Provincial response.....	29
<i>Alberta's Response to the UNDRIP</i>	<i>29</i>
Why Teacher Education is Essential	33
Problem Statement	35
Significance of Study	36
Purpose of Study.....	37
Researcher Positionality	37
Definition of Terms	39
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW	42
The Disruption of Colonization.....	43

Colonialism, Control and Power	44
Settler Colonialism	45
Towards a Definition of Decolonization	49
<i>Decolonization as the process of undoing</i>	50
<i>Decolonization as Reclaiming</i>	51
Decolonizing Education	52
<i>Decolonizing Education is a Shared Responsibility</i>	55
Teacher Responsibilities	57
Professional Learning – finding a way forward in Indigenous Education	63
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY	69
Paradigmatic Orientation	69
Overarching Research Question	72
Theoretical Framework	72
A Decolonizing Methodology	74
<i>Two-Eyed Seeing</i>	77
Decolonizing Approaches in Research Methodologies	79
<i>Rooted in Place</i>	81
Data Gathering Techniques	83
<i>Dialogic Education within Circle Sharing</i>	83
Photovoice	85
Data Collection and Instruments	89
Dependability	93
Ethical Considerations	94
Limitations	95
CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH COLLABORATION	97
Preparatory Research Phase	98
First Sharing Circle	100
Co-researcher introductions	103
Findings	105
Photo Prompt 1: How do you understand decolonizing education?	105

Round One Summary	115
Photo Prompt 2: How are you enacting your responsibilities in Indigenous education?	116
Round Two Summary	126
Photo Prompt 3: What experiences motivate you to engage in Indigenous education?.....	126
Round Three Summary.....	136
Preliminary Collaborative Thematic Analysis.....	137
Second Sharing Circle	137
Recentering.....	139
Resistance	141
Reconnecting	144
Responsibility.....	146
Revitalization	147
Summary	149
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION.....	150
Encounters with Resistance and Racism	152
Embracing a Pedagogy of Discomfort	168
The Power of Critical Reflection	173
Navigating Oppressive Structures	178
Recommendations	183
CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION	189
Researcher Reflections on the Design	191
Final Thoughts	192
References.....	193

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Canada has been experiencing an ongoing crisis when it comes to Indigenous education and teachers find themselves at a pivotal time to move this important work forward 'in a good way.' In Anishnaabe (Saulteaux) scholar Dr. Jacqueline Ottmann's inauguration as the President of First Nations University Canada, she explained that the phrase 'in a good way' reminds us to, learn from patterns from the past to truly understand our current realities and base decisions in considerations with all aspects of time, especially the future...as what is decided today, will impact our tomorrows and those lives not yet born, seven generations into the future. (Ottmann, 2021)

In other words, this widely recognized and well used phrase among diverse Indigenous communities, 'in a good way,' implies that those living in Canada must first look at the history in relation to Indigenous peoples to understand our current educational crisis in order to make decisions that will positively impact future generations. To understand this past, we look to Mi'kmaw scholar and internationally known educational theorist, Marie Battiste (2013), who explains that "for more than a century, Indigenous students have been part of a forced assimilation plan - their heritage and knowledge rejected and suppressed and ignored by the education system" (p. 23). Looking to the present day, a radical shift in education is required to acknowledge and repair the long-term harm inflicted on Indigenous peoples by the colonial government and educate non-Indigenous peoples about these colonial consequences. In response to various calls from Indigenous scholars (Battiste, 2013; Dion, 2016; Donald, 2009; Poitras Pratt & Hanson, 2020; Smith, 2012; St. Denis, 2011; Styres, 2019; Toulouse, 2017), as well as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action (TRC, 2015b), this study aimed

to look at established and emerging teacher practices in Indigenous education in order to examine possibilities for improved professional learning in this specialized area.

In this overview of my research design, I cover the following topics to set the context for this study: the current context of Indigenous education; a discussion about the education debt and an account of pre- and post-contact Indigenous education. I situate the study within the current context of anti-racist movements and the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015) that most recently includes the recoveries of student bodies on the sites of former Indian Residential Schools. As part of this discussion, I share the history of Indian Residential Schools, the impacts of Indian Residential Schools, and the efforts on behalf of Indigenous communities to seek reparations and self-determination in relation to education and federal government responses to these lobbying efforts. Current guiding documents shaping Indigenous education will be shared, which includes an overview of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007), the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action (2015b), and Alberta Education's Teaching Quality Standard (2018). I conclude the chapter by sharing my positionality, the purpose of my study and definition of terms along with an exploration of limitations and delimitations relative to this study.

Indigenous education is rooted in Indigenous thought, values, and centers Indigenous worldviews while demonstrating an awareness of historical and contemporary realities of the diverse Indigenous peoples on Turtle Island/North America (Styres, 2019). It is important to understand that Indigenous education is not only for Indigenous students and teachers but is relevant for all peoples living in Canada. Eurocentric schooling is associated with the larger

colonial project and can also be referred to as 'schooling' to distinguish it from education and learning in general (Poitras Pratt et al., 2018).

Indigenous learning, or "coming to know" (Cajete, 1999, p. 78), for Indigenous peoples has existed on this land for millennia, prior to any European contact and the colonization of Turtle Island/North America. Since the era of colonization, Indigenous communities across Canada have continually sought a vision for maintaining and revitalizing their traditional ways of knowing, being and doing through a multitude of approaches, including the necessary process of decolonization. Despite various policy recommendations to support changes to improve Indigenous education over time (Association of Canadian Deans of Education, 2010; Assembly of First Nations, 1972; Council of Ministers of Education Canada, 2009; Hawthorn, 1967; Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996; Truth & Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015a), our current K-12 education system in Alberta is not meeting the needs of Indigenous students (Alberta Education, 2021). In their international study of Indigenous education, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2017) states the schools who have made improvements to meet the needs of their Indigenous students are those who have identified teachers as instrumental in establishing the conditions for academic success of Indigenous students. In seeking to reverse the damage that a colonial past has had on Indigenous students, this study focuses on the important role that teachers play in supporting the necessary improvements to Indigenous education for all students, through decolonization.

From Achievement Gap to Educational Debt

There is a much-needed shift in the responsibility that the stakeholders within the education system currently assume for the state of Indigenous education - one that has been negatively impacted by the implementation of a Eurocentric education model that has led to negative impacts relative to Indigenous student learning outcomes. Previous scholarship in Indigenous education has focused on the education gap in relation to differential academic achievement of Indigenous and non-Indigenous students (Bishop, 2003; Deonandan, et al., 2019; Hattie, 2003; Skrla & Scheurich, 2001; Valencia, 1997). Scholars in education suggest that the conversation around the education gap wrongly places the responsibility to improve their educational achievement on the Indigenous students themselves rather than discussing the impacts of a colonial past and the role the education system plays in harming Indigenous peoples (Deonandan, et al., 2019; Skrla & Scheurich, 2001).

Among the negative consequences of the ongoing colonization of education, and the wider impacts of colonialism across all sectors, are low high school graduation rates for Indigenous students. In the document *Promising Practices in Supporting Success for Indigenous Students*, the international organization, OECD (2017) explains that our education systems define the success of Indigenous students in terms of closing educational achievement gaps in comparison to non-Indigenous Canadians, and includes measures such as: “various educational performance indicators (such as attendance, retention, transitions and academic assessments often in literacy and numeracy or success on examinations)” in how this education gap is defined (OECD, 2017, p. 30). Without understanding the historical and political context of Indigenous education, these statistics would infer that it is Indigenous students themselves who

are failing. In the western Canadian province of Alberta, where a substantial 16% of the total population of Indigenous peoples in Canada reside, the educational attainment rates for Indigenous students are lower than the rest of Indigenous students in Canada. According to Statistics Canada (2016), 49% of Indigenous students in Alberta have less than a high school diploma, in comparison to 28% of Indigenous students in the rest of Canada. While these statistics reveal alarming data, I question what is happening behind these numbers to make the situation so stark. Many of the scholarly conversations and reported statistics that surround the topic of the “education gap” fail to address the underlying issues that impact Indigenous students in Canada as a result of colonization; instead, these reports tend to place the blame for low educational attainment on Indigenous peoples. In wishing to broaden the ‘gap’ discussion to include a wider swath of factors, particularly those that arise from our shared colonial past, my study aligns with that of Métis scholar Yvonne Poitras Pratt and allied scholar Patricia Danyluk (2017) who argue that the true education gap lies within the context of mainstream educators. Educators have not received adequate opportunities for background training in Indigenous perspectives as a result of limitations inherent in the current education system, rather than the failings of Indigenous students (Poitras Pratt & Danyluk, 2017). Similarly, American educational researcher, Gloria Ladson Billings (2006) implores educational researchers to shift the focus from an education or achievement gap to that of an education debt, inferring that something is owed to racialized students. In this case, the Eurocentric educational system here in Canada has not historically met the needs of mainstream educators in terms of Indigenous education and contributes to low achievement rates of Indigenous students. In acknowledging there are many complex historical and contemporary factors that

are contributing to the shocking difference in achievement levels between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students, teachers are in the unique position of working to disrupt the current teaching approaches that are harmful to Indigenous students through their influential roles in the classroom (Styres, 2019). Using a critical lens to problematize the mainstream understanding of where the problem of differential achievement levels lies, this study examines how teachers can address the debt owed to Indigenous students, how some teachers are already empowered to assume their responsibilities within Indigenous education, and how their experiences can help refine professional learning experiences for all teachers. To understand the current landscape of Indigenous education, we must first understand the harmful colonial strategies that reinforce racist ideas that negatively impact the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada. Although I am intentionally moving away from a deficit approach to discussing Indigenous education, it is essential to acknowledge the dark history of colonization. A brief account of the colonial history in Canada, relative to a discussion on education, is covered in the sections that follow the current context for my study.

Background and Context

As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic that emerged in early 2020, Canadians have endured unprecedented changes to their lives through government restrictions in effort to curb the spread of the deadly illness plaguing the world. During the pandemic, we witnessed anti-racist movements spreading across the globe inspiring conversations and activism in response to tragic events highlighting well established racism against Black, and other minoritized groups, including Indigenous peoples in Canada. In May of 2020, George Floyd, a young husband and father, was brutally murdered in a callous and very public way by two White

police officers; this horrific event was witnessed and shared by several onlookers. This flagrant abuse of power accelerated long standing inequities between the white powerholders and Indigenous, Black, and people of colour. The George Floyd event birthed the Black Lives Matter movement surfacing a level of global outrage echoing the civil rights movement of the 1960's (Maqbool, 2020). As many Canadians followed the events on social media that highlighted racial tensions and injustices, some started to consider how racism exists in our own backyards (Martin, 2021).

Recoveries of Student Bodies on Residential School Grounds

One short year later in 2021, attention was turned sharply to our own nation's stories of injustices when it was confirmed that 215 children's bodies were found buried in unmarked graves at the Kamloops Indian Residential School. This tragedy was followed by similar haunting announcements of children's bodies being recovered across Canada resulting in a current tally of lost children who died of extreme neglect and abuse rising to over 7000 and with total recoveries estimated to rise by thousands (Martin, 2021). These shocking realities may be new for some, but are well known within Indigenous communities (TRC, 2015a, b). With the growing emphasis on anti-racism movements during the global pandemic, and now with the realities of children's remains being unearthed, highlighting the long history of racism towards Indigenous peoples, Canadians cannot turn away from the truths of the harmful colonial agenda underlying Indian Residential Schools and how these schools were part of larger government plans to assimilate and remove Indigenous peoples from the Canadian landscape (Martin, 2021). Respected Cree Elder of Saddle Lake First Nation, Doreen Spence, shared that the souls of these children waited to be discovered until non-Indigenous Canadians were ready to be awakened to

the true history of Canada (Spence, 2021, personal communication). The recoveries of children buried on the grounds of schools has the potential to influence much needed shifts in Canadian society to improve relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples if people are willing to take up the work. As Canadians were forced to consider the magnitude of the recoveries of thousands of former students who died while attending Indian Residential Schools without proper respect, or acknowledgement, an essential awakening of Canadian consciousness has been rightly started.

With these shocking truths and the rise of anti-racism movements, teachers find themselves in the position where they are having to teach and address content where, in many cases, they do not have a strong or even basic understanding of Indigenous realities or perspectives. In my role as an Indigenous Education Specialist in a large urban school district, I have observed a significant increase in requests for support from teachers who are seeking help to develop their foundational knowledge of Indigenous education. In order to better understand how we might best support teachers in their wish to understand and teach Indigenous perspectives and content, it is essential to look at a detailed account of the history of oppression of Indigenous peoples related to education and examine how our shared colonial past may not be common knowledge to all those living in Canada.

Traditional Indigenous Learning

The true and fuller story of Indigenous peoples in Canada is not widely known nor understood by all Canadians. According to respected Piikani Elder Reg Crowshoe (Crowshoe, 2018, personal communication) for the millennia prior to colonization, Indigenous peoples in Canada held diverse ways of learning rooted in land, culture, and oral traditions which differed

greatly from the colonial education systems that were introduced post-contact (Assembly of First Nations, 1972; RCAP, 1996). The hundreds of Indigenous groups across Canada represent many diverse and unique communities, yet there are shared universal values relative to traditional Indigenous learning. For instance, Sylix (Okanagan First Nations) author Jeanette Armstrong (1987) shares that Indigenous learning in a pre-contact world was traditionally a family and community-based, natural process that sustained millennia of survival. This natural educational process that spanned a lifetime of learning ensured cultural continuity and contributed to spiritual, emotional, physical and mental well-being of Indigenous communities. The traditional learning practices of Indigenous communities recognized natural inclinations or gifts of individuals, which were fostered through stages of human growth and connected to the unique environment on which the community resided (Armstrong, 1987). A local Treaty 7 and Blackfoot-specific example is provided by Elder Crowshoe who shares how Blackfoot societies transferred knowledge to children that was specific to seasonal cycles of movement necessary for survival, for example the seasonal rounds of relocation which followed the bison and other local harvesting practices that demonstrated awareness of the natural rhythms of mother earth (Crowshoe, 2018). Understanding that traditional Indigenous communities were holistic, collective, and connected to land, we can begin to understand how different traditional Indigenous learning is from Canada's Eurocentric education system.

Colonial Forces and the Interruption of Indigenous Learning

Traditional Indigenous learning which allowed for survival and thriving of Indigenous peoples was severely disrupted at the hands of incoming colonizers to North America (Battiste, 2013; RCAP, 1996, TRC, 2015a). As a result of this disruption Indigenous languages, customs,

culture, and relational networks were negatively impacted. The 1600s saw a greater influx of British and French explorers landing in the New World whose sole motive was to profit from new economic opportunities, many of these spurred by the fur trade, and whose pursuits encroached on the lives and livelihood of Indigenous peoples. The incoming colonial forces claimed this land, often referred to as Turtle Island, as 'terra nullius' (new land) which not only failed to acknowledge the Indigenous peoples of this land but also justified exploitation of both land and people (Battiste, 2013; RCAP, 1996). The colonial project, in what would become the settler-colonial project, is complex and lengthy, however, it is recognizing the wealth of resources on the lands now known as Canada, the colonizers proceeded to recruit Europeans to settle the land. The colonial powerholders instituted the Royal Proclamation of 1763, which acknowledged "Indian" (First Nations) title to land and set in motion the treaty-making process. The implementation of treaties allowed the foreigners, under the auspices of the Crown, to acquire the lands that the First Peoples had occupied for millennia (RCAP, 1996). The Europeans secured dominion over the land and people through the establishment of multiple treaties across approximately one third of the country (RCAP, 1996). The Indian Act (formerly known as the British North America Act) was established in 1867 as a government tool used to control Indigenous peoples. The aim of the Indian Act was to eradicate existing traditional models of government and cultures with the goal of assimilation into the Euro-Canadian society (Newhouse, 2021; RCAP, 1996). Through implementation of the Indian Act, the incoming colonizers forced the relocation of First Nations peoples onto reserves, thus removing the Indigenous peoples from their traditional livelihoods, kinship networks, and systems of learning. Alongside the forced relocation, the outlawing of cultural practices, and controlling of

resources were the realities of foreign-introduced diseases and starvation among Indigenous peoples at the hands of the colonizers (Daschuk, 2013; RCAP, 1996; TRC, 2015a). The traditional learning of Indigenous peoples was not only disrupted by the incoming colonizers through these various colonial tactics, but they were soon to be replaced by a violent system of forced assimilation. Education was used by the colonizers as a primary tool of colonization envisioned by powerholders as complete assimilation accomplished through schooling systems.

Residential Schools

As though forced relocation, starvation, and disease were not enough to exert control over the Indigenous peoples, Indigenous schooling was also viewed as a key assimilative tool by the incoming Europeans. Since the early 1600s, missionary run schools had been built near Indigenous communities to enforce a Christian and Eurocentric education on Indigenous children (TRC, 2015a). From the 1870s-1990s, a destructive strategy employed by the colonial powerholders included that of forced schooling by way of low-cost, church-led educational alternatives in the form of Indian Residential Schools that were forcibly imposed on Indigenous peoples (TRC, 2015a). The Indian Act of 1867 dictated that the colonizers had legal control and responsibility over Indigenous education (TRC, 2015a). There were over 130 Indian Residential Schools across Canada that aimed to “Christianize first and then civilize” Indigenous peoples (Maclean, 1899). In these schools, Indigenous children were banned from speaking their language and practicing their culture as they were wrongly considered to be savages whose culture was heathenistic (TRC, 2015a). In the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC), the authors shared the following quote by Duncan Campbell Scott, the head of the Canadian Department of Indian Affairs from 1913 to 1935: “Our object is

to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politic, and there is no Indian question, and no Indian Department” (TRC, 2015a, p. 13); this quote aptly describes the goal of forced assimilation. In 1894, Canada’s first Prime Minister, Sir John A. MacDonald and cabinet members, including Hector Langevin and Egerton Ryerson, implemented an amendment to the Indian Act which mandated that Indigenous children aged 7-15 be forcibly taken from their families and communities and placed in Indian Residential Schools. These schools were often situated far away from their homes and families (TRC, 2015d). Indigenous parents were not only robbed of their parental rights but they also risked punishment and jail time if they did not comply with this aggressive policy (TRC, 2015a). All to say, the lack of trust in the education system is deeply rooted for Indigenous peoples in Canada as a result of the forceful Indian Residential School policies.

Although First Nations Children were the primary target, in the early days of the Indian Residential School system, the schools did not distinguish between status, non-status, Métis or Inuit students and so each Indigenous group has their own unique story of residential schooling. The federal government considered the Métis to be “members of the ‘dangerous classes’ whom the Residential Schools were intended to civilize and assimilate” (TRC, 2015a, p. 66). Of interest, Métis children sporadically attended or were placed in Indian Residential Schools where enrollment varied dependent on funding and location, alongside the colonizers’ perceptions of the Métis childrens’ socio-economic placement and physical appearance (TRC, 2015a). There were jurisdictional gaps between the federal and provincial government pertaining to which government assumed responsibility for Métis children, and as a result, Métis students were often refused by local public schools as well as Indian Residential Schools

(TRC, 2015a). These realities reflect negligence by the various levels of government in relation to Métis peoples. Métis people have been subject to a multitude of harmful impacts of the larger colonial project, including armed resistance, and suffered greatly as a result. Some Northern Métis children also attended the Arctic Indian Residential Schools due to their closer proximity to the schools (TRC, 2015a). With a substantial population of Métis currently enrolled in Alberta's public school system, there is a great need for teachers to understand the implications of colonial policies on the Métis, including the impact of the 1869 and 1885 Resistances, and the flawed scrip system (Rupertsland Institute, 2015).

As another Indigenous population greatly affected by the IRS, Inuit children had a unique experience at Indian Residential Schools as it was not until the late 1930s-1960s that the federal government expanded Indian Residential Schools into the Arctic. Due to the extreme northern climate and great distances from their home communities, many Inuit children had to remain in the schools for months, or even years, without ever having contact with their parents or home communities (TRC, 2015a). As recent accounts reveal, the negative impacts of Indian Residential Schools did not leave any Indigenous community unharmed and has, in contemporary times, left a lingering impact on the well-being of Indigenous peoples.

With the goal of assimilation as the key focus in Indian Residential Schools, there was little emphasis on educating students in the proper sense of the term, rather these institutions enforced 'schooling' as a weapon of colonization on Indigenous peoples. Keeping costs down was a primary consideration in these schools and, as a result, missionaries acted as teachers yet they held no formal teacher training or education. The federal government did not provide adequate funding to the schools and as a result, students "were poorly fed, clothed and

housed” (TRC, 2015a, p. 97) and highly susceptible to illness. Due to the chronic underfunding of the schools, Indigenous students also served as unpaid labour, assisting in the day to day operation of the schools where much of their day involved engaging in manual chores as opposed to engaging in learning (Alberta Teachers’ Association, 2006; TRC, 2015a). Many former students of Indian Residential Schools likened their experiences in the schools to prisons (TRC, 2015a), which highlights the fact that there was very little education provided to students at these schools.

Beyond the lack of necessary funding and poor living conditions, the treatment of the Indigenous students who attended these Indian Residential Schools was deplorable. The Indigenous children in residential schools were neglected and many were subjected to significant physical, emotional, and sexual abuse at the hands of teachers and school staff (TRC, 2015a):

Even by the standards of the day, discipline was often excessive. Lack of supervision left students prey to sexual predators. To put it simply: the needs of tens of thousands of Aboriginal children were neglected routinely. Far too many students were abused, far too often. (TRC, 2012, p. 1)

The reality of the abuse of Indian Residential School students shakes the foundation on which Canadian identity is imagined as a fair and just nation. To fathom that fellow citizens could inflict such pain and suffering onto children, in a school setting no less, is not in alignment with Canada’s peaceful reputation. By and large, the federal government kept the majority of non-Indigenous Canadians in the dark around the conditions of Indian Residential Schools with the exception of a rare few. Dr. Peter Bryce, the Indian Affairs Medical Inspector, was one of the

few who attempted to alert Canadians by releasing a report calling the conditions in Indian Residential Schools a national crime. With this 1907 report, Dr. Bryce raised his alarm about the high death rate of the students where “the Indian population of Canada has a mortality rate of more than double that of the whole population, and in some provinces more than three times” (Bryce, 1907, p. 1). Regrettably, Dr. Bryce’s urgent message was buried by the Canadian government who refused to publish his findings or take action in response to what he shared. Doing what he could, Dr. Bryce resorted to self-publishing his findings through the media (First Nations Caring Society, 2016). The fact that Dr. Bryce’s whistleblowing attempts were blocked by a government, who were culpable in the devastating findings, speaks to the efforts that kept Canadians in ignorance about the horrific conditions and treatment of children in Indian Residential Schools whose devastating outcomes continue into present day.

Impact of Indian Residential Schools into the Present Day

The immense negative impacts of Indian Residential Schools, along with other colonial injustices, continue to be felt today as Indigenous families endure the effects of intergenerational trauma in their homes. Intergenerational trauma can be understood as what “happens when the effects of trauma are not resolved in one generation. When trauma is ignored and there is no support for dealing with it, [this trauma] will be passed from one generation to the next” (Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 1999, p. 2). The collective intergenerational trauma of Indian Residential School survivors and their families translates to a myriad of social, economic and political challenges within Indigenous communities (TRC, 2015d). The legacy of Indian Residential Schools has also impacted non-Indigenous Canadians who have misinterpreted the traumatic impacts of these schools as being clear and damning

evidence of Indigenous peoples' inferiority. In his preface to The Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC, 2015a), Justice Murray Sinclair stated, "The most harmful impacts of residential schools have been the loss of pride and self-respect of Aboriginal people, and the lack of respect that non-Aboriginal people have been raised to have for their Aboriginal neighbours" (p. VI). It is essential that all Canadians undertake necessary learning about how harmful previous and contemporary policies and legislation have impacted Indigenous peoples to fully comprehend the collective story of our nation. Educators play an important role in leading the work of teaching about the history of Indigenous peoples and it is necessary that teachers be supported in this learning in order to improve Indigenous education outcomes.

Closing Residential Schools, White Paper, Indian Brotherhood/ Assembly of First Nations

After close to a century of operation, the government began recognizing that the Indian Residential Schools were failing at assimilating Indigenous students through the guise of education (TRC, 2015a). In 1958, the federal Indian Affairs Minister offered recommendations to then Conservative Prime Minister John Diefenbaker that the Indian Residential Schools be closed, however there was no immediate action by the federal government to close the schools (RCAP, 1996). In a federally funded nationwide survey titled *A Survey of the Contemporary Indians of Canada: Economic, Political, Educational Needs and Policies*, popularly known as the Hawthorn Report (1967), during a time of activism across Turtle Island/North America, it was determined that Indigenous peoples of Canada were oppressed and disadvantaged as a result of misguided government policies such as the Indian Residential School system. The federal government was advised to end forced assimilation and close Indian Residential Schools (Hawthorn, 1967). The federal government did not assume responsibility for the harm done

and instead interpreted the Hawthorn Report recommendations for their own benefit, moving in favour of a policy of integration of Indigenous peoples into Canadian society as a new strategy for integration of Indigenous peoples. There were other recommendations contained within the Hawthorn report (1967) that were not realized, even though they were supported by Indigenous leaders from across Turtle Island/North America (Milloy, 1999). Once more, the disregard for the Hawthorn report serves as a telling example of the federal government's lack of transparency to non-Indigenous Canadians and lack of accountability to the Indigenous peoples of Canada.

In response to the Hawthorn Report (1967), the federal government published the Statement of the Government of Canada on Indian Policy (1969), later known as the White Paper, which recommended abolishing the Indian Act and Treaties, and extinguishing special rights for Indigenous peoples. The release of the White Paper, proposed by then Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Jean Crétien, created the conditions for former Prime Minister Pierre Elliot Trudeau to end the partnerships with the churches and begin the process of closing Indian Residential Schools in the 1970s (RCAP, 1996). After 160 years of the Indian Residential School system being in place, the last Indian Residential School was closed in 1996 (TRC, 2015b). The White Paper faced fierce backlash from Indigenous communities across Canada. Métis leader Harold Cardinal, as cited in the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996), explains why the Indigenous community was in opposition to the White Paper of 1969 in his book *The Unjust Society* (1969):

We do not want the Indian Act retained because it is a good piece of legislation. It isn't. It is discriminatory from start to finish. But it is a lever in our hands and an

embarrassment to the government, as it should be. No just society and no society with even pretensions to being just can long tolerate such a piece of legislation, but we would rather continue to live in bondage under the inequitable Indian Act than surrender our sacred rights. Any time the government wants to honour its obligations to us we are more than ready to help devise new Indian legislation. (p. 236)

One of the more sacred rights Cardinal referenced in this passage included rights for Indigenous control over Indigenous education. Cardinal's words foreshadowed a substantial educational movement and document called "Indian control of Indian education" (National Indian Brotherhood, 1972) which called for Indigenous determination over Indigenous education.

First Peoples' Agency and Self-Determination as an Early Form of Decolonizing

As history reveals, the intended abolishing of the Indian Act and treaties proposed in the White Paper did not come to fruition due to monumental and united resistance from Indigenous communities across Canada. After World War II, Indigenous veterans returning home from fighting for Canada faced the fact that they could not vote in their own homeland. They lived in a country where they were not treated as equals to their non-Indigenous counterparts and provided significant resistance to the government overall treatment of Indigenous peoples (RCAP, 1996). During the 1960s, a time when many civil rights movements were rising across North America, grassroots Indigenous organizations also began to form. Indigenous groups such as: the American Indian Movement (AIM) in the United States (Young Man, 2015), the Red Power Movement in the United States and Canada (Rutherford, 2020) and the National Indian Council (NIC) in Canada, were all advocating for Indigenous rights. In 1970,

the National Indian Brotherhood (known now as the Assembly of First Nations) was established during this highly politicized time, and successfully campaigned against the proposed White Paper of 1969 (TRC, 2015a). These examples of Indigenous resistance created a ripple effect of important activism and initiatives that have lasted into the present day (Dyck, 1990; Newhouse & Graham, 2021). Despite these efforts, the federal government has deliberately and consistently failed to honour Indigenous peoples' rights to self-determination, including education, leading to ongoing Indigenous resistance all the while keeping the non-Indigenous Canadians in ignorance about the grave impacts of these failings.

Attempts at Indian Control over Indian Education

With the release of “Indian Control of Indian Education” in 1972 (with new editions published in 1976 and 2001), education was singled out as the most important factor in First Nations achieving parity with non-Indigenous Canadians. The paper emphasized the need for Indigenous communities, both on-reserve and in urban areas, to regain control over the education of their children. To restore what Indigenous peoples had been denied in the past, the policy provided the foundation for decolonizing education by emphasizing the need for relevant curricula for Indigenous schools inclusive of language and traditional values. The policy also recognized inherent Treaty rights of Indigenous peoples to exercise jurisdiction over education (AFN, 2002). The 1972 policy was adopted by the Indian Affairs and Northern Development at the time and spurred some changes to Indigenous education such as the development of Indigenous teacher education programs (NIB, 1972; Newhouse, 2021). The policy also motivated partial legislative changes of local jurisdiction to a small number of Indigenous communities, such as those under the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement

however, despite these strong recommendations, the policy has never been fully implemented (Peters & White, 2009). Jurisdiction over Indigenous education was never fully devolved by the federal government who maintained a stronghold over administration, funding, and curriculum. The federal government did not adhere to the recommendations for culturally relevant curriculum, parental responsibility and local control over Indigenous students set out in the document thereby ultimately blocking opportunities for cultural values and traditions to be revitalized in education settings (AFN, 2002; Peters & White, 2009). Some fifty years later, the same recommendations and suggestions for improvements to Indigenous education made by the Indian Brotherhood (AFN) back in the 1970s continue to be brought forward by Indigenous communities and have yet to be implemented by the federal government, affirming who ultimately holds the power (First Nations Jurisdiction of Education, 2002).

The Royal Commission of Aboriginal Peoples

The long road to the Royal Commission of Aboriginal Peoples (1996) was paved by resistance from Indigenous communities inclusive of former students of Indian Residential Schools. Groups of Indian Residential School survivors initiated legal campaigns in the 1980s that sought legal and rightful restitution for the abuses endured at the schools. The survivors sought compensation from the federal government as well as the churches involved in the operation of Indian Residential Schools. It was reported that over 18,000 lawsuits were filed by Indian Residential School survivors against the government, churches and individuals who were the perpetrators of abuse (TRC, 2015a). At this time, there was also growing tension between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians due to the anti-Indigenous racism that was allowed

to fester because of the federal government's lack of transparency about the treatment of Indigenous peoples of Canada:

The country's leaders were arguing about the place of Aboriginal people in the constitution. First Nations were blockading roads and rail lines in Ontario and British Columbia. Innu families were encamped in protest of military installations in Labrador. A year earlier, armed conflict between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal forces at Kanesatake (Oka) had tarnished Canada's reputation abroad – and in the minds of many citizens. (Government of Canada, 2010)

Looking back, one of the more obvious causes for the unrest of Indigenous peoples was fueled by unfulfilled government obligations. For decades, Indigenous communities have been seeking just reparations for government wrongdoings and it was not until 1991 that the Government of Canada finally started to move this important work forward by creating the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) in an effort to mend the broken relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians. The government's motivation for establishing RCAP was directly related to the relentless perseverance of Indigenous peoples to advocate for their rights and in reaction to the civil unrest that fomented with the 1990 Oka Crisis. After five years of Indigenous community engagement and activities, RCAP released a five volume report in 1996 which contained 440 recommendations in its 4000 pages. One of the more damning areas of the report emphasized the need for a public inquiry into the traumatizing effects of Indian Residential Schools on Indigenous peoples in Canada. The report also called for public acknowledgement of the overall violence inflicted on Indigenous peoples since European contact (RCAP, 1996). The findings from RCAP prompted the Federal Government's Statement

of Reconciliation in 1998, releasing federal funds to support the establishment of the Aboriginal Action Plan, a policy aimed to address the government's role and responsibility for the harmful impacts of Indian Residential Schools on Indigenous communities (Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 1998). The Aboriginal Action Plan resulted in the establishment of the Aboriginal Healing Foundation in 1998. A key objective of the Aboriginal Healing foundation was to renew relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians (Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 1998). Clearly, at this point in history, relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada still required much repair, and although this work should have been started decades earlier, it began in earnest with the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996) and continues today with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2015b) and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Contemporary Times

Residential School Survivor Initiatives

Indian Residential School survivors continued to pressure the federal government for acknowledgement and reparations of the harms done at Indian Residential Schools. Over the years, thousands of civil suits have been brought forward by Indian Residential School survivors against the Canadian government, the churches and individuals involved in the operation of the schools, yet many of these efforts have been rejected in the courts (TRC, 2015a). In 2004, one of the cases filed by survivors of the Mohawk Institute Residential School known as the "Cloud case" finally proceeded in the Ontario Court of Appeal (TRC, 2015d). The Cloud case marked a pivotal moment for First Nations claimants against the Canadian government, who then began negotiating settlements with Indian Residential School survivors. In 2007, the legal counsel

representing the survivors of Indian Residential Schools, the Canadian government, the Assembly of First Nations, the Churches and other Indigenous organizations reached a settlement in the largest class action lawsuit in Canada in what is now known as the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement (TRC, 2015a). This historic event demonstrated recognition of the impacts of colonization on Indigenous peoples in the court system. Still, no such recognition was present in mainstream Canadian consciousness.

Federal Apology

Shortly after the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement, former Conservative Prime Minister, Stephen Harper, formally apologized in June 2008 to all Indian Residential School survivors and all Indigenous peoples in Canada referring to a “sad chapter in Canadian history” (Government of Canada, 2008). This long overdue apology was heavily influenced by the former Liberal Leader Paul Martin and supported by the New Democratic Party Leader, Jack Layton, who were longtime leaders in pushing the need for the government to take ownership over the wrongdoings that occurred in the Indian Residential School system (CBC, 2008). The apology, although symbolically important, lost its authenticity as it did not align with sentiments Harper shared one year later at a G20 summit where he stated that in Canada “we ...have no history of colonialism” (Vancouver Sun, 2009). Former Senator Murray Sinclair affirmed that Harper’s apology was highly criticized by the Indigenous community due to the lack of sincerity, action, and commitment on behalf of the government in relation to reconciliation (TRC, 2015a). The events that ensued after the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement, including Harper’s formal apology, demonstrate a wavering and unclear commitment in terms of the government’s accountability to the Indigenous peoples in Canada.

Federal Response to Indigenous Rights

United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

Globally, Indigenous peoples have many parallel experiences of being colonized and marginalized by incoming foreign forces (UNDRIP, 2007). As a result of the tireless efforts of global Indigenous organizations lobbying for their rights and restitution for multiple human rights violations, the United Nations sought to develop policy that addressed the significant need to protect the fundamental human rights of Indigenous peoples globally, including Indigenous peoples' rights to control over their education (UNDRIP, 2007). After almost 25 years of deliberations by the United Nations member states and Indigenous peoples, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) was created to protect the rights of Indigenous peoples in 2007 (UNDRIP, 2007). Our federal government's reluctance in becoming a signatory to the UNDRIP is a prime example of the Canadian government's lack of commitment to Indigenous peoples (CBC News, 2007).

Canada, under the leadership of former Conservative Prime Minister Stephen Harper, originally voted against UNDRIP, stating that the instrument conflicted with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, taking particular issue with the articles related to land claims, self-government and the degree of free and informed consent required for the development of land and resources (Held, 2019). This claim was highly contested by critics who stated that the real reason for not signing this international covenant was because the Conservative government of the time wanted to maintain power and control over Indigenous peoples and lands (Held, 2019). Of the 144 countries who supported UNDRIP, Canada was only one of four nations who refused to sign, the other three nations being those with similar colonial pasts, namely the

United States, Australia and New Zealand, who also declined their support (UNDRIP, 2007). Although Canada has endorsed the declaration since 2010, Canada did not consider adopting UNDRIP until 2016 under the leadership of Liberal Prime Minister Justin Trudeau (Held, 2019). Signaling that more work needs to be done to honour the spirit of UNDRIP which expresses concern “that Indigenous peoples have suffered from historic injustices as a result of, inter alia, their colonization and dispossession of their lands, territories and resources, thus preventing them from exercising, in particular, their right to development in accordance with their own needs and interests” (UNDRIP, 2007, p. 3), the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action #43 and #44 target the need for the federal government to support UNDRIP (TRC, 2015b). In response, the federal government more recently in 2020 promised to introduce legislation to incorporate UNDRIP into Canadian law (Government of Canada, 2021). After much delay, it was not until June of 2021 that Bill C-15, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (the UDRIP Act), became law with a two-year action plan for implementation (Government of Canada, 2021). Reflecting the lack of trust in the federal government to enact meaningful change, former Assembly of First Nations National Chief Perry Bellegard explained that although this bill has the potential to improve conditions for Indigenous peoples of Canada, he is concerned the government will delay any real implementation (Laskaris, 2020). Federal and provincial government implementation of UNDRIP could potentially answer the Indigenous communities’ calls to regain control over their education. The declaration contains 46 articles, two of which are directly and explicitly related to education:

Article 14

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to establish and control their educational systems and institutions providing education in their own languages, in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning.
2. Indigenous individuals, particularly children, have the right to all levels and forms of education of the State without discrimination.
3. States shall, in conjunction with Indigenous peoples, take effective measures, in order for Indigenous individuals, particularly children, including those living outside their communities, to have access, when possible, to an education in their own culture and provided in their own language.

Article 15

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to the dignity and diversity of their cultures, traditions, histories and aspirations which shall be appropriately reflected in education and public information.

(UNDRIP, 2007, p. 13-14)

More specifically, and in relation to this study, UNDRIP (2007) Article 14 calls for teachers to use culturally relevant pedagogy that is inclusive of traditional Indigenous languages, even for those urban Indigenous students living outside of their home communities. Article 15 asserts the need for reflections of the diverse cultures and histories, which implies teachers must have background knowledge of Indigenous histories and the unique cultures of their students.

Articles 14 and 15 are relevant to the teachers working in the large school district in Alberta in which this study took place. Whether or not the province of Alberta chooses to implement UNDRIP (2021), teachers are tasked to meet the needs of our diverse Indigenous students and engage with Indigenous content and perspectives. Implementing the Articles of UNDRIP (2007) are critical for Indigenous students, however it is important to note that the Articles have the

potential to positively impact non-Indigenous students in fostering greater understanding of Indigenous cultures and traditions which could lead to more respectful relations among Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples of Canada. Federally, we can look to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action (2015b) which guides federal and provincial policies.

The Truth & Reconciliation Commission of Canada

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was launched in 2009 in response to the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement (Kairos, 2017). The TRC was led by three commissioners: the Honourable Justice Murray Sinclair, Dr. Marie Wilson, and Chief Wilson Littlechild (TRC, 2015a). The commissioners engaged in a six year long truth-telling quest documenting testimonies from over 7000 Indian Residential School survivors, families and communities to honour and recognize the truths of their schooling experiences. An integral mission of the TRC was to inform Canadians of the true history of Indian Residential Schools (TRC, 2015a). The commission published an extensive final report of their findings (TRC, 2015a) and, in an important departure from reporting, the 94 Calls to Action (TRC, 2015b) were issued. Speaking to the important role of education, approximately one quarter of the 94 Calls are related to kindergarten to post-secondary education (Held, 2019). Other areas of focus include how different levels of government including but not limited to: justice, child welfare, health, language and culture (TRC, 2015b), are implicated in this work. I will focus specifically on Calls to Action #62 to #66 that highlight the important role of education and schools in moving towards a more just and responsible Canadian society (TRC, 2015b). The establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2015) was made possible by the persistent and dedicated efforts of Indigenous peoples of Canada despite the many barriers that were put in place

historically by the federal government. Many injustices sadly continue to persist in the present day.

Each province and territory are taking up the Calls to Action in unique ways. The Canadian faith-based charity, Kairos (2017), conducted an assessment on the progress that provincial and territorial governments have made in achieving the Calls to Action related to education in a report called “Winds of Change.” In the context of Alberta, Kairos (2017) noted that Alberta has made commitments to fund work towards this Call to Action; however, they also note a reluctance by teachers to present material related to Indigenous content.

At the time of the release of the Kairos (2017) report card, Alberta was led by the New Democratic Party (NDP) and there was a draft K-6 curriculum created in consultation with Indigenous teachers and community that was being piloted. Drafts of the NDP revised curriculum included an increase in Indigenous content woven throughout the subject areas; this approach worked to advance the education-related Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action (CBC, 2018). Since the shift to the United Conservative Party (UCP) as the governing party of Alberta in 2018, the NDP’s curriculum was revoked, and a new draft K-6 curriculum was released in the spring of 2021 (Alberta Education, 2021). Based on the lack of appropriate Indigenous content and perspectives, the UCP’s draft curriculum does not support the implementation of the Calls to Action as the references to Indigenous peoples and content are harmful and limited (Association of Alberta Deans of Education, 2021; French, 2021; Mertz, 2021; Narine, 2021). The UCP curriculum has caused outrage in the Indigenous community. Throughout the province, 95% of school boards declined to pilot the draft K-6 curriculum, including the school district in which this study takes place (French, 2021; Mertz, 2021; Narine,

2021). Many teachers are speaking out against the draft curriculum and are exercising their voices on social media, such as the Albertans Reject Curriculum Draft Facebook group, with over 40,000 educators, parents and concerned citizens as group members speaking out against the curriculum, the page further indicates public rejection of the curriculum (Albertan's Reject Draft Curriculum, n.d.). One wonders if Kairos (2017) were to conduct a more current report card for Alberta in relation to the Calls to Action, it would likely show that the progress towards the implementation has regressed. More recently, an Indigenous-led research organization, the Yellowhead Institute (2021) released a special report about the progress towards the Calls to Action stating that only 11 out of 94 Calls to Action have been achieved, none of which were related to education. Given what is at stake and what Canadians are finding out about the truths of our shared colonial past, it is time the education system move beyond verbal claims of support for the Calls to Action (TRC, 2015b) and take responsibility for their implementation. Drawing on the lessons of the past, we know that this task is best supported through the mandating of provincial policies and standards such as Teaching Quality Standard competency 5 (Alberta Education, 2018) but, importantly, can also be furthered through the work of Alberta teachers.

Provincial response

Alberta's Response to the UNDRIP

While the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act was implemented into federal law, each province and territory retains “their own approaches and authorities relating to the implementation of the Declaration” (Government of Canada, 2021, p. 1). Our neighbour to the west, British Columbia, was the first province to pass legislation that

aligns with the UNDRIP Act (Government of British Columbia, 2021) and so far, no other provinces have followed the lead of this most westerly Canadian province. Recently, the city of Saskatoon, Saskatchewan adopted the UNDRIP Act in their municipal legislation, however it is worth noting that education is a provincial responsibility (Dayal, 2022).

Since the UNDRIP Act, otherwise known as Bill C-15 (2021), was put into federal law, the Alberta Government has expressed significant concerns about the implementation of UNDRIP as it pertains to resource extraction. This resistance is not altogether surprising given the United Conservative Party's (UCP) priorities and main industry hinging on resource extraction. In a public written submission to the Senate, the Government of Alberta shared concerns relative to Bill C-15, in particular around "free and informed consent" (Alberta Government, 2020, p. 4) specifically concerned with the possibility of First Nations veto power, rights and entitlements of "lands, territories and resources" (Alberta Government, 2020, p. 5), predicting, rather ironically, that it could create conflicts and divisions. While Alberta did not declare any concerns with the Act specifically in relation to education, it does not seem hopeful that the government will align with this important federal law. Their resistance to implementation will have serious implications for Alberta's Indigenous communities and speaks to the current UCP's priorities that privilege economic interests over all else. The ramifications for education are that the implementation of the UNDRIP articles related to education will not be assumed as the legal responsibility of the provincial education system.

Alberta's Teaching Quality Standard

Despite a long history of opposition to Indigenous rights recognition, Alberta has made some positive changes in response to the TRC Calls to Action specific to education (TRC, 2015b) through the implementation of the professional practice standard for teachers and leaders. These standards were put in place by the former New Democratic Party government in 2018. The Alberta Teaching Quality Standard (TQS) includes professional expectations for K-12 teachers who work directly with students that stipulate the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that are required for teachers to support optimum student learning. The professional practice standard also includes expectations for leadership (Leadership Quality Standard/LQS) and superintendents (Superintendent Leadership Quality Standard/SLQS) but for the purpose of this study, my focus will be on practicing teachers (Alberta Education, 2018). The TQS outlines six competencies for teachers which are the basis for professional certification for all teachers in Alberta and holds them accountable to both the profession and the Ministry of Education. Teachers seeking qualification must be evaluated on these competencies and certificated teachers must adhere to the competencies in their practice in order to maintain professional standing. One of the six competencies identified in relation to Indigenous content is “applying Foundational Knowledges about First Nations, Métis and Inuit” (Alberta Education, 2018, p. 6).

Aligning with the TRC, the inclusion of Indigenous perspectives is in direct response to Call to Action #62 which states that “provincial and territorial jurisdictions of education in Canada [that] have been called on to make the history of residential schools, Treaties, and the historical and contemporary contributions of Indigenous peoples a mandatory educational requirement for all K-12 students” (TRC, 2015b, p. 120). The TQS competencies are understood

as “an interrelated set of knowledge, skills and attitudes, developed over time” (Alberta Education, 2018, p. 3) and so there is an important distinction between the TRC Call to Action #62 being mandatory and the more open-ended implementation of the TQS competencies. The inclusion of Indigenous perspectives was not present in the previous professional practice standard for teachers (Alberta Education, 2013), so for some and what should be all teachers, the inclusion of TQS competency 5 (Alberta Education, 2018) may encourage much needed shifts in teacher practice within Indigenous education. The four indicators below competency 5 are measurable actions that lead to the achievement of the competency:

A teacher develops and applies foundational knowledge about First Nations, Métis and Inuit for the benefit of all students. Achievement of this competency is demonstrated by indicators such as:

(a) understanding the historical, social, economic, and political implications of:

- treaties and agreements with First Nations;
- legislation and agreements negotiated with Métis; and
- residential schools and their legacy;

(b) supporting student achievement by engaging in collaborative, whole school approaches to capacity building in First Nations, Métis and Inuit education;

(c) using the programs of study to provide opportunities for all students to develop a knowledge and understanding of, and respect for, the histories, cultures, languages, contributions, perspectives, experiences and contemporary contexts of First Nations, Métis and Inuit; and

(d) supporting the learning experiences of all students by using resources that accurately reflect and demonstrate the strength and diversity of First Nations, Métis and Inuit.

(Alberta Education, 2018, p. 6)

Many teachers find themselves seeking support in working towards developing their foundational knowledge of Indigenous peoples, since it had not been mandated previously or widely present in their own education. Teachers require support in their own learning in relation to Indigenous education, so that they can best support student learning. In a recent survey of 2300 Alberta teachers from more than 40 school divisions on the implementation of the Teaching Quality Standard, teachers reported that they were in the beginning or early adoption phases of implementing Competency 5: Applying Foundational Knowledge About First Nations, Métis, and Inuit, into their teaching practice (Friesen et al., 2020). When these same teachers were asked about the level of need they had in meeting this competency, they reported a low level of need. This highlights a discrepancy between the professional expectation and how teachers view their responsibilities in building foundational knowledge about Indigenous peoples; this finding is problematic and perplexing, and requiring of further investigation. This study suggests that there may be a lack of knowledge, a mismatch between the professional learning teachers are receiving and what is needed to advance their teaching practice, or a resistance to implementing the competency. As competency 5 is a requirement within the TQS (Alberta Education, 2018), there is a need to uncover what needs to be in place for teachers to embed Competency 5 within their day-to-day practice.

Why Teacher Education is Essential

Although many Canadians may only be learning and understanding the impact of Indian Residential Schools in very recent times, this history is anything but new. Despite decades of Indigenous peoples' attempts to relay their truths, many Canadians remain vastly unaware of the atrocities that happened within the Indian Residential School system in large part because it

was not included in Canadian school curriculum. This lack of awareness and understanding by mainstream citizens to the realities of Indigenous peoples and our shared colonial past has led to racist attitudes and harmful relations with Indigenous peoples (RCAP, 1996).

It is worthwhile to quote at length Senator Sinclair's words in the Summary of the Final report of the TRC:

It became clear over the course of the Commission's work that most adult Canadians have been taught little or nothing about the residential schools. More typically, they were taught that the history of Canada began when the first European explorers set foot in the New World. Nation building has been the main theme of Canada's history curricula for a long time, and Aboriginal peoples, with a few notable exceptions, have been portrayed as bystanders, if not obstacles, to that enterprise...Beginning in the 1980s, the history of Aboriginal people was sometimes cast in a more positive light, but the poverty and social dysfunction in Aboriginal communities were emphasized without any historical context to help students understand how or why these happened. This has left most Canadians with the view that Aboriginal people were and are to blame for the situations in which they find themselves, as though there were no external causes. Aboriginal peoples have therefore been characterized as a social and economic problem that must be solved. By the 1990s, textbooks emphasized the role of Aboriginal peoples as protestors, advocating for rights. Most Canadians failed to understand or appreciate the significance of these rights. (TRC, 2015b, p. 235)

Since the education system has played a significant role in harming Indigenous communities either overtly or covertly, we must consider the possibilities that exist within the current education system to bring to light the truths about Indian Residential Schools. As professionals, teachers play an integral role in being key agents of change in education (OECD, 2017). In considering the powerful role of educators to affect change, I have chosen to work with teachers who have demonstrated their commitment to make meaningful change through their professional roles as the primary focus of study within my research.

Problem Statement

In order to make the necessary improvements to education in Alberta, significant shifts in teacher practice related to Indigenous education are needed. This study aligns with the notion that the true education gap lies within the lack of non-Indigenous understanding of Indigenous peoples, history, and perspectives held by teachers and not Indigenous student ability (Poitras Pratt & Danyluk, 2017; TRC, 2015a). This gap is a part of the larger educational debt owed to Indigenous students (Ladson Billings, 2006). Acknowledging that the TQS (Alberta Education, 2018) and Calls to Action (TRC, 2015b) require teachers to engage in Indigenous education, I aimed to better understand how teachers make sense of their role within Indigenous education as well as which experiences have led them to, or hindered, their efforts to engage in Indigenous education. At present, we are at a crucial time in Canadian history to ensure future generations of citizens are aware of the impacts colonization has had on Indigenous peoples and points to the critical role teachers can play in educating the future generations.

Significance of Study

This study is significant because of the need to re-imagine Indigenous education and support teachers in leading this important work. In order to move Indigenous education forward 'in a good way' in the province of Alberta, we must engage in the decolonizing of education. Education scholars such as Poitras Pratt and Danyluk (2017) affirm that the current educational disparities continue unchallenged due to the teaching of a biased history and a silencing of Indigenous perspectives. As a longtime advocate for the restitution of Indigenous rights in education, Mi'kmaw scholar Marie Battiste (2013) implores readers to challenge the Eurocentric education system and reject the colonial agenda on which it is built. The 94 Calls to Action (2015b) issued by the TRC offer tangible actions for challenging our current education system. The TRC Calls to Action for Education (2015b) and subsequently Alberta's TQS competency 5 (Alberta Education, 2018) have provided teachers with clear responsibilities in Indigenous education by imploring teachers to rethink their teaching practices. It is timely to look at how teachers are taking up these significant responsibilities in their classrooms when they likely have not had much explicit teaching about the true history of our nation in their own formal education experiences. Without addressing teacher needs, we are at risk of continuing harm done to Indigenous peoples through the education system.

Through my research, I aimed to better understand how practicing K-12 teachers in a large urban school district in Alberta view and action their role in Indigenous education. Adopting a strengths-based approach, I was interested in learning what experiences teachers have had in their professional or personal lives that motivate them to actively engage in Indigenous education.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this research study was to gain a greater understanding of the experiences of teachers engaging in Indigenous education and to identify which experiences encourage or discourage how they enact their responsibilities to Indigenous education. My research took a qualitative and collaborative approach with practicing K-12 teachers serving as co-researchers in a large urban school district in Alberta to determine how teachers are understanding their role in Indigenous education and how we might better support their efforts.

Researcher Positionality

I am a person of mixed ancestry, having both Settler and Indigenous roots, who is living and working as a visitor on Treaty 7 Territory in Alberta. My maternal ancestors came from Northern Ireland two generations ago and my paternal grandmother is from U'nama'kik, Mikmaki (Cape Breton Island, Nova Scotia), and Ktaqmkuk (Newfoundland) Canada. In her book, *Indigenous Methodologies*, Saulteaux scholar Margaret Kovach (2009) explains that we must state our tribal affiliations out of respect to our ancestors and to reflect our identity as an integral part of a researcher's role. She emphasizes that each tribal identity is connected to place. I recognize that I have never actually lived in the places where my ancestors are from and so this removal from ancestral lands complicates my ability to confidently situate myself within a tribal identity connected to my ancestors. My settler roots further complicate this positioning as I am also implicated in the colonial project. Kovach (2009) asserts that researchers must do the work to honour tribal epistemologies, and as an urban woman with Indigenous ancestry living away from her ancestral territories, I recognize that I am working on developing a

relationship and understanding of my paternal grandmother's territory and people but do not yet feel confident identifying with my Mi'kmaw roots or applying a fully Mi'kmaw epistemology to my work as I am still in the stage of exploring these roots. I am also someone who currently lives on the traditional territory of the Blackfoot Confederacy. Cree scholar, Shawn Wilson (2008) explains that "identity for Indigenous peoples is grounded in their relationship with the land and their ancestors who have returned to the land and with the future generations who will come into being on this land" (p. 80). Although I have never lived on the traditional territories of my ancestors, I am grateful to have had the opportunity to learn from local Elders and Knowledge Keepers from the places I have lived throughout my life. I am also aware that I feel a sense of responsibility to engage in this study 'in a good way' honouring my Indigenous ancestors and understanding they were taught to feel shame for who they were as Indigenous people. I deliberately choose to prioritize those actions that may have a positive impact on the generations still to come.

I also have a vested personal interest in Indigenous education in Alberta as a teacher who has worked with Indigenous students and perspectives for the majority of my career. Having previously worked at a federal school on a remote, fly-in Anishinaabe reserve (Treaty 9 Territory), an independent school for youth-at-risk (Unceded Territory of the Matsqui, Kwantlen, Katzie, and Semiahmoo First Nations), and with my latest professional experience working in Indigenous education at a large urban public school district in southern Alberta (Treaty 7 Territory) means I have been able to witness firsthand the state of Indigenous education across multiple provinces, contexts, and settings. My dedication to Indigenous education also connects to my quest to understand my role of being in a treaty relationship,

which refers to developing an understanding of my responsibilities with the place and peoples within the numbered Treaty region on which I reside (Donald, 2010) on both sides of my lineage.

Definition of Terms

Many of the terms used in this study have a broad range of possible definitions. Thus, for clarity, I provide the following table of terms and definitions to provide the reader with insights into my understanding of these terms that, in turn, provides a glimpse into my worldview.

Table 1
Definition of Terms

Term	Definition
Assimilation	A process of imposing the dominant culture's values, norms and languages upon Indigenous peoples. In the context of Canada, assimilative policies which tried to force Indigenous peoples to adopt Eurocentric values, norms and languages (Battiste, 2013).
Colonization	A system of oppression (Battiste, 1996) that orders relationships among peoples, lands, the natural world and civilization, where one dominant group controls all others (Tuck and Yang, 2012).
Decolonization	The process of undoing or dismantling colonial structures of power so as to relinquish established dominance over Indigenous peoples (Smith, 2013). Within education, this term often refers to the practice of challenging colonial perspectives on what knowledge is, whose knowledge it is and how knowledge is gained and transferred (Smith, 2013).
Enfranchisement	The policy imposed on Indigenous peoples of Canada by the federal government that resulted in a person no longer being considered an Indian under the federal legislation. Indians, who were enfranchised under the Indian Act, were removed from their band lists (Assembly of First Nations, n.d.). Examples of enfranchisement include loss of status as a result of marriage, enrollment in the military or pursuing post secondary education.

Eurocentrism	The dominant worldview that centers Western perspectives and knowledges as superior and universal (Battiste & Henderson, 2011).
First Nations	A term developed by the Canadian Federal Government to identify someone who is registered under Canada's Indian Act (1867) and who represents those who have lived on Turtle Island since time immemorial.
Indigenous	A term used internationally to describe the original inhabitants of a particular region or country, in contrast to those who have settled, occupied, or colonized a region or country (Battiste, 2013).
Indigenous Education	Indigenous education is rooted in Indigenous thought, values and centers Indigenous worldviews while demonstrating an awareness of historical and contemporary realities of the diverse Indigenous peoples on Turtle Island/North America (Styres, 2019), which exists outside of a Eurocentric approach to education.
Inuit	The modern name of the original occupants residing in the northern and Arctic areas of North America, occupying 35% of Canada's land mass and over 50% of its coastline (Indspire, 2019).
Métis	A distinctive post-contact cultural group whose descendants are a mix of Indigenous and European ethnicity, and who come from a unique shared political and historical background (Métis National Council, n.d.).
Newcomer	Refers to a landed immigrant who came to Canada up to five years prior to a given year (also known as recent immigrant) (Statistics Canada, 2006).
Non-Status	A term used to describe a First Nations person that is not registered on the Indian Register pursuant to the Indian Act (Government of Canada, 2012) who have lost their status as a result of assimilative government policies.
Reconciliation	According to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2015d), reconciliation is the process of establishing and maintaining mutually respectful relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians.

Refugee	A person who is forced to flee from persecution and who is located outside of their home country (Canadian Council of Refugees, 2010).
Settler	A term referring to descendants of individuals who either came to Canada or were brought to Canada from somewhere else. This term often, but not always, refers to those in the dominant white European culture; additionally, settlers can come from anywhere in the world (Regan, 2010).

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

It has been said that in order to know where we are going, we must acknowledge where we have been (RCAP, 1996). In light of this wisdom, we cannot meaningfully speak of the present day hopes and challenges within Indigenous education without first acknowledging the dark colonial reign that underlies the nation-building project of Canada and the outcomes of this colonial past on the First Peoples of Turtle Island/North America. The previous chapter demonstrated the multitude ways colonization has harmed Indigenous peoples and left non-Indigenous Canadians uninformed about the ways in which Indigenous peoples have been perpetually mistreated. In this chapter, I review relevant literature with the aim of situating Indigenous education on a path of gradual improvement as we grapple with the outcomes of a colonial past, surveying current and ongoing outcomes stemming from colonialism, and imagining a way forward with possibilities for decolonization. The aim of this review is to set the context and to explore relevant themes in the literature in order to understand the learning experiences that K-12 teachers have had in Indigenous education in an effort to find ways to support teachers in their professional learning.

This literature review is divided into four sections. In the first section, I discuss colonization and its relevance to Canada and the impact on Indigenous peoples. From here, the next section explores decolonization from a broader perspective before narrowing in on decolonizing education literature. The following section examines studies related to pre-service and inservice teachers engaging with Indigenous education content. Finally, I look to the ways in which educators have taken part in professional learning activities as a form of agency or empowerment within a context of social justice education.

I have chosen to draw on both Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars to offer multiple perspectives on my research topic that in turn provides a more holistic approach to engaging with my research question. Understanding how colonization has negatively and excessively controlled Indigenous peoples and contributed to the lack of truthful information that non-Indigenous Canadians hold about Indigenous peoples will provide the basis for developing an awareness of the possibilities within decolonizing education.

The Disruption of Colonization

In order to see the possibilities that exist for the decolonization of education in Alberta, we must first gain an understanding of the complex forces of colonization and their impact on Indigenous peoples. In a recent critical review of the Alberta's United Conservative Party's 2021 proposed draft curriculum, Papaschase Cree scholar Dwayne Donald asserted that, "you can't pass over colonialism, that is where you have to start" (2021, October 6, personal communication). As globally renowned Maori scholar, Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012) explains, colonization can be understood as an expression of imperialism, originating from the West, which is rooted in the Eurocentric concept of discovery and economic expansion. Once the foreign lands were "discovered" by incoming colonizers seeking to expand their power, Unanga scholar Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang (2012) maintain that colonialization then imposes a new set of relationships among peoples, lands, and the natural world. The post contact relationships that are of interest in my study are those between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. Both Battiste (2013) and Donald (2014) agree that colonization imposes a power laden hierarchy on Indigenous peoples which denies balanced or equitable relationships among groups. This study seeks to imagine the renewal or perhaps the establishment of healthy

relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples of Canada through the decolonizing of education.

Colonialism, Control and Power

Colonization is a means of exerting power and control over others for the purpose of gaining authority over people, land, and resources. Scholars Tuck and Yang (2014) describe this imposed control as taking the forms of both internal and external control of Indigenous peoples, animals and resources within a Nation's borders by colonizers in their traditional territories. The European powerholders, the colonizers, exercise this control through various systemic, structural and interpersonal modes of dominance (Tuck & Yang, 2012). This exploitation is further described by Dakota scholar, Waziyatawin Angela Wilson and Arikara and Hidatsa scholar Michael Yellowbird (2005) as a power imbalance between the colonizers and the colonized that allows power holders to expand their social, political and economic power at the expense of the lives, identities, lands and resources of Indigenous peoples. In the lands now known as Canada, the power the colonizers exerted over Indigenous peoples was established first through the Doctrine of Discovery and then through subsequent federal policies and laws such as the Royal Proclamation (1763) which unjustly gave the British permission to buy and sell land inhabited by Indigenous peoples. The Indian Act (1873) is another example of racist legislation imposed by the colonizers which continues to govern all aspects of Indigenous life to present day, including the imposition of colonially defined terms of Indian status, the allocation of reserve lands that represented the forced relocation of Indigenous peoples, and the enforcement of treaty rights (including colonial forms of education). The Indian Act was the greatest contributor to the oppression of Indigenous peoples (Battiste, 2013). In western

Canada, the illegal pass system was also used as a control mechanism of Indigenous peoples . This control mechanism, which was instigated in reaction to the Métis-led Northwest Resistance of 1885 in an effort to control the movement of Indigenous peoples. This illegal process implemented by then Prime Minister, Sir John A. MacDonald, wrongfully confined First Nations peoples to reserves where they could not leave a bounded territory without permission granted by the local Indian Agent in the form of a permit (TRC, 2015a). These types of policies have been the basis for the imbalanced relationship between the colonizers who aggressively exerted these policies and laws and the Indigenous peoples in Canada to further a colonial advantage over the original occupants. As explained by Battiste (2013) and Smith (2012), the changes that occurred under these racist policies contributed to making Indigenous knowledges and languages de-legitimate. Here in Canada, the colonial force that contributed to the dehumanization of Indigenous peoples was that of settler colonialism.

Settler Colonialism

Settler colonialism differs from the broader global agenda of colonialism that is focused on gaining control over land and resources, by additionally seeking to replace the Indigenous peoples of the land with an incoming group of settlers from foreign lands (Tuck, McKenzie & McCoy, 2014). This insidious form of colonialism, often cloaked as the colonial myth of settling empty unused lands, works by turning land into individually owned property which reifies the misassumption that these lands were new and unoccupied or 'terra nullius'. A direct result of this colonial mindset imposed on lands not their own was that these lands were claimed as property for the settlers which was started with the "Doctrine of Discovery," then enforced and supported through the Indian Act (RCAP, 1996). In Canada, settlers were recruited from

western Europe under the guise that they were coming to a newly discovered world which held promises of free land and a better life, while held in ignorance of the truths that these lands had been occupied since time immemorial by the First Peoples (TRC, 2015a). As Veracini (2013) explains, settler colonialism is unique to other forms of colonialism because the aim is to make the Indigenous peoples “disappear” through relocation and displacement into bounded and often remote territories. Settler colonialism has had irrefutable damaging impact on the lands, cultures, languages, and traditional education systems of Indigenous peoples. Within contemporary education, the settler colonial or “pioneer” history of Canada dominates our school curriculum and diminishes the experiences of First Peoples (Donald, 2009). Settler history erases Indigenous stories and truths perpetuating the idea that through colonization, Indigenous peoples only exist in the past, which is a commonly held myth that is kept alive through the Eurocentric perspectives shared in the curriculum.

Impacts of Colonization

The ongoing impacts of colonization continue to ripple across the Canadian landscape and to negatively affect Indigenous peoples. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC, 2015a) explained that the Indian Residential School system was central to the attempted cultural genocide of Indigenous peoples. Cultural genocide can be understood as the “destruction of those structures and practices that allow the group to continue as a group” (TRC, 2015a, p. 9) and the TRC (2015a) determined that Indian Residential Schools, among other government-imposed actions were an attempt at cultural genocide (Cardinal, 1999; MacDonald & Hudson, 2012) as the overarching purpose of these schools was to assimilate Indigenous peoples into the mainstream population (TRC, 2015b). During the Pope’s visit to

Canada in the summer of 2022, he affirmed that what happened to Indigenous peoples at Indian Residential Schools in Canada, was in fact, genocide (Deer, 2022). In response, and more recently in October of 2022, Canadian Members of Parliament unanimously backed a motion calling on the government to also recognize what happened in Indian Residential Schools as a genocide (Raycraft, 2022). Against all odds, Indigenous peoples are survivors of attempted genocide. Still, the impacts of harmful government policies continue to be present throughout Canada today.

Several damaging consequences have resulted from the imposition of racist government actions and include, but are not limited to: poverty, family and community violence, substance abuse, and the deterioration of health (Monture & Dénomme-Welch, 2009; Schissel & Wotherspoon, 2003; Wilson & Yellowbird, 2005). The Indian Residential School system was one of the most damaging policies enacted against children and their families within the larger colonial agenda. As Battiste (2013) asserts, Indian Residential Schools did significant harm to Indigenous peoples through its agenda of forced assimilation that included removal of language, culture and the severing of family ties. Potawatomi-Lenapé Susan Dion et al., (2010) concur that Canadian education policies have been responsible for “decimating aboriginal (sic) families, cultures and nations” (p.11). Although the colonization of Indigenous peoples of Canada extends well beyond schooling, I am interested in how formal education was used as a weapon against Indigenous peoples, while keeping non-Indigenous Canadians virtually unaware of the horrors that were inflicted on the First Peoples. The long-standing negative impacts of the Indian Residential School system continue to reverberate through Indigenous families and

communities today due to the trauma resulting from the abuse, and cultural violence that occurred in these schools.

In discussions about the issues plaguing Indigenous communities today, a common refrain for uninformed Canadians is to suggest that Indigenous peoples should “just get over it” (Palmater, as cited in Switzer, 2013). Considering that colonization is not over, this study aligns with the conviction that colonization is ongoing and therefore requires a renewed approach to education. The Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2015a) sheds light on how education is to blame for perpetuating myths and misunderstandings between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples living in Canada,

Non-Aboriginal Canadians hear about the problems faced by Aboriginal communities, but they have almost no idea how those problems developed.

There is little understanding of how the federal government contributed to that reality through residential schools and the policies and laws in place during their existence. Our education system, through omission or commission, has failed to teach this. (TRC, 2015a, p. 235)

The belief that colonization continues to be the backbone of the education system in Canada is affirmed by scholars such as Battiste (2013) and Chung (2019), as the system is built on damaging assumptions about Indigenous peoples and privileges a Eurocentric foundation of knowledge. Thus, it can be argued that both the historic and current systems of education have been focused on maintaining the oppressive structures that continue to harm Indigenous peoples in Canada (Battiste, 2013; Dion et al., 2010; Smith, 2012). In order to disrupt the

ongoing oppression and marginalization of Indigenous peoples, it is essential to look to the possibilities that decolonization offers to learners and teachers alike.

Towards a Definition of Decolonization

There are various definitions associated with the term decolonization that differ depending on the context in which the term is used. Indigenous scholars frame decolonization in both contested and parallel ways because of the complex nature of the concept and diversity of Indigenous peoples and their experiences (McKinlay & Barney, 2014). For instance, Tuck and Yang (2015) affirm that the term 'decolonization' is often overused without acknowledging the oppression and marginalization of Indigenous peoples reducing the term to a 'metaphor'. For this reason, it was important to review literature from predominantly Indigenous scholars to advance a working definition of decolonizing education for this study.

As a starting point, it is helpful to understand and conceptualize what decolonization is not. Tuck and Yang (2015) assert that decolonization is not synonymous with social justice. They further explain that the term decolonization has integrity and is not a metaphor for other things we want to improve in our societies such as broad social justice initiatives. I align with the belief that decolonization should be distinct from social justice work. As an example of what is meant by this observation, Cree - Métis scholar Verna St. Denis (2011) explains that lumping decolonizing efforts alongside multiculturalism initiatives continues to limit and silence Indigenous content and perspectives. In other words, by subsuming Indigenous realities into the same categorization as other oppressed or marginalized groups, colonialism is perpetuated as it fails to recognize the unique perspectives of Indigenous peoples. Therefore, decolonization is its own project distinct from other social justice and human rights movements, and as a

result, cannot be grouped alongside other initiatives, including multiculturalism (Burman, 2016; Schick & St. Denis, 2003; St. Denis, 2011; Tuck & Yang, 2015). If colonization is understood as a process of implementing structures of power and control over others, then decolonization can be conceptualized as the process of undoing these structures.

Decolonization as the process of undoing

Unshackling ourselves, whether we are Indigenous or non-Indigenous, from the imposed constraints of colonization, is a process that will take time and sustained effort. Diné scholar, Kelsey Dayle John (2019) asserts that the first step towards decolonization within the context of Canadian nation-state building, is attending to the impacts of settler colonialism. In the context of decolonizing education, Indigenous scholars are leading the way (Battiste, 2013; Dion, 2020; Donald, 2009; John, 2019; Poitras Pratt et al., 2018; Smith, 2012; Styres, 2017; Tuck & Yang, 2012). In the seminal text, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012) describes decolonization as a process that involves the undoing of the structures implemented through imperialism and colonialism at multiple systemic levels, including education. Mohawk scholar Sandra Styres (2017) reminds us that these structures and systems of privilege and power are well-established to uphold the status quo and therefore, decolonization is a complicated process. The process of decolonization can be more specifically understood as the “bureaucratic, cultural, linguistic and psychological divesting of colonial power” (Smith, 2012, p. 101). The divesting of exclusive colonial control from the existing education systems in Canada requires active engagement from both Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities.

In order to take up the process of decolonizing, we must first understand how our current systems are inherently Eurocentric and then actively work through the process of

dismantling these structures. World renowned Brazilian critical theorist and philosopher, Paulo Freire (2000) affirms that decolonization is not a passive undertaking, but instead is intrinsically tied to a concept known as praxis defined as “reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it” (p. 33). Decolonization requires individuals to take action. Wilson and Yellowbird (2005) describe decolonization as an active resistance to colonial powers such as actively challenging the status quo of our current education system by questioning the legitimacy of our education practices, policies and curriculum. More specifically, Donald (2009) affirms the importance of action-based decolonial responses and focuses his directive to non-Indigenous Canadians by asking them to interrogate the assumptions that they hold about Indigenous peoples. In relation to this study, both Wilson and Yellowbird (2005) and Donald (2009) concur that it is important to challenge commonly held assumptions about Indigenous peoples so teachers can appropriately share the true history of our nation with their students. We cannot move to authentic decolonial action before reflecting on the implications of the current colonial stronghold that exists in Canada, consider what is truly possible, and then actively create space for resurgence of Indigenous knowledges.

Decolonization as Reclaiming

As a result of the power imbalance that was enforced by colonization, there is much discussion about decolonization being reflected in the act of reclaiming Indigenous identity, culture, language and rights (Held, 2019; McKinlay & Barney, 2014; Styres, 2019; Kuokkanen, 2007). The reclamation of languages and cultures that were violently taken from Indigenous communities through the Indian Residential School system, and other colonial strategies, is a telling example of reclamation and therefore integral to decolonization in Canada (TRC, 2015a).

By reclaiming identity and culture, we enact the heart of decolonization by returning power and control to Indigenous peoples, so they may have autonomy and self-determination over their lives (Styres, 2019), which as Held (2019) envisions, will only be possible when colonizers no longer have power over Indigenous peoples. In addition to decolonization being an active process of undoing colonial control, it is also important to reclaim the traditional Indigenous knowledges that have been forcibly removed and de-legitimized through colonization.

Decolonizing Education

During the release of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action, former Senator Murray Sinclair famously said, "It is education that got us here and education is what will get us out" (CBC, 2015, p.1) in reference to the impact of Indian Residential Schools. His statement also speaks to the requisite shifts required within Canadian education systems to bring balance back to Indigenous communities and necessarily educate non-Indigenous Canadians. Education is key to decolonization because schools have continued to foster the oppression of Indigenous peoples through oppressive acts as well as hiding important truths from non-Indigenous Canadians (Siemens, 2017). The call to decolonize education is a call to critically reflect on the negative impacts of colonization and take action in resistance (Battiste, 2013; Kanu, 2007; Donald, 2013; Tuck & Yang, 2015). Understanding that education systems have been designed to replicate the colonizers' view of the world, any efforts made towards decolonizing education requires unpacking the current colonial system and actively resisting its aims (Battiste, 2013). Unpacking the current system would involve looking at how current curriculum, teaching practices, structures and processes are inherently Eurocentric in nature and subsequently engaging in truth telling acts, such as unpacking the biased assumptions

within the recently discarded Doctrine of Discovery with students, to deepen understandings and help reframe the current relationships between Indigenous peoples and non-Indigenous Canadians.

In arguing that decolonizing education exists outside of multiculturalism, scholars such as Tuck and Yang (2019) assert the need for critical race theory and progressive education. Although decolonizing education has been described as anti-oppressive, as Stavros and Miller (2017) explain, it means much more than the promotion and celebration of cultural diversity because understanding how Indigenous peoples have been specifically marginalized through colonization is essential for all Canadians. Battiste (2013) calls for decolonizing Indigenous education to be “framed within concepts of dialogue, respect for educational pluralities, multiplicities, and diversities...it is about deconstructing decisions about curricular knowledge and reframing education and knowledge to the context of people’s lives” (p. 107). So, while Battiste (2013) speaks to pluralities, it is not multicultural plurality she is referring to, rather it is diversity across Indigenous peoples.

Decolonizing education involves an active resistance to current Eurocentric approaches to teaching and learning (Battiste, 2013; Styres, 2019). Resistance to the current Eurocentric model includes introducing Indigenous pedagogy into the classroom and amplifying Indigenous voices and perspectives in the curriculum. In doing so, Dion et al., (2010) explain that this resistance, along with inclusion of Indigenous voices and content, challenges oppressive power structures. Within the K-12 education system in Alberta, there is a need for teachers to develop an awareness of how the current educational system reflects a primarily Eurocentric worldview thus a need and opportunity to embrace opportunities for truth-telling by including Indigenous

perspectives and content in their learning environments. This is how teachers engage in the important work of decolonizing education.

Decolonizing education does not solely include looking at external factors within education systems, it also involves looking deeply at oneself, in other words, involving decolonization of your own thinking. Colonization continues to have significant damaging psychological and mental impacts on Indigenous peoples, and as such, undoing the colonization of the mind for all is a necessary first step towards decolonization (Wilson & Yellowbird, 2005). University of Manitoba Sierra Leonean curriculum scholar Yatta Kanu (2005) explains that the psychological subordination of Indigenous peoples has been enforced by settler colonialism and contributes to internalized racism. American author and educational theorist bell hooks (1994) shares that decolonization of the mind challenges the impacts of this internalized racism. The impact of the psychological harm is referred to as 'hidden injuries' and results from internalizing harmful racist stereotypes (Joseph & Williams, 2009; Lorde, 1984; Osajima, as cited in Kumashiro, 2000). Rather than thinking of colonization of the mind as an injury, which could imply victimization of Indigenous peoples, I look to the work of Battiste (2000/2013) and her concept of cognitive imperialism. Cognitive imperialism suggests that decolonizing the mind is a process which infers that it can be undone (Battiste, 2013), and not an injury that can heal but will forever leave a scar. Decolonizing our minds involves rejecting Eurocentric thought patterns, assumptions and beliefs (Battiste, 2013). Although there is an emphasis on the importance of Indigenous peoples' decolonizing of the mind, it is also a process that is beneficial to all Canadians. The decolonization of our minds is a shared responsibility in order to move the goals of decolonizing education forward. The concept of conscientization, as

conceptualized by Paulo Freire, calls for the act of engaging in the difficult work of examining commonly held ways of thinking.

The decolonization of self involves ongoing critical interrogation of one's commonly held beliefs, assumptions and values (Battiste, 2013; Styres, 2019). The term conscientization or consciousness raising which is translated from the Portuguese word, *conscientização*, was first coined by Paulo Freire in his seminal 1970 text, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Conscientization is described as learning to "perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality" (Freire, 1970, p. 17). Conscientization provides a model, as explained by Styres (2019), to help develop a critical consciousness about the oppression and marginalization of Indigenous peoples that is essential for decolonizing education. Decolonizing the mind through conscientization is inherently unsettling as it deliberately challenges commonly held assumptions and beliefs about Canada's relationship to Indigenous peoples and the true history of our nation. I take up conscientization as an essential process within my research study as it advocates for ongoing critical reflection that is necessary for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous teachers to challenge their commonly held assumptions about the history of Canada.

Decolonizing Education is a Shared Responsibility

The recognition of a shared responsibility to decolonize education calls for all stakeholders in the education system to participate. Decolonization must be a mutual undertaking between the colonizers and those who are colonized (Battiste, 2013; Beeman-Cadwallader, Quigley, and Yazzie-Mintz 2011; Donald, 2009). Donald (2009) further clarifies the

opportunity to work towards deconstructing our shared past by acknowledging that our present and future are intertwined together. We all must decolonize.

Working Definition of Decolonizing Education

The purpose in exploring the various ways decolonizing is defined is to come up with a working definition of decolonizing education as one way to stimulate discussion with the research participants in this study who live and work in the context of southern Alberta, Canada. I recognize that defining such a morally charged term is difficult because decolonizing education involves recognizing the oppressive nature of our current education system. I therefore looked to literature from Indigenous and critical scholars to inform the definition.

Decolonizing education is the responsibility of both non-Indigenous and Indigenous peoples (Battiste, 2013; Donald, 2009; Beeman-Cadwallader, Quigley & Yazzie-Mintz, 2011). Decolonizing education involves actively engaging in the process of interrogating Eurocentric systems and developing an understanding of how these systems continue to marginalize and oppress Indigenous peoples (Alfred, 2009; Dion et al., 2010; Donald, 2009; Ermine, 2007; Smith, 2012; Stavros & Miller, 2017; Tuck & Yang 2015; Wilson & Yellowbird, 2005). The revealing of how colonialism perpetuates the education system involves ongoing reflection and conscientization (Battiste, 2013; Freire, 1970; Styres, 2019). Actively resisting Eurocentrism by the difficult task of reviewing the current education system policies and practices results in a more equitable system which includes and reflects Indigenous worldviews (Battiste, 2013; Smith, 2012; Styres, 2017). Through this newly imagined lens, naturalization and legitimization of Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing in education are realized for the benefit of all learners (Battiste, 2013; Dion et al., 2010; Kovach, 2007; Little Bear, 2009; Smith, 2012). Using

this working definition as a framework reminds us of the need for decolonizing education in Canada.

Teacher Responsibilities

Teachers have a multitude of responsibilities related to decolonizing education. With the UNDRIP (2007), TRC Calls to Action (2015b), and TQS (2018) setting the course towards necessary improvements in education, it is in the hands of school districts, schools and teachers to take up this important work. As Battiste (2013) urges, educational systems must respect and draw upon the broad principles for decolonization. The question, however, remains as to how to go about this work given that there are gaps in teacher knowledge about Indigenous truths and perspectives (Poitras Pratt & Danyluk, 2018; TRC, 2015a). Looking to current studies for examples, there was far less literature focused on how practicing K-12 teachers are taking up decolonizing education in their schools and classrooms. The research that exists in this area focuses largely on the experiences of pre-service teachers or teacher educators in education programs across Canada (Cardinal & Fenichel, 2017; Deer, 2013; Poitras Pratt & Danyluk, 2018; 2019; Poitras Pratt & Hanson, 2020; Rodríguez de France et al., 2017; Schick & St. Denis, 2003; Watson & Currie Paterson, 2018). These studies point to possibilities and considerations for practicing teachers who are serving in their professional roles without the privilege of prior training.

It has been widely noted that pre-service teachers indicate there are challenges to taking up Indigenous topics reflecting an overall generalized resistance to work related to decolonizing education (Cardinal & Fenichel, 2017; Deer, 2013; Dion, 2016; Poitras Pratt & Danyluk, 2018; 2019; Schick & St. Denis, 2003; Watson & Currie Paterson, 2018). Kahnawake

scholar, Frank Deer (2013), wrote that pre-service teachers report feeling apprehensive because of their lack of foundational Indigenous knowledge. They are also unsure how Indigenous perspectives can live within a Eurocentric-dominant education system. Schick and St. Denis (2003) explain that many pre-service teachers do not see the need to take up Indigenous education in their future classrooms because they do not see themselves as teachers of Indigenous students. These findings reveal that some pre-service teachers do not see Indigenous education as relevant for all students, instead, assuming wrongly that it is solely reserved for Indigenous students. Racist attitudes are also a factor in pre-service teachers' unwillingness to engage with Indigenous education as they see this worldview as holding lesser value than Eurocentric education (Deer, 2013; Schick & St. Denis 2003). In her work with practicing teachers, Dion (2016) expands on the difficulty of engaging teachers because their hesitation to engage with Indigenous content and perspectives is rooted in fear and ignorance.

This resistance is also believed to be present because pre-service teachers are not prepared for the unsettling and difficult investigation of looking at one's own biases and beliefs about Indigenous peoples, a necessary component of initially engaging with decolonial praxis (Schick & St. Denis, 2003). Such resistance, including a deliberate choice for inaction, leads to maintaining oppressive structures in education which underlines Styres (2019) assertion that acts of resistance from pre-service teachers serve to protect the status quo and reinforce the relations of power and privilege that currently exists in our education system. In the context of pre-service teachers in Alberta, Poitras Pratt and Danyluk (2019) explain that because of the discomfort involved in learning about a colonial past and its negative outcomes on Indigenous peoples, many students opt for inaction once they enter their teaching professions. However,

their study also points to those who voluntarily take up their responsibilities in Indigenous education by volunteering in on-reserve service-learning opportunities. Dion (2016) proposes that we might consider whose interests are being served by the deliberate choice to not take up decolonizing education, since the privilege to opt out, as Poitras Pratt and Danyluk (2019) observe, is really only an option for non-Indigenous educators who represent the majority of pre-service teachers. Kumashiro (2016) states that any anti-oppressive education needs to involve overcoming such resistance to change and new learning which as Dion (2016) explains, requires confronting their privilege by understanding how they might be implicated in the oppression of Indigenous peoples. Overcoming the active resistance to engaging in Indigenous education requires that teachers go through discomfort and unsettling of assumptions and beliefs.

To better understand how the process of unsettling might be made more inviting, we look to Métis scholars and teacher educators Poitras Pratt and Hanson (2020) as well as fellow teacher educators Watson and Currie Paterson (2018) who share that the process of unsettling previously unquestioned assumptions includes personal discomfort and disruption of worldviews. Due to the lack of education around Canada's true colonial past, teacher candidates need conditions where they are able to critically consider how their lives intersect with ongoing colonialization and benefit from it (Poitras Pratt & Hanson, 2020; Watson & Currie Paterson, 2018). Key to the process of unsettling is that teachers must actively engage in thinking about and challenging commonly held assumptions (Wotherspoon & Milne, 2020). Through carefully curated course content, teachers' belief of Canada as a just and fair nation is unsettled and beliefs about education and Indigenous peoples are challenged (Poitras Pratt &

Hanson, 2020; Watson & Currie Paterson, 2018). Poitras Pratt and Hanson (2021) state that it is the unexplored biases of teachers that undermine efforts to take up the work of decolonizing education, therefore engaging in the process of unsettling through critical reflection has great potential to impact classroom teacher practice.

In a study that explored the local context of Calgary in relation to practicing teachers, Scott and Gani's (2018) research examined Social Studies teachers and their resistances to teaching Indigenous content in the curriculum. The study revealed that many teachers ignore teaching Indigenous content, even though it is required in the program of studies. Instead, teachers demonstrate ambivalence and uncertainty towards the teaching of Indigenous content and perspectives, despite the TQS (2018) mandates. They simply do not see the implementation as their responsibility (Scott & Gani, 2018). Similarly, in Kanu's (2005) study of teachers' perceptions of the integration of Indigenous content, it was observed that teachers believe the integration of Indigenous content was important but were not certain how to do this teaching correctly; therefore, lack of pedagogical knowing was a key issue. Kanu (2005) suggested that this lack of knowledge was a passive act due to lack of information or an active act of resistance to difficult content that conflicted with the teachers' values and beliefs. Each of these studies points to the ways in which Indigenous perspectives have been summarily dismissed as less important than the Eurocentric perspectives.

Specifically, Scott and Gani (2018) identify three key arguments which teachers used to deflect their responsibility: a) perspectives could not be identified due to the highly diverse nature of Aboriginal peoples and communities; b) only educators who are Indigenous can authentically offer insights into or teach Aboriginal perspectives; and c) Aboriginal perspectives

should not be given special attention, because all cultural perspectives in Canada should be given equal treatment (Scott & Gani, 2018, p. 168). Similarly, Wotherspoon and Milne's (2020) study of practicing teachers affirms that commonly held and damaging beliefs about Indigenous peoples and histories are rooted in teachers' longstanding racist interpretive frameworks. These interpretive frameworks, which are rooted in Canadian identity formation, may impede teachers from authentically engaging with Indigenous content. Professional learning experiences that support teachers in taking up Indigenous content are necessary, but the learning experiences must begin by addressing the resistance teachers feel in order to remove barriers for bringing Indigenous content and perspectives into the classrooms (Scott & Gani, 2018). There is some evidence that teachers are willing to move past the discomfort and their own resistance by engaging with Indigenous content. In their study of practicing teachers who participated in professional learning in Indigenous education, University of Calgary and Queen's University scholars McDermott et al., (2021) found that teachers have the desire to confront the narratives and truths that they encounter in engaging with Indigenous perspectives and recognize the necessary work of challenging one's own perspectives and experiences. The teachers in their study recognized that, in implementing Indigenous content, they cannot presume to assert an expert position as their personal learning will take time and patience (McDermott et al., 2021). In their study of pre-service teachers, Cree scholar Trudy Cardinal & allied scholar Sulya Fenichel (2017) state that sharing personal stories of addressing one's ignorance to Indigenous histories and perspectives can support students in addressing their own ignorance.

Another study by Poitras Pratt and Danyluk (2018) from the Calgary area points to general lack of understanding of Canada's colonial history and the ongoing negative impacts this history has had on Indigenous peoples as a limitation held by preservice teachers. Through their critical service-learning program where pre-service teachers spent time in on-reserve schools, Poitras Pratt and Danyluk (2018) provide an exemplar for how to engage future teachers in embodied and reflective learning experiences beyond the typical classroom. They assert that praxis-based learning opportunities provide opportunities to build trust and connections between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples but only if the pre-service teachers are provided with initial training, ongoing support, and an opportunity to critically self-reflect, throughout this learning experience. The assertion of praxis connects to the work of Freire (2000) who, as mentioned above, explains the importance of decolonization as realized through critical reflection on action. Poitras Pratt and Danyluk's (2018) study reveals there are non-Indigenous teachers in Alberta who are passionate about engaging in decolonizing education if given the right direction and supports. These scholars also note that it is educators who can be positioned at the forefront of the national project of reconciliation motivated by the TRC Calls to Action (2015b) if they are given the right opportunities. Since decolonizing education involves unsettling assumptions and critical reflection, there is a need for a learning model for teachers to identify with so they can move through the difficult work required and adhere to the obligations of UNDRIP (2007), the TRC Calls to Action (2015b), and the TQS (Alberta Education, 2018). Poitras Pratt and Danyluk's (2019) article "Exploring Reconciliatory Pedagogy and Its Possibilities through Educator-led Praxis" also asserts that ongoing critical

reflection is essential to understand how one might be implicated in the colonial project and remain committed.

Given the limitations and potential ways forward that previous studies have revealed, this study aims to uncover what types of learning experiences teachers have had related to Indigenous education and how they assert a commitment and then maintain this momentum in an effort to provide further impetus for development of professional learning.

Professional Learning – finding a way forward in Indigenous Education

In terms of broadening the scope to include practicing teachers, Styres (2019) and Gebhard (2018) note that quality and intentional professional learning opportunities for both pre-service and in-service teachers is essential to make improvements in Indigenous education. McGregor (2017) notes that in order to see sustained and effective change in Indigenous education, educators need to have appropriate modeling, samples of lesson plans, pedagogical approaches, as well as teaching and assessment strategies. Consistent with Indigenous ways of knowing, a commitment to lifelong learning is to continually assert a need to deepen knowledge and understanding in relation to Indigenous education and this open mindset is essential for professional learning to be impactful (Battiste, 2013; McGregor, 2017).

Indigenous education initiatives that support teachers in upholding their responsibilities to Indigenous education can often be misunderstood as the need to teach using cultural approaches (Gebhart, 2018; Kanu, 2007; St. Denis, 2011). St. Denis (2011) argues that using only cultural approaches, such as creating artifacts, replicating art, and introduction of Indigenous forms of dancing, can harm Indigenous students as well as Indigenous education for all students as it represents a superficial approach that reinforces a cultural hierarchy. Even

though culturally informed teaching may be well intended, it is often misguided as St. Denis (2011) explains “culturally-based solutions can inadvertently contribute to further problems” (p.178). Kanu (2007) and Gebhard (2018) agree that cultural approaches in Indigenous education can reproduce the idea that Indigenous students are inferior, because it does not address the implications of power and privilege. While making space for students to learn about and appreciate Indigenous cultures can be included within the realm of Indigenous education, if it is used as a singular approach there is a risk of tokenizing Indigenous cultures. A cultural approach silences the damaging realities in which Indigenous peoples of Turtle Island/North America are living within as a result of ongoing colonization.

Cree scholar Angelina Weenie (2014) argues that in order to be effective in Indigenous education, teachers must develop awareness of the inequalities within the education system. We can look to the work of anti-racist scholars in order to better understand how teachers can develop awareness of inequities for Indigenous peoples. In their research on Black students in Canadian schools, anti-racist scholar George J. Sefa Dei et al., (1997) asserts that taking up questions of power, equity and social class is crucial to support the engagement of minority students. Once teachers have developed an awareness of power laden structures in the education system, Dei and McDermott (2019) maintain that addressing the hierarchies that exist in the education system requires implementation of anti-racist education. Anti-racist education for teachers requires developing awareness of how negative ideologies about Indigenous peoples exist and persist. Professional learning that takes an anti-racist approach involves explicitly teaching about how Indigenous peoples continue to be treated in Canada (St. Denis, 2007). The decolonizing education literature points to the need to bring awareness of

how the education system marginalizes Indigenous peoples, (Alfred, 2009; Dion et al., 2010; Donald, 2009; Ermine, 2007; Smith, 2012; Stavros & Miller, 2017; Tuck & Yang 2015; Wilson & Yellowbird, 2005) and resist Eurocentric approaches to education (Battiste, 2000; 2013; Freire, 1970; Styres, 2019). There is a gap in the decolonizing education research about how professional learning targeted at Indigenous education can work in tandem with anti-racist professional learning, as put forth by St. Denis (2007), to support teachers in their commitments connected to the TRC (2015) and TQS (Alberta Education, 2018).

Through addressing and confronting our colonial relations (Donald, 2012), there are opportunities to address the need for a lasting intervention for teacher professional learning within Indigenous education (Kanu, 2007). In looking to practical and accessible applications for addressing oppression, literature may be one ready solution. Thompkins (2002) shares that a way teachers can begin to recognize privilege through professional learning is to listen to the oppressed, through short narratives or biographical pieces written by marginalized voices which may also include guest speakers or films. In their work with pre-service teachers, Cardinal and Fenichel (2017) as well as Gorecki and Doyle-Jones (2021) also advocate for learning first hand from Indigenous voices. Going one step further, Dion (2009) asserts that we move beyond solely providing Indigenous counter-stories and actively engage in learning about how the education system perpetuates injustice for Indigenous peoples.

The education system in Western nations has universalized what counts as knowledge and is dominated by a Eurocentric perspective (Ahenakew, 2017; Battiste, 2013; Styres, 2019). Professional learning within Indigenous education requires that Indigenous knowledges are legitimized, one of the ways this can happen is by centering the land. Renowned Tewa scholar

Gregory Cajete (2015) and Cree scholar Cash Richard Ahenakew (2017) assert that relationships to land are central to Indigenous education. Indigenous education should start with learning about the places on which we are located (McGregor, 2017). Land-based learning offers possibilities for decolonizing education, as Wildcat et al., (2014) shares, "if colonization is fundamentally about dispossessing Indigenous peoples from land, decolonization must involve forms of education that reconnect Indigenous peoples to land" (p. 1). By centering land in professional learning activities, teachers can learn about Indigenous knowledges and perspectives in a way that does not tokenize culture. In her study of pre-service teacher Indigenous education courses, Madden (2015) asserts that because Indigenous knowledges are "informed and infused by place" (p.3), land-based education can support teachers in their understanding of traditional Indigenous ways of learning. Although there are challenges in trying to incorporate Indigenous knowledges into a Eurocentric education system (Ahenakeew, 2017; Simpson, 2014), the gifts of bringing Indigenous perspectives of the land can balance the shortcomings of the singular Eurocentric way of knowing (Cajete, 2015). For non-Indigenous teachers, reconceptualizing the relationship to land by engaging in professional learning about the land from Indigenous perspectives has the potential to benefit teachers and students alike (Madden, 2015; Newhouse & Graham, 2008; Styres et al., 2013).

Designing professional learning to meet the needs of practicing teachers requires ongoing commitment and an important shift away from a solely cultural approach. Professional learning should also include interrogating existing structures that work against the goals of Indigenous education and perpetuate the marginalization of Indigenous peoples and

knowledges. Offering teachers opportunities to engage in land-based learning has the potential to legitimize Indigenous knowledges within the Eurocentric education system.

Conclusion

In this review of the literature, we see the complex position in which we find ourselves as educators who are leading the way forward in Indigenous education and to understand the possibilities that exist in decolonizing education. Our current colonial education system limits the progress that can be made in Indigenous education by the ongoing privileging of only Eurocentric approaches and knowledge. It is time for our education system to move ahead with the work of decolonization. We are guided by the Articles in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007), the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action (2015b), and in the context of Alberta, the Teaching Quality Standards (2018) which provide the social and moral impetus to engage in decolonizing education. As a result of the current Eurocentric education system and its choice to marginalize and diminish Indigenous perspectives, teachers have not been equipped with adequate knowledge or skills to bring Indigenous content and perspectives into their classrooms, which is a roadblock to decolonizing education. To find ways to remove these roadblocks, the need for teacher critical reflection which includes interrogating commonly held beliefs and assumptions is necessary work for teachers to engage in decolonizing education (Battiste, 2013; Freire, 1970; Kumashiro, 2016; Poitras Pratt & Danyluk, 2019). Understanding the many challenges and promises of Indigenous education, this study aimed to uncover the experiences that practicing teachers have had within their work in Indigenous education and sought to explore how teachers understand their

role in Indigenous education as a way to keep momentum and commitment to this essential component of education moving forward.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

In this action-based qualitative study, I employed a decolonizing methodology of Photovoice and sharing circles, grounded in the principles of participatory action research and oriented by critical pedagogy in order to empower teachers to critique structures of oppression in the education system. These methodologies were selected to explore how teachers are enacting their responsibilities as champions of Indigenous education. In this chapter, I situate myself by sharing my paradigmatic orientation and I offer an overview of the problem and research question that explores possibilities to support the current crisis in broader teacher avoidance of Indigenous education. I then describe the decolonizing methodology and selected methods of Photovoice and sharing circle methods that were used in this research study, followed by data collection, dependability, ethical considerations, delimitations and limitations. The exploration of teacher experiences in Indigenous education will help support the development of professional learning initiatives for K-12 teachers in response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action (TRC, 2015b) and the Teaching Quality Standard (TQS), specifically TQS 5 (Alberta Education, 2018) in a large urban school district in Alberta, Canada.

Paradigmatic Orientation

As an individual who claims and comes from both European and Indigenous roots, my paradigmatic orientation is rooted in my complex identity. Graveline (2000) and Kovach (2007) explain the importance of “self in relation” and “researcher in relation,” which emphasize the importance of positionality and the need to be transparent in situating myself alongside my

work. I recognize that there are both gifts and limitations that can be identified within the overall perspective I bring to this study.

As an Indigenous Education practitioner, I support teachers and leaders in their work with Indigenous students and content. Through my years of work with Indigenous students and families, I have fostered and sustained personal connections to Indigenous communities and have come to know that Indigenous knowledges and ways of being resonate with me on a deeper level and has forever changed the way I live and walk in this world. I feel a sense of responsibility to 'all my relations' which includes both physical and spiritual relations, and those of Indigenous and non-Indigenous descent (Absolon, 2011; Hart, 2002; Kovach, 2010; Lavall'ee, 2009). In keeping the ethos of honouring 'all my relations' in the forefront of my work, which is inclusive of both my settler and Indigenous ancestry, I am reminded of my responsibilities to my Indigenous ancestors who have been negatively impacted by colonization and my settler ancestors who were complicit in the colonial project. I am also reminded of my responsibility to the future generations of children who, if the Calls to Action (2015b) and TQS (2018) are implemented, will be educated differently than their teachers about the true history of Canada.

In my professional role as an educational practitioner in a specialist position that supports teachers with their professional responsibilities around Indigenous education, I have witnessed an increase in teachers seeking much needed support in responding to the TRC Calls to Action (2015b) and in implementing TQS 5 (Alberta Education, 2018). Through my study, I would like to further my understanding of teachers' experiences as they enact their responsibilities in implementing these educational mandates in their classrooms. One of my

study's contributions will be to provide considerations for professional learning opportunities for teachers to help support their understanding of the history and perspectives of Indigenous peoples. In light of my own complex positioning, I deliberately drew upon Indigenous and Western approaches to address the research question related to our current context in Indigenous education in Alberta, Canada. I have, in essence, taken up a two-eyed seeing, or Etuaptmumk in Mi'kmaw, approach (Marshall & Marshall, 2012) where my study sought to gain a holistic understanding of what experiences have led teachers to feel empowered to take up their responsibilities to the TRC (2015a) and TQS 5 (2018) despite lacking a historical and present-day understanding of Indigenous perspectives in Canada.

The methodological choice for this study was selected in an intentional effort to engage with the research question 'in a good way' (Ottmann, 2021). Engaging in research 'in a good way' requires a decolonial approach to research which is collaborative and draws from Western and Indigenous knowledge systems. This phrase is also meant to reflect that the study aims to be empowering for those taking part in research activities as well as those who will learn from it.

Problem Statement

Teachers and schools across Canada have a responsibility to adhere to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP, 2007), now that the Canadian government has finally signed onto this international agreement, and the Truth and Reconciliation Commissions Calls to Action (TRC, 2015b) relative to education, in order to make necessary improvements to Indigenous education. Within Alberta, teachers must also meet the requirements of the Teaching Quality Standard (Alberta Education, 2018) to meet the

professional standard requirements of practicing teachers where the fifth teaching quality standard, TQS5, addresses the need for teachers to acquire foundational knowledges relative to First Nations, Métis, and Inuit. Practicing teachers are in need of professional supports to help decrease their gaps in knowledge relative to Indigenous education. This study focused on teacher champions, meaning those who are actively taking up Indigenous education initiatives in their school settings despite their lack of professional training and/or background studies. The purpose of my study was to explore how K-12 teacher champions in a large urban school district in Alberta are actively taking up their responsibilities in Indigenous education, and understanding their motivations in doing so, in order to look at possibilities for professional learning.

Overarching Research Question

In order to explore how champion teachers are engaging in Indigenous education and adhering to the TQS 5 (2018), the TRC Calls to Action (2015) and the articles of UNDRIP (2007), this research study focused on the following research question:

How do practicing K-12 teachers understand and enact their role in Indigenous Education?

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for my study is that of critical pedagogy which encourages reflection and action, or in Freirean terms 'praxis,' that inherently holds the potential for transformation of cultural or oppressive structures (Freire, 2000). Opaskwayak Cree scholar

Shawn Wilson (2001) maintains that interpreting Indigenous perspectives through critical theory can produce knowledge around the realities of Indigenous peoples, including an awareness of the histories and perspectives of Indigenous communities. For this study, a critical approach means teachers will develop further understandings of the realities of Indigenous peoples in both a historical and contemporary sense. Wilson (2001) shares that critical pedagogy, a typically Western approach to research, appropriately aligns with the Indigenous belief that reality is fluid. The notion that reality is fluid connects it to Indigenous knowledges in that “we might be able to say in critical theory that our fluid reality is affected by our culture as Indigenous people...that would create an Indigenous perspective” (Wilson, 2001, p. 176). Critical pedagogy’s aim to inform change in oppressive systems, including that of education, aligns with Smith’s (2012) concept of talking or writing back, and the responsibility to the collective as opposed to the individual, which is central to decolonizing approaches to research. I observed that despite being in a global pandemic during a time of high political tensions, a number of teachers were empowered to assume and continue their responsibilities within Indigenous education. Through engaging in reflective praxis on experiences of teachers taking up Indigenous education, we build upon a foundation of critical pedagogy which aims to explore issues of equity and inform changes in school districts, specifically that of how professional development and learning is designed and delivered, where the study takes place.

A Decolonizing Methodology

I have chosen to implement an action-based, qualitative research approach in my study that upholds a belief in the social construction of knowledge and goes one step further in its co-creation of knowledge with fellow educators. Understanding the professional and lived experiences of fellow educators championing Indigenous education has the potential to offer insights into societal and cultural influences, negotiation of power dynamics, and pedagogical innovations (Archibald, 2008; Battiste, 2013; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Smith, 2012). I chose to focus on teachers who are championing Indigenous education because they will have insights and experiences in navigating the greater landscape of K-12 education to include Indigenous ways, despite inherent challenges, which in turn has the potential to inform the development of professional learning. I employed Photovoice as a decolonizing and participatory methodology that utilizes multiple methods, including sharing circles, to address my primary research question and to further develop an understanding of the experiences of practicing teachers who are actively engaged in implementing Indigenous perspectives, and meeting the calls of TQS 5, into their teaching practice.

Decolonizing education “entails identifying how colonization has impacted education and working to unsettle colonial structures, systems, and dynamics in educational contexts” (Poitras Pratt et al., 2018, p. 1). In seeing the need to disrupt colonially-driven approaches to research, I chose to situate this work within a decolonizing framework (Absolon & Willet, 2004; Kovach, 2010). Decolonization involves interrogating and resisting Eurocentric systems and making space for and legitimizing Indigenous knowledges and approaches. One way I attended

to resisting Eurocentric approaches in my study was to move away from a deficiency approach to research, which places blame on Indigenous peoples for harsh life realities including socio-economic and health disparities, and into a strengths-based approach where the education system is interrogated. Kovach (2010) explains that “an Indigenous paradigm welcomes a decolonizing perspective, one could (and ought to) argue that a decolonizing theoretical perspective is necessary within Indigenous research given the existing social inequities that Indigenous peoples continue to experience” (p. 42). A decolonizing methodology holds the potential to legitimize Indigenous approaches to research by honouring and being inclusive of Indigenous understandings of knowledge creation through our interconnectedness.

Kovach (2009) further asserts that each research inquiry is positioned “in relation to place and person [and] how they integrate into Indigenous research frameworks” (p. 56). As an educator with Indigenous and non-Indigenous ancestries, I acknowledge that I am in-relation to the research and the co-researchers in complex ways (Graveline, 1998; Kovach, 2008). I am not a neutral observer (McGregor, 2018) rather I am deeply dedicated to calling out injustices and advancing knowledge within Indigenous education. Speaking to relational ways, Métis scholar Fyre Graveline (1998) notes that within the dynamics of self-in-relation, knowledge is co-created. Other Indigenous scholars, including Kovach (2009) and Wilson (2001), assert that relational approaches are central to Indigenous inquiries. Knowledge construction should be relational in approaches to qualitative and community-engaged research (Creswell, 2013). As yet another advocate for relational approaches, Wilson (2001) emphasizes the importance of

relational accountability which affirms the responsibility I have to honour 'all my relations' within this work.

This study demands a decolonizing outcome from both myself and the co-researchers; one that aligns with the research question but also has the objective to contribute to decolonizing education (Absolon, 2011). The topic of how to look at teachers' experiences within Indigenous education compels me to look beyond Eurocentric research traditions in order to identify potential solutions that come from practicing in-classroom educators (Kovach, 2010; Smith, 2012; Wilson, 2001). As researchers, Smith (2012) requires we critically engage in research inquiries and be aware that the academy is a Eurocentric system.

Research done on Indigenous peoples has had many detrimental consequences for Indigenous communities. Smith (2012) also warns that we must be aware the historical implications of research that has been harmful to Indigenous peoples which as Patel (2016) asserts, educational research has been a site of coloniality. Decolonizing research analyzes power differences and is necessary because of ongoing colonial influences which are "persistent and persuasive" in research (McGregor, 2018, p. 817) and therefore, decolonizing research approaches require constant attentiveness to such influences (McGregor, 2018; Smith, 2012). Engaging in ethical research approaches requires a critical awareness of how the academy has harmed Indigenous peoples and requires considering a new way forward through decolonization.

According to Indigenous scholars, there are limitations to a decolonizing approach when used within the Western academy. Māori scholar Graham Smith (2010) warns that the term

decolonizing puts Indigenous peoples in a place of reactivity, as though we have to justify much-needed and long overdue actions to non-Indigenous peoples. Alfred (2004) also notes the limitations of Indigenous paradigms within the academy where Indigenous perspectives have historically been marginalized and has oppressed Indigenous peoples and advocates for an entirely Indigenous paradigm. Trying to fit Indigenous perspectives within the boundaries of existing Western research frameworks can be restrictive. However, Smith (2012) shares that decolonizing does not mean a total rejection of all theory or research or Western knowledge, rather it is about centering Indigenous worldviews and then coming to know and understanding theory and research from our own perspectives and in support of our own research objectives. Although there are obvious limitations in taking up Indigenous paradigms in the Western academy, an entirely Indigenous approach to research may be best suited for Indigenous scholars who are firmly rooted in their tribal epistemology (Kovach, 2010). As a novice researcher with a complex positionality, I see the appropriateness in including both Indigenous and Western perspectives, through an *Etuaptmumk*/ two-eyed seeing approach to research.

Etuaptmumk /Two-Eyed Seeing

Because my identity is complicated by having both settler and Indigenous roots, and I have limited understanding of my tribal epistemology (Kovach, 2010), I explored my research question through both a Eurocentric and Indigenous lens. I am taking an *Etuaptmumk* /two-eyed seeing approach that was originally developed by Mi'kmaw Elders and scholars Marshall and Marshall (2012) to frame my research, which is "to see from one eye with the strengths of Indigenous ways of knowing, and to see from the other eye with the strengths of Western ways of knowing, and to use both of these eyes together" (Bartlett, 2012; Marshall & Marshall, 2012,

p. 335). Etuaptmumk /two-eyed seeing connects to a decolonizing methodology because it resists a strictly Eurocentric approach to research. Etuaptmumk /two-eyed seeing in research “draws together the strengths of the mainstream, or Western and Mi’kmaq knowledges” (Iwama et al., p. 4). Bartlett (2012) shares that Etuaptmumk /two-eyed seeing is not an exclusively Mi’kmaq approach and can be applied when bringing any Indigenous and non-Indigenous worldviews together. Despite its obvious appeal as a way to bring worldviews together, an Etuaptmumk /two-eyed seeing approach has limitations. In an analysis of research conducted utilizing a two-eyed seeing approach, it was found that there are multiple interpretations of how researchers apply Etuaptmumk /two-eyed seeing into their research due to the lack of clarity in which this approach is described (Wright et al., 2019). Canadian biology scholars, Reid et al., (2021), explain that some interpretations of Etuaptmumk /two-eyed seeing have placed the worldviews in contrast to one another rather than in balance. Casteldon et al., (2017) states that researchers must move beyond the oversimplified dichotomy discourse, which positions worldviews in opposition to one another within Etuaptmumk /two-eyed seeing approaches and instead see them as equally valid. Etuaptmumk /two-eyed seeing is not an amalgamation of two worldviews, but a thoughtful integration of worldviews and knowledge in order to solve a problem (Iwama et al., 2009). In light of the various critical interpretations of how Etuaptmumk /two-eyed seeing is taken up, I have carefully employed this decolonizing approach by using both Western and Indigenous methods in tandem within this research inquiry.

Etuaptmumk/ two-eyed seeing scholars Bartlett et al, (2012) further emphasize that the worldviews should not be kept separate from one another but should be carefully woven

together throughout the research process. I believe that the strength of a Etuaptmumk /two-eyed seeing approach was that both perspectives woven together can more appropriately respond to my research question. I view Indigenous and Western ways of knowing as equally valid and recognize that Indigenous perspectives have been ritually overlooked and undervalued due to colonial impacts. I do not believe there is one pan-Indigenous way of knowing, and I acknowledge the diversity of Indigenous knowledges which are rooted in land. Since this study takes place in a large urban setting where there is much diversity, in both educators and the student body, we actively work to bring Indigenous knowledges and perspectives in balance with Western perspectives in our collective work as a district. A balanced perspective can be achieved when Indigenous and Western perspectives are equally valued and employed in district structures and processes.

Decolonizing Approaches in Research Methodologies

The decolonizing methodology used for this study applied an Etuaptmumk /two-eyed seeing approach and was guided by the principles of Participatory Action Research (PAR) (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). PAR is rooted in feminist, critical race, queer, neo-marxist and Indigenous scholarship. As the name implies, PAR involves participation and action from the members of the community who are the focus of the research inquiry (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Grbich, 1999; Minkler & Wallerstein, 2003). Participatory researchers align with a critical approach as they are committed to the improvement of humanity through the seeking of equity amongst all persons (Smith, 1997). PAR as a methodological approach draws on the work of Freire (2000) and has developed into an “action oriented, advocacy means of inquiry”

(Creswell & Gutterman, 2019). A collaborative approach to research decolonizes the traditional researcher-participant power imbalance and situates the participants on even ground alongside the researcher. In employing a collaborative approach within the context of this study, the participants acted as co-researchers. Collaborative approaches are also in harmony with an Etuaptmumk /two-eyed seeing approach which emphasizes collaboration and co-learning (Barlett et al., 2012). I assumed a guiding role in this study and situated myself alongside the co-researchers.

Anishinaabe scholar Cindy Peltier (2018) engaged in a synthesis of Indigenous methodology and PAR in employing a two eyed seeing approach which engaged stakeholders in the research process as well as the implementation and evaluation. Aligning with Peltier's (2018) model, the participants in this study were engaged throughout the first stage of photo creation, sharing and analysis, as is consistent with the chosen methods. Although co-researchers were not involved in the final analysis phase of the study, they had a key role in co-creating the content and interpretation of the initial data which then formed the data for my secondary analysis.

In the context of my study, PAR provides space for the findings to be actioned; in this case, to create opportunities for improvements to Indigenous education through informing the design of future professional learning activities. Wilson (2001) explains that "participatory action research is also useful for Indigenous people because it aligns with our axiological beliefs. Action research may have been developed from constructivist or critical theory models, but it fits well into our [Indigenous] paradigm because the idea is to improve the reality of the people

with whom you work” (p. 178). PAR can work alongside Indigenous methodologies because it is a collaborative approach to research which aligns to Indigenous worldviews that value the collective over the individual (Battiste, 2013). Working alongside the co-researchers in this study, we engaged in collective decision-making around the data and its analysis which aligns with PAR principles that advocate a more consensual approach to research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

I am cognizant that not all of the co-researchers are members of oppressed population(s) as is typical within PAR studies. Rather, in the current context of Alberta, Canada, some teachers are enacting their responsibilities to the TRC Calls to Action (2015b) and TQS (Alberta Education, 2018) in their teaching practice in what can be a challenging political environment. Thus, developing a collective understanding of their experiences could help support the development of teacher professional learning for all teachers as they have found ways to enact their responsibilities in spite of challenges. If action research addresses specific educational problems and focuses on equal collaboration and life enhancing changes, as Creswell and Gutterman (2019) maintain, then our collaboration can make improvements to Indigenous education within a large urban school district situated on Treaty 7 territory.

Rooted in Place

The consideration of place and how to honour both the original occupants as well as the diversity of an urban Indigenous community within the context of this urban-based school study, where many Indigenous peoples reside, is a complex undertaking. I am presently working and living on the territory of the Blackfoot confederacy, formally recognized within treaty-

making as Treaty 7 territory and I want to connect this work to the traditional territories on which it takes place. As explained by Tuck and McKenzie (2015), the notion of “place,” whether it be chronologically, geographically or spatially considered, cannot be separated from research because of the influences of place and context on knowledge production. The importance of place-based knowing has long been recognized by scholars such as Keith Basso in *Wisdom Sits in Places* (1996) and Sto:lo scholar JoAnn Archibald (2008) who share how stories connected to place are deeply connected to our identity; this understanding aligns with Indigenous perspectives of being in relationship with the land and ‘all our relations.’ In the text, *Decolonizing Educational Research*, American scholar Leigh Patel (2016) further suggests that one of the ways that educational researchers can interrupt coloniality is by attending to place and context. Place was attended to within this study by acknowledging the context in which this study takes place and listening to participant wishes to take our learning outside on the land. Our study took place during a global pandemic in a politically charged time in education in the province of Alberta, Canada, on the traditional territories of the Blackfoot Confederacy, the Tsuut’ina, Stoney Nakoda and the Métis. By choosing methods that align with a decolonizing approach that upholds Indigenous ways, I have attended to considerations of place, and ancestral traditions. Specifically, by choosing a sharing circle process as a method wherein the protocols are rooted in traditional Indigenous teachings of this territory, I am lifting up and mobilizing Indigenous ways. Further to this, I privileged relational ways throughout my interactions with participants.

Methods

A multiple method approach, using methods that are informed by Indigenous and Eurocentric traditions, was chosen to action an Etuaptmumk/two-eyed seeing approach to the research. These methods include: Dialogic Education through sharing circles as well as Photovoice.

Data Gathering Techniques

Dialogic Education within Circle Sharing

Indigenous peoples are rooted in oral traditions (Battiste, 2013) which affirms that knowledge is primarily transferred through oral storytelling (Archibald, 2008). To honour the oral traditions, and to situate this study within the place in which it was written, a sharing circle was used to engage in dialogue with the co-researchers. Protocols taught by Piikani Elder Dr. Reg Crowshoe, who serves on the Elder Advisory of the school district where the study takes place, were used to conduct the circle process. To honour the relationship and teachings shared by Elder Reg, I have shared with him that I employed his teachings during this proposed research study and have sought his permission. Graveline (2000) suggests that using circles resists oppressive Eurocentric research norms which are extractive and individualistic and aligns with the decolonizing goals of this study. Sharing circles create a pedagogical space in which co-researchers can share their insights and learn from one another. Circles as a symbol and engaging with circle processes is common among Indigenous peoples across Turtle Island/North America (Cajete, 2000). The circle protocols from our local area, and as provided by Elder Dr. Reg Crowshoe (2018), were shared with participants prior to the first meeting. Sharing circles

involve participants coming together in a circle, where everyone is able to see one another from where they are seated (Graveline, 2000). Equality is also honoured, no one is seated in front of, above or below, another and each person has the right to speak. If in person, as is custom to this territory, the circle keeper faces east. A circle keeper shares the protocols and ensures they are maintained throughout the circle process. A topic or question is asked and each participant in the circle has space to answer rotating speakers in a clockwise direction, often passing a natural object to identify whose turn it is to speak. Listening is emphasized within a sharing circle. Participants may not speak over one another and have the option to pass if they do not wish to share. Sharing circles honour the power of respectful dialogue and co-creation of knowledge as participants listen carefully to one other and share their insights.

From a Western perspective, Dewey (1938) believed in a dialogic approach to learning, referred to as transactive, which emphasized verbal exchanges to support student learning. Freire (2000) advocated the need for dialogic education to empower people to speak their truth and name their experiences and reality which, in turn, creates an expansion of consciousness. By engaging in dialogue in what was referred to as cultural circles, Freire (2000) asserted dialogue can support re-interpreting and understanding the colonial system in which co-researchers are situated. As another influential voice in education, Vygotsky (1991) claimed that individual reasoning stems from social interactions through dialogue which – in Western ways - is traced back to the Socratic practice of questioning (Wegerif, 2019). Taking up sharing circle traditions to learn from one another within a Photovoice approach aims to create space for participants to share equally and learn in collaboration with one another (through subsequent sharing circles). In engaging in a decolonizing methodology, my hope was to share

power with the co-researchers; however I acknowledge that this was not entirely possible as I hold the role of circle keeper to ensure the protocols are honoured and I have been the designer of our collaborative learning events. Holding the cultural knowledge and sharing these teachings with participants may have contributed to a power imbalance among co-researchers; however I did my best to mitigate that risk. One of the ways that the power was in the hands of the co-researchers were the ways in which they chose to showcase their thinking through Photovoice.

Photovoice

Photovoice is a process whereby co-researchers can “identify, represent and enhance their community through a specific photograph technique” that is intended to foster social change (Wang & Burris, 1997, p. 369). The development of photovoice is rooted in the process of photo novella—a research technique which used visuals to teach language and literacy (Wang & Burris, 1997). Inspired by Freire's (2000) empowering education, Photovoice arose as a participatory response by Wallerstein and Bernstein (1988) in a health education study that focused on empowering participants through active participation. The process was further developed by Wang and Burris (1997) who brought the process into the realm of PAR approaches. In explaining the process more fully, Wang and Burris (1997) outline that the aims of Photovoice are to allow people to reflect their community's strengths and concerns, promote dialogue about significant issues in small discussion groups about the photographs taken and finally, achieve the goal of reaching policy makers through a public sharing event. This process has since inspired other iterations due to the method's flexibility. I see value in

Photovoice to enable teachers to showcase how they are empowered in their work in Indigenous education.

In their review of multiple studies using Photovoice as a method in PAR studies, Suprpto et al., (2020) emphasized that Photovoice is a flexible method that can be adapted to meet the needs of the co-researchers. Inspired by this scholarly encouragement, co-researchers engaged in the Photovoice process by selecting three (3) photos that were chosen by the individual to reflect their understanding of their role in Indigenous education as well as experiences that motivate or discourage their work in Indigenous education. These images were all shared in circle alongside the co-researchers. Freire (1970) asserted that using visual images enables people to think critically about their community and discuss issues in their everyday lives, which in the case of the teachers in this study, allowed them to think critically about their role in Indigenous education. Through circle group discussions about the photos, the co-researchers reflected on their images and shared these messages with others. Photovoice and sharing circles were applied in this study as data gathering tools to understand how teachers are enacting their responsibilities in Indigenous education.

Sampling and Sample Size

I used non-probability, purposive/judgmental sampling, which was the intentional selection of participants, and snowball sampling, where participants recommended other participants, as methods for recruitment. These sampling, or recruitment methods were taken up because my study targeted teachers who are already engaging in sharing their work in Indigenous education with fellow educators. In my professional role, I have had the privilege of

working with multiple schools through a referral process that routes teachers seeking support from our education team and I also lead professional learning for the school district. I looked for participants who were identified by their school as the designated lead for Indigenous education and those who either myself or my colleagues have witnessed engaging in Indigenous education work. Participation in the study was voluntary. The only criteria for study involvement was that co-researchers had to identify as taking Indigenous education initiatives in their teaching practice. Indigenous education is defined as rooted in Indigenous thought and values and ultimately centers Indigenous worldviews while demonstrating an awareness of historical and contemporary realities of the diverse Indigenous peoples on Turtle Island/North America (Styres, 2019). This definition was shared with the participants at the information session, to ensure they agree that their work aligns with a common definition of Indigenous education. The participants for the study were practicing K-12 teachers working within a large urban school district in Alberta, Canada who self-selected as those who are active in Indigenous education. To honour principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion, there were no specific gender, race, or teaching experience level requirements for participants because the research question does not focus on a specific group. A total of 10 participants stepped forward for this study which allowed for attrition and other extenuating circumstances. In an intentional move to protect the confidentiality of these teachers, pseudonyms were assigned, or alternatively, chosen by the participants, to ensure the teachers' identities remained confidential outside of the group of participants and to protect the professional reputation of participants. Anonymity was maintained throughout the study by removing details that may serve to reveal the identity

of the teachers to the public; this practice also aligned with the ethical requirements of this study and the school district.

As per the requirements of the school district's ethics process and protocols, the school principals of potential participants were emailed an informational poster to share with the Indigenous education team lead (see Appendix A for sample). The poster included information about the study and the time commitment involved to participate which included two 2-hour meetings in circle, one hour to review data on an individual basis between meetings, and the possibility of a final cumulative event. Participants who wished to volunteer for the study contacted the researcher directly via email. Participants were known to one another due to the circle process and collaboration. Outside of the co-researcher circle, identifying information about the participants was held confidentially on a locked password protected computer.

Visual of the Collaborative Process

The visual below shares the process that occurred after the recruitment of the participants. As per circle protocols that were shared in this territory, the circle begins in the east (Crowshoe, 2018) and proceeds in a clockwise direction.

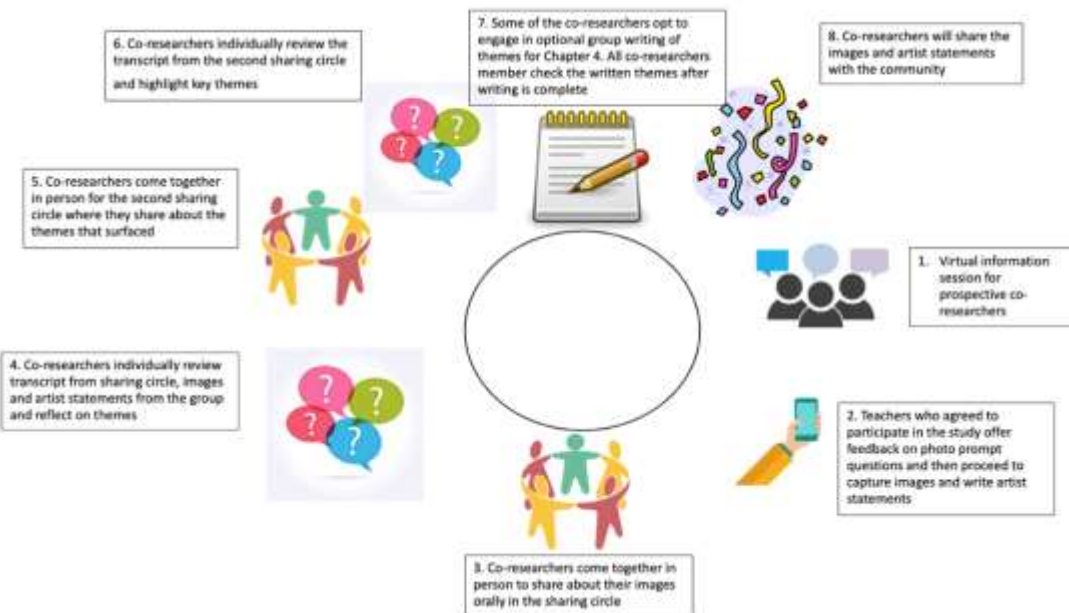


Figure 1. Visual of collaborative process

Data Collection and Instruments

The primary sources of data for this study were photographs, artist statements and transcripts gathered from the sharing circle. The photographs were taken to respond to question prompts which were subsequently shared with all co-researchers for their feedback ahead of the study. Each individual co-researcher responded to the same question prompts, so a thematic analysis could be completed on their diverse responses to these prompts. The draft question prompts were:

1. How are you enacting your responsibilities in Indigenous education?
2. What experiences motivate you to engage in Indigenous education?
3. What experiences discourage you in engaging in Indigenous education?
4. How do you understand decolonizing education?

5. Which supports are required for teachers within Indigenous education?

The co-researchers offered feedback on the question prompts by way of email and digital survey which narrowed down the initial prompts down to three prompts. In response to these chosen question prompts, co-researchers took photos or selected digital screen shots that responded to the question prompts. The co-researchers accompanied the photos with a short artist statement (150 words) which explained each of the images. Reflecting the contemporary technology-filled world we occupy, all co-researchers identified that they owned a smart phone with working camera, so we did not have to engage in training with cameras which has historically been part of the photovoice process (Wang & Burris, 1997). Prior to the first sharing circle, the co-researchers uploaded their photos to a password protected digital location, or sent them to me via email, and I organized them based on what question prompt they were answering. The co-researchers chose one of their digital images for each question prompt for a total of three submitted digital images from each participant. The images were shared with me ahead of the first sharing circle so that they could be printed out in anticipation of our first in-person gathering.

A date was set for the group to come together for the first circle to share the images and artist statements in response to the question prompts. Following circle protocols, each co-researcher shared their photos based on the individual question prompt in the circle along with their artist statements and verbally explained the reason behind their chosen digital image as a representative response to the prompt.

Thematic Analysis

We used thematic analysis to identify, analyze, organize, describe, and report themes found within our circle discussion (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The circle transcript, artist statements and digital images shared in the first circle, were all shared digitally with the co-researchers and formed the raw data which was used to identify themes within the second sharing circle. The co-researchers were asked to consider the following questions in advance of the second circle:

1. What themes stood out to you when the images were shared in response to this prompt?
2. Is there anything else that resonated with you as you listened to the co-researchers' responses?

Another date was set to meet in person for the second sharing circle. During the second sharing circle, the co-researchers, having thought about the reflective questions, engaged in a thematic analysis of each photo prompt question. The thematic analysis conversation, that went for three rounds, one per question prompt, was recorded on a transcript application on my smart phone. The co-researchers came to consensus on main themes that I summarized from my notes after each round of the circle through discussion. After the second event, I shared the entirety of the transcription with the co-researchers for their editing and approval. Four of the co-researchers chose to engage in the collaborative writing of the themes. We wrote in a shared document and then shared back with the larger group for their approval. Suggestions that were made by my supervisory committee in relation to the collaborative writing were all shared with the group of co-researchers before changes were made. I reminded the co-

researchers that I would be writing the discussion chapter independently as it was beyond the scope of their responsibilities, and I shared multiple iterations of this extended chapter with them throughout the writing process in a shared folder on OneDrive.

As an essential component of PAR, specifically that of Photovoice and a decolonizing approach, our next step for this research will be intentionally shared back to the community so that it holds the potential to inform changes within the education system. In our planning conversations we have brainstormed ideas to share with fellow teachers, school leaders and pre-service education students in the coming months.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness refers to the rigour of the study and is specific to qualitative studies where quantifiable indicators of quality research, such as validity and generalizability are not appropriate (Blomberg & Volpe, 2019). Trustworthiness signifies the researcher followed the proper protocols to the best of their ability for the research process. The group of co-researchers may or may not have met the researcher previously because they work in the same school district and this could have influenced their decision to participate. I clearly articulated the purpose of the study, expectations and time commitment with the co-researchers. This was communicated to the potential participants in the orientation discussion and written information provided at the recruitment stage. Each of the co-researchers' contributions to the circle dialogue was member checked, meaning the co-researchers reviewed the transcript and were able to edit their contributions, to ensure the raw data accurately represented what they shared. Identifying specific themes and the interpretation of the first-circle dialogue was done

in collaboration with the co-researchers after the circle sharing of the photos. As Coles (1989) explains, the researcher's interpretation of the stories has the potential to disrupt or overwrite the data so the participants were involved in working alongside the researcher to locate themes and interpret the data. During the secondary analysis, the findings were shared back to the co-researchers throughout the writing process for their insight and feedback.

Credibility

Credibility refers to the confidence that can be placed in the truth of the research findings by the educational research community (Blomberg & Volpe, 2019). I sought credibility by collaborating with the co-researchers during analysis of the data collected and by sharing back the various iterations of the findings, themes and recommendations chapters for their feedback and editing. Given that the responsibility for the final draft of the dissertation lies with me, I let my co-researchers know that a secondary analysis would be my responsibility alone.

Dependability

Dependability refers to the overall reliability of the research and whether the research is clearly documented, logical, and traceable. Documentation was addressed by creating an audit trail in my field notes. The audit trail consisted of a detailed and thorough explanation of how the data was collected meeting the logical and traceable criteria, including the transcribed dialogue and field notes (Blomberg and Volpe, 2019) so that the results are an accurate representation of the data.

Ethical Considerations

Researchers must consider the potential harm they might inflict on the participants through their research design (Miles, Huberman & Saldaña, 2020). Research with human participants requires care and consideration well before embarking on the study and I spent considerable time contemplating the best way to proceed with my study in conversation with others. This was particularly important given that the researchers bravely shared challenges they encountered in their school settings. Co-researchers were required to sign consent forms to participate. In order to mitigate potential harm, the co-researchers' identities remained confidential outside of the inner group of co-researchers. I worked to develop a trusting, respectful relationship with participants by creating a welcoming environment and this was further fostered through circle processes (Archibald, 2008; Clandinin & Connelly, 1990). Co-researchers were actively engaged in both the initial photo-sharing stories as well as the thematic analysis. Their involvement ensured the themes were accurately represented from their perspectives.

Co-researchers' participation in the study was entirely voluntary and they were gifted blankets in exchange for their contributions. It was important to me to share a gift in reciprocity for their contributions as it aligns with my personal ethos and values. I recognize the possible power imbalance between researcher and co-researchers as well as the impact of working within the same school district as the participants. I ensured transparency around my research goals and worked with the participants as co-researchers instead of extracting stories from

them to interpret on my own. This approach reflects my honouring of their voices and perspectives.

I adhered to the principles set out in the application for ethics approval from the Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Review Board at the University as well as the school district where the research took place. Over the years, a more informed and clearer mandate around Indigenous-themed research has meant that extra care and precautions are taken to protect individuals taking part in the research.

Limitations

There are a number of limitations to this study. First off, the experiences of teachers cannot be generalized as the experiences of many teachers in the school district; however, it is not a requirement of research trustworthiness for qualitative research to meet the requirement of generalizability. Instead these experiences can be considered representative of a specific group at a specific time and place. Another limitation is the timing of data collection. This study took place while Canada was still in the midst of a global pandemic and the teachers may have had less available time and be under more stress given what they are navigating in their classrooms and their lives. Another additional limitation was the requirement from the school district ethics that research with teachers be completed during the school year so the teachers who took part in this study could be better accommodated as they were juggling their professional responsibilities while taking part in this study.

Delimitations

One of the boundaries I created within my study is the selection of co-researchers, I recruited ten participants who are known to be actively engaging in Indigenous education. Each school in my district has identified a teacher to lead Indigenous education within their setting and this list was at my disposal as a member of the Indigenous education team. Within such a large district, I may not have had awareness of all teachers who are suitable for this study. I made the decision to target teachers that are already taking up Indigenous education in their teaching practice as they are champions of the work and could offer insights into the research question. In addition, another delimitation is the selection of what school district I would work with, the specific place and location were chosen to inform the work of Indigenous education within a specific school district.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH COLLABORATION

The process of engaging in this research study alongside the co-researchers truly exceeded any expectations I had at the beginning of this project and, upon reflection, their generosity for sharing touched my heart. The participatory nature of this study allowed for multiple perspectives to come together to develop and deepen relationships. This relational aspect in turn deepened understandings through the reciprocal acts of listening and sharing. We became a community.

The methods of Photovoice, along with accompanying sharing circles, proved to be effective in addressing the research question through a *Etuaptmumk* /two-eyed seeing approach (Marshall & Marshall, 2012). The co-researchers were thrilled to connect in person as opposed to a virtual meeting space; many expressed their burnout from being on screens throughout the pandemic. This was a relief to me as I was concerned about how meeting virtually might interfere with the way we could authentically connect and develop trusting relationships. In preparing responses to the Photovoice prompts, the co-researchers came to the sharing circles having reflected on their responses and were able to contribute to the discussion with a more reflective stance. The most powerful part of the process was how the sharing circles created a safe space for the co-researchers to share from the heart and elaborate in depth on their images/photos and artist statements. Through the layered approach of preparing Photovoice images/photos and then elaborating on their creative works in dialogue with colleagues, the goal of gaining a holistic understanding of which experiences led teachers to enact their responsibilities in Indigenous education was achieved. The process of

co-creating knowledge went beyond what I would have been able to understand from images or dialogue alone. Had I interpreted the images and artist statements on my own, I would have been working from a singular and more limited understanding of the co-researchers' responses. One of the more significant outcomes of the study has been the group of co-researchers' hopes to further mobilize this work by hosting multiple art showcases for various audiences across the city. Plans for these showcases are being developed and our wish is to share our findings in the near future. What follows is the collaborative writing of the data and themes from the group of co-researchers. I invite you into what we, the co-researchers and myself, identified as significant findings from the Photovoice creations representing the initial stage of the research process.

Preparatory Research Phase

To begin the study, I invited potential co-researchers to attend a virtual information session where I described the purpose and aims of the proposed study. I responded to questions from these participants two weeks prior to the first sharing circle as they contemplated their involvement. To my surprise and delight, all those who attended the information session opted to be a part of the study and, in doing so, assumed the role of co-researchers who would be responsible for active participation and sharing with one another. Following the conventions of ethical research (University of Calgary Research Ethics Board, 2022) and our professional code of conduct as teachers (Alberta Teachers Association, 2022), group criteria were discussed at the information session in order to protect the confidentiality of the co-researchers at their place of work. After some discussion, we agreed that no images or photos would be used that contained identifiers that would reveal someone's identity or

place of work. The co-researchers decided that, if necessary, we would black out or blur parts of the photos/images that could potentially reveal one's identity or worksite. During the information session, I shared five sample question prompts from my research proposal and shared with the co-researchers that they could also offer suggestions, however they did not come forward with any additions. After the information session and through a virtual poll, the co-researchers came to consensus on three photo prompt questions related to the research question which we would all be responding to with photos/images, artist statements, and then later discussing in more detail in a sharing circle. These co-selected photo prompt questions were:

1. How do you understand decolonizing education?
2. How are you enacting your responsibilities in Indigenous education?
3. What experiences motivate you to engage in Indigenous education?

In the preparatory phase that preceded the first sharing circle, the co-researchers and I collected and/or created one photo or image that responded to each of the individual photo prompt questions noted above for a total of three photos/images. We also wrote relatively brief 150-word artist statements to accompany each of the photos/images and submitted them to a shared online space, OneDrive – this took place through e-mail or the uploading of files so they could be stored in a common space. During this time, four of the co-researchers reached out to me, as the facilitator, for clarification of the task and asked to connect to discuss the task further. I provided reassurance and support as needed through phone calls and emails to ensure the co-researchers understood their responsibilities. Prior to our first sharing circle, I

organized all of the photos/images and artist statements onto PowerPoint slides following the order of the selected photo prompt questions and created an order for the co-researchers to speak in circle and printed one copy for each co-researcher. I purchased fleece blankets, snacks, kleenex, pens, and tins of tobacco for each co-researcher in reciprocity for their time and energy in participating in the research project. I arrived at the location early to lay out the blankets and other items in a circle to set up a welcoming space for the co-researchers as they showed up.

First Sharing Circle

For the first sharing circle, co-researchers were enthusiastic about meeting in person on the land to share photos and thoughts. We met by the confluence of the Bow and Elbow Rivers in circle on a warm and sunny autumn afternoon for our first in-person event together. This site was chosen because of its significance to the Blackfoot Confederacy as a traditional meeting place. The choice of place signalled our responsibilities as residents of Treaty 7 territory. Knowing the significance of this place as lands where we choose to reside is key to understanding how we are in relationship to the Indigenous peoples of Treaty 7. We began our circle with a smudge and a land acknowledgement with the intention to root our work in place. I placed a pair of beaded baby moccasins in the centre of the circle to serve as a visual reminder that students are the centre, the focus, of our work together as educators. Although all co-researchers expressed they had some familiarity with sharing circle processes, I reviewed specific protocols rooted in this territory prior to the first round of circle to honour the teachings of those who have longstanding connections to Treaty 7 territory. We had previously decided that the co-researchers would be seated in the order in which their photos appeared in

the print out. The co-researchers began with a round of traditional introductions, sharing their ancestry and teaching role, before circling around to answer each of the photo prompt questions. As each individual spoke, I observed that the group listened attentively as one another shared.

In order to ensure confidentiality, pseudonyms have been used in writing but co-researchers opted to use their given names in circle and be known to one another. This made sense given what I had shared in the first information session and their willingness to be involved. Although they also shared their work sites in this circle setting, the school names have been removed from the data as presented here to support confidentiality.

As we shifted from the protocol of ancestral introductions, we then moved into discussion of the photos taken by each of the co-researchers. Each co-researcher was given a printed package of the collection of photo/images. Attendees were seated according to how their photos were ordered and each then spoke in this order so they could easily reference what photo their peers were speaking to in circle. Following circle protocols of moving clockwise around the circle, the co-researchers narrated an explanation of their individual photos/images to those seated in circle. There were four rounds within the sharing circle, including the introductions and responses to each of the question prompts by each of the participants, including myself. This oral sharing was recorded on a device that I later transcribed verbatim and sent out to co-researchers.

To enhance credibility, co-researchers reviewed the entire transcript from all three rounds of the first sharing circle to ensure their statements were captured correctly. Co-researchers were invited to edit the transcripts for clarity and meaning prior to analysis. What

follows is a selection of the data collected from the first sharing circle, which is organized in the order that the co-researchers shared in circle and by the photo/image prompt questions. The co-researchers decided to present the data in this chapter in the following order: a) introduction of co-researchers using their chosen pseudonyms, and b) each question prompt followed by each individual photo response (with a photo title and an artist statement included in italics). They also worked on a brief narrative summary from the sharing circle transcription followed by the themes and findings. The artist statements serve to describe the image, written in the words of the creator to support the interpretation from the perspective of the co-researcher.

Table 2

Coresearcher demographic information

Co-research Pseudonym and Pronouns	Ancestry	Years taught	Grades taught over career	Current teaching assignment
Elaine (she/her)	European & unknown ancestry	17 years	Grades 6-12	Indigenous studies Grade 10-12
Kala'aksh (she/her)	Tsimshian Gitksan and mixed European ancestry	4 years	Grades 10-12	High School Social Studies and Indigenous Studies
Hope (she/her)	European	16 years	Kindergarten-Grade 9 (mostly 1-6)	Elementary/Junior all grades
Räv (he/him)	European	8 years	Grades 7, 8, 9	Junior High Grade 9 Humanities & Environmental Stewardship
John (he/him)	European	10 years	Grades 6-12 Mathematics, Sciences,	Grade 8/9 Math & Student Leadership

Meg (she/her)	European	24 years	Kindergarten-Grade 6	District literacy role
Julia (she/her)	European	11 years	Grades 5-9	Junior High Grades 6-9
Em (she/her)	European	6 years public education, 4 years outdoor education	Grades 1-12	Specialized Grades Kindergarten-Grade 12 setting
Jennifer (she/her)	Métis	16 years	Grades 10-12	High School Grades 10-12
Niskam (they/them)	Mixed European & Indigenous	15 years	Kindergarten, Grades 4-12	Specialized mental health settings serving students in Kindergarten – Grade 12

Co-researcher introductions

The co-researchers started with a round of traditional introductions, as is customary in interactions with Indigenous peoples, sharing their ancestry and connections to place (Archibald, 2008). These co-researcher descriptions are as follows:

Elaine (she/her) was born in Treaty 6 territory and now makes her home with her family in Treaty 7. She identifies as settler but may have Indigenous ancestry on her father's side. Elaine has taught for approximately 15 years and teaches at a small high school with a large Indigenous student population. Elaine expressed a love for the community in which she works.

Kala'aksh (she/her) is an educator of Tsimshian Gitksan and mixed European ancestry. She was born on Treaty 6 territory and has lived on Treaty 7 territory for ten years. Kala'aksh expressed gratitude for being able to reside on Treaty 7 territory. Kala'aksh teaches at a small high school with a large Indigenous student population.

Hope (she/her) is a guest on Treaty 7 territory who grew up in Ontario and expressed a deep connection to the land and waters where she grew up. Hope is in her second year at a large K-9 school, having previously worked in elementary settings and expressed she is enjoying the addition of working with junior high students. Hope's current role involves teaching land-based learning.

Räv (he/him) was born on Treaty 7 territory but spent some time living in Ottawa, Ontario. Räv is of Italian and Swedish descent. He teaches at a school for Grades 5-9 and teaches Grade 9 humanities and environmental stewardship.

John (he/him) is of European descent and was born and raised on Treaty 7 territory. John describes a love for the river and parks where he lives. John has taught in five different school settings and is in his second year of teaching science at a large middle (Grades 6-9) school.

Meg (she/her) is of European descent and was born on Treaty 6 territory. She has lived on Treaty 7 territory for the last 25 years and her current role is supporting literacy for the urban district where she works.

Julia (he/her) is a guest on Treaty 7 territory with settler ancestry. She grew up at the forks of the Credit on Anishinaabe territory in Ontario. Julia works at a large junior high school working in a new role in Indigenous Education to support both teachers and students.

Em (she/her) is a third-generation settler immigrant of English, Irish, Polish and Belgian descent. She previously resided in southern Ontario and has lived on Treaty 7 territory

for the last 7 or 8 years. Em works at a unique K-12 setting supporting Indigenous education.

Jennifer (she/her) is an educator of Métis and settler ancestry who was born on Lhtako Dene territory in British Columbia and previously lived on Secwepemc territory before coming to Treaty 7. Jennifer works at a large high school and has spent most of her career working in Indigenous education.

Niskam (they/them) is of Indigenous and European ancestry and was born on Treaty 7 but raised in southern Ontario. They've returned as a guest on Treaty 7 territory for the last decade. Niskam has taught for 15 years in a variety of K-12 settings. Their current role supports K-12 students in a variety of unique settings specializing in mental health.

From these initial introductions, we then shared our photo prompt questions that we together agreed would be useful to answering the overarching research question.

Findings

The following sections include the photos, artist statements and a summary of what was shared during the first sharing circle.

Photo Prompt 1: How do you understand decolonizing education?

The co-researchers agreed that although they had all chosen to respond to this question, it was certainly the most difficult one to answer. It was apparent that many were feeling uncertain about their understanding of decolonizing education but were willing to share their perspectives. The responses below follow the order the co-researchers shared in circle.

Elaine's understanding of decolonizing education:



Title: At the centre of the circle

Artist Statement: Decolonizing education is, as I see it, the key to, what Tim Fox refers to as the generational work that needs to happen in Canada. It is not swift, but plodding and constant. It is a willingness to listen and learn, a willingness to try – even when it is hard . . . especially when it is hard. There seems to be no one way, or right answer, except to say that good intention and trustworthiness are essential and that upholding and respecting Indigenous voices need to be central to the actions and guiding principles of our systems. I once heard Ernie Poundmaker describe reconciliation as taking away the barrier in between people. If we all come at a problem from different sides, we end up fighting against each other in our attempt to push against the barrier. If we come together to remove the barrier, we can plan for success.

Figure 2. Three students in a circle outdoors with arms around one another

In the sharing circle, Elaine further elaborated on the photo by sharing it was taken on a field trip with students from multiple school sites where students were actively engaging in land-based learning and transitional work between sites. The school staff had anticipated there may be some conflict between students during some common time where they were playing games but shared that the students were instead engaging collaboratively with one another. Their behavior reminded the staff that we need to trust students to take the lead and they often-times have the answers we are seeking as educators.

Kala'aksh's understanding of decolonizing education:



Title: We are in relation

Artist statement: *I understand decolonizing education as overcoming and breaking down colonial policies and structures that continue the legacies of harm done in education. These include any policies and procedures that are eurocentric, non-relational, and that refuse to make room for Indigenous ways of knowing and doing in our education systems. Decolonizing education also means creating space for indigenous students to strengthen their relationships with the land, their cultures, their languages, their communities and their kin. It also means creating a space for ALL people in education to develop a greater connection with the land, as well as a deeper respect and understanding of Indigenous people's ways of being, knowing, thinking and doing. I chose this image because it represents my hopes of what decolonizing education can begin to look like. In this picture, students, teachers, administrators and community members are sitting in a circle on the land about to smudge together. It was taken during a land-based field trip through which we all spent time with the land and with each other, encouraging and supporting one another in a good way.*

Figure 3. Students seated in a circle on the land

Kala'aksh explained that the photo she selected was taken on a field trip with students in Kananaskis country. In circle, she suggested that decolonizing education is looking at what gets in the way of allowing for Indigenous ways of knowing, thinking, doing, being to thrive in our schools and allow students to thrive. She mentioned the importance of addressing colonial policies within our systems and developing understanding of how they impact students.

Hope's understanding of decolonizing education:



Title: The beauty in the spaces in between

Artist statement: *The work of our time is to critically reflect on where we are, and where we want to go. To consciously integrate living intelligence, cooperative intelligence and compassionate intelligence through diverse perspectives and ways of being is the counter to colonialism; a way of disrupting violent race and class hierarchy. Stories written and unwritten are a powerful chance to critically engage in the conversation that allow us to reflexively consider our self-in-relation to this work. I believe it starts with confronting our own biases, truths and epistemologies. When we turn down the volume to move aside the colonial barriers and allow space for divergent ways of walking and being in this world, we engage the intelligences that have been numbed through colonial thinking; in essence, we embody hope and create space to imagine new ways. Knowledge is power. Truth-telling is powerful. Transformation and growth through the harms and paradigms of unbending colonial domination are possible.*

Figure 4. A tree surrounded by a cage with a white flower growing at the base

Within the circle, Hope shared that as an educator she is always questioning what it means to hold understanding. She explained that the barbed wire in her photo represents living under colonial ideologies and how we need to question our own understanding. She shared that to her, the flower represents the beauty of possibility and opportunity for growth when we look at the spaces that allow for growth between the spaces.

Räv's understanding of decolonizing education:**Title: Lesson from kin of the sea**

Artist statement: *For me, decolonizing education means breaking down the normal or standard way of doing things and thinking about things (usually meaning, straight, white and Eurocentric). This is a photo I took of an Opalescent Nudibranch I took while with students on a trip to Vancouver Island. To me it represents place-based, experiential education, and breaking down Eurocentric understandings of what a classroom is. Nudibranchs are also hermaphroditic, symbolizing the breakdown of Eurocentric views of things like sex and gender, which is important to me as a queer man.*

Figure 5. An opalescent creature under water

Räv explained that within education we need to question what we accept as the norm and he shared that what is considered normal is often represented by Eurocentric, heteronormative ways of thinking. The photo of the opalescent nudibranch was taken on a trip to the west coast with students and inspired reflection on how what we learn in schools often presents a limited view of the world. In other words, we should look to nature for teachings about the diversity of all things.

John's understanding of decolonizing education:



Title: Deconstructing rows upon rows

Artist statement: *For me, my journey toward decolonizing my practice can be represented by circle. The shape and position of each participant allows for the equalization of students and teacher. There is no longer only one expert in the classroom and the circle allows for the physical and symbolic equalization of student and teacher. Everyone is at the same level, no one is above. The shape also supports the fair and equitable sharing of information and thought. As everyone faces inwards, this opens up the students for opportunities to be vulnerable and genuinely connect with one another. This tradition acknowledges that we all come with knowledge, history, and experience that can leverage the collective for the betterment of all.*

Figure 6. A classroom with chairs set up in a circle

John shared that his photo was taken in his classroom and represents how he feels the classroom environment has limitations for learning as it adheres to the traditional model of education where the teacher is at the front and centre of the classroom. John has interrupted the factory model of education by introducing circle which fosters the notion of equality and continual learning and makes space for the amplifying of student voices.

Meg's understanding of decolonizing education:



Artist statement: *I am a beginner in understanding decolonization. I am from bricks that held up unquestioned inherent, and inherited inequities. Then the bricks started to crack and crumble; shifting the foundation as truth and knowledge were shared. For myself, decolonization means moving away from THE way, toward an understanding of a better*

<p>Title: Foundation crumbling</p>	<p><i>way. At this time, it is about becoming aware of my implicit bias and systemic entitlements, with a sense of responsibility and a determination to move towards the light. Decolonizing education is embracing the work of moving from a place of privileged knowledge to discomfort in not knowing. The foundations are changing and I hope to hold space and follow others into the places less known to myself. The bricks are being replaced with stepping stones - slippery and unknown, leading us forward.</i></p>
---	---

Figure 7. Books, rocks and bricks laid on the land with sunlight breaking through

Meg remarked with humour that she thought her photo represented a very colonized view of decolonization as she chose to use many written texts. Meg further shared that she was hesitant to use the word entitlement to describe her photo but has recognized that decolonizing is being able to really look at where she is from and recognizing her positionality. She shared that she needs to be courageous in her work within Indigenous education and she is developing an understanding of decolonizing education.

Julia's understanding of decolonizing education:



Title: Student centred learning

Artist statement: *This image of a dreamcatcher, made by a student reminds me of how I see decolonizing education because it is an opportunity for building of student supports, connecting to families and communities, as well as intentionally sharing various perspectives and role models. Learning becomes an opportunity for families to share and grow together. As a larger community, we then focus our attention on individual growth, shared opportunities and begin to see all members as learners and teachers.*

It has been about encouraging students to explore and integrate their own being into their learning, while also honouring all their learning experiences. As I have created a Place within teaching for students to engage their families, their histories and trust themselves in their own learning, they have reciprocated with engagement and success. Students who have felt trust from their teachers and fellow learners, have then learned to trust themselves.

Figure 8. A handmade dreamcatcher decorated with natural items

Julia elaborated on her photo by sharing the importance of students being able to foster a stronger understanding of themselves by removing the focus on the teacher as the sole position of power. Though flexible task design and honouring the many ways in which students come to know through the many connections in their lives, students can share their unique selves and insights with their learning community.

Em's understanding of decolonizing education:



Title: The crocus signals hope and renewal

Artist statement: *Decolonizing in a linguistic sense means to remove the colonizing influence. In my mind, I associate colonization in education with the industrial revolution and industrialization of education, the stripping of the spirit and soul, the wonder and awe of learning experiences. To remove this industrial force of standardized, fragmented, and predetermined "learning" we must look back to what is natural, adaptive and engaging. If we view this time of colonized education as a long winter, full of hardships we have had to endure, Ki'piaapi (the prairie crocus or pasque flower) would be the first flower we see in the spring, a glimmer of hope that change is about to happen. To me, decolonization in education is this glimmer of hope, this disruption of inauthentic learning, a reminder to notice and pay attention to what is around us.*

Figure 9. Prairie crocus in bloom

In circle, Em shared that because of the land-based education she received as a child, she has an expansive view of what constitutes learning. Through the metaphor of the prairie crocus, Em compared colonization to a harsh winter season that we have endured and that through the cycle of the seasons, the spring represents the possibilities to reimagine learning and education as spring always brings a reminder of hope.

Jennifer's understanding of decolonizing education:




	<p>Artist statement: <i>Decolonization is such a complex concept to define. There are days I feel like I have a decent grasp on what it entails, and others when I recognize there is so much more to it than I might ever be able to understand. For this reason, I instead found myself inclined to define decolonizing education visually by what I know for sure it is not, rather than what it is:</i></p> <p><i>The image I have chosen is one of orange t-shirts being sold en masse via a social media online marketplace. The image speaks to what I consider to be decolonizing education missteps. These include non-Indigenous individuals profiting off the genocide of Indigenous communities, virtue signaling and performative activism taking precedence over any education or action that might truly support Indigenous communities, and colonial capitalism taking advantage of the sense of urgency associated with reconciliation, resulting in frantic (and even manic) actions that lack a full understanding of the truth.</i></p>
<p>\$15 Orange shirt day.</p> <p>\$20 Orange Shirt Day T-shirt...</p>  	
<p>\$20 Youth Size Orange Shirts</p> <p>\$14 Orange Shirt Day, Every...</p>	
<p>Title: Profiting from trauma</p>	

Figure 10. A screen shot of orange shirts for sale

Jennifer described her frustration with tokenistic approaches to Indigenous education and explained that although she doesn't fully understand decolonizing education, she is certain she knows what it is not. She expressed that as an Indigenous person, she feels emotionally taxed and muzzled in the presence of tokenistic, surface level approaches to Indigenous education. Jennifer hopes that teachers can slow down and engage in intentional and meaningful work.

Niskam's understanding of decolonizing education:


	<p>Artist statement: <i>I chose Yarrow to represent decolonizing education because Yarrow often grows in places where there have been disturbances and it is known to heal the land (Kainai Plant Index). In addition, Yarrow has been referred to as the medicine chest of the prairies and has good medicine for a plethora of ailments that need healing. I think decolonizing education requires us to return to land-based teachings, to learn from plants, animals, the cosmos, water, the trees, the stories, Elders and Knowledge Keepers that are of this land. Returning to land-based teachings has the potential to dismantle the current colonial system and foster empathetic and interconnected students.</i></p>
<p>Title: Yarrow medicine</p>	

Figure 11. A yarrow plant in bloom

Niskam emphasized that within our Eurocentric education system, what counts as knowledge is limited and that we need to turn to the land to expand our understandings of the diversity of knowledge systems. They expressed their belief that the land is the curriculum we need to reconnect to in order to better understand one another and develop an awareness of the interconnectedness and animacy of all things.

Round One Summary

The co-researchers seemed to breathe a sign of relief at the closing of the first image sharing in response to the prompt of what constituted decolonizing education. The group shared that this was the most challenging of the questions to answer. The mood in the group was shifting from slightly nervous towards a sense of comfort with one another as they set up for the second round of the circle.

Photo Prompt 2: How are you enacting your responsibilities in Indigenous education?

It was apparent that the co-researchers were keen to share how they were enacting their responsibilities in Indigenous education in the second round of the first sharing circle. The co-researchers continued to listen attentively and some had much stronger voices in their responses to the second prompt. The responses below follow the order the co-researchers shared in circle.

How Elaine is enacting her responsibilities:

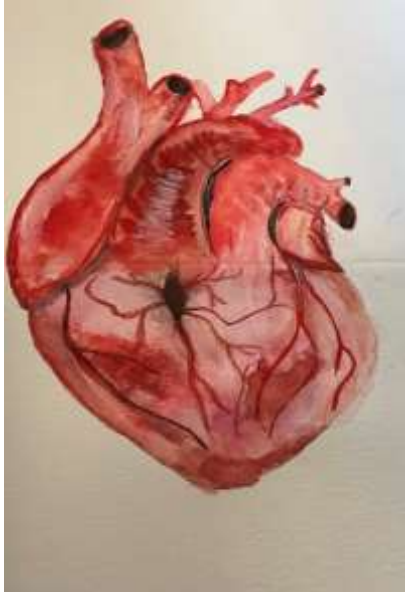

	<p>Artist statement: <i>It is a simple strategy. I commit myself to being trustworthy, to always holding, at the center of my work, children, and their right to be known, protected, and valued for exactly who they are, as they are. To do the work that needs to be done, I need to know in the marrow of my bones that my students' pain and suffering and even their successes and joys or my colleagues' misconceptions or problematic ideologies are not mine. I cannot carry or take ownership of those things, but rather, I commit to walk along side and to work with and for my students, their families, my colleagues, and the system that I work within to lift the voices of Indigenous youth. This is not to say that I am unfeeling, or unimportant in the work, but to say that if the work becomes about me, it has lost its central focus – children – there can be no success in education without children at the heart . . . at the center.</i></p>
<p>Title: Students at the heart</p>	

Figure 12. A painting of an anatomical heart

Elaine emphasized the need for students to be at the center of our work and noted also that our Eurocentric education system instead positions the teacher at the center. She

expressed that as a teacher, her role is not to singularly impart wisdom to students, but honour the unique gifts they bring into the classroom and offer hopeful encouragement.

How Kala'aksh is enacting her responsibilities:

	<p>Artist statement: <i>One of the ways that educators have been enacting our responsibilities towards Indigenous Education is through creating space for students to connect with the land, with each other, with Indigenous culture and with the wider Indigenous community, in hopes of helping our students walk in a good way - with respect, reciprocity and in a good relationship with the world around them. We have partnered with local Indigenous organizations to provide culturally enriching learning experiences for students, invited elders and knowledge keepers to share with our staff and students, taken a whole school approach to honoring Orange Shirt Day and Indigenous People's Day, and have embraced Indigenous pedagogies, such as incorporating circle protocols, taking students out on the land, and providing students with the opportunity to smudge and give offerings of tobacco during their time at school.</i></p>
--	--

Title: A tobacco offering

Figure 13. A tobacco tie on the ground at the base of a tree

In reference to her photo of a tobacco offering created by a student, Kala'aksh shared the importance of embodying the values of respect, reciprocity, relationship, renewal and responsibility in our work in Indigenous education. She shared that providing students opportunities to learn about and practice these values is encouraging in the work of Indigenous education and emphasized that as teachers, we are in reciprocal relationship with students.

How Hope is enacting her responsibilities:



Title: Concentric circles

Artist statement: *I am using concentric circles as a metaphor for the target. The image of a target represents the stratification of our current capitalist system. There is a long historical narrative that places patriarchal civilization in the centre of a target; notably and interestingly the smallest circle. For many, we have lived our lives within the confines of the smallest circle of 'whiteness' as the superior way of knowing and being.*

Nature is our teacher. It has been shared with me that Indigenous ways of knowing and places children as the focus. What a beautiful (re)frame that ignites hope through (re)storying. How might we look at this target from a different perspective, to understand that freedom and diversity live in the circles that surround the centre? The layered stories that exist that need to be shared to allow us to see there is more than one way to hold knowledge and walk in this world.

I have used the analogy of concentric circles within my classroom in a variety of ways. The centre starts with self. When someone draws us out of the circle, we simply draw a bigger one to include them back in. Larger circles, multiple perspectives, storytelling and heart wrap around us and support our journey of disrupting through critical questioning. Stories are a piece of who we are; they too are alive and layered. There is a communal spirit of care to honour the stories shared by both humans and our more- than-human world rooted in place; a notable interconnected web of hearts. Space for heart-centered diverse stories push against colonial logic and allow space to see that educators are all walking hearts, doing the same thing in different ways.

Figure 14. A cross section of a tree trunk

Hope shared how she works through difficult situations in her teacher role when people are resistant to diverse, non-patriarchal and non-Eurocentric ways of knowing and how the notion of wrapping a bigger circle of community around them enables everyone to remain in community together. She also shared that decentering herself as a teacher allows the learning community to learn alongside one another.

How Räv is enacting his responsibilities:


	<p>Artist statement: <i>I can't separate Indigenous education from the land. Indigenous education is about learning on and from the land. A major part of that for me is connecting students to the natural world, and helping them see they are a part of the natural world, not separate from it. I try to get my students outside to learn on the land, but also from the land. This photo represents learning on and from the land. I used trees in the photo because it represents an activity I use with my students asking the question "what can trees teach us about economic systems?"</i></p>
<p>Title: Land as curriculum</p>	

Figure 15. A trail in a forest

Räv elaborated in the circle about the evolution of the ways he has come to understand the possibilities that exist in engaging in land-based learning. Previously, he enjoyed "learning outside" and through engaging in professional learning in Indigenous education he began to see the land as the teacher and has been able to connect the curriculum he teaches to the knowledge that lives on the land.

How John is enacting his responsibilities:


	<p>Artist statement: <i>I have been told a story of Napi and learned how to read the signs of nature to know when the berries of the Buffaloberry are to be picked. This story was told to me while next to this plant as I stood on the Land in what is now called Fish Creek Park. I learned how to identify this plant and when and where to find it. I learned what this plant needs and how to care for it and when to leave it alone. I learned that the berries can be dried or used in teas to help stomach aches. This experience has stood out to me and continues to motivate me to hold up both Indigenous traditional ecological knowledge and traditional western scientific knowledge as equals. When I design learning tasks, I think of the Buffaloberry and make a concerted effort to find ways to hold-up Indigenous knowledge and scientific knowledge together.</i></p>
<p>Title: Learning through story</p>	

Figure 16. A buffaloberry plant

John expressed a growing personal awareness of how learning Indigenous ways of knowing have challenged his understanding of science. Specifically, he noted there has been a shift in looking at science solely through a linear, taxonomized lens that places humans in a dominant position in relation to everything else. By engaging in personal and professional learning, he is struck by how story and Indigenous languages demonstrate an intimate relationship to the land and have changed his professional outlook.

How Meg is enacting her responsibilities:



Title: Musings of Land as text

Artist statement: *My sit spot; a place, over time, I am coming to know. To enact Indigenous education, I need to do the work. I cannot talk with others about “Land as text” as is in the new curriculum, unless I begin to know and build an authentic connection with place; discovering what reciprocity truly means and what my role is in this relationship. I cannot talk about weaving Indigenous ways of knowing and pedagogies into spaces of teaching and learning unless I spend time looking for and learning from the lessons gifted to me. I need to challenge and change my ways of seeing the world. Picture books have always provided an entry point for this and I model this with others whenever I can; lifting up the work of Indigenous authors and artists, alongside all content and learning spaces in our schools. I hope to model thoughtful courage to create space to amplify and engage respectfully in Indigenous education. Learning first, acting slowly, creating space for Indigenous voices to lead this work; these are my responsibilities.*

Figure 17. Multiple books laid out on grass

Meg expressed her desire to learn more about Indigenous education and sees opportunities to do so through Indigenous voices such as artists and authors. She also shared that she has the responsibility to be comfortable with her ignorance and discomfort in the work of Indigenous education and that part of her responsibility is to lead by example and make space to learn alongside others. Meg also expressed genuine gratitude for Indigenous peoples who are generously sharing their perspectives.

How Julia is enacting her responsibilities:



Title: Reflections

Artist statement: *Reflection has become a large part of my practice in enacting my responsibilities in Indigenous Education. I have found that taking a new perspective and looking outside of myself has shown me ways to be more responsible with my words, actions and choices. I am a learner first and it's my responsibility to seek out histories, lived experiences, language and deeper understandings of Indigenous Ways of Being, Doing, and Knowing so that I can respect the perspectives of those from within the community.*

I remember being present when a question was asked by a fellow educator about whether we should be sharing the Teachings and Story we were being told. The answer shared was 'Who else will?' In that moment the responsibility I felt to shift practice was affirmed. We have a responsibility to change our practice, model and share an authentic way of being, based on Indigenous learning we have been gifted.

Figure 18. A sunset on a lake

Julia shared that the colour of her photo is significant, going through the colour spectrum from blue to orange and reflecting cold to warm, as it represents the necessary individual reflection she has to do to ensure she is reacting to challenges as a learner first. She explained she enacts her responsibilities by being curious about emotions connected to learning. Julia expressed that she is constantly learning about her role in Indigenous education and recognizes her responsibility to support fellow teachers in facing their own feelings of vulnerability and discomfort in this learning.

How Em is enacting her responsibilities:



Title: Seeds of possibility

Artist statement: *The more I think and learn about Indigenous education, the more it becomes more complex and simple. The complexity is reflected in the interconnectedness of all things. When I begin to think about Indigenous education, I can't seem to find the line of where it begins or ends, for it touches all areas of learning for all learners. The simplicity lies in the core values, the stories and wisdom that Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing are rooted in. In an attempt to remain grounded in this work, I tell myself to plant seeds. I can't change the world over night, I can't change the world on my own, but I can plant seeds. These seeds show up both figuratively and literally. Much of my work is rooted in connecting with plants in school gardens and wild spaces. Planting is quite literally how I do this work. These seeds also represent the lessons learned. Both staff and students I work with are not always ready for teaching and learning, but the seed will sometimes stay with them and sprout when they are ready and when they need the learning the most. I have hope that the seeds that I plant will connect people to values of respect, reciprocity, responsibility, renewal, relationships, and reflection.*

Figure 19. A dandelion gone to seed

Em shared that she is constantly reflecting on her role within Indigenous education as a person of settler background. She expressed that most of the Indigenous students at her school setting have a history of trauma and mistrust in the school system and the metaphor of the seeds helps Em to remember that her impact may not be visible right away, but over time has the possibility to positively inspire change.

How Jennifer is enacting her responsibilities:



Title: Beading as cultural revitalization

Artist statement: *I chose this image because it speaks to many of the multi-layered ways in which I am enacting my responsibilities in Indigenous education.*

First, this image depicts my first ever attempt at beadwork. As an Indigenous person, taking the time for my own cultural revitalization is one of the ways I am enacting my responsibility to myself, my children and all generations that come after to keep my culture alive. Second, my journey to learn to bead has occurred within a community of friends and family who are also learning alongside me. In all aspects of how I am enacting my responsibilities in education, I am learning as a part of a community. Third, the beadwork is messy and imperfect, also a metaphor for how I am taking up this work. Lastly, the beadwork itself depicts water drops. These water drops are both symbolic of the hummingbird story in which a hummingbird humbly attempts to put out a forest fire by carrying one water drop at a time in its mouth. Water is also symbolic of how I am able to calmly approach this work some days like gentle lakes, streams or ponds, and how on other days I am angry and forceful like raging rapids.

Figure 20. Beaded water droplets

Jennifer shared that she is newly connecting with her Indigenous heritage through beading and the photo depicts a collaboration among a group of women. She is enacting her responsibilities through a dedication to the revitalization of her culture. Jennifer also expressed that her photo represents the messiness of hard work and how, as teachers, we allow space for

students to make mistakes and grow, however we often don't provide educators with the same opportunities which is essential to move the work of Indigenous education forward.

How Niskam is enacting their responsibilities:



Title: Drum making as a metaphor

Artist statement: *This photo from a drum making session represents how I am enacting my responsibilities. Drum making is a careful art that requires a modicum of risk and vulnerability. The process of creating a drum involves multiple steps, each with its own challenges; from preparing the hide, to punching holes, stringing the sinew, adjusting the tautness, all have to be done with care, so as not to pull too tightly and create cracks or if you are too gentle it will be too loose, and it won't be able to be used. Working within that tension, creating some blisters along the way, is all part of it. There is a vulnerability in not knowing, in leaning on the collective versus focusing only on one individual. I am guided by the TRC, the TQS, the district's Indigenous framework, all of which are great to hold everyone accountable to the important work that is needed to be done to move Indigenous Education forward. Yet, I am truly guided by a moral responsibility to do right by the community and students. When the drum is complete and ready to be used, I see this as the moment when I have been challenged to use my voice in ways to sing the songs and share the truths which has been shared with me.*

Figure 21. Two hands stringing a hand drum.

Niskam expressed the difficulty of working with colleagues who are resistant to taking up Indigenous education in their teaching practices. Niskam shared about the importance of self-care and being in a good space when supporting teachers and compared the work to the responsibility of being in such a space when in ceremony or preparing offerings. Niskam is

grateful that the TRC, TQS and our district Indigenous education strategy hold all teachers accountable to their responsibilities in Indigenous education.

Round Two Summary

During the second round of the sharing circle, the co-researchers spoke with more assertiveness and confidence. The co-researchers proudly shared their work and were supportive of what their peers in the circle shared. The co-researchers demonstrated that they were speaking from the heart, always elaborating well beyond what they had prepared in the artist statements in their oral sharing. Moving onto the third round of circle we agreed we may need to go over our two-hour allotted time together demonstrating that folks were keen to continue to share.

Photo Prompt 3: What experiences motivate you to engage in Indigenous education?

Although we were going over time in circle, the co-researchers continued to share their responses in a calm and generous manner. There was a greater sense of collegiality and encouragement moving into this final round. The responses below follow the order the co-researchers shared in circle.

Elaine's motivations to engage in Indigenous education:


	<p>Artist statement: <i>There are many reasons, but, mostly, it is the children, my children . . . the ones that I teach and the ones that I gave birth to. I came to know, through my work, that we were failing Indigenous children . . . that I was failing kids that I knew and loved. After 10 years of teaching, I understood that what I knew was not enough to create conditions in which the Indigenous students I was teaching could reach for and achieve the success that they deserved. In not creating conditions in which Indigenous students could thrive, I was failing all of my students. I knew that I was missing something in my practice, but I did not know what it was. So began my journey into listening and learning from Indigenous teachers, Elders, students, and families.</i></p>
<p>Title: Following the path of wisdom</p>	

Figure 22. Students walking along a snowy path

Elaine explained that although she is a skilled teacher, she hasn't always felt successful in her work with Indigenous students and within Indigenous education. She continues to strive to meet Indigenous students' needs and her motivations center around all children. Elaine credits her growth with learning Indigenous ways of knowing from Indigenous peoples which has changed her approaches to working with all students.

Kala'aksh's motivations to engage in Indigenous education:



Title: Moccasin reminder

Artist statement: *This is an image of a beaded moccasin that one of our students made and tied to the fence outside of our school in memory of the children who never made it home from the Residential Schools. I have chosen this image because it both reflects the legacies of colonialism that continue to impact our society today, as well as the hope that we have for a better future through upholding Truth and Reconciliation in our communities. Seeing the continued impacts of intergenerational trauma and ongoing colonial practices on our communities and our students is a constant reminder that there is still so much work to be done. Yet, I am also inspired through seeing the positive impacts that upholding Indigenous Education in our school has had on our students and school community. Through creating space for Indigenous students to strengthen their relationships with the land, their cultures, their languages, their communities, and their kin, we have seen students develop pride in their cultures as well as strengthen their gifts and use those gifts to contribute to the world around them in a good way.*

Figure 23. An orange beaded moccasin on a chain link fence

Kala'aksh shared that her ancestors light her passion for Indigenous education, in particular she shared about her grandmother who also worked with Indigenous students. She was inspired by the way her grandmother showed love in her work with others and is motivated to have her ancestors be proud of her work. Kala'aksh shared that cultural revitalization is healing for both students and the community and she feels hopeful when she can provide opportunities at her school to learn about Indigenous ways of knowing.

Hope's motivations to engage in Indigenous education:


	<p>Artist statement: <i>Heart Intelligence</i> <i>Student: Ms. _____, I found this rock on my walk last night. I asked Mother Nature if I could take it.</i> <i>Me: You did! (my heart swelled with the exchange of reciprocity). So how did you know it was okay to take it? What did Mother Nature share with you?</i> <i>Student: She said yes. I listened to my heart.</i> <i>Me: You know, you don't find heart rocks. They find you when you need love the most.</i> <i>Me + Student: shared a smile and a connected heart moment.</i></p>
<p>Title: Heart intelligence</p>	

Figure 24. Hands holding a heart shaped rock

Although Hope has encountered resistance within her work in Indigenous education, she is motivated by the student's enthusiasm to learn through Indigenous perspectives. She was reminded of a brief exchange with a student sharing a heart rock and reflected on her work with students in learning about reciprocity. Hope shared that this may be hard work, but it is also heart work.

Räv's motivations to engage in Indigenous education:

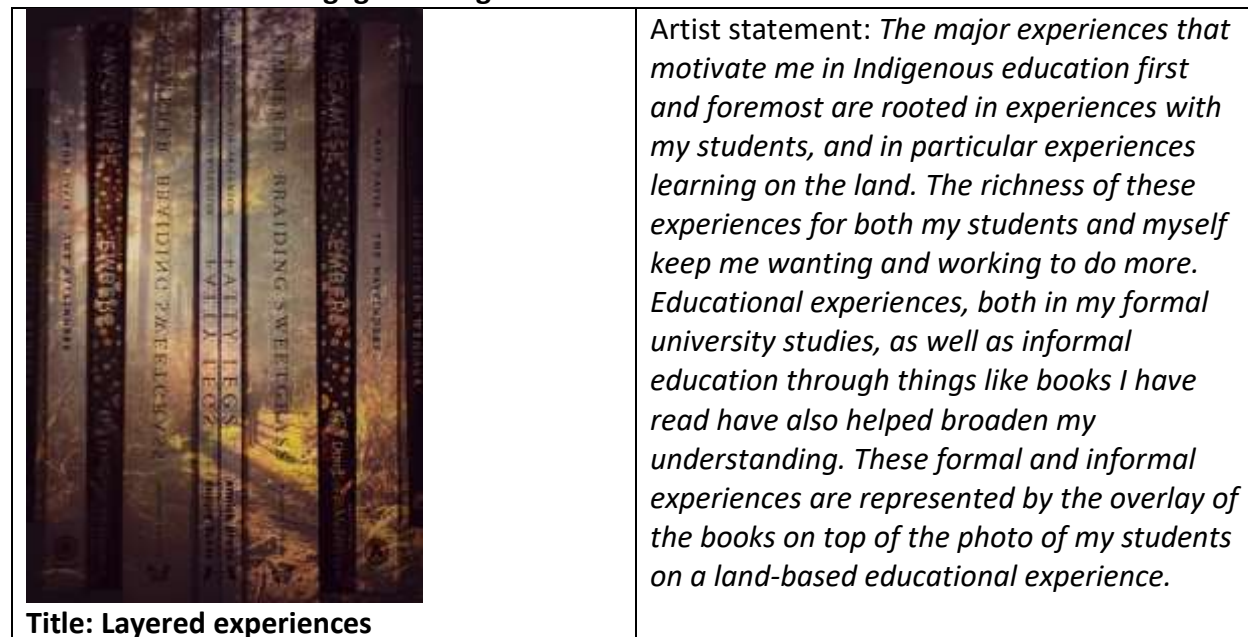
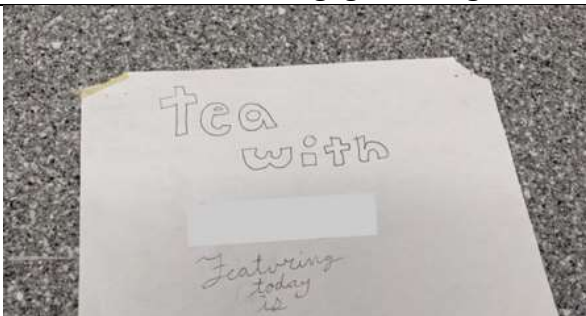


Figure 25. A stunning visual of a forest with Indigenous books over top

Through a double exposure photograph, Räv elaborated on his key motivations which are Indigenous authors and learning from the land with students. In reflection, Räv remarked that in his teaching experience, learning from the land has proved to benefit all students. Räv also shared key authors who have inspired him to learn through Indigenous ways of knowing through his visual.

John's motivations to engage in Indigenous education:



Title: Strengthening relationships

Artist statement: *In my earlier days of teaching, I had a student who made a strong impression on me. He challenged me to find new and better ways to connect and engage with all my students. He struggled to even enter the school building in the first weeks and months of school, but as the year progressed he physically, emotionally, and intellectually entered the classroom and I began to connect with him. He went from not saying a word to me to actively poking fun at my expense. We then began creating a mock television talk show. We created mock episodes (never got around to filming them) and the premise of the show was we would sit around drinking tea as we talked about "the issues." His laughter soothed my soul. He was recognized by his peers and teachers at the end of the year as "most improved." It was so joyful to see this acknowledgement register on his face. When I get discouraged in the work of indigenous education in school, I look at this simple piece of paper and my soul hears his laughter and I carry on.*

Figure 26. A paper with student writing on a table

John shared a vulnerable story about the hard work of building a trusting relationship with a student and how he found success by being dedicated to connecting to the student and by using humour. John keeps this image as a reminder to engage with students with a good heart.

Meg's motivations to engage in Indigenous education:



Title: From Darkness into light

Artist statement: *Darkness; the thick, sticky mud of guilt and shame brought me to Indigenous education. The seeds were uncovered when listening to elder Narcisse Blood. I cried. He quietly came to ask what was wrong. I admitted my sense of guilt; desperate for him to tell me that this was not my fault. I can still feel the ache for this exoneration today, even though I would never wish for it now. Instead, I was gifted these words, "I hope you take time to think about that." And I did. Next year, Dwayne Donald was talking of the erasure of truth in text books that said such things as "And the buffalo disappeared from the prairies.", and, in that moment, the guilt transformed into anger.*

I read that exact line in high school – that was from my social studies text book. I had been lied to, and I had chosen to believe it for decades. It was so comfortable to believe. But no more. Enough. The mud became fertile soil and the seeds took root. First in the darkness, but then in the light, realizing that learning about Indigenous histories, traditions and cultures held more wisdom and joy than darkness. Tending to the darkness is essential, but so is caring for and celebrating what grows towards the sun.

Figure 27. An uprooted plant and Kimmerer's book *Braiding Sweetgrass*

Meg expressed that the experiences that motivate her are deeply emotional, including feelings of guilt and anger. She reflected that she felt guilty for not knowing the true history of Indigenous peoples and then was motivated by anger to grow in her understanding. Meg expressed hope in moving forward and learning from Indigenous peoples and reflected on how she is committed to continually evolving in her approaches to working within Indigenous education.

Julia's motivations to engage in Indigenous education:



Title: For the love of children

Artist statement: My first experience of living Indigenous Education was teaching in a community. The way that the families came together in times of need, celebration and shared responsibility to others continues to be a large influence on me. It is why, when Land-Based Learning Series was offered, I applied for the opportunity. Those six days on the Land showed me a different way to educate.

Further to the professional learning that has motivated me as an educator is the life-altering experience of becoming a mother. When I became a parent, I finally understood the way that past influences the present and how it was impacting my family. Seeing that influence firsthand, knowing that I wanted more for my kin, changed how I saw my students and their need for supportive learning. Indigenous Education has gifted me a way to provide them that and it continues to motivate me.

Figure 28. A child looking out at a mountain lake

Julia expressed the difficulty in narrowing down her many motivations to work in Indigenous education; however, she expressed that becoming a mother has given her much inspiration and supported her in realizing how much love and care go into supporting children. Witnessing her young daughter learn about the true history of our nation in her Kindergarten class gives Julia hope for the future.

Em's motivations to engage in Indigenous education:



Title: Land as teacher and curriculum

Artist statement: *Time spent outside, with people, with animals, with the elements of the natural world inspire me to continue to engage in Indigenous education each day. In times when I doubt my impact, my capacity, or my purpose in this work, I am usually reminded to continue by spending time outside with young people. This fall, a group of young people picked crab apples for math class. The freedom to engage with all of our senses outside, to support one another, to come together as a community and harvest from the trees on our campus, learning about estimation and how we know when we have enough apples for everyone in our community. We learned about mass and volume and the changes in weight when we heat fruit and the water evaporates into the air. We turned the apples into jelly that we gave as gifts to our families and community members. This gave purpose to the connections we were making and the weaving of wisdom from plants and relationships all around us. The overwhelming sentiment, 'this doesn't feel like school' and a shared love for authentic learning experiences is what keeps me going.*

Figure 29. Crab apples in a basket

Em expressed that she is motivated by an increase in student engagement through engaging in planting and harvesting guided by the teaching of reciprocity. She is inspired by creatively finding ways to support teachers in seeing curriculum connections and experiencing the pure joy of students engaging on the land.

Jennifer's motivations to engage in Indigenous education:

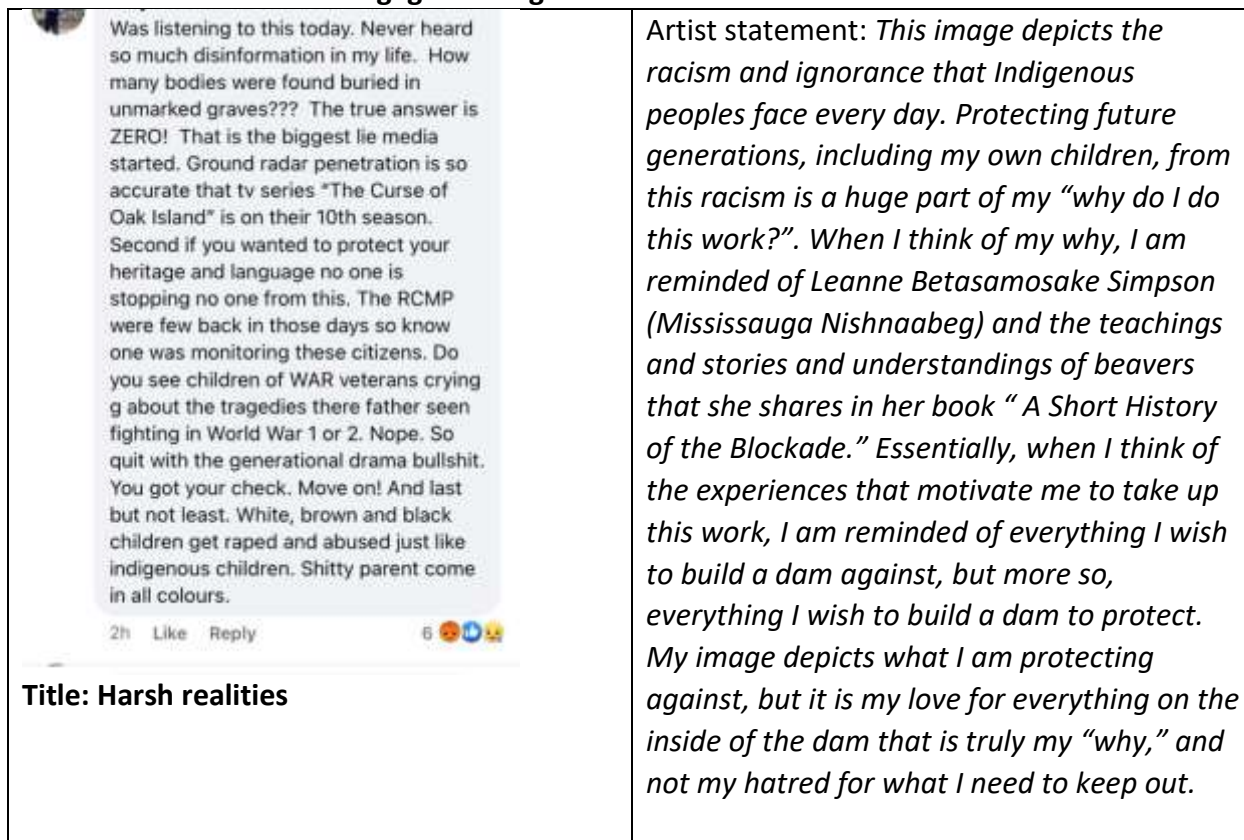


Figure 30. A screen shot of an anti-Indigenous racist comment online

Jennifer explained that she chose this screen shot, even though it may be triggering to some, to emphasize the racism that is present in Canadian society. She shared that it took her less than two minutes to find this image which portrays a disturbingly racist comment that was written under a current online newspaper article. She is inspired to be an anti-racist educator where she can address issues of racism in our schools so that Indigenous students and the community aren't responsible for shouldering this burden.

Niskam's motivations to engage in Indigenous education:

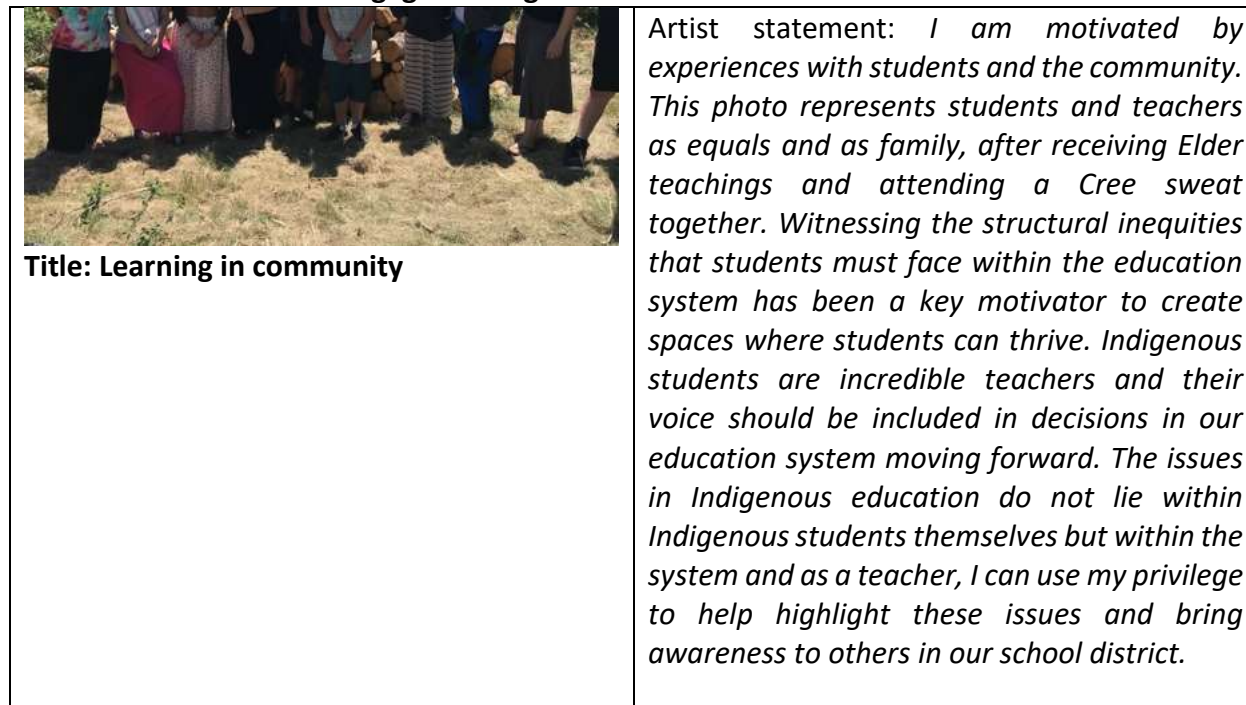


Figure 31. People standing together after a ceremony

Niskam reflected on their work with Indigenous students and how they feel that our education system is not set up to support their success in school and yet the students have so many gifts and wisdom to share. They reflected on the need to create space for Indigenous students to feel a sense of belonging and to be heard and valued. Niskam feels motivated by their responsibility to remove barriers and challenge policies that negatively impact Indigenous students which calls for flexibility and innovating thinking.

Round Three Summary

At the conclusion of our first time together, the co-researchers lingered for a while long after the closing of the circle, engaging in conversations with one another at our meeting place. They organically broke off to connect in small groups to either follow up on or connect with one another about what was shared in circle as we collected our blankets and camping chairs. There

was a buzzing in the group and afterwards, many expressed gratitude for the opportunity to be a part of the research project, as it benefitted them to connect with colleagues and discuss important topics related to their work in Indigenous education.

Preliminary Collaborative Thematic Analysis

After our first circle together where these images and statements were shared and discussed, the co-researchers were sent the circle transcript to review. The co-researchers reviewed and suggested minor edits to the transcripts from the first sharing circle, and then they were tasked with reviewing the transcript with the following questions in mind:

1. What themes stood out to you when the images were shared in response to this prompt?
2. Is there anything else that resonated with you as you listened to the co-researchers' responses?

Second Sharing Circle

The second sharing circle was held at a different location around a fire near the river within a provincial park. This location was recommended by some of the co-researchers because the majority of the group had previously attended land-based professional learning at this site. The site is within close proximity to Tsuut'ina Nation, who have many oral stories connected to this place, often referred to as Wolf Creek. This was also significant because Tsuut'ina Nation is the closest First Nations community to the large city where the co-researchers work, and many students from the Nation choose to attend our district schools. The circle began with a smudge and a check-in with how everyone was doing to strengthen our relationships. We then started with sharing our individual thoughts on the key themes that emerged from each of the photo prompt questions. Co-researchers were also encouraged to

bring forward any other key points that resonated with them as they went through this process. The conversations were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim and, similar to the first circle sharing, co-researchers had access to the transcript for member checking after the second circle. All co-researchers came prepared to share the themes that emerged for them in the first circle, some came with notes and elaborated on them orally, while others expressed that the themes they were going to speak to evolved through the process of listening within the circle sharing.

A common theme among what was shared in the second circle was the common use of words that begin with “Re”. Within the circle, Kala’aksh remarked that they were amazed at how many of the seemingly relevant words began with “Re”:

When I was listening in the circle, I thought it's such a coincidence these concepts all start with R and then and RE, but then [another co-researcher] started talking and I thought well of course because...we're not doing anything new here. This is a bringing back of what has been attempted to be taken away and so of course the list goes on and on and on if all of these words that really do reflect this work and so thank you. It was like an AHA moment for me. And also I think it's also cool that it's maybe a way that even though the English language is not captured so much of this in a very good way, but it is probably, maybe the one of the best ways that the English language can capture that is that idea of ...RE... and they all have to do with relationship, that connectedness as well.

Hope emphasized that, "there's grand gestures in the 'Re' because the words ask those big things of us". The co-researchers emphasized that “Re” words require action, which speaks to

the main research question that asks how teachers are *enacting* their responsibilities in Indigenous education. The co-researchers collaboratively chose “Re” words to organize the themes from the first sharing circle. It is worth noting that many of the co-researchers had undoubtedly been influenced by Cree educator Verna Kirkness and her colleague Ray Barnhardt (2001) who proposed four “Rs” for post-secondaries to develop for Indigenous students: Respect, Relevance, Reciprocity, Responsibility. Although these “Re” words are not entirely unique in the realm of Indigenous education, the co-researchers were enthusiastic to discuss the possibilities for “Re” words to encompass the themes. Much like the co-researchers shared in our circle conversations, many of the themes are interconnected and relational. The themes and findings that were shared in the second circle were as follows:

Recentering

Recentering Indigenous knowledges

The theme of recentering was described by the co-researchers as the notion of placing what is most important at the centre of the circle. Recentering also involves decentering dominant approaches to education. Kala’aksh observed that, as educators we often instinctually “default to Western approaches of teaching” and shared that she often practices reflection to ensure she is employing Indigenous pedagogical approaches as well. Similarly, Räv emphasized the importance of moving away from centering dominant knowledge systems in education to Indigenous ways of coming to know. As the co-researchers collectively emphasized, when our responsibilities as teachers become too daunting it is helpful to have space to be reflective on our pedagogical practices to ensure we are making space for Indigenous perspectives and knowledges.

Recentering students

Some of the co-researchers challenged the hierarchical structures in education and emphasized the need to “decenter spheres of privilege” as John shared. It was suggested those in roles of power need to lean into “unseating comfort” in relation to teachers and administrators. Many co-researchers shared that centering students and relationships support the levelling out of hierarchical structures that they are working with in education.

Recentering land

Recentering also involves shifting our understanding of where learning happens, such as “educating outside of traditional spaces”, as shared by Julia which can “feel very sterilized”. Similarly, John echoed the physical constraints of classroom learning. Recentering land was a resounding theme among co-researchers. The co-researchers noted the amount of land imagery within the photos shared and many commented on how professional land-based learning had shifted their approaches to centering land as not only classroom space but also as natural teachers. Many of the co-researchers shared stories of increased relational connection with students through land-based learning experiences; this in turn increased student academic engagement and sense of belonging.

A key quote shared by Kala’aksh in the first sharing circle was referenced multiple times by other co-researchers in the second sharing circle was., “if it is not relational, it is colonial,” which served as a guideline for the co-researchers for how to re-center knowledge, students, and land through fostering relationships.

Resistance

All of the co-researchers shared stories of encounters with resistance to these attempts at re-centering, both internally and externally, including within the system of education itself.

Systemic resistance

The majority of co-researchers noted that Indigenous students face inequities in our education system. Co-researchers shared the ways in which they worked to support students' navigation through these systemic barriers. John suggested the need to disrupt inequity by engaging in critical questioning "how can we break through the things that are interrupting or are in our way by calling attention to them?" This speaks to the need as teachers to use our voices and act when we witness or experience barriers that impact students. This also includes the commitment to constant evolution as a professional and "questioning things we have done" in the past, and critically reflecting on the impacts of our actions.

Niskam shared that the ways in which our education system defines success should be expanded, in reference to their photo of students after a sweat lodge ceremony, they shared, "when I look at this picture, I cropped this picture but I can see who the students are, they were all considered disengaged with poor attendance by school standards but in reality they had so many gifts to share, our system wasn't built for these...souls." Similarly, Kala'aksh shared that, "so many policies and procedures are not guided by relationship." Given the emphasis all co-researchers placed on relationships, this statement clarified a need to question the purpose of policies and procedures which do not support positive relationships. Generally speaking, some of the common procedures and policies that were mentioned by some of the co-researchers included: student attendance, the emphasis on student academic achievement, the Alberta

curriculum and learning spaces. Jennifer shared that as educators, resisting inequities is demonstrating our ethical responsibility to the students we serve.

Resistance from others

All the co-researchers recounted stories of working through challenges with resistant colleagues, students' parents/guardians, or their own close family members. The co-researchers all spoke to how working with resistant people forced them into the feeling of “edge walking” a term used by John, Julia and Hope which referred in this context to the careful balance required to teach Indigenous education while walking alongside those who are resistant to Indigenous education initiatives in order to maintain a professional relationship.

Within the sharing circles, the co-researchers described how they navigate resistance that they encounter in their workplace. Meg shared the complicated task of creating space so colleagues feel safe to enter into the work but ensuring that these spaces aren't too comfortable because making things too comfortable may not move the work of Indigenous education forward. In reference to her understanding of being an ally, Meg shared, “I need to not be so abrasive. And so we're not going to agree to disagree... we're not gonna' argue all the time so that people don't even wanna talk to me anymore. But, but to find a way to be a better advocate.” In relation to working with resistant colleagues, Julia shared how she works through the challenges by asking herself, “How can I have those challenging conversations in a good way that helps them kind of buy in and not break that relationship? And it's not that you did this wrong, but it's like this is the part that we need to work on to keep moving forward and so I think that that was really valuable in the sense of like in a good way [it] doesn't have to be nice

and pretty all the time, and 'in a good way' can be messy." Niskam shared their struggle to address resistant colleagues,

these types of situations where you're encountering racist perceptions or, comments or experiences I don't know what to really call it but it's like my skill level [in managing these situations] feels off. So, I'm trying to... I'm trying to work through and ...do the work... like really it's anti-racist education. Those pieces that relate to not just Indigenous education but anti racist education more broadly so I want to feel... feel more equipped to be like OK this is what this is going on and here is what I can do.

Elaine remarked on a commonality among co-researchers who seem to have the willingness to take a hit and get back up again and "trudge forward" - this speaks to resilience. Although challenging, there were some stories of hope shared in working with resistant people. Em reflected that in her experience with colleagues she has noted that people do have the capacity to change. Hope stated that her process in working with resistant people is to picture the concentric circles as depicted in one of her photos and shared that she envisions "wrapping another circle around them" so as not to segregate people outside of the community.

All co-researchers spoke to internal discomfort which requires embracing the difficulty of enacting our responsibilities in Indigenous education. Meg acknowledged her own need to sit with discomfort; a similar sentiment was echoed by Hope who stated, "I am comfortably uncomfortable." A term used among many of the co-researchers to describe their work in Indigenous education was vulnerability. Em shared a story which resonated with the circle of co-researchers on the difficulty of navigating their work in Indigenous education,

this idea of the slow process and how it kind of feels messy and it feels clunky and it feels like it's slow. And there were two visuals that came to mind with this, and one of them was a story that was shared with me over a decade ago, from, an elder from where I'm from and Anishinaabe territory. And he was saying that life is kind of like this feather. And if you imagine the feather, there's kind of this strand that goes in the middle of it. And he was saying that's kind of our life path. But we often go on these like tangents off to the side. But in order to get back onto their main path, it feels like we're going backwards. But it's actually forwards because you have to go back to get back onto the main path. And so that always comes to me in those times where I feel like I've kind of made mistakes, where I've blundered and I'm like, oh, I just need to go backwards now.

Normalizing the difficulty that is involved in working with Indigenous education was a key theme among the co-researchers and Em's story was chosen to capture this theme by the group.

Reconnecting

Related to resistance is the concept of reconnection. In reference to encountering people who are resistant to Indigenous education, Räv shared,

Maybe those...people are disconnected right now and so how do we work to...How do we work to connect them? What is that piece that gets them motivated and the lack of better term, like interested in it? Like I have my connection and my motivation is the connections that I've had on the land and my connections with my students and their experiences on the land. But like there's a disconnect for them and so how do I, how do I help find that connection?

Similarly Julia observed that all co-researchers shared a personal connection to their work in Indigenous education, “it is the personal connection that's helping us and I think that, everyone around the circle has experience and we're all in different spots, but we've also got that personal connection and dedication.” She also questioned, “so when we're thinking about motivation, like what is that thing that can be a personal connection for people?” The co-researchers agreed that supporting colleagues with fostering personal connections to Indigenous education may support moving Indigenous education initiatives forward. John further emphasized the importance of personal connections, “it has to come through a relationship. You can't have difficult productive conversations with people if you don't have relationship with them because it's so easy to dismiss someone that you don't know. But it's hard to dismiss someone that you value and you have a relationship with.” In her reflection of the images shared in the first circle, Kala'aksh observed,

to me all of that connects back to connection...connection with each other, connection with the land, connection with culture and bringing back that connection into education and what we do because that was broken through colonization...And it was very disconnected way of educating, it was purposefully disconnecting. Indigenous people are people from our cultures and so how do we bring back that focus on connection in a good way. But how do we do that with all the barriers that are still in place today, all the policies, all the procedures that make it very hard to connect in a genuine way

Elaine shared that a positive connection she has observed is through finding allies in the work that are supportive; this is key to maintaining connections to one another. John summarized his understanding of connection and named some possibilities for those seeking connection,

“there's personal investment in everything that someone was saying and I think it it's that personal investment that allows us to move forward and sometimes that personal investment is going to begin with it's an experience or a person or a text and it's gonna just continue from there.” It is evident that the co-researchers agree that personal connections need to be fostered and maintained in order to engage ethically in Indigenous education initiatives.

Responsibility

The co-researchers stressed the importance of having a personal connection to Indigenous education; however, they did not infer that those without personal connections are permitted to disengage from this work. All co-researchers emphasized the importance of Indigenous education being the responsibility of everyone and individuals in school sites should not be siloed into doing the work on behalf of others. “It's everyone's work...Indigenous, non-Indigenous, not just one person in the school but everybody's,” Niskam shared.

As Jennifer noted during the second circle, many co-researchers articulated they were driven to take up Indigenous education initiatives in their practice because of personal connections. Jennifer and Niskam suggested that the group framed this work as an ethical obligation and less of something they could choose to opt into, or not. Jennifer stated, “there's just a sense of what's just and what's right and what's human.” Similarly, Hope shared that when we stop and consider why we do our work as educators, it is “about humans and it's about story and it's about this one chance that we have to ...experience life together.”

Over the course of both circles, the co-researchers shared a range of experiences. They shared stories about the difficulties they encounter in taking up Indigenous education initiatives at their various school settings, but at the same time, they identified that they were on a

journey of growth in their own learning about Indigenous perspectives. Meg, Hope and John specifically shared their willingness to take action and engage in the work despite the difficulties; they knew they wanted to give back. Although many co-researchers felt like they still had much to learn, they take their personal and professional responsibilities to Indigenous education very seriously.

Although there were two references made in the circles to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action (TRC, 2015b) and the Alberta Teaching Quality Standard (Alberta Education, 2018), it was evident that the co-researchers' responsibility to this work was internally motivated. This was evident through the multiple times the co-researchers mentioned their own commitment to personal learning and advocating for students. Jennifer shared that perhaps the co-researchers felt they had to compensate for others who are not assuming their responsibilities in the same way, "we're all feeling, like we're each not taking up a big enough space and getting it done, or we're not accomplishing enough, or, you know, we're not, you know, but I think it's because we're feeling like we have to, you know, compensate for all those that aren't yet here with us at this...fire...at this table." Elaine also explained her motivation to step into the work on behalf of students, "we all get stuck. when we're stuck in education, we think, who am I to do this? but if not us, then who? And so I think for me... we are fighting this fight for our kids" which again speaks to the co-researchers commitment to remove barriers that impact Indigenous students negatively.

Revitalization

A unique theme that surfaced among the Indigenous co-researchers was the idea that it is important to mark the distinct but interconnected ways we enter into this work from our

different social positions. For the Indigenous co-researchers, engaging in Indigenous education initiatives was a form of cultural revitalization in honour of their ancestors. Kala'aksh and Jennifer shared that in doing this work, they know they are making their ancestors proud. Examples of how they are taking up this work in a unique way is through learning their traditional languages and engaging in cultural practices. Jennifer also connected the importance of honouring the ancestors to the photos of the land that were shared by all co-researchers,

I found that really, looking at those images and really taking the time, the ones that had that contrast of the colours were so fascinating to me because we talked about children, we talked about those generations, and we didn't so much actively discuss that idea of the ancestors and those before us. But that idea of those bright colours and that those bright colours are the colours that our ancestors see and that's why the red, that's why the bright orange, and that's why all those bright colours...there was an implicit conversation that was being had about those that came before us too and bringing those into...Until the conversation. And so I thought that was kind of a really interesting, subtle theme that I saw as well.

The Indigenous co-researchers also connected to the concept of seven generations. For instance, Jennifer shared "making our ancestors proud is the same things as making the seven generations ahead proud." This sentiment proved a central motivation in their engagement and work in Indigenous education.

Summary

The co-researchers shared their responses to the photo prompts by capturing images, writing artist statements, and sharing orally in circle together. Focusing on the lessons learned from the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), each co-researcher was able to share their insights from their unique experiences as educators enacting their responsibilities in Indigenous education. The themes that were identified by the co-researchers signaled a need to return to, or perhaps recalibrate, the focus in education where emphasis is placed on recentering Indigenous knowledges, students and the land, reconnecting to others, and cultural revitalization. Throughout our circle dialogues, the co-researchers all shared stories of encountering resistance from others and the education system. What was also notable about this study was the conditions that were in place to allow this data to surface. The artistic approach using photographs or images appealed to many of the co-researchers as an entry point to discuss their experiences. The relationships that developed among the group of co-researchers enabled the feeling of safety and community. Co-researchers felt comfortable discussing their difficult emotions and challenges with one another in circle because, although each of their experiences were unique, what they heard from others resonated with them. The importance of relationships was highlighted, and as evidence of this, many of the co-researchers have remained in touch with one another, some have even begun collaborating on projects together to support their work in Indigenous education. The rich and multi-layered knowledge that was co-created by this group of champion educators surfaced key findings which will be shared in the following chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

The purpose of my study was to understand how practicing teachers in a large urban school district in Alberta are understanding, enacting, and remaining motivated in their responsibilities to Indigenous education. To address the research question: How do practicing K-12 teachers understand and enact their role in Indigenous education?, this study involved multiple stages of preparing, organizing and analysing data. In this chapter, I have taken the opportunity to engage in further analysis of the findings that arose from the Photovoice project by situating the findings within scholarly literature related to Indigenous education focused on pre-service and practicing teachers.

I was honoured that there were some co-researchers who were enthusiastic about collaborating on the writing in the previous chapter. Although I felt the collaborative writing process was suited to reflect the ideas of the group and not solely myself as an individual holding the power of interpretation (Coles, 1989; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011) there were some challenges at this stage of interpreting the data. As a doctoral candidate, I have had the privilege of gaining critical analytic thinking skills through my studies which influenced how I was interpreting the various forms of data. There were some themes that were identified by the co-researchers that I thought needed to go into a deeper interpretation. For instance, the co-researchers advocated for the concept of duality to be one of the themes to discuss in the Research Collaboration chapter. The concept of duality holds the risk of contributing to the dichotomy discourse (Casteldon et al., 2017; Iwama et al., 2009), where Indigenous perspectives and Western perspectives are placed in opposition to one another. As emphasized in Etuaptmumk/ two-eyed seeing approaches to research, the strengths of both Indigenous and

Western worldviews can contribute to finding solutions to problems if they are deliberately woven together (Bartlett, 2012; Marshall & Marshall, 2012). In my review of the transcripts and field notes, I felt that the tension that the co-researchers were describing was an important part of their experiences; however framing it as a 'duality' would not promote a solution to the crisis we are experiencing in this work, as it risks the current state of Indigenous education being viewed as static, not progressing in a forward direction.

The preliminary themes identified by the group of co-researchers: recentering, resistance, reconnecting, responsibility, and revitalization, reflect an understanding of our work in Indigenous education at a particular time and place by K-12 teachers in a large school district in Alberta. This analysis led to a secondary analysis of the data which I completed individually and have included in this chapter.

Findings

In order to further protect anonymity, the co-researchers' input is discussed more generally in this findings chapter and I move away from using the pseudonyms to that of using the term "co-researcher" exclusively. Co-researchers were sent an e-mail that informed them of the decision to remove pseudonyms from this chapter after the findings surfaced from the themes. I wanted to ensure the difficult stories they shared did not negatively implicate their professional reputations or impact them in their workplaces (Archibald, 2008; Smith, 2012).

In order to delve deeper, I juxtaposed the themes that surfaced in this study in relation to the literature then I compared the initial findings from this study to the working definition of "decolonizing education" that was presented in my literature review. From there, I then provide a brief discussion of recommendations based on the findings that could support the

development of professional learning opportunities for educators in Indigenous education. The findings that surfaced in the data through the secondary analysis are:

- 1) Encountering Resistance and Racism
- 2) Enacting a Pedagogy of Discomfort
- 3) The Power of Reflection
- 4) Navigating Oppressive Structures

What follows is a discussion of the four findings that surfaced from the secondary analysis.

Encounters with Resistance and Racism

One of the key findings that surfaced in this study was that the K-12 educators that are intentionally enacting their responsibilities in Indigenous education are regularly encountering resistance in the form of racism, or racist attitudes, relative to the topic of Indigenous education. From an Indigenous perspective, St. Denis (2007) asserts that racism includes a racial hierarchy where whiteness is considered superior and this false thinking contributes to a power imbalance where the dominant group receives advantages that cause stifling disadvantages to other racial groups, in the case of this study, the dominant group were white teachers upholding Eurocentrism. Racism exists on individual as well as societal levels. Racism, as defined by American anti-racist scholar and activist, Ibram X. Kendi (2019) is "a marriage of racist policies and racist ideas that produces and normalizes racial inequities" (p. 17). The findings that follow address school district policies and ideas that the co-researchers identified that contribute to racial inequities. The co-researchers reported that addressing racist perspectives towards Indigenous peoples and perspectives proved to be extremely difficult for them as they feared harming their collegial relationships. In one of the stories shared in circle, a

co-researcher described the internal turmoil they felt when a fellow colleague made harmful comments about parents of Indigenous students, equating their lack of engagement with the school as lack of care for their child. This co-researcher feared being outcast by their colleague and did not know how to address the issue while maintaining a professional working relationship. Indigenous scholars have stated that racism is firmly embedded in the systems and institutions in Canada, in this case the education system, which serves to maintain Eurocentrism as the norm (Battiste, 2013; Dion, 2009; Poitras Pratt et al., 2018; Prete, 2022; Rice et al., 2022, TRC, 2015a) and complicates how individuals can address racism. So, while the co-researchers work within a system that avows to respond to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action (2015b), adhere to the Teaching Quality Standard (2018) specific to integrating Indigenous perspectives as a professional standard, and have developed their own Indigenous strategies, there are still individual and systemic issues which are impeding progress in Indigenous education. Understanding and addressing anti-Indigenous racism has surfaced in this study as an essential beginning point to taking up the work of Indigenous education (Dion et al., 2010; Poitras Pratt et al., 2018; Prete, 2022; Rice et al., 2022; St. Denis, 2007). The extent to which individual teachers feel disempowered in their ability to address racist remarks by colleagues is reflective of a lack of appropriate policies to protect upstanders (those who stand up to racism).

Anti-Indigenous racism in Alberta

Despite recent initiatives related to advancing Indigenous education initiatives in Alberta (Alberta Education, 2018; TRC, 2015b), anti-Indigenous racism continues to be a barrier to engagement for K-12 educators. The current United Conservative Party continually

contradicts efforts to promote Indigenous education curriculum initiatives (Bennett, 2022; Johnson, 2022). As a striking example of this bias, the current appointed Premier, Danielle Smith, recently proposed a ban on teaching anti-racism, critical race theory, and diversity. In 2021, the UCP party proposed this ban was opposed to “any student being taught that by reason of their ethnic heritage they are privileged, they are inherently racist or they bear historic guilt due to said ethnic heritage or that all of society is a racist system” (Johnson, 2022, p.1). This move was undoubtedly meant to protect white settler identity in Alberta (Prete, 2022; Rice et al., 2022). As shared in the media, Smith also implemented the controversial Alberta Sovereignty Act without consideration of Treaty implications, despite her false claims to Indigenous ancestry (Amato, 2022), and lack of consultation with Indigenous peoples (Bennett, 2022). These provincial government actions speak to a disregard for Indigenous peoples and communicate a clear anti-Indigenous sentiment which has drastic implications for Indigenous education. In comparison to other Canadian provinces, Alberta is lagging in the implementation of Indigenous education initiatives. In addition to adopting the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as law (Government of British Columbia, 2021), British Columbia has introduced mandatory Indigenous education courses for all high school students with the explicit goal of these courses as one way to combat anti-Indigenous racism (Moliere, 2022). The province of Ontario has also implemented mandatory Indigenous learning for all students, which includes curricular outcomes in Grades 1 through 12, and these outcomes were created by engaging in ethical and reciprocal collaboration with Indigenous communities (Government of Ontario, 2022). Both Saskatchewan and Manitoba have province wide Indigenous education strategies and initiatives for Indigenous language education (Government

of Manitoba, 2022; Government of Saskatchewan, 2022). Compared to other provinces, Alberta is faring poorly in taking action to support Indigenous education initiatives which combat anti-Indigenous racism.

The normalization of racist perceptions in an effort to protect Eurocentric ideology aligns with a study conducted by allied scholar, Osmond-Johnson and Nehiyaw scholar Turner (2020) who found that anti-Indigenous racism continues to be prevalent, particularly in the prairie provinces. Osmond-Johnson and Turner (2020) explained that settler Canadians in the prairie provinces are more likely than Canadians living in other provinces to hold disparaging views of Indigenous peoples and posits the reason behind this is the racialized history of the prairie provinces who strive to maintain power and control over land and resources. In this education study, some of the co-researchers' comments that the disparaging views held of Indigenous peoples was "the Alberta way" reflect the findings by Osmond-Johnson and Turner (2020). Anecdotally, those co-researchers who had professional teaching experiences in other provinces remarked that anti-Indigenous racism appeared to be more prevalent in Alberta than places they had previously taught at. Once again, these comments mirror what was found in recent studies related to education (Prete, 2020) and in healthcare (McLane et al., 2022). The prevalence of anti-Indigenous racism is harmful to Indigenous peoples in our province, and indeed has negative implications for all Albertans. Certainly, this is true across our nation and educators must step forward when they see how education is implicating in replicating racism.

The prevalence of anti-Indigenous racism also impacts non-Indigenous Albertans as this masking of truth allows harmful stereotypes to fester and further damage relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. The stories shared by the co-researchers revealed that

they regularly encounter resistance in the form of racist ideas in both their professional and personal lives. Within the sharing circles, the co-researchers expressed frustration about how negative attitudes towards Indigenous education and Indigenous peoples seem to go unchecked, meaning they are not addressed and perpetrators are not being held accountable, in their school settings or elsewhere. These often-disturbing stories were related to racism and resistance in their school settings coming from both colleagues and parents, as well as outside of their work, including conversations taking place at family dinner tables. The co-researchers' encounters with racist ideas were shared more freely in the sharing circles than what was depicted in their Photovoice images and written artist statements. Reflecting on why they were more candid in circle than they were in the Photovoice creative phrase, they shared that the safety and community that was created in the sharing circles allowed them to more freely share the truths of what they encounter in schools in hopes of seeking support from one another in terms of how to navigate racism in the form of resistance. Many co-researchers felt they lacked the skills to address the onslaught of racist ideas, yet the opportunity to share these stories with one another enabled them to feel less isolated, and more empowered, in their work in Indigenous education. As like-minded colleagues, their fellow co-researchers listened with empathy and compassion, and offered helpful strategies and tactics to counter what many people walk away from or ignore. The pervasiveness of anti-Indigenous racism in Alberta has serious implications for efforts to move Indigenous education initiatives forward and points to the need for educators to understand how racism lives in our schools and how to work together as a community to address it.

Co-researchers' experiences with racism

Despite the significance of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action (2015b) and the Teaching Quality Standards (2018), the lived experiences of educators currently working in a large school district in Alberta indicate that negative attitudes towards Indigenous education continue to be prevalent in schools. The co-researchers faced questions from both colleagues and students' parents about the purpose of Indigenous education in schools, their comments indicating that Indigenous education did not deserve significant attention and took away from "real" student learning. These questions from parents and colleagues demonstrated a lack of understanding of the depth and rigour that exists when learning from Indigenous perspectives (Battiste, 2013; Cajete, 2015; Donald, 2009; Kumashiro, 2016; McGregor, 2017). The co-researchers witnessed their colleagues actively resisting participation in Indigenous education professional learning initiatives including not attending, participating or engaging. This finding reflects Bailey's (2016) study on anti-Indigenous racism in Canadian universities where modern racism is cast as a more subtle or indirect form of racism that can be harder to identify. In this study, the noted acts of resistance to Indigenous education professional learning and to taking up Indigenous perspectives were absence or ignoring professional standards, whereas traditional forms of racism are more blatant examples of bigotry and intolerance (Bailey, 2016; McConahat et al., 1981). The co-researchers questioned whether their colleagues recognized their inaction as racist, yet from their perspective, their colleagues' actions, or more appropriately inaction, signaled that they continued to subscribe to racist ideas of Indigenous peoples. In her doctoral study of Alberta schools, Kainai scholar, Tiffany Prete (2020) shares that non-Indigenous peoples often lack

understanding of what constitutes racism and its destructive impacts, which she attributes to a lack of anti-racism education within Alberta schooling systems. In my professional experience working in Indigenous education, I have observed very few professional learning opportunities that offer an anti-racist framework either alongside or as a prerequisite to Indigenous education. Instead of addressing the reality that anti-Indigenous racism exists, there has been a trend towards Indigenizing professional learning before decolonizing approaches in education (George, 2019). Keeping these essential teacher learning opportunities disconnected from one another signals a lack of awareness that a foundational understanding of anti-racism is necessary for Indigenous education outcomes to be fully realized (Battiste, 2013; Poitras Pratt & Hanson, 2022; St. Denis, 2007). The lack of anti-racist professional learning has resulted in many instances where the co-researchers and I have faced resistance to Indigenous education from colleagues and have felt ill-equipped to address the racist perspectives we encountered.

Resistance represents more than lack of knowledge

At first glance, racist perspectives and attitudes that were encountered by the co-researchers were interpreted by the group as remarks that resulted from a gap in knowledge. The lack of understanding by non-Indigenous Canadians of Indigenous histories and perspectives has been well-documented in the literature (Battiste, 2013; Dion, 2009; Osmond-Johnson & Turner, 2020; Poitras Pratt & Hanson, 2020; Regan, 2010; Schissel & Wotherspoon 2003; TRC, 2015a) yet the underlying issue goes beyond a lack of knowledge. In teaching pre-service teachers a mandatory Indigenous education course in Calgary, Poitras Pratt and Hanson (2020) noted that in addition to a lack of education around Indigenous perspectives, many Canadians have been “raised in environments where stereotypes and racism against Indigenous

people are still commonplace” (p. 2), which further emphasizes how deeply entrenched these harmful perspectives are in many Canadians’ daily lives. This may be a result of the ongoing impact of a colonially biased curriculum or the more widespread acceptance of anti-Indigenous racism. The findings from this study reflect that the unlearning of deeply rooted false assumptions and stereotypes of Indigenous peoples and histories by practicing teachers is a complex undertaking rooted in an individual’s identity, upbringing, and societal normalization of racist ideals.

In relation to resistance to Indigenous education, Bailey (2007) states that ignorance is socially constructed, meaning it is created and upheld by individuals in the dominant Canadian society. Although rarely considered, the idea that ignorance is an active process, as described in the Pedagogy of Ignorance, affirms that ignorance is beyond a gap in knowledge and “is often actively produced in social, cultural and political context” (Anwaruddin, 2015, p. 742). Within the context of this study, the gap in knowledge that the co-researchers observed in their colleagues cannot be addressed by simply learning Indigenous histories and perspectives; rather a greater awareness of how such ignorance is perpetuated, and what it serves to maintain, is essential. Given the longstanding nature of anti-Indigenous racism, it may well be that those in positions of power and privilege actively choose to remain unaware of systemic injustice in order to continue reaping the benefits of this unjust system (Bailey, 2007). The co-researchers did not consider, or speak to, how unjust power systems are maintained by those holding power and privilege through ongoing racism. The co-researchers in this study also did not make reference to the social construction of ignorance in sharing their understandings of why their colleagues might choose to remain in ignorance. It was refreshing to hear in her 2022

keynote address to Calgarians, her Excellency the Right Honourable Mary Simon, Canada's first ever Indigenous Governor General, state that "the time for 'not knowing' is over" (Simon, M., personal communication, October 6, 2022). This powerful and seemingly simple declarative calls on Canadians to move beyond the veil of ignorance and seems particularly apropos when applied to teachers who must adhere to Teaching Quality Standard 5 (Alberta Education, 2018) to maintain their professional standing. Although it is not their professional responsibility to hold their colleagues accountable, the co-researchers could not identify what was enabling pleas of ignorance from their colleagues despite having made the deliberate decision to not address their own ignorance by ignoring or not attending personal and professional learning.

The Teaching Quality Standard Competency 5 (Alberta Education, 2018) has mandated Alberta teachers develop foundational knowledge of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples and to integrate this knowledge into their teaching practices. It is apparent that K-12 educators in the school district in which this study takes place are not being held accountable to this professional standard related to Indigenous education. This adherence is ultimately the responsibility of the administrators in each school setting, however administrators may not have the foundational knowledge themselves to hold others accountable to this professional standard. Many of the co-researchers expressed frustration at what presents as disregard or lack of caring by some of their colleagues. The co-researchers felt that their colleagues had access to similar opportunities as they had to develop their foundational knowledge of Indigenous peoples but simply chose not to engage in the requisite learning. Perhaps as American scholar Alcott (2007) describes it, this type of "willful ignorance" (p. 39) is not so much a deficit of knowledge as it is a deliberate strategy in maintaining dominant group

identities. The societally accepted norm of ignorance around Indigenous perspectives, and truths, reinforces damaging colonial power structures (Dion, 2009) but also serves to maintain privilege with those who directly benefit. Thus, the ignorance the co-researchers encountered in their colleagues may serve to protect Eurocentric norms and allow their colleagues to remain in their comfort zone where unearned benefits accrue on a daily basis.

Moving beyond willful ignorance requires analysis of the conditions that allow ignorance to be reinforced and sustained (Code, 2014). So, what can be done when teachers purposefully disregard an essential part of their teaching responsibility? What allows this damaging cycle to continue? What is lacking in holding the comfortably unaware accountable to their professional responsibilities as outlined in the TQS 5 (Alberta Education, 2018)? The conditions that allow ignorance related to Indigenous education to continue and even thrive in Alberta schools may be right in front of us. The co-researchers often felt a sense of responsibility to hold colleagues accountable and felt very isolated in how to move forward with supporting their colleagues in moving beyond ignorance. Within the professional code of conduct for Alberta Teachers, if a teacher has criticisms against the professional competence or performance of a teacher colleague, they must directly contact the colleague as a first step (Alberta Teachers Association, 2018). Some of the co-researchers expressed a real and untenable tension between trying to maintain relationships with colleagues alongside not doing anything in reaction to racism. In other words, they felt they were being forced into the role of a bystander, rather than an upstander, to racism. In addition to a perceived lack of skills for addressing racist beliefs with their colleagues, the co-researchers also felt they did not have the necessary resources in their school settings to support them in addressing these acts of racism, such as processes for having

difficult conversations. One of the more common strategies for resistance is that of continual absence in attending Indigenous education professional learning. The co-researchers' deep concern around these avoidance strategies, or silent racism (Bailey, 2007) is something that is outside of the scope of their professional responsibilities but is in the hands of administrators, superintendents, and the Ministry of Education, to address at a systems level.

School administrators are responsible for ensuring their teaching staff are implementing TQS 5 (Alberta Education, 2018) in their work. Ultimately the question of whether school administrators are aware of teacher ignorance in Indigenous education may be the root of the issue. From there, we might rightly ask: what needs to occur for school administrators to properly address this widespread lack of knowing (ignorance) and avoidance in taking up requisite learning? The co-researchers shared that educators in Alberta now have access to a wealth of resources that share the true history of Indigenous peoples in these lands (Alberta Education, 2022); therefore, ignorance is no longer as viable of an excuse as it was in the past when there were few or no resources available. The school district has attempted to help teachers meet the Teaching Quality Standard 5 (Alberta Education, 2018) by offering multiple learning opportunities for teachers and staff. These offerings remain voluntary. In response to a call for priority-setting and as of 2021, the school district has mandated an annual system-wide learning day for all employees, moving away from optional learning to a level of importance that cannot be ignored. All employees within the school district, certificated teachers and staff alike, have had equal learning opportunities around Indigenous perspectives and histories. The question remains, is one day of mandated learning enough to see the necessary changes for Indigenous education?

In a generous show of collegiality, the co-researchers attributed much of the resistance they witnessed from colleagues to a lack of personal connection to the work of Indigenous education. The propensity for racist ideas around Indigenous peoples and ignorance to Indigenous perspectives is deeply rooted in the Canadian consciousness, as Battiste (2000) states, “Eurocentrism is a consciousness in which all of us have been marinated” (p. 124). In a recent study of Canadian educators, Lenapé- Potawatomi scholar Susan Dion worked with allied scholars Fowlie, Breen and Rice (Rice, et al., 2022) to argue that a lack of knowledge around Indigenous perspectives is not the issue at hand, rather it is the excess of Eurocentric knowledge in our schooling systems that continually reinforces the dominant idea that there is only one way of knowing. This excess of Eurocentric knowledge (Rice et al., 2022) that has saturated our schools for a very long time (Battiste, 2000) is now part of our psyches, the impact of which was evident in the co-researchers' stories. Reflecting on Battiste's (2000) assertion that the Eurocentric system builds in a sense of superiority, the co-researchers noted a defensive and stubborn resistance in their colleagues to learning about Indigenous ways of knowing. Given that the co-researchers may have themselves been steeped in Eurocentric ways, they may not have learned about foundational ideas around power and privilege, and positionality, so it is not surprising that the co-researchers did not demonstrate an understanding of why this resistance exists. The key to moving ahead may lie in not only understanding why resistance to Indigenous perspectives exists, but also exploring how we might together overcome this resistance.

Resistance is psychological

Acts of resistance are behaviours that are influenced by thoughts and beliefs in the mind, which means that resistance is psychological. Educator resistance to Indigenous education requires interrogation of the deeply rooted and personal values, beliefs and assumptions of teachers, in this case Alberta-based teachers. In response to teacher resistance to Indigenous education, Rice et al. (2022) share that, “resistance is unsurprising given non-Indigenous peoples’ indoctrination into a [dominant] progress narrative that denies violence perpetrated by settler-colonial regimes” (p. 16). Although unsurprising, the reasons behind the sheer amount of resistance to Indigenous perspectives was not entirely clear to the group of co-researchers involved in this study. In a related study of pre-service teachers in the United States, Gonsalves (2008) notes that resistance in educators could be due to a psychological defense of the ideologies of the dominant culture. The dominant culture in Canada supports and reinforces the myth of neutrality; there remains an enduring belief that Canadians do not privilege any one group (the notion of equality) and remain neutral in conflict. The co-researchers were, however, able to identify the inflexibility of some of their colleagues in changing their teaching practice to incorporate Indigenous perspectives. This stance was interpreted as “digging their heels in” or wanting to “do what they have always done.” So rather than exemplifying growth in learning, this stance suggests resistant educators will do whatever it takes to remain in a perpetual state of unlearning and therefore unchanged - in other words, firmly rooted in their comfort zone. Many Canadian teachers also have a psychological allegiance to upholding the belief of Canadian neutrality, a myth that they were likely raised in and hold dear, and as a result, many are defiantly resistant to any disruptions to

the status quo in education (Battiste, 2013; Donald, 2009; Dion, 2009; St. Denis, 2011; Styres, 2019) as well as to their sense of nationalism. This is the cognitive imperialism that Battiste (1989) speaks to in order to describe the destructive effects of being mentally manipulated to believe there is only one dominant narrative, in this case, the settler Canadian narrative as encountered by the co-researchers. There is a need to disrupt the notion that Canadian schools are neutral spaces (Donald, 2009; St. Denis 2011). In addition to challenging the myth of neutrality, educators need to recognize that the school system itself is a site for historical erasure through the continual replication of white settler superiority and cultivation of colonial narratives (Dion, 2009). It is important to develop awareness of how the space teachers are working within is infused with assimilative structures of power and privilege.

In actively defying the professional standard set out by Alberta Education (2018) around learning Indigenous perspectives, highly resistant teachers, those who frustrated the co-researchers, may be consciously or unconsciously upholding white supremacist ideas or stereotypes or at the very least, racism-influenced habits. The co-researchers recognized this initial resistance in themselves, sharing stories of working through their own feelings of resistance to countering the much-beloved myth of neutrality as natural and Canada as a peaceable, tolerant nation. In working through their own resistance by accepting new truths, the co-researchers shared that they gained a greater understanding of Indigenous knowledges and because the learning transformed their perspectives, they were increasingly motivated to enact their professional responsibilities in Indigenous education. This new transformative learning allowed the co-researchers to open up to new possibilities in their teaching practice

and personal lives, leaving them with feelings of strengthened commitment to their work in Indigenous education.

Resistance holds the potential for transformation

Oftentimes, transformative learning is accompanied by a range of emotions. In the sharing circles, the co-researchers recalled times in their personal and professional learning where their prior understandings were challenged by Indigenous perspectives and histories in Canada and they haltingly or passionately spoke to the emotions that arose during the beginning states of their learning. One of the co-researchers shared a memorable story from their childhood learning from a social studies textbook about the disappearance of the bison where the reason for the decline was presented as a natural process. This co-researcher became emotional when she recounted a more recent experience as a university student, when a respected Blackfoot Elder came into class and shared stories of the intentional killing of the bison by Europeans on the plains and the significant impact this slaughtering had on Indigenous peoples. The co-researcher described the process of trying to reconcile the two narratives in her mind; one that seemed innocent and natural, and the other shattering her understanding of what she understood as truth. She remembered feeling considerable discomfort and stress. Her experience is what psychologists refer to as cognitive dissonance which refers to the psychological stress that occurs when new information is learned which contradicts deeply rooted beliefs (Festinger & Carlsmith, 1959; Harmon-Jones, 2019). Cognitive dissonance can result in the newly learned experiences being rejected by the individual that in turn maintains their previously held schema intact, or, alternatively, there is a change in their cognitive schema to accommodate these new learning experiences (Festinger, 1957). Working through personal

resistance, and other negative feelings, can support educators in doing the difficult work of interrogating their deeply rooted biases and assumptions (Dion, 2009).

Acceptance was identified by the co-researchers as the first step to being able to work through the psychological discomfort that arose from new learning about Indigenous perspectives and history. The co-researchers shared many stories of how their understanding of the history of Canada had been challenged in their adult lives, for most it was during their experiences at university or in the early years of their teaching career (Donald, 2009; Dion, 2009; Poitras Pratt & Hanson, 2020). Many Canadian universities are now mandating Indigenous education courses for Bachelor of Education students (Poitras Pratt & Hanson, 2020; Watson & Currie Paterson, 2018; Wotherspoon & Milne, 2020), however, not all co-researchers graduated from programs where they were explicitly taught Indigenous perspectives and some shared that their previous understandings were challenged by events in the media and during Indigenous education teacher professional learning. These latter, more sudden, encounters are no doubt unsettling for a professional educator who has worked to serve their students in what they felt was the best way possible. A number of studies exploring how pre-service teachers are encountering truths about Indigenous perspectives and histories and how this collides with commonly held beliefs is well documented by teacher educators (Poitras Pratt & Hanson, 2020; Watson & Currie Paterson, 2018; Wotherspoon & Milne, 2020). Most of these studies point to the benefit of doing this essential work prior to entering the workforce as educators in order to be adequately prepared to meet all their professional responsibilities. The question remains, though, how can we reach practicing teachers and educational leaders with these essential learnings?

For the non-Indigenous co-researchers in this study, they worked through the tension that this new learning created by challenging their biases and assumptions by themselves. Most of the examples shared in the circles indicated that the non-Indigenous co-researchers privately worked through these difficult emotions through personal reflection; many felt a strong sense of isolation in this act. To their credit, the non-Indigenous co-researchers took up the challenge of working through feelings of guilt, shame, and anger largely by themselves to make room for this new learning and to make space for new truths. What we now know through literature on relational learning is that we can better supported in this learning when we work with, and alongside, others.

Embracing a Pedagogy of Discomfort

The co-researchers demonstrated their willingness to be uncomfortable, or vulnerable, by sharing stories around Indigenous education openly and honestly in our sharing circles. As hooks (1994) shares, “there can be, and usually is, some degree of pain involved in giving up old ways of thinking and knowing and learning new approaches” (p. 43). The co-researchers recognized that being uncomfortable in their work in Indigenous education became normalized and habitual, which, although difficult, was worthwhile. As a demonstration of their practice of vulnerability, the co-researchers accepted the discomfort that arose because they understood their lack of expertise in teaching Indigenous perspectives. Their willingness and courage to enter into this learning is the antithesis to those educators who use a stated lack of expertise as an excuse to not take up Indigenous perspectives (Scott & Gani, 2018). Affirming Settler Canadian scholar Zanussi’s (2018) assertion that acceptance of discomfort is a sign that educators are progressing in a forward direction in Indigenous education, the co-researchers

demonstrated a willingness to let go of the engrained traditional role of a teacher as the holder of all knowledge and instead positioned themselves as learners. The co-researchers' commitment to personal learning was demonstrated repeatedly in the stories they shared in the circles and was further evidenced in their participation in this study. This resilience and a strong aptitude for learning, was shared by some in the second circle, "we get knocked down, and we just get back up and trudge forward," in speaking to personal and professional challenges in their work in Indigenous education and how they have come to embrace strength in their knowingness. Their need to teach truths has clearly outweighed their own personal discomfort.

Possibilities enabled through the embracing of discomfort

To their credit and as a model of what is required to move things forward in Indigenous education, the tensions that were experienced by the co-researchers did not deter them from enacting their responsibilities in Indigenous education. Canadian scholars Schick and St. Denis (2003) determined in their study of pre-service teachers that educators are typically not interested in engaging in the "difficult analysis of unpacking their assumptions about inequity" (p.55), which resonates with what the co-researchers encountered in some of their colleagues. It is important to note that Schick and St. Denis' (2003) study was conducted over 20 years ago, well before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action were released (TRC, 2015b), however the findings still reflect some of what the co-researchers encountered in terms of their colleagues' attitudes. In a recent study of Alberta teachers taking up Indigenous perspectives, McDermott et al., (2019) found that Alberta educators engaged in Indigenous education demonstrate that once they had learned truths, they found themselves unwilling and

unable to replicate mistruths. Similarly, in their work with pre-service teachers, education scholars Poitras Pratt and Hanson (2020) report that not shying away from difficulty in learning new Indigenous truths enables teachers to open up to new possibilities and ultimately deepen relationships in classrooms. Although it is all K-12 Alberta teachers' responsibility to learn and teach Indigenous education (Alberta Education, 2018), it is evident that some educators are still unwilling to face discomfort, while a brave few are taking up the challenge of embracing discomfort (Boler & Zembylas, 2003) as a necessary part of challenging beliefs

Given the difficult emotional terrain of this work, I am prompted to ask: why were the educators in this present study motivated to engage in this challenging work? Many of the co-researchers shared that it was a strong feeling of responsibility or ethical obligation to Indigenous education that motivated them to work through their own discomfort. In many cases, this overwhelming sense of responsibility was rooted in wanting to make amends for harm done to Indigenous peoples, which led the co-researchers to seek out opportunities to further develop their learning about Indigenous perspectives. Similarly, McDermott et al., (2019) found that teachers' sentiments towards Indigenous education were also deeply personal and emotional. The personal connections and emotions described by the co-researchers in this study fueled their motivation to bring Indigenous perspectives into their work. Their feelings of personal responsibility and commitment to reconciliation that the co-researchers felt reflected the findings within Charlebois and Evans (2021) study where some educators' professional responsibilities to Indigenous education were greater than their need to be comfortable. Further reflecting feminist theorist Sara Ahmed's (2007) assertion that emotions inform how knowledge is either accepted or rejected by an individual, the co-

researchers described experiencing a wide range of emotions related to their lack of knowledge in Indigenous education. Emotions, whether positive or negative, are connected to feelings and ideas one has about individuals and collectives, in this case Indigenous peoples, and can reveal unconscious judgements (Ahmed, 2007). In much the same way that emotions can drive acts of courage and conviction, the same negative emotions, that of guilt and shame, can also keep educators in ignorance (Million, 2013). So, my initial question deepens to ask: why did some of the co-researchers' colleagues actively reject, as opposed to accept, the new learning they encountered around Indigenous perspectives? As mentioned during the second sharing circle, the co-researchers posited that one of the reasons their colleagues were resistant to Indigenous education initiatives was that they lacked connection to the material, meaning they had no ways to relate the content to their own lives or relationships. The connections that the co-researchers shared as meaningful to them were personal relationships with Indigenous peoples such as students, Elders and Knowledge Keepers. They also reported emotional connections to media stories that revealed the truths about Indigenous histories as a source of change in attitudes towards learning. Firsthand testimony from Indigenous peoples is a powerful tool to push non-Indigenous individuals through their initial discomfort and ignorance and into a place of understanding (Million, 2013). These connections, described so eloquently and powerfully by the co-researchers, served as driving forces that relayed a powerful sense of ethical obligation to take up their responsibilities in their work in Indigenous education and into their daily lives as Canadians. At the same time, the ethical question of how much should be asked of Indigenous survivors in terms of sharing stories of abuse and vulnerability, to support non-Indigenous peoples' learning? Even though the co-researchers shared many examples of

significant learning they experienced in the presence of Elders and Knowledge Keepers, they also demonstrated that they took responsibility for learning independently.

Ethical obligations overshadow discomfort

In sharing stories related to their work as teacher champions within Indigenous education, it was evident that the co-researchers were both passionate about and extremely motivated to move Indigenous education initiatives forward in their school settings, despite the difficulties they faced. In addition to facing resistance from others, the co-researchers shared examples of disorienting dilemmas, the catalyst for transformative learning (Mezirow, 1990), as they took part in professional learning opportunities that challenged them to think about their understanding of what counts as knowledge. Other eye-opening events included learning from Indigenous voices and events in the media, including the shocking news of the recoveries of the unmarked graves of children found on the grounds of former Indian Residential Schools. While Mezirow's (1990) initial theory outlined a very linear and sequential order for transformative learning, the co-researchers described more cyclical learning processes as a result of their disorienting learning experiences. The non-Indigenous co-researchers referred to a shift in their ideological assumptions and beliefs because of these disorienting experiences. As one of the co-researchers shared, "I can't turn back, I can't *not* do this work knowing what I know now...it is not an option." Here the teacher, now wide awake to Indigenous truths, is demonstrating an acceptance to the new learning and willingness to act on their personal and professional responsibilities to Indigenous education as a result. The co-researchers' description of themselves as being now in a state of 'wide-awakeness' (Greene, 1997; Shultz, 1967),

understood as a heightened level of consciousness beyond revelation, is representative of this point in their journey in Indigenous education.

Many of the non-Indigenous co-researchers saw their ethical obligation tied to righting the wrongs of the past which speaks to their willingness to take action. They also spoke to the source of their misunderstandings around Indigenous peoples and perspectives as that of their own schooling and familial experiences, which they were inadvertently perpetuating in their teaching practice. These powerful insights were seen as more compelling than the difficult emotions they experienced in their work in Indigenous education. Their observations parallel my own work as an Indigenous education practitioner where I have witnessed many educators in a state of complete shock after learning about the mistreatment of Indigenous peoples which counters the national narrative of our “peaceable and tolerant” nation. These truths ultimately shattered their understanding of Canada as a fair and just country and teachers have shared that they feel compelled to act and “do something” to rectify these injustices. These key moments of motivation, described as disorienting dilemmas (Mezirow, 1990), force individuals to question their assumptions and beliefs, which is furthered by critical reflection.

The Power of Critical Reflection

Positionality – the unexamined self

All ten co-researchers shared the belief that it was vital to engage in critical reflection relative to their previously unquestioned assumptions, in order to enact responsibilities in Indigenous education. The co-researchers shared many stories of the importance of reflecting on their own social positionality as a result of their new learning thereby reflecting the important assertions of many scholars (Dion, 2007; Friere, 1970; Louie, 2020; McGregor, 2018;

Prete, 2022; Poitras Pratt & Hanson, 2020, Rice et al., 2022). Awareness of one's privileged position, as shared by the co-researchers, is necessary work for all educators (Battiste, 2013; Poitras Pratt et al., 2018; St. Denis, 2017). Many non-Indigenous co-researchers shared how they brought constant awareness of their identities in relation to the work of Indigenous education, which as Rice et al., (2022) report, is crucial especially for settler educators. Having previously assumed the position of "neutral" teacher, the co-researchers demonstrated a developing understanding of the power and privilege they have been afforded, or not, by their skin colour. Understanding "self-in-relation", as put forth by Graveline (2000, p. 361) affirms the need to acknowledge the relational networks that we all live within. The co-researchers' willingness to understand themselves in relation to the work of Indigenous education allowed them to enact their responsibilities despite the discomfort and the resistance they face from colleagues and students' parents. Providing individuals with time and space for critical reflection can encourage the acceptance of discomfort and shift into a place where they are ready for new learning (Freire, 1970; Gonsalves, 2008; Paradies, 2005; Poitras Pratt & Hanson, 2020; Rice, et al., 2022). Many of the co-researchers remarked that their critical reflection occurred in isolation and outside of their work hours; they would have welcomed opportunities to reflect in collaboration with peers had they existed in their workplaces. In several instances, thinking about their positionality triggered feelings of guilt and shame as co-researchers became aware of their own implicitness in the colonial project. It was identified among the group of co-researchers that reflecting and understanding positionality is an essential beginning point for embarking on their work in Indigenous education.

When faced with guilt and shame, some individuals struggle to move beyond the negative emotions and it is possible that this form of resistance evokes even more guilt and shame. I have observed educators skip the necessary work of recognition that they are in relation to the history and perspectives of Indigenous peoples, a move to innocence in Tuck and Yang's (2012) terms, thereby severing their identity from the colonial story of this nation in order to ease negative emotions and precluding the need for any action to undo the harm done to Indigenous peoples. One common example of shifting to innocence is the sharing (usually reading) of a territorial acknowledgement, which is becoming commonplace to begin meetings and gatherings in education, without recognition of the ways one benefits from the displacement of Indigenous peoples on said lands. An educator's lack of awareness, and their avoidance of how they are positioned in relation to the true history of Canada, halts their ability to take up their responsibilities in Indigenous education.

Thinking critically about approaches to Indigenous education

Co-researchers also engaged in critical thinking relative to how Indigenous education initiatives were taken up within their unique school communities. The timing of our gatherings appeared significant to our discussions as the first gathering occurred shortly after the second annual National Day for Truth and Reconciliation (see National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, Government of Canada) The second circle was held the day after the school district's system-wide Indigenous education professional learning day where all educators and staff engaged in learning and reflection aimed at supporting their understanding of Indigenous histories and perspectives. The proximity of the sharing circles' timing relative to these significant dates meant that the co-researchers drew on recent examples related to the Indigenous education

initiatives in their school setting which prompted emotionally charged discussions about Indigenous perspectives and histories.

During each of the circles, the co-researchers shared stories of how each of their various schools engaged in Indigenous education initiatives on these significant dates. The co-researchers observed some educators were only willing to engage in surface level or performative activities, such as wearing an orange shirt on September 30th, but were unwilling to engage in deeper conversations about the contemporary impacts of Indian Residential Schools, which was part of the keynote discussion on the district's mandatory Indigenous education professional learning day. Speaking to the ways in which surface level approaches to Indigenous education are problematic, various scholars including Gebhard (2018), Kanu (2007) and St. Denis (2011), call on educators to move beyond tokenistic and cultural approaches to Indigenous education initiatives to those which reflect the diversity and richness of Indigenous perspectives. The co-researchers used terms like tokenistic and performative, to describe some of the activities they observed at their school sites related to Indigenous education. These activities included: Indigenous "crafts" which did not identify the Nation, group or land where these crafts connect to, or without explicit curriculum connections, that signal that Indigenous perspectives live *outside* of the curriculum; sharing resources written by non-Indigenous authors *about* Indigenous peoples; and sharing resources which only position Indigenous peoples in the past or that use outdated and harmful terminology which perpetuate negative stereotypes. In my own work, I have observed school communities take similar "check box" approaches to adhering to their responsibilities to the Teaching Quality Standard Competency 5 (2018) such as publicly sharing their commitments to Truth and Reconciliation on social media,

or hanging medicine wheels or other Indigenous symbols in their classrooms, which enable them to remain within their comfort zone without really challenging their perspectives or worldviews. The check box approach is highly problematic as it denotes that educators can be “done” the work of Indigenous education by engaging in a single act; these superficial and token gestures devalue the richness of Indigenous perspectives. In truth, this type of approach does not make meaningful change for anyone and ignores the necessary systemic changes required in the education system. The co-researchers’ concern with tokenistic approaches to Indigenous education aligns with the assertions of Gebhardt (2018) and St. Denis (2017), who state that surface approaches, such as appropriating culture by creating dream catchers and tipis without traditional teachings, can do more damage than good in the work of Indigenous education. This damage occurs because they create the optics that Indigenous education initiatives are being supported but the underlying issues of systemic oppression have not been addressed. Continually engaging in performative actions contributes to fostering the racist perception that, despite our efforts, there will be no improvement to Indigenous education because Indigenous peoples are inherently inferior (Gebhard, 2018; Kanu, 2007; Schick & St. Denis, 2003). Performative actions in Indigenous education give the illusion of equality and inclusivity, yet are ultimately tokenistic because these simplistic acts fail to honour the rich diversity of Indigenous cultures and the ways in which colonialism continues to oppress Indigenous peoples in Canada (Styres, 2019). Some of the co-researchers shared their efforts in moving their colleagues beyond problematic approaches in leading by example and by working alongside their colleagues, both softer approaches than directly telling someone what is wrong with what they are doing. Without any accountability measures in place and with

administration engaged in early learning themselves, the co-researchers shared that they struggled with having a candid conversation with their colleagues relative to how performative or tokenistic approaches are occurring in schools. The Indigenous education team I worked with has been actively engaged in looking for solutions to this very real problem. Some ways forward include listening to the advice of supportive colleagues who have encountered similar challenges, and even role-playing challenging conversations. These types of activities, collaboratively developed with my colleagues, left me feeling more equipped to address tokenistic approaches with individual teachers, reinforcing the idea that responsibilities in Indigenous education are best supported by being in community working together. Countering tokenistic approaches to Indigenous education involves recognizing the structures that are in place that allow these approaches to be maintained and thinking about ways in which these barriers may be overcome.

Navigating Oppressive Structures

As noted by Freire (1970), it is through conscientization, or achieving an in-depth understanding of the world through critical reflection, that individuals begin to recognize unjust structures and policies. This process, in turn, encourages a desire to move towards social justice. The majority of the co-researchers referenced the limitations of the colonial education system and its detrimental impact on Indigenous education initiatives, as well as Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. With the opportunity afforded to dialogue with others through their participation in this study, the co-researchers began to identify some of the processes and structures within the education system that are restrictive and even racist (Kendi, 2019). Through a new lens of understanding, co-researchers started to see how policies are either

fostering equity or maintaining the status quo in the education system. There are policies, for instance, which are limiting the progress of Indigenous education in the school district in which this study takes place. These policies also include the “laws, rules, procedures, processes, regulations, and guidelines that govern people” (Kendi, 2019, p. 18). In other words, racist policies reflect the views of the dominant culture and contribute to ongoing harm of marginalized groups. Within the public education system, examples of such policies are found in the formal curriculum that determine what is taught, in provincial exams that determine how students are assessed, how attendance and discipline are managed, which students can access special programs or supports, and communication with families. The co-researchers asserted that if policies are not guided by relationship or are not supporting the equitable treatment of Indigenous students in the education system, they are in fact, racist. School policies can either contribute to moving Indigenous education initiatives forward or can act as a barrier for teachers to enact their professional responsibilities. Arguably the most influential provincial policy imposed on teachers is the Alberta curriculum.

Alberta Education: a Eurocentric curriculum

As a compelling example of a harmful policy, the co-researchers repeatedly noted the limitations of the current provincial curriculum in supporting Indigenous perspectives. As with other provinces and territories, the curriculum in Alberta is provincially mandated (Alberta Education, 2022), and remains a highly contested topic of debate at this time in the province (French, 2021; Mertz, 2021; Narine, 2021; Poitras Pratt, 2021). The co-researchers described the current K-6 provincial curriculum, which was recently implemented by the United Conservative government and highly criticized by school districts, academics, and the

community, as Eurocentric which privileges white, male, able-bodied, heteronormative perspectives (Association of Canadian Deans of Education, 2022). Sadly, this predicament is not unique to Alberta and the limitations of such an approach are well documented in the literature in Canada and the United States (Ahenakeew, 2017; Battiste, 2013; Cajete, 2015; Donald, 2009; Kumashiro, 2016; McDermott et al., 2019; McGregor, 2017; Poitras Pratt et al., 2018; Schick & St. Denis, 2003; Simpson, 2014; Smith, 2012; Tuck & Yang, 2012). By privileging a single narrative and biased way of knowing, the current Alberta curriculum contributes to upholding colonialism and is detrimental to the aims of Indigenous education initiatives. Although the co-researchers were able to speak to how they creatively found ways to include and even amplify Indigenous perspectives in their teaching practice, there was fear that the current curriculum supports the ongoing resistance of some of their colleagues to not teach Indigenous perspectives, because it maintains a Eurocentric perspective. The co-researchers shared how they used Indigenous pedagogical approaches to creatively counter the limitations of the curriculum, such as: sharing circles, land-based learning, storytelling, and the inclusion of authentic Indigenous perspectives which are integral to respecting and honouring Indigenous ways (Ahenakeew, 2017; Archibald, 2008; Battiste, 2013; Cajete, 2015; Cochran-Smith, 2000; Graveline, 1998; Korteweg & Fiddler, 2018; OECD, 2017; Styres et al., 2013; Wildcat, 2014). The co-researchers' confidence in taking these actions to counter the Eurocentric curriculum came from witnessing fellow educators model decolonizing or Indigenizing practices during professional learning sessions or within their school settings. As McGregor (2017) shares, modeling pedagogical approaches in Indigenous education through professional learning is essential for educators to develop confidence and refine their own practices. The co-

researchers demonstrated that enacting their responsibilities in Indigenous education requires significant effort and creativity in relation to navigating oppressive policies.

Oppressive school policies

As Dakelh scholar Dustin Louie (2019) shares, recognizing oppression is key to moving towards a more just education system. Alongside a largely problematic and colonial form of curriculum, the co-researchers identified school district policies which serve to maintain cycles of oppression for Indigenous students, such as outdated discipline and attendance processes. There was recognition by the co-researchers around how district policies impact non-Indigenous students, however the conversation focused on Indigenous students. This finding was highlighted specifically among the co-researchers who worked closely with Indigenous students as they reported ongoing and detrimental impacts on students including how students gauged their sense of belonging and ultimately their engagement in schooling. Although the school district in which the study takes place is making some progress in response to the TRC Calls to Action specific to education (2015b) and supporting teachers in developing their foundational knowledge in relation to the TQS 5 (Alberta Education, 2018), the co-researchers acknowledged that there are structures within the district that need to better align with fostering positive relationships with Indigenous students and families. The co-researchers called for the need for flexibility in equitable assessment practices, attendance policies, class scheduling, task design, communication with families, and accessible transportation options for Indigenous students. A positive example of how this type of positive policy shift might be brought forward was mentioned by a co-researcher in how their school adapted the school attendance policies to be less punitive and rigid and instead took a relational approach to

working with the families to remove barriers for students by offering flexible timetable options and transportation support. The suggestions to re-evaluate our processes and structures echo the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2017) report outlining what is required for Indigenous students' academic success. The OECD (2017) suggests that although there are many factors that are external to education that impact Indigenous student engagement, there are actions individual school districts can take to better support Indigenous students. Promising practices to support Indigenous students as shared by the OECD (2017) include: having high expectations for students, understanding impacts of trauma, varying modes of academic assessment, building relationships with Indigenous families and Elders, and supporting students to feel safe and socially connected (OECD, 2017). Looking to the OECD (2017) for promising practices can encourage a critical evaluation of structures and processes which disable damaging practices from being present in schools. The school district in which this study takes place has used the OECD (2017) report to inform decisions related to Indigenous education, so it is not surprising that some of the co-researchers were explicitly pointing to promising practices that are outlined in the document. Much like the impactful co-researcher quote from the second circle, "if it's not relational, it's colonial," using the promising practices to guide policy decisions could support the school district in making improvements for Indigenous education. For example, it is important to ask: does a given policy promote students to feel safe and socially connected? Does the policy maintain high expectations for students and provide them with various ways they can demonstrate their learning? Is the policy trauma informed? The co-researchers see possibilities in improving the existing school policies and structures to ensure that school policies align a relational approach to working with students

and families in order to ensure we are creating conditions for success which benefit all students and staff.

The co-researchers mentioned multiple times in the sharing circles that centering Indigenous student voice is key to understanding the barriers that continue to oppress Indigenous peoples within the education system. As shared by one of the co-researchers, “the students often have the answers.” Although we need to be mindful of the dangers of having students speak on behalf of all Indigenous peoples (St. Denis, 2007), developing positive teacher-student relationships can help teachers to understand how Indigenous students navigate barriers in the school system that exist because of harmful policies. Through this understanding, school districts and school communities can understand which structures and processes are supporting or hindering positive relationships with Indigenous students and families.

Recommendations

The aim of this study was to understand the experience of champion educators in order to inform professional learning around Indigenous education in one particular school district. Based on the findings, it is recommended that professional learning in Indigenous education be mandatory for all teachers and school leaders in order for the TRC Calls to Action related to education (2015b) and the Teaching Quality Standard competency 5 (Alberta Education, 2018) to be fully realized. Given the current political landscape in Alberta related to education, it is most important for school districts to deliver intentional and research-informed professional learning to support Indigenous education initiatives. Based on the findings, the design of professional learning should include:

- **Implementation of anti-racist frameworks**

It was evident in the findings that enacting responsibilities in Indigenous education places educators in spaces where they are more likely to be encountering previously unquestioned racist ideas and policies. The co-researchers emphasized that Indigenous education must employ anti-racist frameworks to support educators in working through resistance and to provide them with skills to address racism in effective and sustainable ways. Understanding the lived experiences of Indigenous peoples and how the education system continues to actively oppress Indigenous students is an essential component in Indigenous education professional learning. Specific suggestions for how to employ an anti-racist framework were not brought forward by the co-researchers indicating an area for future research. The vital role of administrators and school leaders in learning about and implementing anti-racism in schools as a first and essential step also surfaced in this study. Administrators are in positions of power and influence where their role is to ensure that the teaching staff they support are working towards the professional standards outlined by the province (Alberta Education, 2018). Supporting administrators and leaders with anti-racist education would be an essential starting point in order to best support teachers and school staff in their work in Indigenous education.

- **Embracing a Pedagogy of Discomfort**

As Boler and Zembylas (2003) assert, challenging deeply rooted norms and beliefs requires individuals to be uncomfortable. The co-researchers in this study all shared stories of how they eventually accepted the need to accept that discomfort is a part of their work in Indigenous education, emphasizing that it is essential to their process of enacting their

responsibilities in Indigenous education. Although I have experienced much discomfort in my own learning, I had never thought about it being an essential part of my work in Indigenous education. There is something disarming about the recognition that being uncomfortable is an important part of the learning process. This learning requires humility and within that recognition, I feel a sense of relief being released from my own resistance. Leaning into discomfort, and indeed embracing it, holds the potential for deep transformation in how teachers understand and enact their responsibilities in Indigenous education. Accepting that discomfort is a part of growth can ultimately support Indigenous education professional learning initiatives.

- **Time, space, and resources, to engage in critical thinking**

As Freire (1970) states, critical thinking is essential to move social justice initiatives forward. Understanding how ongoing colonization continues to impact the education system and Indigenous peoples requires that educators engage in both unlearning and relearning. As shared by Poitras Pratt et al., (2018) “on a societal level, the act of raising awareness of how colonialism has impacted the lives of the colonized and granted unearned privileges to colonizers is a fundamental and first step in decolonizing education” (p. 19). The inclusion of Indigenous education within professional learning requires educators to think critically about their social positionality alongside their beliefs about Indigenous peoples and histories. Many of the co-researchers indicated they had engaged in critical thinking independently which led to feelings of isolation. An ideal space for this type of intense learning includes a trusting group of colleagues where individuals can engage in thinking critically and discussing ideas with others. Designing professional learning that incorporates time and space for critical thinking, and

moving through tough emotions (Boler & Zembylas, 2003), holds the potential for improving teacher practice. Thinking critically about how one is implicated in colonization is essential for transforming teacher practice related to Indigenous education. Part of this process involves developing an understanding of systems of privilege which can be unsettling for educators and requires embracing discomfort as a signal of strong learning.

Summary

Teachers in Alberta have the professional responsibility to adhere to the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action (2015b), specific to education, and the Alberta Education Teaching Quality Standard 5 (2018) related to Indigenous education yet there are no accountability measures or adherence standards. Despite these professional standards, those Alberta teachers who are enacting their responsibilities in Indigenous education are encountering real-life and professional challenges such as resistance, racism, personal discomfort, and the navigation of oppressive structures that make a full implementation of these standards in their workplace challenging, if not impossible. The teachers in this study expressed that their motivations to engage in the work of Indigenous education can be described as an ethical obligation, which encourages them to remain engaged in their work even though it presents personal and professional challenges for them. As they became increasingly aware, the co-researchers reflected on the barriers that are implicated by a Eurocentric education system and curriculum which continues to do harm to Indigenous peoples. Based on the telling experiences bravely shared by the co-researchers, the findings from this study can be used to inform the development of teacher professional learning in Indigenous education, which was set out as the aim of this study, in order to encourage fellow educators to also enact their responsibilities. The

findings call for Indigenous education professional learning opportunities which support educators in: offering space for critical reflection, understanding their social positionality, normalizing discomfort, understanding ways to navigate and shift oppression structures, and navigating resistance and racism. The collaborative nature of this study's methodology created a space for sharing and connection among educators that was integral to the findings that surfaced and could also serve as a model for educators to be supported in sustainably taking up their critical responsibilities to Indigenous education 'in a good way' (Ottmann, 2021). The role of the arts in such transformative work is another area for future study.

Returning to the working definition of decolonizing education, it is evident that the co-researchers are engaging in acts related to decolonizing education, however as teacher champions in their school settings, they are doing so in relative isolation. Decolonizing education is the responsibility of both non-Indigenous and Indigenous peoples (Battiste, 2013; Donald, 2009, Beeman-Cadwallader, Quigley & Yazzie-Mintz, 2011), which was common sense to our group of co-researchers who were Indigenous and non-Indigenous and spoke directly to this work being for all. Critically interrogating Eurocentric systems and developing an understanding of how these systems continue to marginalize and oppress Indigenous peoples (Alfred, 2009; Dion et al., 2010; Donald, 2009; Ermine, 2007; Smith, 2012; Stavros & Miller, 2017; Tuck & Yang 2015; Wilson & Yellowbird, 2005) were ideas that were at the developing stage among the group and more apparent among co-researchers working closely with Indigenous students. Ongoing critical reflection (Battiste, 2000; 2013; Freire, 1970; Styres, 2019) was identified as a necessary part of the co-researchers' processes. In terms of actively resisting Eurocentrism, by way of undoing of the current education system policies and

practices, results in a more equitable system which includes and reflects Indigenous worldviews (Battiste, 2013; Smith, 2012; Styres, 2017), the co-researchers were able to identify and challenge what was in their control, but ultimately recognized the limitations of their role as well as the current education system. Efforts to normalize and legitimize Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing in education are realized for the benefit of all learners (Battiste, 2013; Dion et al., 2010; Kovach, 2007; Smith, 2012) was apparent among the group of co-researchers and ultimately was their strength in their work as designers for student learning. What this working definition failed to address was the different levels of power and control that limits what is possible for teachers in their classrooms. What the co-researchers shared was how they are working within their learning spaces to uplift Indigenous voices and Indigenous ways of knowing. What could be understood as 'between the lines' of this working definition were the motivations and difficulty that the co-researchers experienced. Looking back at this working definition of decolonizing education it is clearer that all levels of the education system require the courage to make important shifts in policy and practice in order for the TQS 5 (Alberta Education, 2018) and the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action (2015b) to be fully realized. The findings of this study demonstrate that the TQS 5 (Alberta Education, 2018) fails to address the complexity of racism and ignorance related to Indigenous peoples that should be frontloaded for teachers and leaders in education in order to equip them with the tools they need to move Indigenous education initiatives forward in Alberta.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to understand how K-12 educators in Alberta are enacting their responsibilities in Indigenous education in order to inform future teacher professional learning in the school district where the study took place. My motivation to engage with this topic stems from a deeply personal obligation to uplift Indigenous knowledges and peoples, as well as my professional responsibilities working in Indigenous education within the school district where this study takes place. This study involved multiple stages of analysis. The preliminary stages of data collection and analysis were the Photovoice images, artist statements and circle sharing by the co-researchers, which lead to the collaborative theming of the data. This was followed by identification of the key findings in the Discussion chapter. The following is a summary of the implications for further research and dissemination, limitations and a conclusion.

Implications for Further Research and Dissemination

This work presents multiple opportunities for future research in response to the TRC Calls to Action (2015b) and the TQS 5 (Alberta Education, 2018). The TRC Call to Action 65 (2015b) states that research can support the building of social capacity and practical skills for long term reconciliation. The decolonizing methodology employed in this study could be replicated in future research studies in education. Looking beyond Eurocentric approaches to research towards decolonizing paradigms is one element of the larger goals of the decolonization project (Held, 2019). Using Photovoice (Wang & Burris, 1997) allowed the co-researchers to represent their understanding using images that metaphorically or symbolically shared their understanding and prepared them for the circle discussion. Arts based approaches,

such as Photovoice, have the potential to strengthen reconciliatory practices Indigenous education (Poitras Pratt, 2023). Positioning the participants as co-researchers had significant benefits for this study. Many of the co-researchers commented on the group experience in the sharing circles as the creation of a community which was fostered by using the sharing circle protocols (Graveline, 1998). Working collaboratively on identifying the themes that surfaced in the circle allowed for multiple perspectives to come together in consensus. Replicating this study could provide valuable insights that are specific to other school districts in Alberta and throughout Canada.

One of the major learnings of this study was the strength of community among colleagues. Through the co-researchers' reflections on how the methods employed in this study led them to feel a sense of community and allowed them to reflect on their work as teachers, by bringing together Western and Indigenous approaches, the methods of Photovoice and sharing circle could be used with teachers to implement Indigenous education professional learning. I also believe that the multi-layered approach to addressing the research question, through selecting photo prompt questions, allowed the co-researchers to prepare for a thoughtful sharing in the circle which led to a rich discussion in the group. Hosting two sharing circles, with two weeks' time in between, allowed the co-researchers to reflect on the themes which also contributed to a fruitful exchange. My field notes reflect many exchanges with the co-researchers after their contributions to the Research Collaboration chapter were complete. To my surprise and delight, some of the co-researchers are now collaborating with one another on curricular projects. Although the time commitment for the co-researchers' involvement in this study was eight hours maximum, I wonder what the possibilities would have been to

sustain this community of dedicated educators and continue our work together to explore our individual and collective work in Indigenous education. Perhaps the public sharing event will yield even more benefits. The methodology employed in this study brought together a community of educators who courageously spoke truth to power.

Researcher Reflections on the Design

The design of this study purposefully targeted a relatively small number of co-researchers who were chosen because they are recognized as champions in Indigenous education in a single school district and are not reflective of all educators in the district. The co-researchers identified themselves as having Indigenous and European ancestry or solely European ancestry and was not reflective of the diversity of perspectives that exist in the large urban centre in which the study took place.

As an educational practitioner working within the school district in which this study takes place, I must also declare my own bias. Wilson (2008) states that “we cannot remove ourselves from our world in order to examine it” (p.14). I have a deeply vested interest in moving Indigenous education initiatives forward which influenced my decisions in the development of this research project. Kovach (2010) shares that relational assumptions are central to Indigenous research methods which recognize the interplay between the research and the researcher(s). I attempted to address my personal ethos by working alongside the co-researchers and engaging in member checking throughout the study.

Final Thoughts

As stated in the TRC Final Report (2015a), “the current state of troubled relations’ between Aboriginal and non- Aboriginal Canadians is attributed to educational institutions and what they have taught or failed to teach, over many generations...the Commission believes that education is also the key to reconciliation” (p. 234). As such, practicing educators have a significant role in righting the wrongs of our education system in relation to Indigenous peoples. This research study has presented a series of findings, in both visual and textual renderings, to articulate how K-12 educators are enacting their responsibilities in Indigenous education in hopes to inform the professional development of educators. In the spirit of participatory action research (Creswell & Gutterman, 2019), the co-researchers plan to share an exhibit the Photovoice images and artist statements with fellow educators to offer inspiration and contribute to improving Indigenous education initiatives. As educators in Alberta are tasked to take up the TRC Calls to Action (2015b) and demonstrate competency in the TQS 5 (Alberta Education, 2018), the educators in this study provided insights into how others can step into the work of Indigenous education in order to take up these essential initiatives ‘in a good way’ through an anti-racist framework which accepts discomfort as part of the learning and involves thinking critically about an individual’s positionality. Through thoughtful implementation of decolonizing approaches to Indigenous education professional learning, my hope for future generations of Indigenous and non-Indigenous students and teachers, is that education in Alberta becomes a site of renewed relations.

References

- Aboriginal Healing Foundation. (2002). *The healing has begun: An operational update from the Aboriginal Healing Foundation*. <http://www.ahf.ca/downloads/the-healing-has-begun.pdf>
- Absolon, K., E. (2011). *Kaandoswin : How We Come to Know*. Fernwood Publishing.
- Absolon, K., E. & Willett, C. (2020). Aboriginal Research: Berry Picking and Hunting in the 21st Century. *First Peoples Child & Family Review*, 1(1);5-17.
- Ahenakew, C., R. (2017). Mapping and Complicating Conversations about Indigenous Education. *Diaspora, Indigenous and Minority Education*, 11(2).80-91. Web.
- Ahmed, S. (2012). *On being included: Racism and diversity in institutional life*. Duke University Press.
- Alberta Education. (2013). *Teaching Quality Standard*.
https://education.alberta.ca/media/1626523/english-tqs-card-2013_3.pdf
- Alberta Education. (2018). *Teaching Quality Standard*.
<https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/4596e0e5-bcad-4e93-a1fb-dad8e2b800d6/resource/75e96af5-8fad-4807-b99a-f12e26d15d9f/download/edc-alberta-education-teaching-quality-standard-2018-01-17.pdf>
- Alberta Education. (2021). *Alberta Education Assurance Measure Results*.
<https://open.alberta.ca/publications/alberta-education-assurance-measure-results>
- Alberta Teachers' Association. (2006). *Education is Our Buffalo*.
<https://www.albertaschoolcouncils.ca/public/download/documents/55705>
- Alberta Teachers Association. (2022). *Teacher Code of Conduct*.

<https://legacy.teachers.ab.ca/SiteCollectionDocuments/ATA/Publications/Teachers-as-Professionals/IM-4E%20Code%20of%20Professional%20Conduct.pdf>

Albertan's Reject Draft Curriculum (n.d.). *Home* [Facebook page]. Retrieved January 2, 2022 from <https://www.facebook.com/groups/353881362641844/>

Alfred, T. (2004). *Warrior scholarship*. In D. A. Mihesuah & A. C. Wilson (Eds.), *Indigenizing the academy: Transforming scholarship and empowering communities* (pp. 88–99). University of Nebraska Press.

Alfred, T. (2005). *Wasáse: Indigenous pathways of action and freedom*. Broadview Press.

Alfred, T., & Corntassel, J. (2005). Being Indigenous: Resurgences against contemporary colonialism. *Government and opposition*, 40(4), 597:614.

Allard, A.C., & Santoro, N. (2006). Troubling Identities: Teacher Education Students' Constructions of Class and Ethnicity. *Cambridge Journal of Education* 36(1): 115–129.

Anwaruddin, S. (2015). Pedagogy of Ignorance. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 47(7), 734–746. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131857.2014.914879>

Amato, A. (2022, November 18). First Nations chief critical of Alberta Premier Danielle Smith's Indigenous heritage claim. *CBC News*.

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/edmonton/first-nations-chief-critical-of-alberta-premier-danielle-smith-s-indigenous-heritage-claim-1.6657519>

Archibald, J.-A. (2008). *Indigenous storywork: Educating the heart, mind, body, and spirit*. UBC Press.

Armstrong, J. (2002). Jeanette Armstrong. In D. Jensen (Ed.), *Listening to the land*:

Conversations about nature, culture and Eros (pp. 282–299). Chelsea Green Publishing Company.

Ashcroft, B., Griffiths, G., & Tiffin, H. (2002). *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-colonial Literatures*. Routledge.

Assembly of First Nations/ (n.d.) *Enfranchisement*.

<https://www.afn.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/12-19-02-06-AFN-Fact-Sheet-Enfranchisement-final-reviewed.pdf>

Assembly of First Nations (1972). *Indian Control of Indian Education*

<https://oneca.com/IndianControlofIndianEducation.pdf>

Assembly of First Nations. (2002). *First Nations Jurisdictions over Aboriginal Education* .

https://www.afn.ca/uploads/files/education/4.2002_nov_nancy_morgan_fn_jurisdictions_over_fn_education_report_to_min_working_group_-_if_not_now_then_when.pdf

Assembly of First Nations. (2013). *Education, jurisdiction and governance AFN annual report 2013*. <http://www.afn.ca/index.php/en/policy-areas/education>

Association of Canadian Deans of Education. (2009). *Association of Canadian Deans of Education accord on Indigenous education*. [http://www.cssee-](http://www.cssee.ca/docs/acde/acde_accord_indigenousresearch_en.pdf)

[ce.ca/docs/acde/acde_accord_indigenousresearch_en.pdf](http://www.cssee.ca/docs/acde/acde_accord_indigenousresearch_en.pdf)

Association of Canadian Deans of Education. (2010). *Accord on Indigenous education*.

<http://csse-scee.ca/acde/wp-content/uploads/sites/7/2017/08/Accord-on-Indigenous-Education.pdf>

Atleo, E. R. (2004). *Tsawalk: A Nuu-chah-nulth worldview*. UBC Press.

- Aveling, N. (2002). Student Teachers' Resistance to Exploring Racism: Reflections on 'Doing' Border Pedagogy. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, 30 (2), 119–130.
- Bailey, K., A. (2016). Racism within the Canadian university: Indigenous students' experiences. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, (9)7, 1261-1279.
- Barber, M, & Jones, M. (2021). Inequalities in Test Scores between Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Youth in Canada. *Economics of Education Review* (83)1, 102-139.
- Bartlett, C., Marshall, M., & Marshall, A. (2012). Two-eyed seeing and other lessons learned within a co-learning journey of bringing together indigenous and mainstream knowledges and ways of knowing. *Journal of Environmental Studies and Sciences*, (2), 331–340.
- Battiste, M. (1986). *Mi'kmaq literacy and cognitive assimilation*. In J. Barman, Y. Hébert, & D. McCaskill (Eds.), *Indian education in Canada: The legacy*, (1), 23–44. University of British Columbia Press.
- Battiste, M. (2013). *Decolonizing education: Nourishing the learning spirit*. Purich Publishing.
- Battiste, M. (2000). *Reclaiming Indigenous voice and vision*. UBC Press.
- Battiste, M., Bell, L., & Findlay, L. M. (2002). Decolonizing Education in Canadian Universities: An Interdisciplinary, International, Indigenous Research Project. *Canadian Journal of Native Education*, (26)2, 82.
- Beeman-Cadwallader, N., Quigley, C., and Yazzie-Mintz, T. (2012). Enacting Decolonized Methodologies. *Qualitative Inquiry*, (18)1, 3-15.

- Bennett, D. (2022 December 8). Alberta passes Sovereignty Act, but first strips out sweeping powers for cabinet. *CBC News*.
<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/edmonton/alberta-sovereignty-act-1.6678407>
- Bishop, R. (2003). Changing power relations in education: Kaupapa Māori messages for “mainstream” education in Aotearoa/New Zealand. *Comparative Education*, 39(2), 221-239
- Blackstock, C. (2011). Reconciliation means not saying sorry twice: How inequities in Federal Government child welfare funding, and benefit, on reserves drives First Nations children into foster care. *A submission to the Standing Committee on the Status of Women*. <https://fncaringsociety.com/sites/default/files/fnwitness/FNCFCS-submission-status-of-women.pdf>
- Bloomberg, L. D., & Volpe, M. (2019). *Completing your qualitative dissertation: A roadmap from beginning to end*, 4th edition. Sage.
- Bold, C. (2012). *Using Narrative in Research*. Sage.
- Boler, M., & Zembylas, M. (2003). Discomforting Truths: The Emotional Terrain of Understanding Differences. *Pedagogies of Difference: Rethinking Education for Social Justice*, edited by P. Trifonas, 110–136. Routledge.
- Braun, V. & Clarke, V. (2006) Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, (3) 77-101.
- Brookfield, S. (2018). Transformative Learning and the Awareness of White Supremacy. *Phronesis*, (7)3, 63-69.

Britzman, D. P. (1998). *Lost subjects, contested objects: Toward a psychoanalytic inquiry of learning*. State University of New York Press.

Bryce, P.H. (1907). Report on the Indian Residential Schools of Manitoba and the North-west territories. <https://archive.org/details/reportonindiansc00bryc>

Caine, V. (2007). *Dwelling with /in Stories: Ongoing Conversations about narrative Inquiry, including Visual narrative Inquiry, Imagination, and Relational Ethics*. Sage.

Cajete, G. (1999). *A People's Ecology: Explorations in Sustainable Living*. Clear Light Print.

Cajete, G. A. (2017). Children, myth and storytelling: An Indigenous perspective.

Global Studies of Childhood, (7)(2), 113-130

Cajete, G. (2020). Indigenous Science, Climate Change, and Indigenous Community Building:

A Framework of Foundational Perspectives for Indigenous Community Resilience and

Revitalization. *Sustainability, (12)22, 9569*.

Canadian Encyclopedia. (2020). *Genocide and Indigenous Peoples in Canada*.

<https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/genocide-and-indigenous-peoples-in-canada>

Cardinal, H. (1999). *The unjust society: The tragedy of Canada's Indians*. Douglas & McIntyre.

Cardinal, T. & Fenichel, S. (2017). Indigenous Education, Relational Pedagogy, and

- Autobiographical Narrative Inquiry: A Reflective Journey of Teaching Teachers.
In *Crossroads of the Classroom* (Vol. 28, pp. 243–273). Emerald Publishing Limited.
<https://doi.org/10.1108/S1479-368720160000028019>
- Castleden, H., Hart, C., Cunsolo, A., Harper, S., & Martin, D. (2017). Reconciliation and relationality in water research and management in Canada: Implementing indigenous ontologies, epistemologies, and methodologies. *Water Policy and Governance in Canada*. 69– 95. Springer.
- CBC News. (2007, September 12). Canada votes ‘no’ as UN native rights declaration passes.
<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/canada-votes-no-as-un-native-rights-declaration-passes-1.632160>
- Charlebois, S. & Evans, C. (2020). Reconciliatory Pedagogy: Teaching Perspectives and Practices. *Journal of Educational Thought*. (53)1.
- Chung, S. (2016). The morning after Canada’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission report: Decolonisation through hybridity, ambivalence and alliance. *Intercultural Education*, (27)(5), 399-408. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14675986.2016.1240497>
- Chung, S. (2019). The Courage to Be Altered: Indigenist Decolonization for Teachers. *New Directions for Teaching and Learning*, (157), 13-25.
- Cobb, J. (2020, May 27) The Death of George Floyd in Context. *The New York Times*.
from: <https://www.newyorker.com/news/daily-comment/the-death-of-george-floyd-in-context>
- Cochran-Smith, M. (2000). Blind Vision: Unlearning Racism in Teacher Education. *Harvard Educational Review*, (70)2, 157-90.

- Code, L. (2014). Ignorance, injustice and the politics of knowledge. *Australian Feminist Studies*, (29)80, 148–160. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08164649.2014.928186>
- Coles, R. (1989). *The call of stories: Teaching and the moral imagination*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.
- Collard, S., and Law, M. (2016). The Limits of Perspective Transformation: A Critique of Mezirow's Theory. *Adult Education Quarterly (American Association for Adult and Continuing Education)*. (30)2, 99-107.
- Connelly, F. M., & Clandinin, D.J. (1988). *Teachers as curriculum planner: Narratives of experience*. Teachers College Press.
- Council of Ministers of Education Canada. (2009). *Strengthening Aboriginal Success Summary Report*.
https://www.cmec.ca/Publications/Lists/Publications/Attachments/221/aboriginal_summary_report.pdf
- Corntassel, J., Chaw-win-is, & T'lakwadzi.(2009). Indigenous Storytelling, Truth-telling, and Community Approaches to Reconciliation. *English Studies in Canada*, (35)1, 137-59.
- Clandinin, D. J. (2006). *Handbook of Narrative Inquiry*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications.
- Clandinin, D. J., & Connelly, F. M. (2000). *Narrative inquiry: Experience and story in qualitative research..* SAGE.
- Creswell, J. W. & Guetterman, T. (2019). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research*, 6th edition. Pearson Education.
- Cloud v. Canada (Attorney General), [2004] O.J. No 4924, 247 D.L.R. (4th) 667. Fontaine v.

Canada (Attorney General), 2011 ONSC 4938 (CanLII), 7. [Reasons for Decision of Winkler CJO, Court File No 00-CV-192059CP]. R. v. Comeau, [1998] N.W.T.J. No. 34 (NTSC).

Creswell, J. W., & Guetterman, T. C. (2019). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research*. Sage.

Cross, T. L, Pewewardy, C., & Smith, A. T. (2019). Restorative Education, Reconciliation, and Healing: Indigenous Perspectives on Decolonizing Leadership Education. *New Directions for Student Leadership*, (163)101-15.

Cross, W.,E. (2017). Identity Work: Enactment of Racial-Ethnic Identity in Everyday Life Identity. (17)1, 1–12.

Crotty, M. (1998). *The foundations of social research: Meaning and perspective in the research Process*. Sage Publications.

Crowshoe, R. Piikani Nation. Oral teaching, personal communication. September 2018.

Coulthard, G.S. (2014). *Red Skin, White Mask : Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition*. Indigenous Americas.

Council of Ministers of Education Canada (CMEC). (2009). *Strengthening Aboriginal success*.
www.cmec.ca/Publications/Lists/Publications/Attachments/221/aboriginal_summit_report.pdf

CTV News. (2008, June 11). Harper Apologizes for Residential School Abuse.

<https://www.ctvnews.ca/harper-apologizes-for-residential-school-abuse-1.301603>

Daschuk, J. W. (2013). *Clearing the Plains: Disease, politics of starvation, and the loss of Aboriginal life*. University of Regina Press.

David, E. J. R., (2014) *What is internalized oppression and, so what?* Springer Publishing Co,
<https://connect.springerpub.com/content/book/978-0-8261-9926-3/part/part01/chapter/ch01>

Dayal, P. (2022, September 27). City of Saskatoon adopts United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. *CBC News*.

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatoon/saskatoon-adopts-undrip-1.6597853>

Deer, F. (2013). Integrating Aboriginal perspectives in education: Perceptions of pre-service teachers. *Canadian Journal of Education*, (36)2, 175–211.

Deer, K. (2022, July, 30). Pope says genocide took place at Canada's residential schools. *CBC News*. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/indigenous/pope-francis-residential-schools-genocide-1.6537203>

Deonandan, R, Janoudi, G., & Uzun, M. (2019). Closing the Aboriginal Education Gap: A Systematic Review of Indigenous Educational Experiences in Canada, *Journal of Educational Leadership in Action: (6)1*.

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2005). *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Dion, S., D., Johnston, N. & Rice, C.(2010). *Decolonizing Our Schools: Aboriginal Education in*

the Toronto District School Board.

https://www.ontariodirectors.ca/UA_Pilot_Project/files/Toronto%20RE/Decolonizing%20Our%20Schools%203.pdf

Dion, S., D. (2016). Mediating the Space Between: Voices of Indigenous Youth and Voices of Educators in Service of Reconciliation. *The Canadian Review of Sociology*, (53)4 : 468-73.

Dion, S., D. (2009). *Blinded by the (White) light: A critical examination of whiteness in the context of urban Aboriginal education.*

http://blogs.ubc.ca/edcp/files/2011/05/Student-2-Proposal_AERA_20111.pdf

Donald, D., T. (2009). Forts, curriculum, and Indigenous Métissage: Imagining decolonization of Aboriginal-Canadian relations in educational contexts. *First Nations Perspectives*, (2)1, 1-24.

Donald, D., T. (2010). Aboriginal Perspectives and the Curriculum (Social Studies) – Discussion Papers. *Edmonton Regional Learning Consortium and Aboriginal Teacher Education Program (ATEP), University of Alberta.*

http://erlc.ca/resources/resources/aboriginalperspectives/aboriginalperspectives_discussionpapers.pdf

Donald, D., T. (2016). *On what terms can we speak.* [Video].

<https://vimeo.com/15264558>

Eschenbacher, S. & Fleming, T. (2020). Transformative Dimensions of Lifelong Learning: Mezirow, Rorty and COVID-19. *International Review of Education*, 1–16.

Evans, M., Hole, R., Berg, L., D., Hutchinson, P., & Sookraj, D. (2009). Common insights,

differing methodologies: Toward a fusion of indigenous methodologies, participatory action research, and white studies in an urban Aboriginal research agenda. *Qualitative Inquiry*, (15), 893–910.

Ferguson, E. (2021, April 15). Not fit for students': Teachers demand halt to Alberta's K-6 curriculum draft as more school boards reject it. *Calgary Herald*.

<https://calgaryherald.com/news/local-news/not-fit-for-students-teachers-demand-halt-on-albertas-k-6-curriculum-draft>

Festinger, L. (1957). *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance*. Row, Peterson and Company.

First Nations Caring Society. (2016). *Fact sheet on Dr. Peter Henderson Bryce: A Story of Courage*.

https://fncaringsociety.com/sites/default/files/dr._peter_henderson_bryce_information_sheet.pdf

First Nations Jurisdiction of Education. (2002). *If not now, then when? First Nations jurisdiction over education: a literature review*.

https://www.afn.ca/uploads/files/education/4._2002_nov_nancy_morgan_fn_jurisdiction_of_fn_education_report_to_min_working_group_-_if_not_now_then_when.pdf

Fisher, W., R. (1984). Narration as a Human Communication Paradigm: The Case of

Public Moral Argument. *Communication Monographs*, (51), 1–1

Freemon, V. (2010). *Reconciliation in cyberspace? Learning from Turning Point: Native peoples and newcomers online*. University of Toronto Press.

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/edmonton/indigenous-leaders-elder-feel-used-by-alberta-government-tactics-to-bolster-new-curriculum-1.6033499>

Freire, P. (1970/2000). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. Continuum.

French, J. (2021, May 25). Indigenous leaders, elder feel used by Alberta government tactics to bolster new curriculum. *CBC News*.

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/edmonton/indigenous-leaders-elder-feel-used-by-alberta-government-tactics-to-bolster-new-curriculum-1.6033499>

Friesen, S., Chu, M. W., Hunter, D., Brandon, J., Brown, B., Louie, D., & Mombourquette, C. (2021). Optimum Learning for All Students Implementing Alberta's 2018 Professional Practice Standards A Longitudinal, Mixed Methods Research Study: 2020-2021 Provincial Year 2 Survey Research Report.

Galileo Network. (2016) *Kainai plant index*. <https://galileo.org/kainai/plant-index/>

Gaudry, A., & Lorenz, D. (2018). Indigenization as inclusion, reconciliation, and decolonization: Navigating the different visions for indigenizing the Canadian Academy. *AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples*, (14)3, 218-227

Garcia, J., & Shirley, V. (2012). Performing decolonization: Lessons learned from Indigenous youth, teachers and leaders engagement with critical Indigenous pedagogy. *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing*, (28)2. 76-91.

Gebhard, A. (2013). Schools, Prisons and Aboriginal Youth: Making Connections. *Journal of Educational Controversy*. (7)1.

Gebhard, A. (2018). "Let's Make a Little Drum": Limitations and Contradictory Effects of

Cultural Approaches in Indigenous Education. *Race, Ethnicity and Education*. (21)6,757-72.

George, C., T. (2019). Decolonize, then Indigenize: Critical insights on decolonizing education and Indigenous resurgence in Canada. *Antistasis*, (9)1, 73–95.

Giroux, H. A. (2011). *On critical pedagogy*. Continuum.

Gonsalves, R. (2008). Hysterical Blindness and the Ideology of Denial: Preservice Teachers' resistance to multicultural education. *Counterpoints*, (319), 3-27.

Gorecki, L. & Doyle-Jones, C. (2021). Centering Voices: Weaving Indigenous Perspectives in Teacher Education. *The Canadian Journal of Action Research*, 21(3), 115–141.

<https://doi.org/10.33524/cjar.v21i3.536>

Government of Alberta. (2018). *Teaching Quality Standard*.

<https://www.alberta.ca/professional-practice-standards.aspx>

Government of Alberta. (2021) *Draft K-6 Curriculum*.

<https://www.alberta.ca/curriculum.aspx>

Government of British Columbia. (2021). *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act*.

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/indigenous-people/new-relationship/united-nations-declaration-on-the-rights-of-indigenous-peoples#:~:text=B.C.'s%20Implementation%20of%20the,the%20TRC's%20Calls%20to%20Action.>

Government of Canada. (1969). *Statement of the Government of Canada on Indian*

Policy. <https://publications.gc.ca/site/eng/9.700112/publication.html#:~:text=%22The%20Government%20believes%20that%20its,a%20break%20with%20the%20past.>

Government of Canada. (2012). *Definition of Non-Status Indian*.

<https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1100100014433/1535469348029>

Government of Canada. (2021). *The Indian Act*. <https://laws->

[lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/i-5/](https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/i-5/)

Government of Canada. (2021). *Indian Residential School Agreement Government of Canada*.

<https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1100100015576/1571581687074>

Government of Canada. (1969). *The White Paper*.

<https://ehprnh2mwo3.exactdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/1969-The-White-Paper.pdf>

Government of Canada. (2008). Statement of apology to former students of Indian Residential

Schools. <https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1100100015644/1571589171655>

Government of Canada. (2016). *Report on the Royal Commission of Aboriginal Peoples*.

<https://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/aboriginal-heritage/royal-commission-aboriginal-peoples/Pages/final-report.aspx>

Government of Canada. (2022). *Highlights from the Royal Commission of Aboriginal Peoples*.

<https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1100100014597/1572547985018>

Government of Canada. (2022). *National Day for Truth & Reconciliation*.

<https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/campaigns/national-day-truth-reconciliation.html>

Government of Manitoba. (2022). *Indigenous Education and Early Childhood Learning*.

<https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/abedu/index.html>

Government of Ontario. (2022). *Indigenous Education Ontario*.

<https://www.ontario.ca/page/indigenous-education-ontario>

Government of Saskatchewan. (2022). *First Nations & Métis Education*.

<https://www.saskatchewan.ca/residents/education-and-learning/first-nations-and-metis-education>

Graveline, F.J. (1998). *Circle Works : Transforming Eurocentric Consciousness*. Fernwood.

Grbich, C. (1999) *Qualitative research in health. An introduction*. Sage

Greene, M. (1998). *The Dialectic of Freedom*. Teachers College Press.

Hamber, B., & Kelly, G. (2009). Beyond coexistence: Towards a working definition of reconciliation. In J. Quinn (Ed.), *Reconciliation(s): Transitional justice in postconflict societies*, (286-310). McGill-Queen's University Press.

Harmon-Jones, E. (Ed.). (2019). *Cognitive dissonance : Reexamining a pivotal theory in psychology*. American Psychological Association.

Hart, M. A. (2002). *Seeking Mino-Pimatisiwin: An Aboriginal approach to helping*. Fernwood Publishing.

Hattie, J. (2003) New Zealand education snapshot: With specific reference to the 1-13 Years. Knowledge Wave 2003 The Leadership Forum. file:///C:/Users/13000231/Desktop/John%20Hattie%20(1).pdf

Hawthorn, H.B. (1967). *A Survey of the Contemporary Indians of Canada: A Report on Economic, Political and Educational Needs and Policies*. Volume II. Ottawa: Indian Affairs Branch.

Held, M. B. (2019). Decolonizing Research Paradigms in the Context of Settler Colonialism: An Unsettling, Mutual, and Collaborative Effort. *International Journal of Qualitative*

Methods, (18).

Higgins, M., Madden, B., & Korteweg, L. (2015). Witnessing (halted) Deconstruction: White Teachers' 'perfect Stranger' Position within Urban Indigenous Education. *Race, Ethnicity and Education, (18)*2. 251-76.

Hodge, S. (2014). Transformative Learning as an 'Inter-Practice' Phenomenon. *Adult Education Quarterly, (64)*2, 165–181.

hooks, B., (1994). *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*.
Routledge.

Indspire. (2019). *Truth and reconciliation in post-secondary settings: Student experience*.
Retrieved from https://indspire.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/JMGD_003_IND_TR_REPORT_FINAL_V3_NOV15_V3.pdf

Iwama, M., Marshall, M., Marshall, A., & Bartlett, C. (2009). Two-eyed seeing and the language of healing in community-based research. *Canadian Journal of Native Education, (32)*2, 3–23.

John, K.D., (2019). In Smith, L. T., In Tuck, E., & In Yang, K. W. *Indigenous and decolonizing studies in education: Mapping the long view*. Routledge.

Johnson, L. (2022, October, 22). UCP members on Saturday vote down controversial anti-racism teaching ban. *Edmonton Journal*.
<https://edmontonjournal.com/news/politics/ucp-members-expected-to-debate-20-resolutions-at-agm>

Joseph, V. & Williams, T. (2009). *The Struggle to Find Courage*,

- Strength and Confidence to Fight Internalized Racism and Internalized Dominance. *Democracy and Education*. 17 (3).
- Josselson, R. (2013). *Interviewing for qualitative inquiry a relational approach*. Guilford Press.
- Kairos. (2017). *Winds of Change-Education for Reconciliation Report Card: Provincial and territorial curriculum on Indigenous education*. Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives. <https://www.kairoscanada.org/what-we-do/indigenous-rights-2/windsofchange-report-cards#ab>
- Kanu, Y. (2005a). Teachers' Perceptions of the Integration of Aboriginal Culture into the High School Curriculum. *Alberta Journal of Educational Research*, (51)1 .50-68
- Kanu, Y. (2005b). Decolonizing Indigenous Education: Beyond Culturalism: Toward Post-cultural Strategies, *Canadian and International Education / Education canadienne et Internationale*, (34)2. <http://ir.lib.uwo.ca/cie-eci/vol34/iss2/2>
- Kanu, Y. (2007). Increasing School Success Among Aboriginal Students: Culturally Responsive Curriculum or Macrostructural Variables Affecting Schooling?. *Diaspora, Indigenous and Minority Education*, (1)1, 21-41.
- Kendi, I. (2019). *How to be an antiracist*. Bodley Head.
- Kirby, S. L., Greaves, L., & Reid, C. (2017). *Experience, research, social change: Critical Methods*. University of Toronto Press.
- Kirkness, V. J. & Barnhardt, R. (2001). First Nations and Higher Education: The Four R's - Respect, Relevance, Reciprocity, Responsibility. *In Knowledge Across Cultures: A Contribution to Dialogue Among Civilizations*. The University of Hong Kong.

Korteweg, L., Fiddler, T., Bissell, A., Primavesi, L., Clarke, M., & Moon, M. (2014). Circles

of hope in indigenizing mainstream teacher education. *Creating circles of hope in teacher education* (20-36). Laurentian E-Press.

Kovach, M. (2010). *Indigenous methodologies: Characteristics, conversations, and contexts*.

University of Toronto Press.

Kovach, M. (2018). *Doing Indigenous methodologies—A letter to a research class*. In N. K.

Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (5th ed., pp. 214–235). Sage.

Kumashiro, K., K. (2016). Toward a Theory of Anti-Oppressive Education. *Review of*

Educational Research, (70)1, 25-53.

Kuokkanen, R. (2007). *Reshaping the university: Responsibility, indigenous epistememes, and the*

logic of the gift. UBC Press.

Ladson-Billings, G. (2006). From the Achievement Gap to the Education Debt: Understanding

Achievement in U.S. Schools. *Educational Researcher*, (35)7, 3–12.

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3876731>

Laskaris, S. (2020, December 5). UNDRIP legislation met with applause and caution. *The*

Toronto Star. <https://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2020/12/05/undrip-legislation-met-with-applause-and-caution.html>

Lavall'ee, L., F. (2009). Practical application of an Indigenous research framework and two

- qualitative indigenous research methods: Sharing circles and Anishnaabe symbol-based reflection. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, (8), 21–40.
- Little Bear. (2009). *Naturalizing Indigenous Knowledge: Synthesis Paper*. Canadian Council on Learning, Aboriginal Learning Knowledge Centre.
- Loh, J. (2013). Inquiry into issues of trustworthiness and quality in narrative studies: A perspective. *The Qualitative Report*, 18(65), 1-15.
<http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR18/loh65.pdf>
- Lorde, A. (1984). *Sister outsider: essays and speeches*. Crossing Press.
- Louie, D. W. (2020). A social justice teaching framework: Blending critical theory and Blackfoot epistemologies. *Interchange*, (51) 179-197.
- MacDonald, D., B., & Hudson, G. (2012). The genocide question and Indian Residential Schools in Canada. *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, (45)2, 427-449.
doi:10.1017/S000842391200039X
- Mackinlay, E., & Barney, K. (2014). Unknown and Unknowing Possibilities. *Journal of Transformative Education*, (12)1, 54–73.
- Madden, B. (2015). Pedagogical pathways for Indigenous education with/in teacher education. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 51, 1–15.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2015.05.005>
- Martin, M. (2021, December 27). Forced to Look After Generations of Looking Away. *Winnipeg Free Press*. <https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/local/forced-to-look-after-generations-of-looking-away-575975292.html>

- Maqbool, A. (2020, July 10). Black lives matter: from social media post to global movement, *BBC News*. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-53273381>
- Mcconahay, J.B., Hardee, B. B., & Batts, V. (1981). Has racism declined in America? It depends on who is asking and what is asked. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, (25), 563-579.
- McDermott, M., MacDonald, J., Markides, J., & Holden, M. (2021). Uncovering the experiences of engaging Indigenous knowledges in colonial structures of schooling and research. *Engaged Scholar Journal: Community-Engaged Research, Teaching, and Learning*, 7(1), 25-44.
- McGregor, H.,E. (2017). One classroom, two teachers? Historical thinking and Indigenous education in Canada. *Critical Education*, 8(14), 1-18.
<http://ojs.library.ubc.ca/index.php/criticaled/article/view/186182>
- Merriam, S., Caffarella, R., & Baumgartner, L. (2007). *Learning in adulthood a comprehensive guide*. Jossey-Bass.
- Merriam, S. & Kim, Y. (2008). *Non-Western perspectives on learning and knowing*. In Merriam (Ed.). Third update on adult learning theory (pp.71-81). Jossey-Bass.
- Mertz, E. (2021, March 8). Métis Nation of Alberta has ‘monumental concerns’ with proposed curriculum. *Global News*. <https://globalnews.ca/news/7731446/metis-nation-alberta-proposed-school-curriculum/>
- Métis National Council. (n.d.). *Métis Nation*.
<https://www.metisnation.ca/index.php/who-are-the-metis>

- Mezirow, J. (1990). Transformative Learning: Theory to Practice. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, (74),5-12. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/ace.7401>
- Miles, M., Huberman, A., & Saldaña, J. (2020). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook*, 4th edition. Sage.
- Million, D. (2013). *Therapeutic nations: Healing in an age of Indigenous human rights*. UA Press
- Milloy, J. S. (1999). *A national crime: The Canadian government and the residential school system, 1879 to 1986*. University of Manitoba Press.
- Minkler, M., & Wallerstein, N. (Eds.). (2003). *Community based participatory research for health*. Jossey-Bass/Wiley.
- Moliere , A. (2022, March 11). Indigenous leaders hope new required high school courses in B.C. will help combat racism. *CBC News*. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/secondary-schools-bc-indigenous-courses-1.6380578>
- Montero, M. K., & Dénomme-Welch, S. (2018). Reconciliation Through Education: A Review of Achieving Indigenous Student Success: A Guide for Secondary Classrooms. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, (62)2. 241-43.
- Monture, P. (2009). *'Doing academia differently': Confronting whiteness in the university*. University of Toronto Press.
- National Indian Brotherhood. (1972). Indian Control of Indian Education Policy Paper. <https://oneca.com/IndianControlofIndianEducation.pdf>
- Narine, S. (2021, April 8). UCP draft curriculum for K to Grade 6 has inside-the-fort logic all

over it, says professor. *Windspeaker News*.

<https://windspeaker.com/news/windspeaker-news/ucp-draft-curriculum-k-grade-6-has-inside-fort-logic-all-over-it-says>

Nedo, Y. F., & Pedersen, A. (2013). *No Time like the present: Determinants of intentions to engage in bystander anti-racism on behalf of Indigenous Australians*. Cambridge University Press.

Newhouse, D. & Graham, K. (2021). *Sharing the Land, Sharing a Future*.

Perceptions on Truth and Reconciliation, 4. University of Manitoba

Ollerenshaw, J., & Creswell, J., W. Narrative Research: A Comparison of

Two Restorying Data Analysis Approaches. *Qualitative Inquiry*, (8)3, 329–347.

Ottmann, J. [FNUniv Communications] (2021, October 15). *First Nations University of Canada President's installation* [Video]. YouTube.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UgRuN6nc65U>

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2017). *Promising Practices for Supporting Success of Indigenous Students*. <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264279421->

Osajima, K. (1993), as cited in Kumashiro, K. K. (2000). Toward a Theory of Anti-Oppressive Education. *Review of Educational Research*, (70)1, 25-53.

Osmond-Johnson, P., & Turner, P. (2020). Navigating the “Ethical Space” of Truth and Reconciliation: Non-indigenous School Principals in Saskatchewan. *Curriculum Inquiry* (50)1, 1-24.

Palmater, P. as cited in Switzer, M. (2013, April 17). Why First Nations Can't Just Get Over It.

Anishinabek News. <http://anishinabeknews.ca/2013/04/17/why-first-nations-cant-just-get-over-it/>

Paradies, Y. (2005). Anti-Racism and Indigenous Australians. *Analyses of Social Issues and Public Policy (ASAP)*, (5)1, 1–28. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1530-2415.2005.00053.x>

Peltier, C. (2018). An Application of Two-Eyed Seeing: Indigenous Research Methods With Participatory Action Research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, (17)1.

Pete, S. (2016). 100 Ways: Indigenizing & decolonizing academic programs. *Aboriginal Policy Studies*, (6)1.

Peters, J. & White, J, (2009). *A Short History of Aboriginal Education in Canada*.

<https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=https://www.google.com/&httpsredir=1&article=1421&context=aprci>

Poitras Pratt, Y., & Danyluk, P.,J. (2017). Learning What Schooling Left Out. *Canadian Journal of Education*, (40)1, 1-29.

Poitras Pratt, Y., & Danyluk, P.,J. (2018). Transforming Preservice Teacher Practices and Beliefs through First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Critical Service-Learning Experiences." *The Wiley International Handbook of Service-Learning for Social Justice*. John Wiley & Sons, 171-90.

Poitras Pratt, Y., & Danyluk, P.,J. (2019). Exploring Reconciliatory Pedagogy and Its Possibilities through Educator-led Praxis. *The Canadian Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, (10)3 1-16.

Poitras Pratt, Y., & Hanson, A.,J. (2020). Indigenous instructors' perspectives on pre-service

teacher education: poetic responses to difficult learning and teaching, *Race Ethnicity and Education*.

Poitras Pratt, Y, Louie, D., Hanson, A.,J., & Ottmann, J. (2018). Indigenous education and Decolonization. *Oxford Research Encyclopedia*.

Poitras Pratt, Y. & Gladue, K. (2022). Re-defining academic integrity with Indigenous truths. In S. Eaton, J. C-Hughes (Eds.), *Academic Integrity in Canada: An Enduring and Essential Challenge*. <https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-3-030-83255-1>

Poitras Pratt, Y. (2023). Elevating arts integration to everyday reconciliatory practices. In J. Markides & D. St. Georges (Eds.), *Art as Reconciliation, Resistance, Resurgence, and Renewal, Community Wisdom Series*, DIO Press.

Prete, T. (2022). How integrating Indigenous perspectives into the classroom affects students attitudes towards Indigenous People. *Journal of Contemporary Issues in Education*.

Raycraft, R. (2022, October 27). MPs back motion calling on government to recognize residential schools program as genocide. *CBC News*.
<https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/house-motion-recognize-genocide-1.6632450>

Reid, B. (2020). Positionality and Research: “Two-Eyed Seeing” With a Rural Ktaqmkuk Mi’kmaw Community. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, (19)1.

Regan, P. (2010). *Unsettling the settler within: Indian residential schools, truth telling, and reconciliation in Canada*. UBC Press.

- Reid, A. J, Eckert, L., E., Lane, J., Young, N., Hinch, S., Darimont, C., Cooke, S., Ban, N,
& Albert Marshall, A. (2021). Two-Eyed Seeing: An Indigenous Framework to Transform Fisheries Research and Management. *Fish and Fisheries (Oxford)* (22), 243-61.
- Rodríguez de France, C., Scully, A., & McIvor, O. (2017). Beyond the Classroom: The Impact of a Required Indigenous Education Course in the Lives of Pre-service Teachers. In *Promising Practices in Indigenous Teacher Education* (pp. 87–102). Springer Singapore.
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-6400-5_7
- Root, E., Augustine, S., Snow, K., & Doucette, M. (2019). Evidence of co-learning Through a relational pedagogy: Indigenizing the curriculum through MIKM 2701. *The Canadian Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, (10)1.
<https://doi.org/10.5206/cjsotlrcacea.2019.1.8006>
- Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. (1996). *People to People, Nation to Nation: Highlights from the Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples*. Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services Canada.
- Rupertsland Institute (2015). *Bridging the Aboriginal Education Gap in Alberta*.
https://www.rupertsland.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Bridging_the_Aboriginal_Education_Gap_in_Alberta.pdf
- Rutherford, S. (2020). *Canada's Other Red Scare : Indigenous Protest and Colonial Encounters during the Global Sixties*. Rethinking Canada in the World. McGill-Queen's UP.
- Schick, C., & St. Denis, V. (2003). What makes anti-racist pedagogy in teacher education difficult? Three popular ideological assumptions. *Alberta Journal of Educational Research*, (49)1, 55–69.

- Schissel, B., & Wotherspoon, T. (2003). *The legacy of school for aboriginal people*. Oxford University Press.
- Schutz, A. (1967). *Collected Papers* (2nd ed.). Hague: Martinus Nijhoff.
- Scott, D., & Gani, R., (2018). Examining Social Studies Teachers' Resistances towards Teaching Aboriginal Perspectives: The Case of Alberta. *Diaspora, Indigenous and Minority Education*, (12)4, 167-81.
- Sefa Dei, G., J. (1997). Beware of False Dichotomies: Revisiting the Idea of Black-Focused Schools in Canadian Contexts." *Journal of Canadian Studies*, (31)4, 58–79.
- Sefa Dei, G., J. (2008). Schooling as Community: Race, Schooling, and the Education of African Youth. *Journal of Black Studies*, (38)3, 346–66.
- Sefa Dei, G., J. & McDermott, M. (2019). *Centering African proverbs, Indigenous folktales, and cultural stories in curriculum: Units and lesson plans for inclusive education*. Canadian Scholars Press.
- Siemens, J. (2017). Education for reconciliation: Pedagogy for a Canadian context. *Canadian Journal for New Scholars in Education*, (8)1, 127-135.
- Simon, R. (2000). *The Touch of the Past: The Pedagogical Significance of a Transactional Sphere of Public Memory*. In *Revolutionary Pedagogies: Cultural Politics, Instituting Education, and the Theory of Discourse*, edited by P. Trifonas, 61–80. Routledge.
- Simpson, L. (2011). *Dancing on our turtle's back: Stories of Nishnaabeg re-creation, resurgence and a new emergence*. Arbeiter Ring.
- Skrla, L. & Scheurich, J., J. (2001). Displacing deficit thinking in school district leadership. *Education and Urban Society* 2001(33), 235-258.

- Smith, L.,T. (2012). *Decolonizing Methodologies : Research and Indigenous Peoples*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Spence, D. Saddle Lake First Nation. Lives in Calgary, Alberta. Oral teaching. personal communication, July 1, 2021.
- Statistics Canada. (2016). *Census: Aboriginal Population*.
<https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/abpopprof/index.cfm>
- Stavros G.S., & Miller, D. (2017). Miscalculations. *Canadian Journal of Education*, (40)3, 92-122.
- Styres, S. (2017). *Pathways for Remembering and Recognizing Indigenous Thought in Education*. University of Toronto.
- Styres, S. (2019). In Smith, L. T., In Tuck, E., & In Yang, K. W. *Indigenous and decolonizing studies in education: Mapping the long view*. Routledge.
- St. Denis, V., & Schick, C. (2003). What Makes Anti-Racist Pedagogy in Teacher Education Difficult? Three Popular Ideological Assumptions. *Alberta Journal of Educational Research*, (49)1.
- St. Denis, V. (2011). Silencing Aboriginal curricular content and perspectives through multiculturalism: "There are other children here." *Review of Education, Pedagogy, and Cultural Studies*, (33)4, 306-317.
- Suprpto, N., Sunarti, T., Suliyannah, D. W., Hidayaatullaah, H. N., Adam, A. S., & Mubarak, H. (2020). A systematic review of photovoice as participatory action research strategies. *International Journal of Evaluation & Research and Education*, (9)3, 675– 683.
<https://doi.org/10.11591/ijere.v9i3.20581>

- Taylor, E., W. (2016). Building Upon the Theoretical Debate: A Critical Review of the Empirical Studies of Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory. *Adult Education Quarterly (American Association for Adult and Continuing Education)*, (48)1, 34–59.
- Tompkins, J. (2002). Learning to See What They Can't: Decolonizing Perspectives on Indigenous Education in the Racial Context of Rural Nova Scotia. *McGill Journal of Education*, (37)3, 405.
- Toulouse, P. (2016). *What Matters in Indigenous Education: Implementing a Vision Committed to Holism, Diversity and Engagement*. <https://peopleforeducation.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/MWM-What-Matters-in-Indigenous-Education.pdf>
- Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2012). *They Came for Our Children*. https://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2012/cvrc-trcc/IR4-4-2012-eng.pdf
- Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. (2015a). *Canada's residential schools: Reconciliation, The final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada* http://nctr.ca/assets/reports/Final%20Reports/Volume_6_Reconciliation_English_Web.pdf
- Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. (2015b). *Summary of the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*. http://nctr.ca/assets/reports/Final%20Reports/Executive_Summary_English_Web.pdf
- Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. (2015c). *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action*. http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/File/2015/Findings/Calls_to_Action_English2.pdf

Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. (2015d). *What we have learned: Principles of Truth and Reconciliation*.

http://nctr.ca/assets/reports/Final%20Reports/Principles_English_Web.pdf

Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (n.d.). *Schedule "N": Mandate for the truth and reconciliation commission*. [PDF document].

<http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/index.php?p=7>

Tuck, E., McKenzie, M., and McCoy, K. (2014). Land Education: Indigenous, Post-colonial, and Decolonizing Perspective on Place and Environmental Education Research." *Environmental Education Research*, (20)1, 1-23.

Tuck, E., & McKenzie, M. (2015). Relational validity and the "where" of validity: Place and land in qualitative research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 1–6. doi:10.1177/1077800414563809

Tuck, E., & Yang, K., W. (2012). Decolonization is not a metaphor. *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education, and Society*, (1)1, 1-40.

United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. (2008). *UNDRIP*.

https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS_en.pdf

University of Calgary. (2022). *Human Research Ethics*.

<https://research.ucalgary.ca/conduct-research/ethics-compliance/human-research-ethics>

Vaudrin- C., J. (2019). Melting the Cultural Iceberg in Indigenizing Higher Education: Shifts to Accountability in Times of Reconciliation. *New Directions for Teaching and Learning*, (157), 105-118.

Valencia, R., R. (1997). *The evolution of deficit thinking: Educational thought and practice*.

Routledge Falmer.

Vancouver Sun. (2009, September 27). *Really Harper, Canada has no history of colonialism?*

<https://vancouversun.com/news/community-blogs/really-harper-canada-has-no-history-of-colonialism>

Veracini, L. (2013). Introducing settler colonial studies. *Settler Colonial Studies, (1)1*, 1–12

Vygotsky, L., S. (1991). *The social formation of mind*. Martins Fontes.

Wane, N., N. (2009). Indigenous education and cultural resistance: A decolonizing project.

Curriculum Inquiry, (39)1, 159-178.

Wang, C., & Burris, M., A. (1997). Photovoice: Concept, Methodology, and Use for

Participatory Needs Assessment. *Health Education & Behavior, (24)3*, 369-87.

Watson, K., & Currie-Paterson, N. (2018). Responding to the Calls to Action: Reflections on

teaching mandatory Indigenous Education Teacher Candidates in Ontario. *McGill Journal of Education / Revue des sciences de l'éducation de McGill, (53)2*. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.lib.ucalgary.ca/10.7202/1058403ar>

Weenie, A. (2014). Reflections on teacher as change agent in indigenous education. *Becoming*

teacher: Sites for teacher development in Canadian Teacher Education, (50)3.

Wildcat, M., McDonald, M., Irlbacher-Fox, S., & Coulthard, G. (2014). Learning from the land:

Indigenous land based pedagogy and decolonization. *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society, (3)3*.

Wilson, S. (2001). What Is Indigenous Research Methodology? *Canadian Journal of Native*

Education, (25)2, 175.

Wilson, S. (2008). *Research Is Ceremony : Indigenous Research Methods*.

Fernwood Publishing.

Wilson, W., A., & Yellowbird, M. (2005). *For Indigenous eyes only: A decolonization handbook*. School of American Research Press.

Wotherspoon, T., & Milne, E. (2020). Public Schooling and Contested Public Discourses Concerning Reconciliation. *Canadian Public Policy*, (46)4, 445.

Wright, A., L., Wahoush, O., Ballantyne, M., Gabel, C., & Jack, S., M. (2016). Qualitative health research involving indigenous peoples: Culturally appropriate data collection methods. *The Qualitative Report*, (21), 2230–2245.

Yellowhead Institute. (2021). *Calls to Action Accountability: A 2021 Status Update on Reconciliation*. <https://yellowheadinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/trc-2021-accountability-update-yellowhead-institute-special-report.pdf>

Young Man, A. (2015). We Are Still Here: A Photographic History of the American Indian Movement. *Great Plains Quarterly*, (35)3, 310.

Zanussi, D. (2018). Avoiding Innocence: Unsettling White Guilt. *British Journal of Canadian Studies*, (31)2, 209-26.

Appendix

Recruitment Materials



WERKLUND SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

Graduate Division of Educational Research
2500 University Drive NW
Calgary, AB, Canada T2N 1N4
ucalgary.ca

Stories of Empowered Alberta Teachers: Enacting Responsibilities in Indigenous Education
(REB22-0381)

Call for Participants



Practicing K-12 Teachers in the Calgary Board of Education who demonstrate empowered work in Indigenous Education

Teachers in Alberta are responsible for adhering to the Truth and Reconciliation Commissions Calls to Action related to Education and the Teaching Quality Standard, Competency 5 which requires teachers to demonstrate foundational knowledge of First Nations, Métis and Inuit in their teaching practice. As such, the purpose of this study is to understand how practicing K-12 teachers understand and enact their role in Indigenous education. By pursuing this research, I hope to better understand how teachers who are demonstrate they are empowered within Indigenous education could inform the development of professional learning for teachers.

You are invited to a virtual information session where you may learn about and ask questions about the study. The session will be (DATE TIME) and can be accessed (LINK). If you have any questions about the study prior to this session, please contact me at (NUMBER) (EMAIL)

In this study, we will be taking up Photovoice and sharing circles as methods. You may benefit from participation in this research study by working collaborative with a group of peers which may in turn impact your teaching practice. Your commitment will involve an introductory conversation with the researcher, engaging in taking photos/images, attending two sharing circles and reviewing the transcripts from the sharing circles to ensure they accurately represent what you had shared. You will also be asked if you would like to take part in the final thematic analysis.

In order to protect you in your professional role, I will not share with your Principal whether you have chosen to participate in this study, or not. Your participation is completely voluntary. Should you participate in this study, you will be asked to provide personal information such as: whether you are Indigenous or non-Indigenous, your contact information, years of professional practice and current teaching role. As a group we will be working to identify wise practices across our diverse teaching contexts- you may find that discussions will open up areas not previously considered but my hope is that we will be collectively learning from one another. You may be exposed to minor psychological or social risks as there is the potential to feel uncomfortable, embarrassed, anxious, or upset during the sharing circles. You may challenge your views and values about your practices, or these may be challenged through your interactions with others. However, these types of challenges to your self-concept or value system may be encountered in the normal course of your professional or post-secondary teaching careers as well.

I will contact you after the sharing circles to ask you to review the full transcript of the discussion and will be open to your feedback. As a group of participants, we will engage in working together to interpret the data collaboratively to identify themes together in circle. You will be invited to participate in the writing of the data analysis if you choose. The University of Calgary's Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board (CFREB) has approved this study (REB22-0381). It follows strict ethical guidelines to ensure your confidentiality. If you agree to participate, you may choose to answer some or none of the questions in the sharing circles. You may also withdraw your participation subject to conditions in the consent form. If you are interested in participating or have any questions, please contact me.

Sarah Meade, M.Ed.

Ed.D. Candidate Werklund School of Education, University of Calgary

Research Supervisor: Dr. Yvonne Poitras Pratt