

EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF ONGOING COLONIAL VIOLENCE
ON ABORIGINAL STUDENTS IN THE POSTSECONDARY CLASSROOM

by

Sheila Cote-Meek

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Graduate Department of Sociology and Equity Studies in Education
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University of Toronto

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Sheila Cote-Meek
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Abstract

Framed within an Anishnaabe method and an anti-colonial discursive framework, this thesis explores how Aboriginal students confront narratives of colonial violence in the postsecondary classroom while at the same time living and experiencing colonial violence on a daily basis. In order to garner an understanding of what pedagogies might be useful in postsecondary classrooms that cover such curricula, I explored these questions by interviewing 8 Aboriginal students and 5 Aboriginal professors who were taking or teaching courses on Aboriginal peoples and colonial history. I also engaged two Aboriginal Elders in conversations on pedagogy because they are recognized as carriers of Aboriginal traditional knowledge.

Drawing on the literature I theorize colonization as violent, ongoing and traumatic. Specifically, I trace how education for Aboriginal peoples has always been and continues to be part of the colonial regime—one that is marked by violence, abuse and a regime that has had devastating consequences for Aboriginal peoples. This thesis confirms that despite some changes to the educational system Aboriginal students and professors interviewed in this research still confront significant challenges when they enter sites such as the postsecondary classroom. The most profound finding in this thesis was the extent of racism that Aboriginal students confront and negotiate in postsecondary classrooms. These negotiations are especially profound and painful in mixed classrooms where the narrative of ongoing colonial violence is discussed. Aboriginal

students also employ a number of strategies to resist ongoing colonialism and racism. The narrative of racism is not new but it does reaffirm that colonialism continues to have devastating effects on Aboriginal peoples. It also reaffirms the pervasiveness of violence in our society despite the fact that many would rather ignore or downplay the level of violence that exists. There is no doubt that the Aboriginal students interviewed in this research describe a significant psychological toll in an environment of ongoing colonialism and is especially difficult when revisiting historical and ongoing accounts of violence of their own colonial history. The thesis offers some suggestions for mitigating this impact in the classroom.

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Miigwech, Miigwech, Miigwech.

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Chapter One: Entering the Sacred Circle: Setting the Context

Background

This thesis grew out of my own experiences as a professor teaching Aboriginal students in postsecondary classrooms and my personal experiences as an Anishnaabe¹ student. In my work as an Anishnaabe educator at the postsecondary level, I have been struck by the strong emotions of Aboriginal students attempting to understand the history of colonial violence against their people in Canada and Indigenous peoples around the world. For most, exploring the history of colonization is a difficult task. They experience waves of emotion that range from sadness and shame to anger, both at the systems of oppression and the people who represent the oppressors. These students repeatedly express difficulty with hearing accounts in their classes of how Aboriginal cultures, traditions, and languages of their respective ancestors have been devalued. For example, for many, it is the first time they have heard and read historical narratives of the violence, brutalities and multiple abuses that Aboriginal children experienced attending residential schools as well as the loss of generations of children to the child welfare system.

The pain these students feel hearing, viewing and reading these violent and traumatic narratives is certainly evident. These reactions are further compounded by the fact that many Aboriginal peoples continue to be subjected to such violence and oppression as a lived daily experience. In researching the links between violence, literacy and learning, Horsman (1999) notes that unless educational systems at all levels begin to acknowledge the violence in the lives of Aboriginal peoples of both genders, many students may fail at learning.

¹ Anishnaabe is an Ojibway word, which translates into the people.

Aboriginal students also express a strong sense of resistance to any further oppression and domination. At times this is expressed in anger and lashing out; at other times it takes the form of activism and awareness work. Classroom discussions of colonization also prompt many Aboriginal students to begin a journey of reclaiming their ancestral traditions and culture, often referred to as a “healing journey.” Other students, however, come to postsecondary classes already imbued with a strong sense of identity as Aboriginal persons. What is not clear is how these groups’ reactions to hearing, viewing and reading historical accounts of oppression, violence and abuse against Aboriginal peoples may differ. Further, it is not clear how the context of the postsecondary classroom, including the intent and delivery of the course content, might assist Aboriginal students in these situations.

When I embarked on this research, I wanted to examine how Aboriginal students reconcile or come to terms with hearing, viewing or reading accounts of colonial historical violence which has and continues to have devastating consequences for Aboriginal peoples. Based on my experience I theorized that this could be traumatic to an Aboriginal student, especially since most are already experiencing ongoing colonial violence on a daily basis. I was also interested in producing material that would delineate Aboriginal pedagogical approaches: ones that built upon strengths and focused on the positive aspects of Aboriginal people’s resistance to colonization. In particular I was drawn to the healing and decolonization movement evident in many aspects of current Aboriginal health and social programmes and services. For example, at one presentation, researchers from the Aboriginal Healing Foundation discussed “Promising Practices Among Projects Funded by the Aboriginal Healing Foundation” (2004), highlighting that “understanding the long term and intergenerational impacts of the residential school contributes to dismantling resistance and denial [in dominant society]”; this reclamation

of history is viewed as an “important part of the therapeutic process of remembrance and mourning” and healing. A framework for understanding trauma and healing was also offered that identified the need for healing from historic trauma, including the legacy of the residential school. The framework is reproduced here for easy reference:

THE NEED FOR HEALING Historic Trauma and the Legacy of the Residential School System		
CONDITIONS NECESSARY TO HEALING		
1. Aboriginal Values & Worldviews	2. Personal and Cultural Safety	3. Capacity to Heal
THE THREE PILLARS TO HEALING		
1. Reclaiming History	2. Cultural Interventions	3. Therapeutic Healing
CONTEXT		
Individual and community resources, strengths and challenges		

Figure 1. A framework for understanding trauma and healing (Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2004).

The abuses suffered at the residential schools are well documented (AFN, 1994; Chrisjohn & Young, 1997; Miller, 1996; Milloy, 1999) as is the impact on subsequent generations. A growing literature also exists on the impact of colonization (Adams, 1999; Battiste & Henderson, 2000; Chrisjohn & Young, 1997; Churchill, 1998; Fanon 1963; Lawrence, 2004; Monture-Angus, 1995). However, little has been written on how education can assist with healing from the impact of colonial historic trauma, despite ‘reclamation of history’ being identified as one of the three pillars of healing from the residential school legacy by the Aboriginal Healing Foundation. It has

also become evident that it is important to interrogate the conditions necessary for healing as articulated by the Aboriginal Healing Foundation in relation to the postsecondary classroom, one site where the history of colonization is communicated.

In the search for Aboriginal pedagogical approaches that would be relevant and appropriate at the postsecondary level, I therefore thought it useful to consider how healing might be linked to that level of education and in particular to the classroom as a site of pedagogy. In most instances this implied drawing upon and centering Aboriginal culture and tradition as a focus of resistance and resiliency to ongoing colonization as well as healing from the effects of ongoing colonial imposition. In my own practice, I employed an Anishnaabe methodology (this is discussed in chapter two), but, as I reflected on my approach, I came to realize that in focusing on resiliency and resistance I was not addressing a significant part of Aboriginal students' experience: the ongoing violence of colonization. In fact, I risked burying the impact that ongoing colonization has on Aboriginal peoples. Clearly, I cannot speak of resistance and resilience to ongoing forms of colonization without speaking of the violence inherent in *ongoing colonial processes*. A first step, I came to understand, was to address colonization as both ongoing and violent. Based on my own experience I also realized the significant impact that confronting this violent colonial history in the classroom can have on an Aboriginal student.

Research Focus

This thesis centers on two specific questions: "How do Aboriginal students confront curriculum on colonial history that is marked by violence, in this classroom? And "What pedagogies, healing or otherwise, might be useful in postsecondary classrooms that cover the topic of colonial violence on Aboriginal peoples, for Aboriginal students who have suffered colonial violence, a violence that remains ongoing?" Drawing from works of Fanon (1963,

1967), Memmi (1965), Said (1994), Trinh (1989, 1991), Dei and Asgharzadeh (2001) and Razack (1998), I conceptualize colonization as violent, ongoing and traumatic. In other words, ongoing colonial violence is understood as the acts perpetrated upon a people and trauma is the result of that colonial violence. I also draw on psychoanalytic theories of trauma that are largely informed by the work of Caruth (1995) and Herman (1997), but also by Indigenous scholars who have made links between the impact of colonization and intergenerational trauma (Brave Heart & Debruyn, 1998; Duran, Duran, Brave Heart, & Yellow Horse-Davis, 1998; Wesley-Esquimaux & Smolewski, 2004). Finally, I interrogate how healing is constructed and organized. While it is natural to speak of healing when one is affected by violence and trauma, it is also important to understand that the notion of ‘healing’ is not without problems.

I decided to explore these questions by interviewing Aboriginal students and Aboriginal professors in Native / Aboriginal studies classrooms or in classrooms where colonial history and Aboriginal peoples is covered. Specifically, I draw from interviews with eight Aboriginal students to garner a deeper understanding of how the history of colonial violence is discussed, understood and experienced in postsecondary classrooms by them. The Aboriginal students interviewed had completed at least one Native / Aboriginal studies course or equivalent at the undergraduate or graduate level within the 2 years prior to the interview that focused on the history of colonization of Aboriginal peoples in Canada. The course material also had to include material that covered the impact of the colonial history on Aboriginal individuals, families and communities. The 2-year limitation on the taking of a course was intended to facilitate recall for the participants. Aboriginal students were interviewed because they are the recipients of the pedagogy in question. As students they come to hear, view and read accounts of colonial

violence through participating in classroom discourse. As such, their perceptions and understandings of how they receive and view course content is important.

Secondly, I interviewed five Aboriginal professors who have taught at least one university level course over the 2 years previous to the interview that contained narratives of colonial history and Aboriginal peoples in Canada. Because of the nature of the questions asked in this research, specifically around Aboriginal pedagogy, I chose to engage only with Aboriginal students and professors. Specifically, I recruited Aboriginal professors teaching courses addressing historical colonial violence and Aboriginal peoples to gain an understanding of their role as course professors in terms of what curriculum is delivered and how they deliver it. I also explored the professors' intent in introducing such curricula in the classroom.

Finally, I draw from interviews with two Anishnaabe Elders who I engaged in conversations on pedagogy because they are recognized as carriers of Anishnaabe traditional knowledge; it is imperative to interview them in order to gain understanding of what constitutes a relevant Aboriginal pedagogy and to assist with developing a deeper understanding of the concepts of trauma and healing.

In terms of sample size the number of interviews (fifteen) makes it difficult to generalize findings to the larger Aboriginal population. However, this was not the intent of this research. Rather, this research is an in-depth exploration of Aboriginal students' experiences with facing narratives of colonial history and the impact on Aboriginal peoples in the postsecondary classroom as well as an exploration of how pedagogy (ies) might be useful in assisting with this process. Therefore this research is consistent with qualitative designs where smaller sample sizes allow for exploration of experiences in more profound and personal ways rather than research designed to generalize to other populations (Tutty, Rothery, & Grinnell, 1996). Focusing on

Native / Aboriginal studies classrooms or in classrooms where the history of colonization is covered was deemed important because issues of colonization and colonial violence are discussed in some detail. It was also reasonable to explore the questions in this research at this site because it is also a site where many Aboriginal students and Aboriginal professors are located. I recognize that there are limitations in the parameters that I set. For instance, Aboriginal professors are often marginalized and confined to a particular space in the academy. Although writing from a United States context, Elizabeth Cook-Lynn (1998) points out, “the American Indian intellectual is to many people a bizarre phrase, falling quaintly on the unaccustomed ears of those in American mainstream” (p. 111). Further, it is well known that many Aboriginal professors, despite holding doctorates in other disciplines, are typically hired in the academy to work in Native / Aboriginal studies departments. However, for the purposes of this research, this was also an identified site where I could locate Aboriginal professors and Aboriginal students who would either be teaching or taking classes that covered the history of colonization and Aboriginal peoples in Canada.

There is also a risk associated with limiting my analysis to Aboriginal students and professors experiences and not examining, in any depth, how white students are implicated in ongoing colonization in the postsecondary classroom. This is intentional on my part. Other researchers including St. Denis (2007) and St. Denis and Schick (2003) have already taken up the challenge of examining the implications of white student teacher’s responses to anti-racist curricular. However, there is no research that I could locate that specifically examines how Aboriginal students confront narratives of colonial violence in the classroom and there is relatively scant literature on documenting Aboriginal students responses to ongoing racism and colonial violence in the classroom. Womack (1999) also makes a particularly relevant point

noting the need for Aboriginal peoples to examine themselves is an important and often missed opportunity: “Even postcolonial approaches, with so much emphasis on how the settler culture views the other, largely miss an incredibly important point: how do Indians view Indians?” (p. 13). I therefore decided very early on to engage only Aboriginal students, Aboriginal professors and Aboriginal Elders in order to gain a fuller understanding of how they view the issues dealt with here.

This research should therefore be viewed as a snapshot or a case study on experiences and negotiations that Aboriginal students and professors must contend within a specific context: postsecondary classrooms where colonial history and Aboriginal peoples is discussed and covered as part of a course. The participants in this research are introduced in more detail in Chapter three.

Situating Self in the Research

I also need to position myself in this research. I do this for several reasons. One is that as an Anishnaabe woman, student, and professor I am implicated in the narratives of this research. In many ways the experiences of Aboriginal students and professors who were interviewed in this research mirror the experiences I have also had. I cannot act as if I am writing from an objective stance as it is an impossibility to separate myself from the narratives in this research. Second, as an Aboriginal person, as with many Aboriginal and Indigenous peoples I have come to know (Absolon & Willett, 2005; Baskin, 2005; Cole, 2000; Fitznor, 1998), it is important that I introduce and identify myself so that people may know and understand the context of which I come. This is an important Anishnaabe value and protocol, one that is shared by many Indigenous peoples who write on the importance of acknowledging that we exist in relationship to everything in this world. For example, Absolon and Willett (2005) point out the importance of

resisting colonial models of writing by taking an active stance on introducing oneself first “and then relating pieces of our stories and ideas to the research topic” (p. 98).

For me, this thesis is akin to entering the sacred circle so important to the teachings of the Anishnaabe people. In these teachings one can enter the circle at any point, but I have chosen to enter this circle in the center. The center of the circle represents many things: it is the place that joins the four directions (Nabigon, 2006) and is considered the very heart and soul of who we are as Anishnaabe people. It also represents the fire (Nabigon, 2006) and passion within each of us that drives us to do the work we do. As well, the center represents our mother the earth--hence the color green (Nabigon, 2006). Eber Hampton (1995), a well-known leader in Aboriginal educator from the Chickasaw Tribe, in searching for an Aboriginal approach to his doctoral research, writes of his experience during a fast and continually coming back to the center after praying in each of the six directions:

I spent four days walking and praying in a pattern that started in the centre facing the sky. Then I walked and prayed facing the east; then back to the centre and out to the north; back to the centre to pray looking to the earth. Each direction reminds me of a complex set of meanings, feelings, relationships, and movements. (p. 16)

The center of the circle symbolizes a spiritual place where I implicate myself in this work and in the research area. Consistent with Aboriginal philosophy and as other Aboriginal writers have done (Baskin, 2005; Cole, 2000; English, 1996; Fitznor, 1998; Hampton, 1995), I write from the Anishnaabe knowledge passed on from my ancestors and the generations preceding me as well as those traditional teachers I have encountered. In other words, in drawing on the knowings of my own people, I become implicated in the narrative. It is therefore appropriate for me to introduce myself.

Boozhoo, kwe kwe, Semaakwe ndishnikaaz. (Hello, My name is Tobacco woman).

Tobacco is one of the sacred medicines used by my people for the purposes of praying directly to the Creator. I am from the Mukwaa dodem, the Bear clan. People of the Bear clan are known for their work in the areas of justice and healing. For me, this has involved advocating for equity and social justice in the fields of health and education. I have lived in a number of places, most recently in Northern Ontario which is close to my mother's traditional territory--the Temagami-Anishnaabe. I have three children and four grandchildren. Over the last 20 or so years, my work has been dedicated to the field of Aboriginal education, where my passion is to facilitate change to ensure a better future for our people.

I situate myself as an Aboriginal woman of mixed heritage, both Anishnaabe and Irish. Briefly, I received my formal education from mainstream institutions, along with informal education and understanding from my family, community people, traditional teachers and Elders in a variety of Aboriginal communities. However, as a direct result of race, class and gender discrimination, the white Euro-Canadian familial influences resulted in internalized feelings of insecurity about my own identity. When my parents married, my father, who came from Irish descendants, was essentially disconnected by his family; naturally, children from such a union were not readily accepted or acknowledged. It is clear that racism—and to a lesser extent sexism and classism—played a significant role in this family system. While a relationship between my immediate family and my father's family was established later, it remained very distant. As a result I had little contact with my white Euro-Canadian extended family. Thus, the major influences in my life and in my upbringing have been my mother's Anishnaabe family, although I also have to acknowledge that, despite feeling alienated from my father's family, that family has influenced the person I have become.

I grew up always knowing that I was Anishnaabe and, like many Aboriginal people, I struggled to retain my Aboriginal identity while participating in the larger Canadian society. During my school years I was clearly identified by teachers as somewhat of an anomaly – neither white nor Aboriginal. In my own mind I always strongly identified myself as Aboriginal. However, despite my strong sense of Aboriginality there were times, when faced with extreme forms of racism and discrimination, that I had mixed feelings about being visibly Aboriginal. It is a daily struggle for many Aboriginal people to retain their identity and stay grounded in their beliefs and values in the midst of a society where one is inundated with racism, discrimination, and a western value system that is diametrically different from that of their own (Cajete, 1994; Fitznor, 1998). Given my own history, it was important for me to carry out this research drawing on my own beliefs, ways of knowing and experiences that ground me as an Anishnaabe-kwe (Aboriginal woman).

In situating myself within this work, I have had to come to terms with my own history as it relates to oppression and colonization. This process was neither quick nor easy. Through my own personal journey in this research, I have come to realize the enormous impact that family, community and larger society, including sites such as the classroom, have on me as well as on many Aboriginal peoples. Such sites often assist in maintaining existing systems of domination and control, thereby perpetuating racial hierarchies that are inherent in colonialism. For example, hooks (1994), writing on the politics of race and gender within the classroom, examines how voices of marginalized groups in the classroom become silenced and are afforded space only when the basis of their experience is demanded as Native informants. This is one example that highlights how the site of the classroom remains part of the deeply embedded colonial regime in which we all live.

I also draw from my experiences in teaching in postsecondary education as well as the theoretical perspectives available in academic literature. Thus my writing utilizes reflexivity², moving and weaving narratives of experience, knowledge and understandings gained from Anishnaabe knowledge, personal experience and academic discourse. In this centering place I am continually in the process of understanding and centering Aboriginal epistemologies, practices, culture and tradition, as well as critically understanding how resistance to ongoing domination, control and oppression are part of decolonizing the mind, body and spirit. Emma LaRocque (2002), a well known educator and Métis scholar, describes this similarly as “*resistance scholarship*”, a critical scholarship not only based on Aboriginality but one borne out of colonial experience. Such scholarship confronts knowledge which has been privileged in a dominating society and includes the critical use of ‘voice’ and ‘engaged research’ as well as the exploration of the social purpose of knowledge” (p. 214). This brings me to a discussion of my methodology. Based on my own subject position, I wanted to locate an approach to research that was counter-hegemonic and would center or invoke an Aboriginal methodology. This is discussed in the next section where I provide detail about why an Aboriginal approach to research is important.

² Reflexivity in research “requires researchers to operate on multiple levels: being aware in the moment of what is influencing our internal and external responses, while also being aware of what influences our relationship with our topic and our participants. Those influences inform personal, cultural or theoretical constructs that we use to guide our interactions as we engage in the research and represent our data” (Etherington, 2004, p. 46).

Methodology:
Why an Aboriginal Approach to Research?

Indians are not satisfied with the manner in which they have been researched or with how they and their ancestors have been depicted in scholarly writings. Indians do not view themselves as “objects of study,” nor do they appreciate scholars who have made lucrative careers from studying their histories and cultures. (Mihesuah, 1998, p. x)

As L. Smith (1999) puts it, “research is probably one of the dirtiest words in the indigenous world’s vocabulary. When mentioned in many indigenous contexts it stirs up silence, it conjures up bad memories, it raises a smile that is knowing and distrustful” (p. 1). Similar reactions have been consistently experienced and articulated by many Aboriginal peoples in various communities and by Aboriginal students in several undergraduate and graduate classes that I have taught or participated in. I have heard, time and time again, stories expressing disdain for anything related to research. Images of researcher(s) coming into Aboriginal communities, observing, asking questions that are often inappropriate and irrelevant, taking notes, leaving the community with distorted assumptions about what was observed and heard, and then writing reports that are never seen by the community are not pleasant memories or experiences. L. Smith (1999) also affirms that research done on Maori peoples essentially told them things they already knew, suggested things that would not work, and made careers for people who already had jobs (p. 3).

Further, many researchers, in an effort to produce bias-free research, fail to encompass the context and worldviews of Aboriginal peoples, thus contributing to research that, because it does not reflect their reality, is of little use to Aboriginal peoples (Gilchrist, 1997; Hampton, 1995; L. Smith, 1999). More often than not, Aboriginal worldviews are discounted and excluded within Western knowledge production venues because they are viewed as ‘primitive’ or ‘of the

old ways.' Thus many works that produce knowledge about Aboriginal peoples are frequently not grounded in Aboriginal worldviews, thereby producing understandings of Aboriginal people through Western lenses. Much of the current state of research as a form of knowledge production thus remains Eurocentric: "Methodological Eurocentrism consists primarily in the claim that prevailing Eurocentric values in the social sciences like economics, psychology, and social anthropology apply universally" (Goldberg, 1993, p. 149). Eurocentrism also perpetuates barriers for Aboriginal people writing from their particular epistemologies and worldviews. The Royal Commission on Aboriginal People (RCAP, 1996b) concur that at a fundamental level, despite the large amounts of research that have been carried out on and about Aboriginal peoples, there still remain huge gaps in [written] knowledge.

Russell Bishop (1998), a Maori educator, argues that even the current paradigm shifting is problematic because research methodologies still remain within dominant discourses or methodologies. He calls for a research methodology that is based on Maori understandings, Kaupapa Maori³, an Indigenous approach to research (p. 201). He cautions that there cannot be a universal Indigenous research methodology: attempting to apply positivist and post-positivist frames of reference to Kaupapa Maori research perpetuates the problems of outsiders determining what is valid for Maori (Bishop, 1998, p. 211). Similarly, an Aboriginal approach to research requires that the research methodology be framed within Aboriginal epistemologies and not dominant discourse.

More recently, Aboriginal peoples are rejecting the continued domination and control of research agendas that are designed to examine their lives. As a result, there has been a slow shift taking place in Canada whereby Aboriginal peoples are being called on to provide input and

³ Very briefly, Kaupapa translates to 'agenda/philosophy'. The term Kaupapa Maori is defined as a Maori approach to research and is concerned with how research practice might realize Maori desires for self-determination. For further discussion see Bishop (1998).

direction into research that may affect them or their communities. The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996), perhaps one of the largest research projects ever undertaken by the federal government in Canada, articulated a clear set of research ethical protocols to guide the work done by the various consultants and researchers involved in the project. More recently the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) has undertaken a review of research on Aboriginal people. As well, many Aboriginal communities are now addressing how they want to relate to researchers and how they want research to be done (Noojmowin Teg Health Centre, 2003). It is important to note however, that this shift is not consistent across all disciplines, and in many instances Aboriginal peoples are still left wondering about the extent to which they have actually ‘participated’ in research in any meaningful way. Personally, as a researcher and academic, I still find myself defending the need for counter-hegemonic approaches to research despite the growing literature that documents the need to consider alternative ways of carrying out research (Absolon & Willett, 2005; Kovach, 2005; Mutua & Swadener, 2004; L. Smith, 1999).

In terms of benefit to Aboriginal peoples one has to raise the question of who is still directly gaining from many of the current research initiatives. Goldberg (1993) raises the point that “good racial government requires information about racial nature: about character and culture, history and traditions, that is about the limits of the Other’s possibilities” (p. 150). In this sense one has to question what and whom the government is supporting in terms of knowledge production. While there are some benefits to Aboriginal communities, the current system of grant distribution still largely funds non-Aboriginal researchers in mainstream institutions with the expectation that they provide opportunities for new researchers⁴ to develop and participate in

⁴ The criteria to receive funding under the support for new researchers of Institute of Aboriginal People’s Health does not exclude researchers of any ethnic group from applying as long as they demonstrate a partnering with an

the process. The questions that arise in Aboriginal communities include: To whom are researchers accountable? Who sets and controls the research agenda? Aboriginal communities? Government? The mainstream academy? More importantly, does the research have any connection to the everyday lives of those about whom we are researching, or are we, through our writing and documenting of particular accounts and stories, contributing to the continued marginalization and oppression of Aboriginal peoples? As a result of the lack of respect and downgrading of Aboriginal ways of knowing and understanding, the relationship between the researchers and Aboriginal communities remains tenuous at best. There is thus an ongoing need to deconstruct previous research methods and methodologies to make space for alternative ways of coming into knowledge.

Part of the struggle in my academic work has been in articulating Aboriginal epistemologies and describing how these knowledges can provide a foundation for Aboriginal research methods. The challenge is compounded by the current context of research which is dominated by particular methodologies, as well as ongoing colonial and racist ideologies which subordinate and disadvantage Aboriginal epistemologies. Very strong and compelling forces also exist within academic institutions to comply with existing research methodologies or at the very least to provide analysis based in current mainstream thought and theory. Garroute (2003) suggests bringing ‘Radical Indigenism’ into the academy despite the fact that there is considerable “pressure on indigenous scholars to participate in academic discourses that strip Native intellectual traditions of their spiritual and sacred elements” (p. 103).

Further, if we understand research as being about knowledge production, there is little doubt that Aboriginal systems of knowledge production and transmission have been largely disrupted and affected as a direct result of past and ongoing colonial and imperial imposition.

The ongoing violence perpetrated upon Aboriginal peoples is particularly important to any discussion on the transmission of Aboriginal peoples' knowledge, worldview, philosophical beliefs and understandings because of the enormous affect such violence continues to have on how Aboriginal epistemologies are disadvantaged through privileging other more dominantly acceptable methodologies. The history of contact and relations between white settler society and Aboriginal peoples was and continues to be marked by violence. Horsman (1999), concurring, notes that "the legacies of historical violence, such as slavery, colonialism and genocide, continue into the present, providing a further backdrop to further violence" (p. 37). Attempts at genocide have resulted in the extermination of some Aboriginal peoples and in the near annihilation of others through massive devaluing, degradation, and destruction of Aboriginal peoples, including their cultures, languages, traditions, ways of life and ways of knowing.

Two examples follow to illustrate the assault on Aboriginal traditional knowledge systems. During colonization Europeans brought with them diseases such as measles, whooping cough, smallpox and influenza, to which Aboriginal peoples had no resistance. As a result epidemics spread through Aboriginal communities and in some instances over half of the community died as a result of exposure to imported diseases (Jaenen, 1973, p. 100). Of particular significance is the heavy toll the epidemics had on "the elderly, who were the guardians and custodians of the tribal traditions, among the very young, who were the hope for the future of the tribe" (Jaenen, 1973, p. 99). As epidemics moved through Aboriginal communities, missionary efforts increased, peaking in the 1800s. At that time, Aboriginal peoples were viewed as heathens and their spiritual practices labeled as 'works of the devil' and 'evil' by Christian missions. The imposition of increased Christianizing efforts effectively and severely undermined Aboriginal belief systems. The fact that Aboriginal peoples were affected by diseases in such

profound ways provided opportunity for Christian missionaries to take advantage of the dire circumstances Aboriginal peoples were experiencing as a result of contact. Aboriginal traditional medicine people, revered and held in high regard in Aboriginal communities, were now ridiculed, their medicine practices belittled and devalued as works of evil (Jaenen, 1973, p. 100). This, combined with the devastatingly high rates of mortality, severely undermined Aboriginal spiritual practices and contributed to the loss of faith in Aboriginal spirituality. Over time this resulted in a dramatic shift to Christianity, practices that have continued to this day, although others maintained traditional medicine practices in a concealed fashion. It is well documented that spirituality had always been a large part of Aboriginal societies (Colorado, 1988; Ermine, 1995; Fitznor, 1998).

Another example of the assault on Aboriginal knowledge systems is the imposition of white settler educational systems on Aboriginal peoples. Schools became one of the primary methods utilized in the colonial project to suppress and eradicate Aboriginal people's ways of knowing and understanding. As instruments of transmitting Eurocentrism, schools "perpetuated damaging myths about Indigenous knowledges and heritage, language, beliefs, and ways of life. It also established Eurocentric science as the dominant mode of thought..." (Battiste & Henderson, 2000, p. 86) and Aboriginal "identities were reconstructed in isolation from Aboriginal world-views" (Regnier, 1995, p. 319). Further, the intergenerational transmission of Aboriginal knowledge systems as lived and understood by Aboriginal peoples was severely disrupted and damaged including the process of knowledge creation [research] (Castellano, 2000, p. 25). As Chrisjohn and Young (1997) point out,

The conceptual world-view that gave rise to the genocide of Aboriginal Peoples remains in place, unchallenged; its lineaments invade all aspects of present majority thinking about Indian Residential School. Unless this world-view is

recognized, and the damage it has done and continues to do is brought into focus, the long-term agenda of Indian Residential Schooling will succeed. (p. 5)

Clearly, Aboriginal peoples' systems of knowledge and knowledge production have experienced an onslaught of ongoing imperialism and colonialism that have led to the denigration and marginalization of Aboriginal knowledges in the academy. On a personal note, as a researcher who is also Anishnaabe, how I conduct myself is rooted in a strong sense of responsibility and concern in not wanting to re-inscribe colonial methods of research that are acts of oppression and continue to perpetuate this situation. However, in searching for appropriate research methodologies to explore the question in this research, it became apparent that Indigenous and Aboriginal methodologies are not well defined in the literature, nor are methods that are counter-hegemonic, decolonizing and / or anti-colonial. I have therefore conceptualized this research in an Anishnaabe methodology as expressed through the sacred symbolism of the circle. Battiste and Henderson (2000) stress the importance of centering Indigenous knowledge within the school systems, emphasizing that there must be room in the educational system for both knowledge systems: Indigenous and Eurocentric (p. 92).

Similarly, L. Smith (1999) states that "Decolonization...does not mean and has not meant a total rejection of all theory or research or western knowledge. Rather, it is about centering our [Indigenous] concerns and world views and then coming to know and understand theory and research from our own perspectives and for our own purposes" (p. 39). As an Anishnaabe researcher, I am not necessarily dismissing all that Western approaches have to offer; rather, I have worked to develop a critical sense of what place these approaches have in this work as it relates specifically to Aboriginal peoples. Therefore this research is informed by an Anishnaabe epistemology, as well as drawing on western scholarship. In working in this way it is my intent to ensure that the research is informed first within the Anishnaabe communities' beliefs, values

and ways of knowing and understanding. As the research evolves, decisions can then be made on which western research practices may assist at various points in the research process. As well, in the writing of the larger thesis and following Womack's (1999) recommendation, it is my intention to supplement this rationale with a brief discussion of Anishnaabe history and culture. It is Womack's (1999) contention that situating and setting the context of Aboriginal peoples assists in developing an understanding of Aboriginal epistemology and strengthens the importance of evoking such a way of doing research.

A Note on Terminology

I have come to realize that the use of words and specific terminology are not without problems and therefore it is critically important to define my use of key terms. Throughout this research, I have chosen to use Aboriginal peoples as an inclusive term to describe First Peoples of Canada including First Nations, Métis, and Inuit regardless of 'status' as defined by the Indian Act. This is not done to homogenize Aboriginal peoples; rather I utilize one term to recognize the shared impact that colonization has and continues to have. For example, Chrisjohn and Young (1997) argue that it is impossible to separate First Nations who attended residential schools from those who did not. They note,

The idea that there must be large difference between these two groups, again while popular, merely reflects the thinking behind the belief in RSS [Residential School Syndrome]. To see the problem with this notion, remember that residential schooling was only part of the pervasive economic, religious, social, cultural, and political attack on First Nations. Those who somehow avoided residential school did not, somehow, also avoid day-to-day discrimination, racism, prejudice, or other poisonous experiences. The differences between attendees and non-attendees is thus roughly analogous to differences between Jews imprisoned in Nazi death camps vs those who took refuge in hiding places: the imprisoned Jews had much the worse time of it, but no one in either group had any reason to be cheerful. (p. 171)

What Chrisjohn & Young (1997) draw attention to is that despite the fact that there are differences in how colonization proceeded Aboriginal peoples were affected similarly by governmental policies instituted for example, in education and social welfare. Both these institutions enforced polices directed at assimilating Aboriginal peoples. In addition, I use the plural term ‘peoples’ when referring to Aboriginal peoples and Indigenous peoples to recognize that there are many distinct nations, each with its own culture, language and traditional practices.

Having said this, I also utilize other terms where participants or various authors use different terminology such as First Nations, Native and Native studies, or where Indian is used in reference to a legal document such as the Indian Act. In my utilization of scholarship from the United States I also use the language that is referred to in the writing I am drawing from. For instance, despite the fact that some terms are considered dated I use them because they are used in the literature that I draw from. Therefore terms such as tribal, American Indian, Indian, and Native American are used periodically because they are still commonly used in the literature from the United States and elsewhere. I also, where possible, utilize more specific terminology if I am drawing on a specific Aboriginal peoples’ experience or knowing. For example I use the term Anishnaabe in my discussion to refer to the fact that I am drawing from information that is specific to Anishnaabe peoples.

In this research I refer to Native / Aboriginal studies interchangeably as a discipline within the university system. This discipline is known to provide a variety of courses and knowledge on a range of Aboriginal perspectives, worldviews, issues, and history.

I also use the term Indigenous which has become a widely accepted term to refer to First Peoples who inhabited a country. I draw from the *United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues* to provide a working definition:

there are more than 370 million indigenous peoples spread across 70 countries worldwide. Practicing unique traditions, they retain social, cultural, economic and political characteristics that are distinct from those of the dominant societies in which they live... [Indigenous peoples are the] descendants – according to a common definition - of those who inhabited a country or a geographical region at the time when people of different cultures or ethnic origins arrived. The new arrivals became dominant through conquest, occupation, settlement or other means. (Secretariat of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, 2009)

Finally, a word about how I use the term postsecondary classroom(s). I recognize that there are a number of classrooms that could be included in this descriptor including trades training for instance. However, in this research I use this term to describe classroom spaces at either at the college or university level. I also make reference to specific postsecondary classrooms where narratives of colonial violence and Aboriginal peoples are introduced and discussed.

The Chapters Ahead

In the next chapter I describe in more detail how I invoke an Anishnaabe methodology in this research. I begin by examining how Aboriginal knowledges / philosophies are currently articulated in the literature and make the links between how knowledge and research are inextricably linked. I also examine how anti-colonial and decolonizing research are described in the literature. Finally I conclude this discussion by describing more specifically how I employ an

Anishnaabe methodology that lays the foundation for informing my research methods and design, which are fully discussed in Chapter three.

In Chapter four I set the context for how Aboriginal education is viewed today. I do this first by laying out the theoretical constructs that are foundational to understanding the questions in this thesis. No discussion of colonization can take place without discussing violence. Specifically I frame colonization as violent, ongoing and traumatic. Recognizing violence as an inherent part of the colonial regime also requires understanding how violence continues to shape current practices, behaviours and responses. I also examine the literature of historical trauma as central concept that also informs my work. Finally, I interrogate the use of terms such as violence, trauma, and healing.

Chapters five and six provide a snapshot of the complexity of negotiations that Aboriginal students and Aboriginal professors must contend with. Specifically, in Chapter five I examine the negotiations that Aboriginal professors are up against as they teach classes on Aboriginal peoples and colonial history. I contextualize this discussion within the longstanding and ongoing history of colonization. I trace how education for Aboriginal peoples has always been and continues to be part of the colonial regime—one that is marked by violence, abuse and has had devastating consequences for Aboriginal peoples.

In Chapter six I examine the negotiations that Aboriginal students face in mixed classrooms where discussions occur on Aboriginal peoples and colonial history, contextualizing this discussion by examining what the literature says on classroom spaces that Aboriginal students enter. I extend the discussion of racialized constructions of Aboriginal professors to Aboriginal students who also find themselves negotiating identity and culture. The most profound finding in the analysis of the data from Aboriginal students interviewed in this research

is the extent of the racism that they must negotiate while in postsecondary classrooms. This negotiation is especially profound in classrooms where narratives of ongoing colonial violence are discussed. It also became evident that Aboriginal students are constrained by existing racialized constructions of Aboriginal peoples.

Finally, in Chapter seven, I summarize the key findings in light of what scholars are writing on appropriate pedagogy with difficult course content. I also draw on the interviews with the two Elders for their understanding as it relates to Aboriginal pedagogy. This is followed by a series of recommendations on what might constitute an appropriate pedagogy in the delivery of curriculum that contains narratives of colonial violence and the impact on Aboriginal peoples. These recommendations are framed within existing literature on transformational education in Indigenous education.

Chapter Two: My Search for an Appropriate Methodology

This chapter describes in detail how I constitute an appropriate methodology for this research. In order to contextualize current conceptualizations of Indigenous research methodologies I first draw on the earlier scholarship of six respected authors from Canada to explore how they describe and define Aboriginal knowledges as they relate to research. This not only provides a good snapshot of earlier articulations of Aboriginal knowledges and Aboriginal research; the range of authors also provides a view of how Aboriginal knowledges are articulated differently across Nations. This is important because the participants in this research were not selected from one specific Nation of Aboriginal peoples. I then examine more current conceptualizations of Indigenous, anti-colonial and decolonizing research. This is important because I wanted to locate a methodology that would resist ongoing colonialism. Finally, I describe how I invoke an appropriate methodology for this research, one that is respectful of Anishnaabe ways of knowing.

Explorations of Aboriginal Knowledges As They Relate to Research

In order to consider approaches to research that are counter-hegemonic, it is important to examine how Aboriginal knowledges in relation to research have been articulated within the literature. Having said this, it would be difficult to articulate the many different Aboriginal knowledges that exist, as all peoples have unique ways of coming to know (Colorado, 1988). For the purposes of describing an understanding of Aboriginal knowledges in this research, and in an attempt to ensure that diverse perspectives are considered, I draw on six respected authors from different Nations and from different parts of Canada who have written on Indigenous and

Aboriginal knowings prior to 2000. These earlier writings provide insight into understanding how scholars began to articulate what might constitute an Aboriginal research methodology.

It is also critical before embarking on any discussion of Aboriginal knowledges, philosophies, or worldviews to acknowledge the inherent limitations of the written word. Aboriginal knowledges are expressed orally in the context of individual, family, community, and natural relationships. To write on and about Aboriginal knowledges presents a challenge because the context of expression as well as the relationship between participants in the mode of transmission is largely absent. Second, it is also important to highlight the fact that many anti-colonial writers (Battiste & Henderson, 2000; Dei & Asgharzadeh, 2001; Fanon, 1967) continue to identify the history of colonization as having a significant impact on the current state of Aboriginal and Indigenous knowledges. Many writers have also reported that Aboriginal and Indigenous knowledges are not recognized or considered as valid as western-based methodologies. For example, Fitznor (1998) provides a discussion about Aboriginal philosophies within the parameters of understanding the impact “historical experiences [of] colonialism, racism, and oppression, displacement of cultures, loss of Aboriginal languages, and experiences with residential schools” (p. 28) have had on Aboriginal philosophies.

Third, it is important to reiterate and reaffirm that different nations of Aboriginal peoples have different and unique ways of coming to knowledge. Aboriginal peoples are not homogenous; rather, they have distinct cultural, linguistic, social, economic and political realities. Basil Johnston (1976), an Ojibway scholar and linguist, in the opening of his book on Ojibway Heritage notes that:

If the Native Peoples and their heritage are to be understood it is their beliefs, insights, concepts, ideals, values, attitudes, and codes that must be studied. And there is, I submit, no better way of gaining that understanding than by examining native ceremonies, rituals, songs, dances, prayers, and stories. For it is in

ceremony, ritual, song, dance, and prayer that the sum total of what people believe about life, being, existence, and relationships are symbolically expressed and articulated; as it is in story, fable, legend, and myth that fundamental understandings, insights, and attitudes toward life and human conduct, character, and quality in their diverse forms are embodied and passed on. (p. 7)

Subsequently I would expect that in examining how Aboriginal peoples describe their respective understandings of Aboriginal worldviews and research that it will likely include attention to ceremony and ritual, often expressed as part of spirituality. What it is important to note is that how people take up and express their worldviews may differ based on their “personal experiences, the life, the land, regional ways, and culture of the group” (Fitznor, 1998, p. 27). Despite these differences there are also similarities such as in the experiences of colonization. Although the specific tactics used by the colonizer may differ many of the same impacts are evident for example, in the outstanding land claims, the significant decline of Aboriginal languages and cultures, and consistent overrepresentation of Aboriginal children in the child welfare system. Johnston (1976), in making reference to the similarities in stories across a number of Nations, contends that the similarities should not be so astonishing since it “simply suggests a common view of life” (p. 8). It is these spaces of ‘similarity’ that I write from in this research. The shared similarities of the impact of colonial and imperial imposition are what have necessitated resistance to further assaults on our ways of knowing and understanding of the world. It has also necessitated that we critically look for ways to carry out research that is at once anti-colonial, decolonizing, and respectful of our own Indigenous knowings.

Pamela Colorado, from the Oneida Nation, in an earlier writing with Collins, a non-Aboriginal academic, provided an early comparison of Native and Western science. Despite the problem associated with ‘boxing’ in a series of traits which reduces Native knowledges to largely spirituality (LaRocque, 2001) these authors do signal the significant differences that exist

between Aboriginal and positivist thought as it relates to research which is a useful starting point for this discussion. I draw on their work specifically for insight into what constitutes Native knowledge versus the comparison with Western science.

Colorado and Collins (1987) describe Native science as grounded in Aboriginal knowledge; as subjective since one becomes a part of the research; as spiritual since its methods include talking with Elders, prayer, fasting and ceremony. Its main purpose is to understand why and the longer-term causes; its outcome is balanced within the dimensions of the natural world; and it is community controlled (p. 62). In their view, understanding the strong sense of spirituality that is inherent in Aboriginal worldview underscores the need for a very different approach in coming into knowledge. It is also important to note that these authors also connect Native worldview to the land, relationships, and community control.

In a subsequent article Colorado (1988) suggests a bicultural approach to research, recognizing both Western and Native science. Her work largely focuses on defining elements of Native science which she describes using metaphors (p. 2). She stresses that the concept of holism that includes the mental, physical, social, cultural, historical and spiritual realms as rooted in the sacred as well as in the notion of the interconnectedness of all things (p. 5). She also extends the concept of Native science as a way of knowing and searching for balance to include the goals of research, which she describes as “a process for healing and identifying relationships” (p. 7). In this context research could be construed as a process for facilitating change through enhancing and encouraging growth among Aboriginal peoples in a way that supports and deals with the pains of the past, in the here and now (present), so that future generations are affected positively (future).

Colorado (1988) emphasizes four essential dynamics that sustain Native science and a research methodology: feelings that tell us whether we are ready for the task; the historical now that frames our understanding as inextricably linked to the past, present and future in one moment; prayer as medicine that emphasizes the importance of praying for guidance; and relations that emphasize that we are all related in this world, including the elements of the natural environment (p. 53). Essential to utilizing this approach is competence in an Aboriginal language so that the community, including the Elders, can express themselves. Building relationships with Elders is also viewed as essential as they are acknowledged as the carriers of Aboriginal knowledges and are often given the responsibility of providing guidance to community members. These dynamics are grounded in the Aboriginal worldview and in the sacred (Cajete, 1994; Colorado, 1988).

Marie Battiste, a Mi'kmaq from Unama'kik (Nova Scotia) and a leading Aboriginal scholar in Canada, is a professor in the field of education at the University of Saskatchewan. James Sa'ke'j Henderson, a Chicksaw of the Chicksaw Nation and Cheyenne Tribe in Oklahoma is a director of the Law Centre at the University of Saskatchewan. Battiste and Henderson (2000) speak of Indigenous knowledges as having strong spiritual and environmental elements; they also emphasize the importance of community relations:

Indigenous ways of knowing share the following structure: (1) knowledge of and belief in unseen powers in the ecosystem; (2) knowledge that all things in the ecosystem are dependent on each other; (3) knowledge that reality is structured according to most of the linguistic concepts by which Indigenous describe it; (4) knowledge that personal relationships reinforce the bond between persons, communities, and ecosystems; (5) knowledge that sacred traditions and persons who know these traditions are responsible for teaching "morals" and 'ethics" to practitioners who are then given responsibility for this specialized knowledge and its dissemination; and (6) knowledge that an extended kinship passes on teachings and social practices from generation to generation. (p. 42)

Like Colorado (1988), Battiste and Henderson (2000) underscore the importance of having some Aboriginal or Indigenous linguistic competence; otherwise it becomes challenging to fully understand Aboriginal worldview. Essentially Indigenous and Aboriginal ways of knowing are reflective of a way of life, a way of being in this world, and a way of relating to both the seen and unseen. Battiste and Henderson (2000) further point out that many definitions of Indigenous knowledges include the principle of totality or holism⁵. This is also consistent with Aboriginal teachings in northern Ontario where I am located.

Consistent with Colorado (1988) and Battiste and Henderson (2000), Marlene Brant Castellano (2000), a respected Elder, well known educator in Ontario and member of the Mohawk Nation, articulates several characteristics of Aboriginal knowledges, including but not limited to the following: “Aboriginal knowledge is said to be personal, oral, experiential, holistic, and conveyed in narrative or metaphorical language” (p. 25). In describing each of these characteristics, Castellano (2000) explains that the personal relates to the fact that Aboriginal knowledges are rooted in personal experiences and knowledges that are validated by the community as a collective; oral is the mode of transmission traditionally used for passing on knowledge; experiential refers to the subjective and descriptive nature of Aboriginal knowledges; holistic means that everything is related and the circle is used as a symbol to depict this interrelatedness; and finally that oral transmission of Aboriginal knowledges or knowings are often done through storying (p. 30). It is important to reaffirm that oral teachings are necessarily passed on in the context of a relationship (Castellano, 2000, p. 27). Transmission of knowledge through story, narrative, and ceremony are deeply embedded within individual, family, and community relationships.

⁵ See for example, Fitznor (1998), L. Smith (1999), and White (1996).

Similar characteristics of Aboriginal knowledges are articulated by Willie Ermine (1995), an Aboriginal educator who is Cree and working in Saskatchewan. He notes that Aboriginal peoples' "fundamental insight was that all existence was connected and that the whole enmeshed the being in its inclusiveness. In the Aboriginal mind, therefore, an immanence is present that gives meaning to existence and forms the starting point for Aboriginal epistemology" (p. 103). Ermine adds that immanence is explained as being linked to a strong sense of understanding self relative to the spiritual: "Aboriginal epistemology is grounded in the self, the spirit, [and] the unknown. Understanding of the universe must be grounded in the spirit" (p. 108). Ermine, like Battiste and Henderson (2000), stresses the importance of language and culture as containing ancestral knowledge; to him ceremony, ritual, and articulating in Aboriginal languages are critical in the transmission of Aboriginal knowings. Ermine (1995), like Colorado (1988), extends the importance of the spiritual aspect in Aboriginal epistemology to include the importance of dreaming, visioning and praying.

Laara Fitznor (1998), a Cree (with German-Scottish ancestry) and a well known Aboriginal scholar in education, similarly shares her understandings and knowledge of the underlying values, beliefs and ways of knowing intrinsic to Aboriginal thought or philosophies. She defines Aboriginal philosophies by claiming that they "embrace a multi-faceted, multi-layered, multi-culture of traditions, beliefs, and ideas" and that the views she expresses represent only a small aspect of Aboriginal knowledges (p. 37). Consistent with the previous authors, Fitznor's (1998) discussion stresses that spirituality is central to Aboriginal thought and philosophy. Further, she reiterates the importance of relationships both in receiving Aboriginal knowledges and in sharing them. Fitznor makes it clear that spirituality and history are central to understanding Aboriginal philosophy.

Fitznor (1998) also discusses the notion of natural laws as expressed by Art Solomon, a well-known Ojibway Elder from northern Ontario. Relationships with the natural world are an important part of the Aboriginal philosophies (Cajete, 1994; Colorado, 1988; Fitznor, 1998) that directs a people's behavior in the world. For example, Fitznor (1998) as an example of these relationships extends the notion of interconnectedness of all things to one's environment. This belief automatically means that we need to treat all things with respect.

Fitznor (1998) also touches upon the notion that people go through stages of growth and development as part of life. Part of growth and development is healing and healing is defined as the seeking the good life in ways that provide us with a balance of our 'emotional, physical, mental and spiritual' (p. 31) aspects of being. Finally, Fitznor provides a brief description of the sharing circle and traditional medicines to illustrate how ceremony, symbols, and medicines are utilized to reinforce Aboriginal beliefs, values, and ways of knowing and understanding.

In terms of informing an Aboriginal methodology of research it is important to consider the shared structures of Aboriginal knowledges. However, one also has to consider the impact that colonization has had on Aboriginal communities. In many instances cultural and spiritual practices are now filtered through Christian values and beliefs. While speaking of building Aboriginal community, Alfred (1999) makes a relevant point: "Working within a traditional framework, we must acknowledge the fact that cultures change, and that any particular notion of what constitutes 'tradition' will be contested. Nevertheless, we can identify certain common beliefs, values, and principles that form the persistent core of a community's culture" (p. xvii). Cultures do, in fact, change and evolve. The challenge is to articulate Aboriginal knowledges and worldviews within the current context, in ways that respect the core values and beliefs that have remained consistent and central to a people's way of being and way of knowing.

Several elements are consistently evident across the writings reviewed: personal, spirituality, holism, interconnectedness and relationships. The personal relates to the nature of experiences that generate understanding and knowledge. Having a strong sense of self is important in reaching understandings about the world in which we live and relate. These earlier writers also view spirituality as central to Aboriginal knowings and expressions of spirituality are described through participating, for example, in ceremony, ritual, prayer, and fasting. The belief in the need to consider the whole is also a central element of Aboriginal knowledge and this concept of holism is described in many ways. For instance, it is referred to as including the mind (mental / cognitive), body (physical), and spirit (spiritual) and also extended to include the cultural and historical. Strongly associated with holism is the belief that everything, all of life, is interconnected: human, animal, plant, rock, seen, and unseen. Castellano (2000) and Fitznor (1998) use the symbolism of the circle to explain this belief further as do a number of Aboriginal authors (Baskin 2005; Graveline, 1998; Nabigon, 2006). Relationships are also central to Aboriginal knowledges. It is through relationships that knowledge is nurtured and transmitted from one person to another as well as one generation to another. Many of the writers discussed the importance of being able to communicate in an Aboriginal language in order to have an intimate understanding of Aboriginal knowings.

Each of these elements appears to be central to core knowings that permeate across these selected scholarly writings. However, in utilizing these core knowings we must exercise caution so as not to create a sense that there is one pan-Aboriginal knowledge or worldview. Therefore, in utilizing these core knowings, it is critical that they be used as a beginning frame of reference that allows for flexibility and fluidity. Leaving this discussion for a moment I discuss emerging literature on conceptualizations of anti-colonial and decolonizing research methodologies.

Indigenous Research:
Conceptualizations of Anti-Colonial and Decolonizing Research

White academics, primarily historians and anthropologists, have owned the Indigenous past for too long. Although the military was the initial force that colonized Natives, the continuing psychological process of intellectual and cultural debilitation ensure their subjugated status. Therefore, it is from that base that Aboriginal decolonization must begin. The racist pattern established by the first colonizers will be broken only when the colonized reclaim their history. (Adams, 1999, p. 26)

Entering a postcolonial era with the disappearance of a formal empire (Betts, 1998) does not mean that imperialism has ended or become a thing of the past (Said, 1994). Indigenous peoples cannot simply name colonialism as a legacy of the past; it is actually a powerful force that continues to exist in the present day (L. Smith, 1999) and is embedded within current imperial relationships that exist between Aboriginal peoples and the larger Canadian society. Examples of continued imperialism are evident, for example, in the relationships between government and Aboriginal nations, and educational institutions and Aboriginal communities. This has led to an enormous effort by Aboriginal peoples to reclaim history, language, culture and traditions, all of which are inextricably rooted in the land and linked to Aboriginal identities. Part of that reconstruction includes articulating Aboriginal ways of knowing and understanding, which form the epistemological underpinnings of a research methodology. Alfred (1999) points out that while Indigenous peoples have made significant strides toward reconstructing their identities as autonomous individual, collective, and social beings, there is still much to do.

This section examines how Indigenous research is currently conceptualized and defined in the literature. I draw from the work of L. Smith (1999), described as a leading theorist on decolonization of Maori in New Zealand, as her work presents strong parallels to the colonial encounter experienced by Aboriginal peoples here in Canada. Linda Smith herself draws from

the colonial encounters experienced by Indigenous peoples in Canada and Australia and thus her work has relevancy to this context. I also draw on several Aboriginal and Indigenous authors from the Canadian context including Absolon and Willett (2005), Battiste (1998), Battiste and Henderson (2000), Dei and Asgharzadeh (2001), Dei, Hall, and Rosenberg (2000), Graveline (1998), and Kovach (2005).

L. Smith (1999) defines a decolonizing framework as being more than the deconstruction of Western scholarship by a retelling of our own stories; rather, it involves elements of resistance and hope as Indigenous peoples retrieve what we were and remake ourselves. Reclaiming identity is a key aspect of the decolonizing process. She further explains that decolonizing solutions encapsulate both an understanding and analysis of pre-colonized and colonized times (p. 24). For many Aboriginal peoples in northern Ontario and elsewhere, the notion of understanding how the past informs the present and the future is a strong message often articulated by Elders. Elders speak of one aspect of the circle of life as the past, present and future. Thus the notion of linking one's history and retelling that history is consistent with how many Aboriginal peoples would conceptualize the impact of that history on future generations.

L. Smith (1999) further views decolonization as “a process that engages with imperialism and colonialism at multiple levels. For researchers, one of those levels is concerned with having a more critical understanding of the underlying assumptions, motivations and values which inform research practices” (p. 20). Research and what is produced from research are powerful methods of transmitting information and knowledges, particularly within the academic community. However, that research is largely carried out utilizing dominant Euro-western methodologies across disciplines. While some disciplines appear to be more supportive of alternative methodologies, for the most part Aboriginal and Indigenous methodologies are either

marginalized and discounted as not having any real relevancy or remain completely invisible to the rest.

Fyre Jean Graveline (1998), a Métis feminist, anti-racist activist and scholar, utilizes Blaut (1989) to articulate two processes central to decolonization which are similar to L. Smith's. The first is to “resurrect one’s own history and to find out how it has contributed to the history of the world. Second, it is necessary to rewrite colonial history to show that it has led to poverty rather than progress” (p. 37). Integral to this decolonizing process is finding our voice and subjectivity (Graveline, 1998) that allow us, as Aboriginal peoples, to speak and write as acts of resistance against continued dominance, oppression and control, and take back our identities. Graveline (1998) extends the discussion on resistance to include cultural knowledge “as an essential component of cultural resistance” against the ongoing, dominant cultural hegemony (p. 41). She notes that resistance to ongoing colonial imperialism, resulting in cultural oppression and domination, is countered through rewriting our histories, articulating our histories and expressing our culture. This does not mean that expressing our culture happens at the expense of negating the impact of colonial imperialism. Rather, through expressions of asserting history, we are engaging in acts of resistance to dominant notions of history.

George Sefa Dei, Budd L. Hall and Dorothy Goldin Rosenberg (2000) editors of a book that explores Indigenous knowledges, note that the challenge of decolonization of research lies in identifying “how we can assist in the decolonization of social investigations about the ‘other’ so as to ensure that the reality of the ‘other’ is not constructed in terms of patriarchal Western / Euro-American hegemony and ideology” (p. 12). What is apparent is that there is an urgent need to examine methodology critically as a starting point in research. Similarly, Battiste and Henderson (2000) affirm that “researchers must seek methodologies that build synthesis without

relying on negative exclusions or on a strategy of differences. At the core of this quest is the issue of how to create ethical behaviour in a knowledge system contaminated by colonialism and racism” (p. 133). A decolonizing framework must therefore be linked to an understanding of colonization and its effects on Aboriginal peoples in Canada.

In writing about decolonization it is imperative to discuss decolonizing as a counter-hegemonic process. For Aboriginal peoples in Canada, decolonization can be described as a process of moving toward self-determination within political, economic, social and cultural spheres of their being. Inclusive in this process is addressing how, historically and currently, research and education have largely been agents of colonization. In particular, addressing the issue of how knowledge is produced, maintained and distributed is central to efforts in decolonizing research, not only because of the power that knowledge carries, but also because as Johnston (1976) notes the knowledge of a people is carried in the stories in which values, beliefs, ways of knowing and understanding are embedded. Thus in many ways a people’s understanding of the environment and life (also termed worldview) is articulated in their knowledges. As Aboriginal researchers, writers, and activists, we must also acknowledge fully that we are still living in a colonial environment. We cannot say that we are uncolonized or non-colonized merely by rejecting its elements, for to do so also implies that we can go back to a nostalgic past whereby we, as an Aboriginal people, were fully self-determining. However, a decolonizing framework necessarily means that we are resisting and working in ways that are counter-hegemonic to existing dominant practices and moving towards greater self-determination. This is a similar notion that is threaded into an anti-colonial discursive framework, discussed later in this chapter.

Battiste (1998) also makes suggestions that can facilitate the decolonization process. She supports the need for healing⁶ and views the validation of the collective history of oppression and colonization as an important part of the process. Such healing and validation highlight the need for linguistic competence in one's original language as a "requisite for the renewal and respect of Aboriginal knowledge and humanity" (p. 25). Reaffirming what many Aboriginal speakers vocalize, she states that linguistic competence is critical in making changes to existing curricula as well as the development of new curricula. I was drawn to this section because I do not fluently speak the Anishnaabe language. However, Battiste (1998) speaks to the spirit or soul of the language as being connected not only to verbal communication but also to non-verbal processes, including the socialization of language and knowledge (p. 25). Therefore linguistic competence means more than being able to communicate orally; it also means that a portion of the competence can and does come from being able to understand non-verbal communication and nuances.

In a chapter on "Decolonizing cognitive imperialism in education," Battiste and Henderson (2000) state that cognitive imperialism⁷ must be dismantled (p. 92) through the establishment of separate Indigenous schools⁸, ensuring that public and community schools enhance Indigenous knowledges, use curriculum taught from a holistic perspective, and strengthen the relationship between the knower and the knowledge. The notion of 'enhanced' is defined as the accruing of, rather than the replacement of, knowledge and with the goal of developing the full potential of students (p. 92). Building on previous work, Battiste and

⁶ Battiste (1998) speaks of healing the great collective 'soul wound' that has damaged our nations as a whole as being the direct result of colonial history. The notion of 'soul wound' is quoted from Duran & Duran (1995).

⁷ Battiste (1996) in Battiste (1998) defines cognitive imperialism as a form of cognitive manipulation used to discredit other knowledge bases and values and seeks to validate one source of knowledge and empower it through public education.

⁸ These authors affirm that there is a place for public schools and that the current education system could develop concepts that are reflective of traditional educational transmission processes (p. 95).

Henderson (2000) view the importance of centering Indigenous knowledges within the school systems, emphasizing that there must be room in the educational system for both knowledge systems (Battiste & Henderson, 2000, p. 92).

Dei and Asgharzadeh (2001) describe an anti-colonial discursive framework as “a counter / oppositional discourse to the repressive presence of colonial oppression” (p. 301). This anti-colonial discursive framework “allows for the effective theorizing of issues emerging from colonial and colonized relations by way of using indigenous knowledge as an important standpoint” (p. 300). This notion of using Indigenous knowledge is important because it brings Indigenous knowledges to the center in the same vein that Battiste and Henderson (2000) advocate. Using an anti-colonial discursive framework, therefore, allows one to invoke an Anishnaabe epistemology while still recognizing the enormous impact that colonization plays in the lives of Aboriginal peoples.

Dei and Asgharzadeh (2001) also propose an anti-colonial discursive framework that interrogates power and examines Indigenous peoples’ understanding of indigeneity, agency, resistance and subjective politics. In particular, the framework “recognizes the importance of locally produced knowledge emanating from cultural history and daily human experiences and social interactions” and has as its goal “to question, interrogate, and challenge the foundations of institutionalized power and privilege, and the accompanying rationale for dominance in social relations” (p. 300). This framework centers Indigenous ways of knowing but also offers critical analysis of oppression. These authors point out as well that not only is power held by the colonizer: “the colonized has the power to question, challenge, and subsequently subvert the oppressive structures of power and privilege” (p. 300). The principles discussed in the anti-colonial discursive framework are important to my analysis because they acknowledge the strong

resistance that Indigenous peoples have to ongoing forms of oppression and allow for countering the notion of the ‘victim identity’ so often ascribed to Aboriginal peoples here in Canada and globally. Such acknowledgement encourages researchers to examine more deeply what is being said.

Essentially, anti-colonial thought is embedded in the notion of the colonial but is also defined in the sense of imposed relations and power inequities engendered by history, tradition, culture, and contact (Dei & Asgharzadeh, 2001, p. 301). Further, analysis from an anti-colonial framework allows for alternative paradigms based on the use of Indigenous concepts, analytical systems and cultural frames of reference (p. 301). This is also important to my research: “It is a way of celebration of oral, visual, textual, political, and material resistance of colonized groups, which entails a shift away from a sole preoccupation with victimization” (p. 301).

In a more recent work on Indigenous research methodologies Maggie Kovach (2005), from the Saulteaux peoples in Saskatchewan and a professor in social work, discusses the challenges of finding scholarship that described such a methodology. In her chapter she notes that,

Indigenous epistemology is fluid, non-linear, and relational. Knowledge is transmitted through stories that shape shift in relation to the wisdom of the storyteller at the time of the telling. The additional task of delivering knowledge in 12-point font, cerlox-bound, written research reports is a little difficult...For the Indigenous researcher, incorporating Indigenous epistemology into a non-Indigenous language with all that it implies is complex. (p. 27)

Similarly my struggle has been with questioning how one can work effectively within current colonized and imperial systems in a way that deconstructs current methodologies as well as resists and acts against ongoing colonization.

Despite the challenges, Kovach (2005) identifies the following four assertions that can guide research from an Indigenous epistemology:

(a) experience as a legitimate way of knowing; (b) Indigenous methods, such as storytelling, as a legitimate way of sharing knowledge; (c) receptivity and relationship between researcher and participants as a natural part of research ‘methodology’; and (d) collectivity as a way of knowing that assumes reciprocity to the community (meaning both two-legged and four-legged creatures). (p. 28)

She then goes on to focus on three key themes of Indigenous methodology which include the relational, the collective and methods. In describing the concept of relational she notes that “Indigenous ways of knowing have a basis in the relationships that are inclusive of all life forms” (Kovach, 2005, p. 30). This notion of interconnectedness and the importance of relationships is a consistent concept articulated by the scholars I reviewed earlier (Battiste & Henderson, 2000; Castellano 2000; Colorado, 1988; Ermine, 1995; Fitznor, 1998) on the topic of Aboriginal knowledges. The second key theme that Kovach (2005) identifies is the collective which she describes as something that Indigenous peoples instinctively do by naturally paying attention to family and community. She notes, “Inherent in this understanding of life is reciprocity and accountability to each other, the community, clans, and nations” (p. 30). This notion of collective is also consistent with the importance of building sustaining and mutually beneficial relations as identified by the Aboriginal scholars reviewed earlier in this chapter (Battiste & Henderson, 2000; Castellano 2000; Colorado, 1988; Ermine, 1995; Fitznor, 1998). However, two points of difference that Kovach raises are the notion of reciprocity and accountability to the community. In her view these two elements are important principles that must guide Indigenous researchers. In other words we must be accountable to the community and engage in research that is benefit to the Indigenous community (Kovach, 2005; L. Smith, 1999). The third theme that Kovach (2005) puts forth is around methods. Here she encourages the expansion of generic and widely accepted methods (for example, surveys and interviews) to include “other options that capture alternative ways of knowing” (p. 31) which may include dreams and solitude with nature for

example. This is not unlike what Colorado (1988) also suggests when she refers to the use of metaphors as a source of Aboriginal knowledges or Battiste & Henderson's' (2000) contention that Indigenous knowledges are embedded in the seen and unseen.

Kathy Absolon, a scholar in social work is Anishnaabe kwe with British ancestry from the Flying Post First Nation and Cameron Willett, a scholar in education, is Cree from Little Pine First Nation in Saskatchewan. These authors describe in detail how a researcher's location is a critically important principle of an Aboriginal research methodology. The notion of researcher location is strongly tied to the importance of establishing trusting relationships with the participants in research which is consistently identified by Indigenous and Aboriginal scholars (Baskin, 2005; Cole, 2000). Absolon and Willett (2005) expand on the concept of researcher location and identify the concepts of respectful representation, re-vising, re-claiming, re-naming, re-membering, re-connecting, and re-covering as principles that are essential in resisting ongoing oppression in research and ensuring that research is useful to the community. Respectful representations is based on the notion of looking twice and ensuring that Aboriginal peoples are represented appropriately and not in ways that support preconceived racialized constructions (Absolon & Willett, 2005). Re-vising is referred to as the process of retelling and revising our histories as we move through life's challenges. These authors note that "as we recover from colonization, racism, residential schooling, and genocidal policies, we are retrieving and locating bits and pieces of who we are" (p. 112). This is similar to what other Indigenous scholars write about in terms of telling and retelling history from our own vantage (Colorado 1988; Graveline, 1998; L. Smith, 1999). What differs is that Absolon and Willett (2005) identify this as an individual process pointing out that individuals change over time and thus their location and how they might identify themselves also changes. Another central concept Absolon and Willett

(2005) identify is how location of oneself is linked to re-claiming, that is “To put yourself forward means to say who you are, give yourself voice, and claim your position” (p. 112). I interpret ‘re-claiming’ as a process that is centered on taking back defining oneself versus being defined externally. Absolon and Willett (2005) note that, “Claiming your personal space within your research and writing counters objectivity and neutrality with subjectivity, credibility, accountability, and humanity. We will no longer be the subjects of objective study; we are the subjects of our own knowledge creation” (p. 113). In a similar analysis these scholars take up the concepts of re-naming as process in research that pays close attention to use of language, re-membering as a process that ensures we locate ourselves with our ancestors and Nations, re-connecting as a process that ensures that we remain connected and accountable to the Aboriginal communities we are researching, and re-covering as a process that ensures we develop a critical awareness of how colonization has impacted Aboriginal peoples. What I particularly appreciate about Absolon and Willett’s (2005) analysis about location is that they pay great attention to how the simple yet complex notion of locating oneself can actually assist researchers in ensuring their research is embedded within an Aboriginal worldview.

In short, location is good protocol for research methodology because it accounts for the context of the researcher. Further, research becomes transformative both for the researched and the researcher as individual stories are told and retold. Location ensures that individual realities are not misrepresented as generalizable collectives. Our ancestors gave us membership into nations and traditions; location both remembers and ‘re-members’ us to those things. The recovery processes of location facilitate healing by restoring pride in ourselves. (Absolon & Willett, 2005, p. 123)

While I have highlighted many of the similarities written on Aboriginal and Indigenous research methodologies I think it is also important to note some of the differences. One of the most striking differences between the earlier works of Castellano (2000), Colorado (1988) and Ermine (1995) and current scholars such as Absolon and Willett (2005), Kovach (2005), and

Mutua and Swadener (2004) for example, is that the earlier writings tend to focus on the philosophical underpinnings of Aboriginal research methodologies whereas current writers are placing greater emphasis on the need to contextualize research in a critical understanding of colonization. Further, current scholars are now beginning to articulate specific methods that can be utilized (Absolon & Willett, 2005; Baskin 2005). On a personal note, when I started this doctoral research these more current examples were not present in the literature. Therefore, much like other Indigenous researchers my search has been to find a way that supports reclamation and articulation of Aboriginal ways of knowing, ways of understanding and ways of doing in counter-hegemonic and decolonizing ways. The next section presents a series of principles that have assisted me in moving my research toward an anti-colonial and decolonizing agenda.

Principles of a Decolonizing Approach to Research

I believe, as an Anishnaabe person, that when we reclaim our culture and tradition, which includes our languages, we also reclaim our history, our knowledges, and our ways of coming into knowledge. Therefore culture entails more than participating in ceremonies. In taking on reclamation we are in fact engaging in decolonizing and anti-colonial strategies. In research on Aboriginal and Indigenous peoples, there can never be only one specific methodology employed, simply because of the diversity in history, languages, cultures and traditions that exists across Aboriginal and Indigenous nations and peoples. However, there is a growing literature that articulates Aboriginal worldviews and challenges dominant or mainstream applications in Aboriginal communities (Absolon & Willett, 2005; Battiste & Henderson, 2000; Cajete, 1994; Colorado, 1988; Dei & Asgharzadeh, 2001; Dei et al., 2000; Fitznor, 1998; Hampton, 1995; Kovach, 2005; Mutua & Swadener, 2004; L. Smith, 1999) which can provide a foundation for the development of alternative methods of research as well as curricula that are based within

Aboriginal worldviews. Consistent similarities can also be utilized to inform a decolonizing Aboriginal social education research methodology. These include, but are not limited to, the following six tenets:

1. Research must be set within a historical context that includes supporting the rewriting of Aboriginal history from an Aboriginal vantage point;
2. Aboriginal knowings, worldview or philosophies must be brought to the center in any research which deals specifically with Aboriginal tradition, culture, spirituality and ways of being;
3. Divesting of colonial power must include transfer of the Aboriginal research agenda to Aboriginal peoples. Aboriginal peoples must be involved as active and meaningful participants throughout the research process;
4. The research must be meaningful to Aboriginal peoples as defined by Aboriginal peoples;
5. There must be respect for individual and community uniqueness; and
6. Research is a relational process.

A decolonizing research methodology necessarily includes reclaiming and recounting history from our own perspective (Absolon & Willett, 2005; L. Smith, 1999), including articulating Aboriginal knowledges that ultimately support and underpin Aboriginal understandings. It follows that articulating a decolonizing approach to Aboriginal research is situated within the larger scope of social, political, cultural and economic community realities and must be inextricably linked to history. As L. Smith (1999) puts it, “Decolonization, once

viewed as the formal process of handing over the instruments of government, is now recognized as a long-term process involving the bureaucratic, cultural, linguistic and psychological divesting of colonial power” (p. 98). Thus it is important for researchers to frame models of research within a solid understanding of the historical and contemporary context of individual Aboriginal communities.

While rewriting history and contextualizing research in history is important, other methodological issues also need to be addressed. Battiste and Henderson (2000), Graveline (1998) and L. Smith (1999) have all asserted that Indigenous knowledges require a different methodology of research. More recently, non-Aboriginal researchers have also begun to realize the inherent difficulties that arise when using Western-based methodologies to approach, interpret and articulate Indigenous knowledges. McIsaac (2000), a non-Indigenous researcher, made the following comment after coming to terms with the difficulties in utilizing current academic methodological frameworks to interpret Indigenous knowledge and experience obtained through narrative interviews with Elders of Kimmirut, an Inuit community on southern Baffin Island: “I argue that the values, interests, and knowledges of indigenous peoples must be accepted as the starting point for developing meaningful social analysis, and that the knowledge systems they possess must be the means of achieving that end” (p. 90). This is a prime example that reaffirms the need to ensure that Aboriginal knowledges, worldviews and philosophies must be brought to the center of Aboriginal research; otherwise the research contributes to ongoing distortions about the reality of Aboriginal peoples and perpetuates colonial and racist ideologies.

The divesting of colonial power is a lengthy process (L. Smith, 1999). However, that should not preclude the development of processes that will assist with the transfer of the Aboriginal research agenda to Aboriginal peoples. In order for the research agenda to be

transferred, the old colonial ordering requires rupturing of power and power relations. In the colonial context, “research was undeniably also about power and domination. The instruments or technologies of research were also instruments of knowledge and instruments for legitimating various colonial practices” (L. Smith, 1999, p. 60). In terms of research and knowledge production, it is also important to recognize the power disparities and imbalances that continue to exist between those who have access to knowledge as well as to knowledge production. Knowledge is not produced in a vacuum (Goldberg, 1993, p. 149); rather, knowledge producers act within a social, political and economic context that influences, frames and reinforces mainstream and dominant ideologies, values, beliefs, ways of knowing and ways of understanding. In this way the knowledge that is produced is reflective of particular worldviews and epistemologies.

Many Aboriginal community groups have the attitude that research is something that outsiders do or at least those who have specialized access to knowledge and so called ‘proper ways’ of conducting research. Research is often viewed as baffling and as a result is left to those with access to specialized knowledge. Many researchers also contribute to this mystification in an effort to maintain power, control and domination of the research agenda. This results in the researcher having power through access to specialized knowledge and the ability to carry out the research. Power relations are played out in the research process in the sense that the researcher or a small group of researchers often controls the research. The maintenance of control ensures that the power around decision making, access to data and data analysis, as well as any final research products or publications, remain with the researcher. When control is maintained by a dominant group, the research can often be misinterpreted and runs the risk of continuing to blame the individual or community for problems, rather than examining larger structural and infrastructural

issues as well as the longstanding history of oppression. At a micro level, researchers can, at the very least, assist with divesting colonial power through engaging in research practices and protocols that promote collaboration, meaningful participation, and active decision making in the Aboriginal community. This has the potential to lead to more meaningful and relevant research at the community level.

In my experience, meaningful research directly implies that Aboriginal peoples must be directly involved in the decisions around the ‘whats’ and ‘hows’ of the research. When people participate in active and meaningful decision-making processes during research, a sense of ownership develops. Meaningful participation implies that one is valued and one’s views are incorporated into the research itself. As L. Smith (1999) points out, much of the research that has been done on Indigenous people has not told us anything new nor is it of much use to the community. As a result the research is meaningless for that community.

Having said this, I am also cognizant of the critique around participation in research. In fact, based on my own experience, as an academic, student and Anishnaabe woman, I know that participation is defined and constructed differently depending on one’s subject position and understanding of research. Wendy Fischer (1996) in a paper presentation on participatory research notes that “discursive practices that constitute certain subjects (read white, ablebodied, heterosexual, western / university educated, male) as ‘social change agents’ and Others as ‘the oppressed’ need to be interrogated.” She further contends that “constructs such as the ‘oppressed’, the ‘people’ and the ‘researcher’ secure racial othering [and] research agendas [such as participatory research] founded upon these produced identities can actually reinforce the dominant social structures the research proposes to dismantle” (Fischer, 1996, p. 2). Clearly meaningful participation, therefore, would have multiple understandings and would be

constructed differently depending upon one's location as a researcher. What is particularly relevant to this research is the question of who defines Aboriginal peoples' participation in any given research project. The conundrum still remains when Aboriginal peoples themselves are left to define their level of participation but are still marginalized from conversations, dialogues and knowledge where participation and research are defined. Therefore, even when 'given' the opportunity to participate, many times people who have been 'Othered' and marginalized in research may not participate. Instead, as Fischer (1996) points out, participatory research "discourse produces the identity of 'participatory research' and a representation of social justice as a career" (p. 4) or assists with producing researchers who go away feeling as if they have done good without recognizing their own personal implication in oppressive practices (Razack, 1993, p. 50). I contend that a decolonizing approach to research would therefore need to understand how participation is understood by the participants in the research.

A decolonizing methodology also needs to be articulated in a way that respects the diversity and uniqueness of individuals, families, communities, and nations. Included in such respect are issues around what guides research ethically:

Ethical research systems and practices should enable Indigenous nations, peoples, and communities to exercise control over information relating to their knowledge and heritage and to themselves. These projects should be managed jointly with Indigenous peoples, and the communities being studied should benefit from training and employment opportunities generated by the research. Above all, it is vital that Indigenous peoples have direct input into developing and defining research practices and projects related to them. To act otherwise is to repeat that familiar pattern of decisions being made for Indigenous people by those who presume to know what is best for them. (Battiste & Henderson, 2000, p. 132)

Aboriginal research is also a relational process. For example, Battiste and Henderson (2000) suggest that for Indigenous peoples of Canada the inclusion of extended conversations with Elders would form one component of an Indigenous methodology (p. 41). From a

methodological perspective, speaking to Elders forms a critical part of revitalizing and reaffirming Aboriginal knowledges and stresses the importance of building relationships. Prior to colonization Elders, in most Aboriginal nations in Canada, were the repositories of community knowledge. They carried the responsibility of ensuring that the history of the people, along with their ways of living and surviving on the land and within the environment, were passed on to the upcoming generation. As well, Elders were often left to care for children when parents were out on the land trapping or hunting. Thus the relationship between Elders and youth was remarkably strong.

Including extended conversations with Elders, however, would present at least three specific challenges to a researcher: the first is to locate Elders willing to share their knowledge when the history of research has had such profound and damaging effects on Aboriginal communities; the second is addressing the language in which the conversations are to occur; as a direct result of colonization many Aboriginal peoples of this generation would be unable to converse fluently in their Aboriginal language when speaking with Elders. Third, as McIsaac (2000) found, it was not only speaking with Elders that was important in reviving Aboriginal traditional knowledges--it was also important to understand the context of how the narratives are received and interpreted. These three barriers present unique challenges for researchers aspiring to affirm Aboriginal knowledges. In order to overcome these challenges, it is clear that the researcher needs to develop a solid, trusting and mutually respectful relationship with Elders as well as have some competency in the Aboriginal language of the Elder, and ensure that the interpretation of data will include community members and / or Elders. Each of these is discussed further as they are important aspects of an Aboriginal research methodology.

Relationships and trust are key elements in working with Aboriginal communities. My own lived experience tells me that I am assessed by members of an Aboriginal community based on the relationships I have with the people and the heart or spirit from which I work. Without a solid relationship it would be difficult for some Aboriginal communities to assess a person's true intent adequately. In order to support and generate understandings that are grounded in Aboriginal knowledges and underlying belief and value systems, research must be based on well-established relationships of mutual respect and trust. If this is not understood, then the research may not necessarily represent what it was intended to, nor would the interpretation necessarily be adequate. As L. Smith (1999) writes, "Some methodologies regard the values and beliefs, practices and customs of communities as 'barriers' to research or as 'exotic' customs with which researchers need to be familiar in order to carry out their work...Indigenous methodologies tend to approach cultural protocols, values and behaviours as an integral part of methodology" (p. 15).

Aboriginal languages are particularly important in the transmission of knowledges (Battiste, 1998, p. 18). Battiste and Henderson (2000) also note that "The Canadian history of cultural genocide, segregation, isolation, and coercive assimilation has greatly eroded, if not destroyed, much of the cultural and linguistic base of Indigenous peoples in Canada, but the traditional transmission of Indigenous knowledge and heritage still exists in most communities" (p. 91). As well, they point out that "Where Indigenous knowledge survives, it is transmitted primarily through symbolic and oral traditions. Indigenous languages are the means for communicating the full range of human experience and are critical to the survival of any Indigenous people..." (Battiste & Henderson, 2000, p. 48). In an article on decolonizing Aboriginal knowledge, language and education, Battiste (1998) effectively utilizes a Mik'maq story as a way to show how Aboriginal language is linked to the survival of Aboriginal peoples.

Her use of storytelling also reaffirms Aboriginal ways of knowing and understanding, as in many Aboriginal Nations storytelling is a large part of the way messages are transmitted to people and to subsequent generations. Battiste (1998) refers to this process as one that “creates a collective cognitive experience for tribal societies that is understood as tribal epistemology” (p. 18). She also establishes how language is linked to core values, beliefs, and ways of relating with one another as well as nature and other worlds beyond the physical one. Therefore, while language is important, there exists also a strong tradition of storytelling, which often utilizes symbolic tradition in articulating the Aboriginal worldviews. Understanding the essence of symbolic tradition would also assist with ensuring that Aboriginal knowledges are retained.

The third challenge lies in how we understand the context of the narratives, and how they are received and interpreted. In order to transmit a people’s knowledge effectively it is imperative to have a lived experience from which to draw or have significant relations with the community. This means that it would be extremely difficult in most instances for outsiders to understand, interpret and transmit cultural knowings in an accurate way: “Only Aboriginals who have experienced critical colonization can understand the nuances of Native customs, spirituality, and traditions, which include the unspoken assumptions and symbolic meanings that permeate Aboriginal communities” (Adams, 1999, p. 27). This clearly suggests that research with / on Aboriginal peoples that include aspects of their Indigenous identity should be carried out by Aboriginal peoples. However, it also points to the need to interrogate our individual and collective understanding of how we make sense of the world, how we come to our knowings, and how our knowings affect our understandings.

In terms of this research these six tenets were particularly useful to informing my methodology as my topic area involves an area that requires examining Aboriginal understandings of Aboriginal pedagogy.

Invoking an Appropriate Methodology

After much reading, thought, deliberation and writing I have come full circle. I started out with the goal of engaging in some sort of Indigenous methodology. In the early stages of this thesis I was unsure of what this would entail or what it might mean. I was, however, intent on working with a methodology that could be viewed as decolonizing or anti-colonial. A decolonizing approach was attractive because I understand decolonizing as a process of resistance to ongoing colonialism and a process that supports the movement of Indigenous peoples toward greater self-determination. Anti-colonial methodology was also appealing because it provided a sense of resistance once again to colonialism and the word itself evokes a counter-hegemonic process. However, because there was little written that actually provided concrete descriptions of what these methodologies might encompass, and because I had little understanding of what this might translate into in practical terms it was difficult to make one choice only. Therefore I used a blended approach. I believe that the principles of a decolonizing approach that I outlined earlier in this chapter and an Anishnaabe method can be easily situated in an anti-colonial discursive framework. Therefore this thesis is informed by an Anishnaabe method embedded in the anti-colonial discursive framework described by Dei and Asgharzadeh (2001) and supported by the six principles of a decolonizing approach described earlier. The combination of these methods has allowed me to work from an Anishnaabe place of knowing and it has also provided me with the tools to interrogate the colonial divide that affects Aboriginal peoples.

Practically speaking, what does this mean? First, this research is informed within an Anishnaabe method as expressed through the symbolism of the circle⁹. The circle has been described as a concept that “is one of singular unity that is dynamic and encompassing, including all that is contained in its most essential aspect, that of life” (Gunn Allen, 1992, p. 56). The basic teachings of the circle, often referred to as the medicine wheel among the Anishnaabe people, include holism, balance, connectedness, relationships, and harmony (Hart, 1996; Hart, 2002; Nabigon, 2006). The teachings that are based in Anishnaabe epistemologies provide a foundation for living and approaching life at the individual, family, community and societal levels as well as physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually. Traditional Anishnaabe teachings symbolized through the circle / medicine wheel have been previously utilized to organize and frame curriculum (Graveline, 1998), addiction recovery and delivery of services for Aboriginal peoples (Nabigon, 2006) as well as decolonizing and healing strategies (English, 1996; Hart, 2002). This research process draws from these writings as well as the oral teachings and way of life of Anishnaabe people in northern Ontario through engaging Elders.

Figure 2 provides a visual depiction of one set of teachings of the medicine wheel¹⁰, which is circular and divided into four quadrants. From what I have learned over the years from my Anishnaabe culture, each of the four quadrants or directions is symbolized by the four colors: yellow, red, black or blue and white. I have chosen to use the color black rather than blue in

⁹ The circle or the sacred circle, also referred to as the medicine wheel, is a sacred symbol utilized by many Aboriginal peoples to express understandings or knowings related to the world. These understandings are often referred to as teachings.

¹⁰ It is important to note that there are variations in how the medicine wheel is depicted. A brief description of the teachings associated with each direction is included in this proposal. It would be beyond the scope of this research proposal to discuss, in-depth, the teachings that are associated with each of the directions because this is considered a way of life. The teachings that are given and received occur primarily through participating in ceremony, ritual, cultural, traditional and spiritual activities. Those who wish a fuller understanding are encouraged to seek out traditional teachers and Elders.

order to be consistent with the teachings of the Anishnaabe. Each of these has a series of teachings that relates to each of the directions. For example there are four aspects to the individual: the physical, the emotional, the mental and the spiritual. Each of these four aspects is represented on the circle and each aspect is considered integral to maintaining balance within one's life. For example, when one concentrates too much on only one aspect, such as the mental or cognitive aspect, imbalance may occur in the physical and spiritual parts of oneself (Hart, 1996). For the purposes of this research, I draw on my cultural Anishnaabe teachings of vision, relationships, reflection and action as they relate to each of the directions are utilized. The teachings of the circle / medicine wheel which are based in the Anishnaabe teachings will also be employed as a basis for working with research participants, as explained in the methods section.

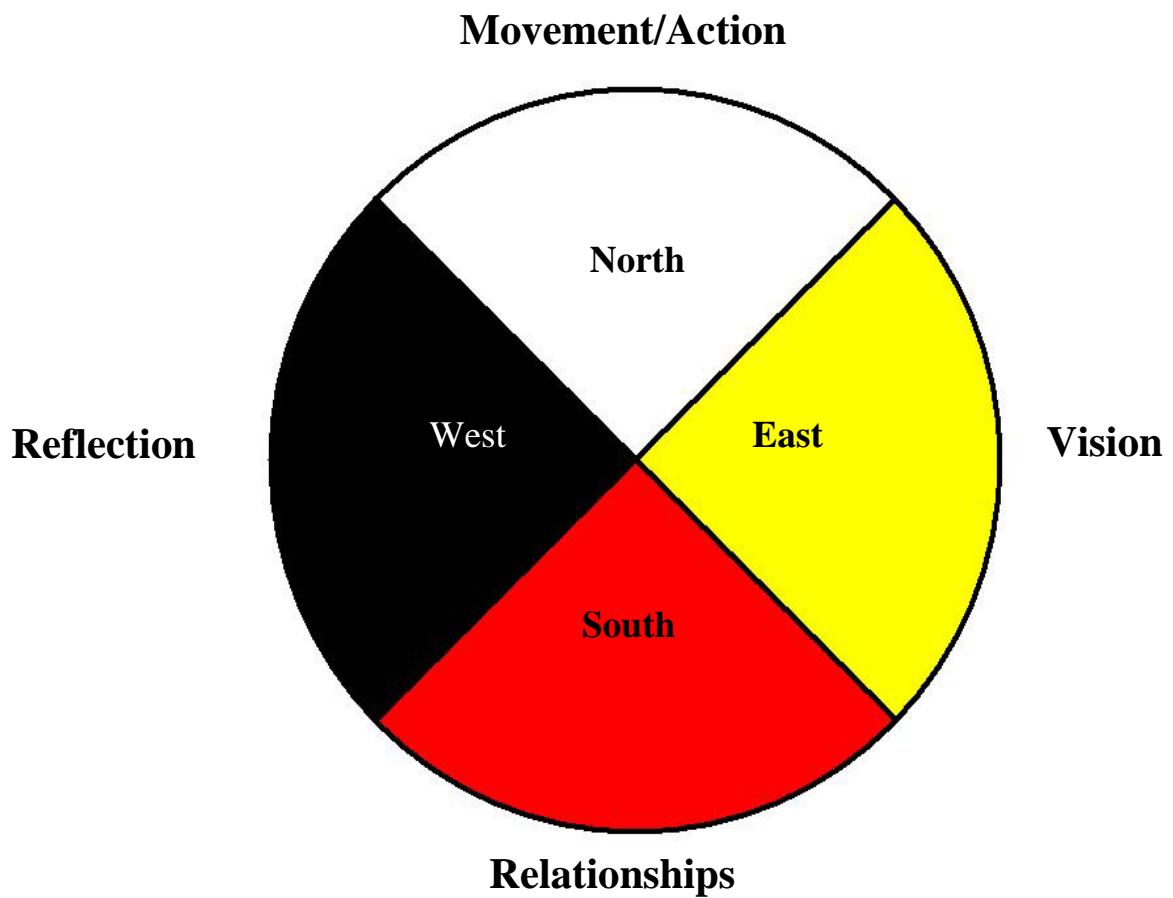


Figure 2. The Medicine Wheel.

In summary, this research is informed by an Anishnaabe methodology expressed within the symbolism of the circle / medicine wheel, the teachings of the circle, and embedded in an anti-colonial discursive framework supported by the six tenets of a decolonizing methodology. These six tenets include the following: contextualizing the research in the ongoing colonial history of relations; ensuring Aboriginal worldviews are brought to the center and especially in any discussion on culture and tradition; engaging Aboriginal students and faculty in meaningful ways as participants; ensuring participation is defined by Aboriginal peoples; respecting individual and community diversity; and ensuring that research is a relational process by engaging with Elders as a way of affirming Aboriginal knowledges. I believe these six tenets are consistent with an Anishnaabe methodology. It is important to reassert that this does not mean that I have totally rejected western-based methodologies. For instance I draw on interpretative frameworks to assist with analyses and deconstruction of how participants present themselves in this research.

Chapter Three:

Research Methods

Establishing a Vision

Moving symbolically from the center of the circle outward in the eastern direction further helps to explain how this research is envisioned. The eastern direction is a place of “spring, of green and growing things” (Hampton, 1995, p. 16) and a place where teachings center on new beginnings and new life. One of the central teachings of the eastern direction focuses on establishing vision (Nabigon, 2006). At the individual level visioning is often a time of prayer and fasting where one explores life options and directions. After questioning my work and at times wondering whether it would be of value to the Aboriginal community, I engaged in personal prayer, thought and reflection and this has continually returned me to the central questions posited in this research study. My life path has involved working within the broader Aboriginal community trying to make a difference in the field of education and to give back what the community has provided me. In this centering place I locate a sense of vision and direction to continue that life work through this thesis.

On another level, in order to conceptualize a concrete vision for this research, I have had to draw upon personal lived experiences as an Anishnaabe-kwe and a postsecondary educator, along with continued reflections and conversations with many Aboriginal people and attendance and participation in cultural gatherings where Aboriginal teachings are provided. These have enhanced my understanding of Aboriginal culture and tradition as they relate to Aboriginal pedagogy and carrying out appropriate and responsible educational research in an Aboriginal context. This has been an ongoing process throughout my doctoral journey. Even as I wrote the last chapter I came back to this symbolic place where vision emanates when I was called upon to

do a presentation on colonial violence and the impact on Aboriginal learners in postsecondary education at a residential school reunion. The response to the content of my thesis was overwhelmingly supportive, although it was difficult for many survivors to hear that their children and grandchildren have also been affected by their experiences. The response from those who had attended residential schools reaffirmed the original vision of this research—to document the experiences of Aboriginal learners and put forth some appropriate pedagogical strategies. Hart (1996) reaffirms the importance of interacting personally with people in order to learn and grow: “In order to learn traditional views on life you must interact personally with the person teaching you” (p. 61).

This research also emanates from a decolonization and anti-colonial framework that has as its goal liberation and freedom for peoples subjected to colonization. In research this includes paying close attention to the research questions as well as how and by whom the research will be done. Certainly there is also the question of ownership of the research and who might benefit from it.

My vision for this research arises from the following key points. One is that there is little doubt that understanding the history of colonialism and imperialism is central to understanding the relations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people today. In terms of education it is particularly important that these issues be discussed in the classroom. It is also important to understand how the colonial enterprise has shaped and continues to shape current sites of pedagogy, in particular the postsecondary classroom where Aboriginal students may be located. I believe that educators need to be cognizant of the effects that narratives of colonial violence may have on subjects within the class because many Aboriginal students come to the classroom already carrying a heavy burden related to ongoing experiences of societal violence. It is

therefore important to understand how narratives of historical events that are violent and traumatic are pedagogically introduced through classroom discussions, videos, lectures, and so on. Further, it is important to understand how these specific colonial narratives may affect the learning process and it is this particular area that I explore within this research. I did not come to this research question alone. In fact, it has been a long journey that has included conversation and dialogue with colleagues, students, Elders and friends – both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal. I have been told many times that this research is important and necessary, and I am especially cognizant of receiving this reinforcement from Elders, Aboriginal students and Aboriginal colleagues. The whole notion of asking the Aboriginal community for support was a critical step before moving forward. Without this support I would probably not have proceeded.

This research focuses on postsecondary classrooms as one site where narratives of colonial violence and Aboriginal peoples are introduced and how Aboriginal students view and come to understand narratives of colonial violence. The vision for the research included an exploration of

1. How postsecondary Aboriginal students experience and come to terms with hearing and viewing historical accounts of colonial history and Aboriginal peoples which is marked by ongoing violence and trauma.
2. The intent of Aboriginal educators in delivering colonial historical curricula on Aboriginal peoples that contain narratives of colonial violence and trauma and the pedagogies invoked to deliver such curricula.
3. The effect of classroom conditions (composition of class, positionality of educator) on the pedagogical approaches employed by Aboriginal educators.

4. The question of what constitutes an appropriate¹¹ pedagogical approach in the delivery of curricula that contains narratives of colonial violence and Aboriginal peoples especially when that colonial violence is ongoing.
5. How healing from colonial violence and trauma is understood. How healing is understood when the violence and trauma are ongoing.
6. How an Aboriginal response might inform pedagogy and healing. (See Appendix B for the specific Interview Guides which were used)

I believe the relevance of this particular research topic involves its ability to bring understanding to the impact that narratives of colonial violence has on Aboriginal students. I hope this research will contribute to the growing understanding of the ongoing effects of colonization as well as the effects of hearing, viewing and reading historical accounts of oppression, violence and abuse in sites such as the classroom. I also hope that this research will delineate pedagogical approaches that will contribute to the larger reclamation and decolonization process for Aboriginal peoples. More broadly, this research also implicates pedagogical approaches across other disciplines, including, for instance, gender studies or studies that address atrocities, including violence, racism, discrimination and oppression.

In an effort to produce this work from a decolonizing / anti-colonial perspective, I intentionally situate an Anishnaabe method and methodology as expressed in the Anishnaabe teachings of the sacred circle in the anti-colonial discursive framework described in Chapter two. The use of these particular methods allows for the centering of Anishnaabe knowledges as a

¹¹ The term ‘appropriate’ is used broadly so that I could explore with those interviewed what might constitute a pedagogical approach in a context where ongoing colonial violence is occurring and where narratives of colonial violence are communicated.

starting point in the research, but the combined methods also ensure interrogation of colonial and imperial imposition.

Methods and Data Collection Tools

I now move symbolically to the southern direction of the sacred circle. The teachings of the south direction center around relationships, which provide a basis for understanding the nature of the research methods employed in this research. The south is described as a place of building new and strengthening existing relationships. In the traditional Aboriginal worldview, building and sustaining positive relationships is paramount (Hart, 1996, p. 61) to the overall well being of the community. This view also upholds reciprocity in relationships in that each person gives and receives (Absolon & Willett, 2005). For example, in many closing circles, whether they are healing or talking circles, people go around the circle and hug the participants, honoring their participation and thanking them. However the circle is not complete until there is a reciprocal round where one receives a hug from each person. Similarly, in relationships one cannot expect to ask and take from individuals or communities without also giving something in return. In translating this to a reasonable and respectful approach to research, the researcher must consider the value of reciprocity and how to build relationships that are mutually beneficially and respectful with participants.

While doing this research I was cognizant of the teachings of the southern direction and after much thought chose to complete a series of audio-taped, semi-structured personal, face-to-face conversational interviews, which were guided by Anishnaabe protocols for engaging in conversation and dialogue. The use of conversations as a process was important to build relationships as well an understanding of the research area. In many Aboriginal communities in northern Ontario, in order for dialogue to occur, establishing a relationship is viewed as an

important first step. The face-to-face or personal approach is considered the most appropriate and respectful way to engage in conversations in many Aboriginal communities. Further, the notion of utilizing a conversational interview that was semi-structured offered the opportunity to engage in and encourage dialogue. Each participant was interviewed at a time and location mutually agreed upon and each interview lasted 1 ½ to 2 hours. As discussed in Chapter one, in order to ensure a more holistic understanding of historical colonial violence and pedagogy, I engaged eight Aboriginal students, five Aboriginal professors teaching course curriculum on colonial history and Aboriginal peoples in a university setting and three Aboriginal Elders. Despite the fact that many Aboriginal Elders often indicate an aversion to being taped, the three Elders engaged in this research agreed to it. However, one interview was not used in the analysis because I was not able to decipher the tape due to background noise. When I spoke with the Elder, he said that he would go through the interview and add the missing parts; however, despite two reminders I did not receive the revised interview. I felt it was inappropriate to attempt to use the interview data and therefore did not use it. Aboriginal Elders were engaged in this research because they are recognized as carriers of Aboriginal traditional knowledge; it is imperative that they are interviewed in order to gain understanding of what constitutes a relevant Aboriginal pedagogy.

Sampling

In research terms, snowball sampling beginning at one designated site was utilized in order to access Aboriginal students and professors to participate in this research. Since this research is exploratory in nature; that is, I am attempting to break new ground by delving into new ideas, the purpose is not to generate a cause-effect relationship but rather to examine and explore new areas of study (Glicken, 2003). This method of sampling was therefore appropriate.

Specifically, I distributed “Invitation to Participate posters” (see Appendix A) at the University of Toronto through First Nations House and the Indigenous Education Network (IEN) at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) to invite potential Aboriginal professors and students. These sites were chosen because they have a significant Aboriginal student population enrolled in a variety of programmes and courses, along with a number of Aboriginal professors teaching in the institution, and the IEN distributes information broadly. Once the potential participant made contact with the primary researcher, he / she was invited to participate in this research through an individual in-depth, tape-recorded, face-to-face conversational interview that centered on specific knowledge, perceptions and experiences as they related to the research area. Each participant was also asked whether he / she could provide a referral for any other qualified participant(s) for the study. With an affirmative answer, participants were also asked to contact their referral to request permission to release their name and contact information to the primary researcher. Once permission was received, I then made contact with the potential participant to ensure eligibility and consent to participate. Before proceeding with each of the student and professor interviews, an offering of tobacco was made to the participant. The process of offering tobacco is explained in the next section.

In order to gain access to Aboriginal Elders, a convenience sample was utilized. The difficulty in accessing Aboriginal Elders that researchers often encounter is that many Elders do not wish to speak with researchers unless a long-standing relationship with them already exists or the researchers are recognized members of the Aboriginal community. The number of Elders that one can contact could thus be very limited: “Sometimes a population is so difficult to locate that we find so few people to use for our study [that convenience sampling is the only method available] (Glicken, 2003, p. 184). I therefore utilized my own longstanding and established

networks within the Anishnaabe community to locate Elders willing to participate. Each Elder was approached in a culturally appropriate manner, which included an offering of tobacco.

Anishnaabe Protocols and Ethical Considerations

In terms of ethical considerations I adhered to the University of Toronto ethical guidelines as well as those of Laurentian University where I am employed as an Associate Professor. I completed the required ethical review process at each of these universities.

I also adhered to Anishnaabe protocols that are implicit within Anishnaabe values around developing and sustaining relationships. Anishnaabe protocols in the area where I live require that an offering of tobacco be made to people when one is making a request. This is not done in every instance, but is certainly appropriate when seeking cultural information for a specific purpose. In this research I made an Anishnaabe traditional offering of tobacco to each participant to request their assistance with the research.

Based on the teachings I received from the Anishnaabe, tobacco is one of the sacred medicines utilized when making a request to a person or a group or when praying to the Creator. Michell (1999), a member of the Rock Cree people in northern Saskatchewan, provides a discussion on how tobacco is offered in exchange for stories and knowledge. To me tobacco is also offered to signify this request as a sacred process or contract. The tobacco is accepted only when the participant accepts the responsibility of the task (Michell, 1999). This is also an appropriate and respectful Anishnaabe protocol for engaging in conversations when one is requesting something of another person. As with Michell's (1999) explanation the act of offering tobacco reinforces the ethic of reciprocity within a cosmological understanding of interdependence, balance and harmony and it is a legitimate and recognized way to seek approval from participants. The Anishnaabe also offer tobacco to reinforce the notion of

reciprocity. How and when the tobacco is given is also important. Part of the offering of tobacco is connected to the notions of relationship building and the value of reciprocity. Before one can offer tobacco, an existing relationship connecting one to the other person is important. In the province of Ontario, some of the participants knew about my work because others who knew me had recommended them as interviewees. Most of the participants indicated that they came forward and volunteered to be interviewed because they wanted to support another Anishnaabe person in her doctoral journey and they thought the topic area was worthwhile. In all instances the offering of tobacco took place after some time was spent establishing a rapport with the participant, sometimes through discussions on family connections, education and Aboriginal community events, but always over tea or coffee.

After the tobacco was accepted, the interview proceeded. At the end of the interview I also offered a small gift to each participant as a token of appreciation and thanked them for their time and for what they had shared. In order that each participant not feel coerced into participating, the gifting was not mentioned as part of the consent process, and only presented once the interview was completed. Gifting is also considered part of the process of reciprocity in relationship building within the Anishnaabe community. Although people do not expect a gift, it is warmly received as an acknowledgement of the information shared in the conversation.

Finally, in order to adhere to the ethical guidelines of the educational institutions, I also obtained written consent from participants (see Appendix C for Consent Form). I reviewed the consent form with each participant and provided opportunities for them to ask questions about the research. Each participant was asked to sign a written consent form prior to audio taping. All the interviews were conducted by me as the primary researcher, which ensures consistency in approach as well as questioning and interview style.

Accounting for Participant Risks

Because of the nature of the topic area (violence and trauma), there was a small risk that participants might react emotionally when asked to describe their thoughts and feelings about the topic areas. Fortunately, I am also a nurse by training and a social worker educator, which gave me sufficient interview skill and ability to ensure that participants felt safe. As well, I ensured the safety of participants by requesting that the participant and I work together to choose a mutually agreed upon location for the interview. Although none of the participants required additional resources or support, I became conversant with relevant local supportive resources in case they should be needed by any participant.

Researcher Positionality

As an Anishnaabe woman, student, academic and researcher, I think I was well situated to conduct the interviews with the students, professors and Elders. My own personal identity and experiences as an Anishnaabe are somewhat similar to those of the students I interviewed. I have also completed courses in Native / Aboriginal studies dealing with historical colonization and its impact. In addition I have been a professor in the Bachelor of Social Work: Native Human Services programme at Laurentian University and this has provided me with in-depth knowledge of the university teaching and learning environment as well as the content of Aboriginal-specific courses. I am also an active member of the local and regional Aboriginal community and this has provided me an opportunity to build a large range of local, regional, national and international relationships with Aboriginal and Indigenous peoples. Relationship building is key to establishing trust within the Aboriginal community, and this is something that is developed over a sustained period of time. In fact, as L. Smith (1999) notes, negotiating entry to an Indigenous or Aboriginal community can be daunting (p. 136).

In terms of interviewing professors, I feel that I was well prepared to conduct the interviews as I have maintained collegial and respectful working relationships with many professors in my own institution of employment as well as in other universities and colleges. I have previous experience with interviewing Elders for other research projects in which I was a team member, and I maintain contact with Elders in the urban community where I live. My familiarity with Aboriginal individuals and communities also assisted with accessing possible interviewees.

Another point centers on accountability. Because of my longstanding relationships in the Aboriginal and Indigenous communities, I am also very aware that people expect me to behave in certain ways. In research there is an unwritten and very explicit expectation that because of who I am and how I am connected to the Aboriginal community, I will adhere to proper protocols and work in a way that is respectful, transparent and honest. This is not to say that non-Aboriginal researchers are not expected to behave similarly. However, what differs is that there is little room to err. As Linda Smith (1999) notes, "...insiders have to live with the consequences of their processes on a day-to-day basis for ever more, and so do their families and communities" (p. 137). If I offend someone, I have to live with the consequences in a much different way than someone who is from outside the community. My work and personal relationships are at risk, whereas others can walk away and the mistake may be forgotten.

With my connection to the Aboriginal community and potential connections to both the students and the professors interviewed fresh in my mind, what became clear during the interviews is that this research is also a reflection of my own story as a student, an academic, a researcher and an Anishnaabe-kwe. The narratives shared with me by Aboriginal students and Aboriginal professors in this thesis are also similar to my own experiences in confronting racism

in the classroom space, both as a student and as a professor. Therefore, I cannot profess that this research is neutral, objective or without bias, because I am directly implicated in the ongoing narrative of colonization of Aboriginal peoples in Canada. I belong to one of ‘those’ peoples.

In positioning myself I also position my intent, which is political in that I am committed to change that facilitates the liberation of my people – the Anishnaabe. As I reaffirm my political intent, I am reminded about the words an Elder shared some years ago: “If you’re born Aboriginal in this country, you are born political.” At the time I did not fully understand his meaning, but over time I have come to realize that the work many Aboriginal peoples carry out is firstly political - they are liberatory, anti-colonial and self-determining. Therefore my research is in itself a project of liberation, one designed to raise critical consciousness and awareness of the complexities that Aboriginal professors and students must negotiate as they move through the postsecondary system.

Power in Research

I also recognize that, based on my own positionality and place in the academy, my relative power and privilege can and do affect my ability to carry out research. I am an academic and hold a tenured position. As a researcher I acknowledge that my understanding and level of education as well as this academic position affect the relationship between the researcher and the researched. I have attempted to minimize the power relations that exist between the researcher and the researched, but recognize that inevitably there is a differential. This research was conceived out of my own experiences and understandings. I set the research agenda in terms of the framework, the questions and the process. However, the refinement of my thesis topic came about from a number of discussions with my thesis committee, thesis group, Aboriginal and Indigenous students, academics, researchers and Elders. I did not interview students that I might

be teaching or any professors who were colleagues in my department. As well, I did employ a methodology that encouraged researchers to participate in a meaningful way in an atmosphere that was mutually respectful rather than having participants who were merely informants to a project. Several junctions for participation were therefore set up to allow this to happen.

First, I used open-ended questions in the interview to encourage a conversational exchange. While I did have a prescribed series of questions, I moved through the interview guide in various ways depending on how the interviewee responded to the opening questions. For instance, sometimes I moved to other topic areas from the interview guide and then came back to earlier questions. This format worked well because it allowed both the participant and me the freedom to digress and explore specific topic areas more closely (Berg, 2007). My opening questions were also posited so that the student, professor or Elder had an opportunity to situate him / her self. This is in keeping with an anti-colonial discursive framework which emphasizes the importance of peoples with colonized histories speaking about their personal lived experiences (Dei & Asgharzadeh, 2001). Second, after the interviews were transcribed in MS Word I sent them back to the participant to ensure they were transcribed correctly. Participants were able to remove sections they did not feel comfortable with or make any changes they wished. Most of the changes were grammatical corrections or consisted of providing clarity to specific words that may have been incoherent on the tapes and could not be transcribed. Only in one case did a participant ask that three sentences be removed because she felt they might be misinterpreted later. Third, professors were invited to participate in a circle discussion on the initial results. However, because of conflicting schedules only one of the five professors was able to participate; instead of the circle this professor was offered the opportunity to make comments on the general thematic areas that had emerged in the first round of analysis via email. Finally,

all participants were sent a summary of the thesis which includes the abstract, table of contents and final discussion / conclusion chapter. If asked, I will provide a copy of the full thesis.

My Approach to Data Analysis and Interpretation

The teachings of the west direction center on reflection and reason and are akin to reflection and interpretation of the data collected from interviews. Since this research is qualitative in nature and largely framed within an Anishnaabe method, it was important for me to choose a method of data analysis that would be consistent with an Anishnaabe worldview, yield information useful and relevant to the research question, and allow flexibility in interpreting the data. The data yielded a significant amount of verbatim transcript and therefore had to be organized so that it was manageable.

After reviewing a number of data analysis techniques, it became apparent that many qualitative methods of analysis identify the importance of hearing or recording the voices of the respondents (Dauite & Lightfoot, 2004) and the importance of understanding how one's own positionality affects the process of data collection, analysis and interpretation. I decided to utilize an adapted version of the Listening Guide, described as a voice-centered relational method of psychological data analysis that involves a minimum of four readings or listenings of the interview text (Gilligan, Spencer, Weinburg, & Bertsch, 2006). Gilligan et al. (2006) contend that

the collectivity of different voices that compose the voice of any given person—its range, its harmonies and dissonances, its distinctive tonality, key signatures, pitches, and rhythm—is always embodied, in culture, and in relationship with oneself and with others. Thus each person's voice is distinct—a footprint of the psyche, bearing the marks of the body, of that person's history, of culture in the form of language, and the myriad of ways in which human society and history shape the voice and thus leave their imprints on the human soul. (p. 254)

This process assisted in contextualizing the participant's interview within a larger context of history as well as flushing out deeper specific issues that emerged in order to gain a better understanding of the underlying conditions or assumptions that are operating in the interviews. Further, the Listening Guide method assisted me with analyzing how my own positionality might affect my analysis and interpretation of the data. Finally, it also allowed me to "trace voices through individual interview transcripts, as opposed to linking themes across interviews" which helped in maintaining differences between the participants (Doucet & Mauthner, 1998, p. 9).

The voice-centered relational ontology is premised on the belief of the 'self-in-relation' or 'relational beings' versus conceptions of the separate, self-sufficient, independent, rational self or individual (Mauthner & Doucet, 2003, p. 422): "The method holds at its core the idea of a relational ontology" (Doucet & Mauthner, 1998, p. 4). This ontology is consistent with many Anishnaabe beliefs about people as being interdependent with one another and the world around them, both in the physical and nonphysical sense. The method has been developed as a "concrete method of data analysis by exploring individuals' narrative accounts in terms of their relationships to the people around them and their relationships to the broader social, structural and cultural contexts within which they live" (Doucet & Mauthner, 1998, p. 5). This allowed for the ability to work with the data transcripts in a way that focused on each person's narratives as distinct, thus acknowledging that each person's voice is uniquely shaped through a myriad of processes including history, language and culture (Gilligan et al., 2003, p. 157). As a result the method is based on the premise that each individual has many voices which are embedded in his / her expressed experience (Gilligan et al., 2003, p. 157) and are enacted and articulated in many forms, including oral dialogue.

This voice-centered method was developed by Lyn Brown, Carol Gilligan and colleagues at the Harvard Project on Women's Psychology and Girls Development at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. It has its roots in psychology, feminism and literary theory and has been utilized to analyze a range of issues (Doucet, 2001; Gilligan, Kreider, & O'Neil, 1995; Gilligan & Machoian, 2002; Gilligan et al., 2003; Pinto, 2004). The method directs attention to both the unspoken as well as the spoken (Gilligan & Machoian, 2002):

The Listening Guide method comprises a series of sequential listenings, each designed to bring the researcher into relationship with a person's distinct and multilayered voice by tuning in or listening to distinct aspects of a person's expression of her or his experience within a particular relational context. Each step requires the active presence of the researcher and an acute desire to engage with the unique subjectivity of each research participant. (Gilligan et al., 2006, p. 159)

The important difference in this approach is that the multiple listenings of transcribed data ensure that the researcher actively engages in listening to the data for the story being told on multiple levels versus categorizing the data (Gilligan et al., 2003, p. 159). Gilligan et al. (2003) point out that the need for a series of listenings is akin to understanding the psyche and therefore, "like voice, is contrapuntal (not monotonic) so that simultaneous voices are co-occurring" (p. 159). After the data were transcribed and verified by the participants, each transcribed interview went through the following series of six listenings:

Listening 1: During the initial reading of the data I identified the overall narrative or storyline. At the same time, I also read the data for my responses to the narratives conveyed by each participant. Reading the data / text to identify the overall plot / story identifying "main events, the protagonists and the subplots" and for "recurrent images, words, metaphors, and contradictions in the narrative" (Doucet & Mauthner, 1998, p. 5) has been identified as a critical step in essentially getting to know the data more intimately. As Pinto (2004) outlines, I then

composed a detailed memo of these narratives, including use of salient quotes. This part of the data analysis remains descriptive versus interpretative (p. 84). I found this listening useful in giving me a good overall sense of what each participant was saying, but it also gave me an opportunity to react and respond to the data in a concrete way. Preparation of the detailed memo was helpful in that it provided me with a summary text of the key points of the interview which I referred to a number of times later in the analysis when I found myself getting ‘lost’ in the data.

Listening 2: In the second listening I listened to the data for my own responses to the narrative, explicitly bringing my own subjectivities into the process of interpretation (Gilligan et al., 2003, p. 160). In this instance I identified and made more detailed notes about my own responses (physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually following the teachings of the medicine wheel described earlier) to what I was reading. This provided me with a deeper understanding of my relationship to the text, thereby helping in the discovery of a deeper understanding of my relationship with and interest in the research topic and the participants. It also provided an opportunity in the next listening / reading to develop a deeper understanding of the text (Doucet & Mauthner, 1998).

The first two listenings

provide an opportunity for a researcher to be reflexive about the data analysis processes as often the researcher plays the primary and only role at this stage of the research. It also provides an opportunity for researchers to: (1) locate ourselves socially in relation to our respondent [research participant]; (2) attend to our emotional response to this person [research participant]; (3) to examine how we make theoretical interpretations of the respondents [research participants] narrative; and (4) document these processes for ourselves and others...the underlying assumption is that by trying to name how we are socially, emotionally and intellectually [and spiritually] located in relation to our respondents we can retain some grasp over the blurred boundary between their narratives and our interpretations of those narratives. (Doucet & Mauthner, 1998, p. 6)

In particular, these first two listenings helped me to identify my own position on the questions and assess how I am implicated in the research. As an Anishnaabe-kwe I knew that the implication was present. However, until I completed these listenings, I was unaware of how close the narratives of the participants were to my own experiences.

Listening 3: The goal of the third listening to the data was to find the voice of the participant. Therefore, the focus was on “how the respondent experiences, feels and speaks about herself [himself]” (Doucet & Mauthner, 1998, p. 6). This was done through looking for the use of personal pronouns. The focus here is on the participant and is an attempt to hear the participant’s narrative:

From the point of view of sociology, this...represents an attempt to hear the person, agent or actor voice, their sense of agency, while also recognizing the social location of this person who is speaking....represents an attempt to stay, as far as it is possible, with the respondents multi-layered voices, views and perspectives rather than simply and quickly slotting their words into either our own ways or understanding the world or into the categories of the literature in our area. (Doucet & Mauthner, 1998, p. 8)

Gilligan et al. (2003) refer to this as the construction of the ‘I Poems’ whereby the researcher listens carefully for when the person uses the word ‘I’. In constructing the ‘I Poem’ the researcher underlines every first-person ‘I’ within the text along with any important accompanying words. The researcher then pulls out the underlined ‘I’ phrases, keeping them in the same sequence in which they appear in the transcript, placing each phrase on a separate line like a poem (p. 162). The intent of this listening was to pick up associative streams of consciousness that are carried in first-person voice and in essence gain insight into inner thoughts, feelings and emotions. This process, at first, seemed rather tedious. However, what I soon found particularly useful about this process was that it provided me with an excellent

overview of the key themes that the interview covered. It also provided a reference to what each participant was feeling and wrestling with as they moved through the interviews.

Listening 4: The goal of the fourth listening was to listen for contrapuntal voices, bringing the analysis back into relationship with the research question (Gilligan et al., 2003, p. 164). The first listening actually establishes the context for the contrapuntal listenings by establishing the central narratives or storylines. In this 4th listening I focused on identifying, specifying and sorting out the different strands in the interview that might speak to the research question. My research questions shaped this listening and in fact, it resulted in multiple listenings (p. 165). Since the development of listenings for contrapuntal voices is an iterative process (p. 168) I began with an idea of possible voices to listen for which created an initial description of what I was to focus on in the listening. I specifically listened for narratives of the central concepts conceptualized in this research. These included colonization, violence, trauma, ethnostress, soul wounding, and healing. I then had to make an assessment of what the listening was yielding and whether adjustments need to be made in the process.

Listening 5: This listening focused on pulling together and synthesizing what had been learned about the person in relation to the research question(s) (Gilligan et al., 2003, p. 169). It further involved developing an overall interpretation of what has been learned from each individual interview.

Listening 6: Since this research involved listening to multiple interviews, this step in the listening process was added so that the interviews could be examined in relation to one another (Gilligan et al., 2003, p. 169). In this listening I looked for similarities and differences across the interviews, focusing on the central concepts conceptualized in this research and described in Listening 4.

I think that this method was particularly useful as an entry point in tracing the underlying processes of how students describe reacting to hearing and viewing narratives of colonial violence. It also assisted in identifying how the central concepts are understood by each of the research participants:

The Listening Guide method is a way of analyzing qualitative interviews that is best used when one's question requires listening to particular aspects of a person's expression of her or his own complex and multilayered individual experiences and the relational and cultural contexts within which they occur. (Gilligan et al., 2003, p. 169)

It is also "particularly appropriate for topics that involve dissociation or self-fragmentation, such as illness experiences, because the method can account for the fragmentation" (Pinto, 2004, p. 83). In this case I am not dealing specifically with illness but rather with significant reactions to particularly traumatic historical events that are, for many if not all Aboriginal peoples, ongoing. This process of analyzing the data was therefore helpful in engaging in a process of reading, analyzing and interpreting the data to garner a deeper understanding of how Aboriginal students react to, understand and confront ongoing colonial history that is violent and traumatic.

In a more recent article Doucet and Mauthner (2008) succinctly articulate the debate about subjectivity as it relates to interpretation:

In a nutshell, the crux of their exchange [deconstructionists and feminists] revolves around whether the subject is *located in* or *constituted* by social, cultural, and discursive contexts. For Benhabib, on the one hand, a feminist conception of the subject must be only *situated*, and not *constituted*...Butler on the other hand, argues that is not sufficient to conceptualize subjects are merely *situated* within social settings or contexts. Rather, subjects are *constituted in* and through power / discourse formations. (p. 400)

While these same authors highlight the problems that arise when one takes an either or approach to understanding the subject they also note that some feminist scholars argue for a blended approach between feminist critical theory with postmodernist and poststructuralist approaches

(Doucet & Mauthner 2008). Doucet and Mauthner (2008) contend that taking a blended approach, “while a creative compromise...can also be seen as epistemologically untenable...” (p. 401). Instead they argue that for the concept of the ‘narrated subject’ as “a path out of impasses between critical or constructed subjects and that the Listening Guide methodological approach offers a way of operationalizing epistemological concepts of relational narrated subjects in research practice” (Doucet & Mauthner, 2008, p. 407). In terms of interpreting what participants had to say the application of the voice-centered methodology assisted with furthering my understanding of coded messages and discourses that were operating in the ‘talk.’ At the same time it is important to note that this methodology favours the “concept of subjects-in-relation over a position that posits subjects constituted by language or discourses” (Doucet & Mauthner, 2008, p. 407).

I have to say that when I began this research project I was overwhelmed at the range of interpretive frameworks available from which to draw. It wasn’t an easy task to sort through. In the first instance, I chose the listening guide because it had clearly articulated steps that I could follow. As a researcher I could not locate a similar detailed step-by-step process for analysis and interpretation in the critical discourse analysis literature which seemed to be the preferred method by a number of my peers. I therefore began the journey of analysis using the listening guide. Towards the end of the data analysis phase I realized that I was also employing some element of discourse analysis (Silverman 2001) in that I found myself looking at the layers beneath the ‘words’ or ‘text’ in the interviews. In this way the use of the listening guide became a starting point for my analysis. Recognizing the tension between understanding a subject as located within or constituted by and through discourses, I found it difficult to stay fixed in one approach, and found myself naturally using a blended approach. Despite this, my main

framework for analysis and interpretation remained with the voice-centered methodology. My premise, as with Doucet and Mauthner (2006), is that “even if we do hold that there are subjects *beneath, behind* or *beyond* narrated subjects...as researchers, we cannot come to fully know them” (p. 407). As well, my aim was also to locate a method of analysis that would be consistent with an Anishnaabe worldview. Viewing the individual in relation to their environment is consistent with this.

Second, my intent was to explore and describe perceptions of Aboriginal student’s experiences in the classroom. Based on these aims, using a blended approach assisted me in reconciling the two approaches to data analysis. Similarly, Beauboeuf-Lafontant (2001) utilized a blended approach and contends that the use of discourse-to-voice-centered analysis can assist with analyzing data on two interrelated levels: the sociopolitical and the psychological. This author suggests the use of a blended approach, noting that critical theorists rely on discursive approaches because they contend that subjects are constituted by the many discourses operating around them. In explaining the use of a blended approach Beauboeuf-Lafontant (2001) notes that she begins her analysis at the level of discourse and not voice as suggested in the listening guide. In taking this approach she contends that her analysis generates an understanding of the “social locations of an interviewee and then situates the psyche (‘I’ voices) within those critical social influences. As a result, interpretations about the psyche are grounded in evidence about the political viewpoints which the interviewee as encountered” (p. 5). This is not to imply that discourse analysis does not seek to attend to the psychological rather I interpret Beauboeuf-Lafontant’s (2001) approach as attending to the subject’s discursive world in the first instance and then using the listening guide which focuses in on the “I” voice allowing her to examine the tension between subject self and the discursive environment. My own contention is that it is

difficult to separate a person from his / her environment whether or not one believes that they are viewed as situated in or constituted through their environments.

The teachings of the north direction center on action and movement, and it is here that the research completes one cycle of the circle. In terms of this research the northern direction is the place where understandings are shared among the participants for further review and discussion as well as linking the analysis to emerging theoretical constructs and appropriate existing literature. The latter is covered primarily in chapters five and six. It was my intention that, after completing the listenings of the interviews, the participants would be invited to come together to discuss the draft data analysis and interpretation further. The ‘Invitation to Participate’ in data analysis in this process was to be extended to all participants at the completion of the face-to-face interview. Because of the logistics of travel and the geographical distance between participants, this was not possible. The alternative was to email the initial data analysis for comment. This was done and yielded no comments from the professors.

Finally, as discussed earlier, the value of reciprocity is important to Anishnaabe peoples. To me this translates into a research process that includes giving back to the ‘community’ of people with whom we have worked. For this project I will invite the participants in this research to a final gathering once the dissertation is completed. In the Anishnaabe community this is done jointly with a feast to acknowledge those who have contributed to the work. At that point I will explore possible applications of the research and possible directions in which it could be carried forward for action.

Challenges and Limitations of Data Analysis

Naturally there are limitations and challenges inherent in any research process and this particular project is no exception. For me, the biggest challenges have been threefold: ensuring

this research is informed by an Anishnaabe method, trying to communicate an Anishnaabe methodology in written form and ensuring that I do not reinscribe a victim identity to Aboriginal peoples.

It has been a challenge to keep this research grounded in a methodology that is respectful to Anishnaabe knowings and understandings of the world. As many Indigenous researchers (Dei & Asgharzadeh, 2001; Michell, 1999; L. Smith, 1999) have noted, using such methodology can be difficult when we are working in western institutions where Indigenous and Aboriginal knowledges are degraded and devalued. At times, I even wondered and questioned what was really Aboriginal or Anishnaabe about this research because in many instances I utilized methods that could be deemed as positivist methods of research. For this research I attempted to bring to the center an Anishnaabe methodology as best I could. However I am aware that others may not view my use of mixed methods as actually accomplishing this. Certainly, in terms of process, I contend that my approach was informed by an Anishnaabe methodology. My research process was guided by the teachings of the sacred circle. I was also always cognizant of the need to do research with, versus on, people. To me, a significant part of an Anishnaabe method is working with and for people. While it was relatively easy to engage participants in conversations about their experiences during the ‘interview’ phase, it was more difficult to engage the same participants in the actual analysis and interpretation phases of the research. For reasons related to geographical distance, time constraints on participants’ lives and probably a number of unsaid other reasons, I was not able to engage participants in the actual data analysis and interpretation phase. Despite this challenge I still believe that participants had an opportunity to engage in the research, speak about the experiences in the classroom and reflect on their own realities as Aboriginal peoples, either as students, professors or Elders. As discussed in Chapter two, notions

of participation are understood and taken up differently by those who are researching and those who are the researched. In a decolonizing approach to research every effort is made for participation. However, there are impediments and limitations to any research.

Certainly the response from one Elder who chose not to make the changes to his transcript needs to be respected. His response, in fact, can be viewed as participating by leaving the transcript as it is. In the teachings of the Anishnaabe peoples that I have received and in keeping with an Anishnaabe methodology one could interpret the difficulties that I encountered in transcribing his interview (barely audible spaces) as the Creator's way of signaling to me that perhaps this is not the time to use his narrative or that there is information in his story that might not be appropriate to use at this time.

Another challenge has been in trying to communicate an Anishnaabe methodology while at the same time attempting to communicate the findings of the research. In retrospect it might have been wiser to conduct research on Indigenous methodologies. Finally, as discussed in Chapter two, research done on Aboriginal and Indigenous peoples has typically focused on identifying them as the problem or as having a multitude of problems and being victims. While I believe that it is important to have an understanding of the difficulties and challenges that Aboriginal and Indigenous populations face, I also believe that we must understand how Aboriginal peoples resist and challenge ongoing oppression, stereotyping and colonization. Thus, while this particular study focuses on historical colonial violence, it was also designed to explore how Aboriginal peoples resist ongoing oppression and what contributes to resiliency.

In the last sections of this chapter I introduce the participants and the contexts from which they come. I also briefly describe the classroom space. I do this here because it is important to have some understanding of the participants and their context before proceeding to a

fuller discussion on the theoretical constructs of colonization and its impact on Aboriginal peoples.

Participant Profiles

In this section I briefly introduce the participants¹² in the research and provide some profile of the classroom space in order to contextualize the discussions in the chapters that follow. A total of 17 interviews were conducted: 9 students, 5 professors and 3 Elders. Of the 17 participants, 15 participant interviews were used in the analysis: 8 students, 5 professors and 2 Elders.

The invitation to participate in this research outlined specific conditions which included that the participants self-identify as an Aboriginal person. I did not specifically define Aboriginal people and who this might include. Rather, this was left open, allowing participants to self-identify. Five professors, three Elders and eight of the nine students did self-identify as being Aboriginal peoples from Canada and linked themselves to their respective nation. One additional student self-identified as Indigenous to another country. This presented an unexpected dilemma because the student, while Indigenous to her land of origin, did not fit within the scope of the research. However, because she was enrolled in an Aboriginal-specific programme, she felt that she had something to offer this research. As a researcher I also struggled with the issue of introducing a participant who was not Indigenous to Canada. At the time I did complete the interview but in the end I decided it would not be appropriate to include her in this research

¹² Participants are identified as S (Student), P (Professor) or E (Elder) followed by a number. Each interview was assigned a number starting with 1. I did not use participant names in the data analysis and chose not to use pseudonyms. My rationale for using a number was purely arbitrary to ensure that use of participant's narratives was appropriately connected back to the particular participant. After reading a number of research projects and theses I found the use of pseudonyms confusing in that it was hard to track one participant's voice in the analysis. I have chosen to use a numbering system with the view that this may make it easier for the reader to track individual participant responses.

because her country of origin differs significantly from that of Canada, and it was beyond the scope of this research to contextualize her country of origin. As a result, 8 student interviews were utilized in the analysis. As stated earlier, one Elder interview was inaudible and could not be used.

Who Are the Aboriginal Professors?

Of the 5 professors interviewed, one was male and four were female. All the professors were teaching in larger urban universities in the province of Ontario. Teaching experience varied from those who were new to teaching in the last 2 years to those with 15 years of teaching experience. Four professors were from the Anishnaabe peoples, one of whom described a mixed heritage background. The fifth professor described herself as Métis. All professors had taught courses in the last 2 years that dealt with the history of Aboriginal peoples in Canada, either as introductory Native / Aboriginal studies courses or, in two instances, as social work and Aboriginal peoples courses where the history is covered. P4 noted that most introductory Aboriginal studies courses cover some basic information:

that in every course you still have to cover the historical stuff, you still have to cover residential schools. Because if you don't get that background, almost everything you talk about now doesn't mean anything. People won't understand why there are conflicting problems, and everything else. Even in a graduate course that I teach, I still have to spend a good part of the class covering the historical stuff, again because it matters in terms of the present context.

Class sizes varied from 20-120 students with students coming from a variety of ethnic backgrounds. Four of the professors described classes that had only one or two Aboriginal students. The largest groups of Aboriginal students were in classes taught by P1 who stated that

up to 25% of his classes were Aboriginal students. Two of the professors interviewed were also students in graduate level programmes.

Who Are the Aboriginal Students?

Eight Aboriginal student interviews were used in the analysis; seven were female and one was male. All students attended universities in the province of Ontario. Three of the students attended large urban universities and six attended smaller urban ones. The majority (6/8) of the students were taking social work education, either in a mainstream programme or an Aboriginal specific social work programme. One student was enrolled in a Native Studies degree programme and the other had taken a degree in a health discipline. Most (6) of the students self-identified as Anishnaabe, two were from the Mohawk Nation. There was considerable variation in class size and class composition. Students described class sizes from 10-150 students with members coming from a variety of ethnic backgrounds. In terms of class composition, the students interviewed in this research described classes where they were one of only a few Aboriginal students in the class. The three students enrolled in an Aboriginal specific social work programme described experiences where they were only one of a few in their elective classes and in other classes where they were the majority. Therefore, the majority of those interviewed described experiences in the postsecondary classroom where they were in mixed classrooms and often the minority. This is an important point because the experiences of those students who come from classes where they are the majority would likely differ.

Who Are the Elders?

Interviews with two female Anishnaabe Elders were used in the analysis. The two female Elders provided their perspectives and knowledge about colonization, its impact, how they

understand the ways in which Aboriginal students deal with issues that arise in the classroom, and some direction on pedagogical approaches. Both Elders had worked in some capacity in a postsecondary institution either as professor or a traditional teacher. This was helpful because each of the Elders understood the environment of university education and what Aboriginal students were experiencing. The two Elders had also attended university themselves.

In various ways each of the Elders recounted their journeys to becoming Traditional teachers and / or Elders. These narratives were expressed in the form of stories about life challenges and how they utilized their own traditional Anishnaabe knowings to overcome these challenges.

Contextualizing the Classroom Space

Because 6/8 students interviewed were enrolled in social work or an Aboriginal specific social work programme, and 2/5 professors interviewed were teaching in university social work programmes, I think it is important to briefly contextualize social work education. I contextualize education and the colonial experiences of Aboriginal peoples in later chapters.

Hick (2006) provides a good historical overview of the evolution of social work in Canada and notes that it has established itself as a vocation committed to major social reform, social change and the eradication of poverty. He describes three phases in the development of social work. These include

The era of moral reform: the pre-industrial phase from the formation of Canada until 1890;

The era of social reform: the transition from a commercial to an industrial society from 1891 to 1940; and

The era of applied social science: the post-war transformation period of rapid economic growth and mass consumption from 1940 to the present. (p. 45)

The first phase of moral reform is informed and developed by strong association with religious organizations and the church. This phase is marked by private charity organizations and many individuals involved became the early social workers although they might not have been labeled as such (Hick, 2006). It is important to note that many of the individuals that became involved in charity work were “elite men and women from the upper classes... [and] their first task was to classify the applicant as either deserving poor or undeserving poor” (p. 47). It is interesting that social work, although premised on values of social equity and social justice, has its roots in a system where there are clear hegemonic hierarchies.

People designated as **deserving poor** were seen as being of good moral character and only temporarily out of luck due to no fault of their own. The deserving did not ask directly for help and were clean and tidy. The **undeserving poor** were deemed to be lazy and / or morally degenerate. (p. 47)

The second phase is marked by a shift from charity type work to funding provided by government bodies providing the impetus for social work as an occupation. It is important to note that in this phase the notion of scientific philanthropy emerged, influencing a scientific approach to practice which was a departure from a moral judgment approach (Hick, 2006). The notion of viewing the client as having a problem and the role of social worker as finding an objective solution flourished under the scientific approach (Hick, 2006). During this phase the rise of trained social workers was apparent, with the first programme being established in 1914 at the University of Toronto. In 1927 the Canadian Association of Social Workers was established (Hick, 2006).

Under the applied social science phase (1941 to the present) a number of events created the need for social workers, including but not limited to, the following: post-World War II assistance for families and returning veterans; the Family Allowance fund; the Old Age Pension fund; and Disability and Child Welfare (Hick, 2006). During this phase, a number of key models

were introduced that shaped social work practice. These included the integrated approach, the problem-solving approach, the behavior modification approach and the structural approach. As the demand for social workers increased, so did the demand for college and university social work programmes. In 1967 the Canadian Association of Schools of Social Work was established to oversee professional university-based education programmes in Canada. Currently, there are 34 universities and 46 colleges that provide social work education (Hick, 2006).

The profession of social work has had a longstanding relationship with Aboriginal peoples in Canada. Like the experiences with the educational system and other colonial and imperial institutions, Aboriginal peoples' encounter with social work is wrought with narratives of intrusion, control, oppression and, more importantly, the significant loss of children to child welfare institutions. Mawhiney and Hardy (2009), in a chapter on Aboriginal peoples in Canada, point out that

Aboriginal leaders argue convincingly that the deplorable economic and social conditions of their peoples over generations can be attributed to social policy-makers, social workers, and other agents of the government. They blame the Eurocentric interventions that have eroded Aboriginal cultural traditions and ways of living and thinking. According to those who work with Aboriginal peoples, the high rates of incarceration, suicide, and violent death, as well as physical and sexual abuse, can be found in the experiences of several generations of children placed in residential schools and then in non-Native foster and adoptive homes. (p. 106)

It is perplexing that social work practice has its origins in religious institutions and has prided itself on values of compassion, social justice, and helping while at the same time it is seen to have contributed to the erosion of traditional Aboriginal childcare practices. On another note, given the longstanding and ongoing history of colonization of Aboriginal peoples in Canada it makes sense when we understand the intent of religious institutions was also rooted in colonial structure of thought.

With respect to education, social work education followed alongside the changes that were being advocated by Aboriginal peoples and the Assembly of First Nations (AFN). Alcoze and Mawhinney (1988) note that one of the fundamental problems with the delivery of social and human services to Aboriginal peoples has been the lack of control: “Services have failed because Native communities have been alienated from all aspects of decision-making that relate to programming – including the funding of programmes and the training of service providers” (Alcoze & Mawhinney, 1988, p. 5). As a result of the larger push for self-determination, Aboriginal peoples successfully advocated for changes to social work education and have to date two accredited Aboriginal specific social work degrees in Canada and a number of mainstream social work programmes that offer Aboriginal specializations as a stream in their programme. There are also two graduate Aboriginal social work programmes that exist in Canada, both based within Aboriginal epistemologies and worldviews of helping and working. There are certainly critiques about focusing on culture-based programmes as the answer to Aboriginal students low participation in education. A fuller discussion of this is taken up in Chapter five. For now it is important to point out that despite some changes to social work education, the profession itself does not always support Aboriginal peoples’ aspirations of being self-determining, despite the fact that, as Mawhinney and Hardy (2009) note, social workers can and should support these goals because they are “consistent with the profession’s ideological position of respecting self-determination and cultural diversity, advocating against oppression and inequity, and promoting non-discriminatory practice” (p. 106). However, these authors also point out that changes are required in current social work education if these ideals are to be realized. As a starting point

we must acknowledge the extent to which learning in mainstream social education programs is still predominantly middle-class, patriarchal, and white in its values, traditions, assumptions, and ways of thinking—qualities that are limited in their application to Aboriginal peoples and communities. Part of addressing these

limitations must be building on an understanding of the colonial history and context of Aboriginal and of Euro-Canadian relations...We need to make structural shifts in how we prepare social workers for practice. (Mawhinney & Hardy, 2009, p. 106)

Despite resistance, Aboriginal social work practice in Canada continues to evolve as a distinct methodology.

Chapter Four:

Conceptualizing the Impact of the Colonial Encounter

In parts 1 and 2 of this chapter I draw on the fields of psychology, cultural studies and variations of native studies to lay out the theoretical constructs that are central to understanding the questions in this research. I expand on these constructs in later chapters to support my data analysis, specifically framing colonization as violent, ongoing and traumatic. Here my research is informed by the earlier anti-colonial works of Fanon (1963, 1967), Memmi (1965) and the more recent works of Dei and Asgharzadeh (2001), Razack (1998), Said (1993), and Trinh (1989, 1991). I also draw on psychoanalytic theories of trauma that are largely informed by the work of Caruth (1995) and Herman (1997), but also by Indigenous scholars who have made links between the impact of colonization and intergenerational trauma, including Brave Heart and Debruyn (1998), Duran et al., (1998), and Wesley-Esquimaux and Smolewski (2004). It is important to note that I draw on experiences and scholarship of Indigenous peoples outside of Canada. This is not to suggest that the experiences are the same as those of Aboriginal peoples in Canada but rather I draw on their works for further insight into key concepts such as decolonization, intergenerational trauma, historical trauma, pedagogy, and racialized constructions of Indigenous peoples.

Based on my intention to explore colonization as violent, ongoing and traumatic, it seemed reasonable to also locate my work alongside that of the Aboriginal Healing Foundation (AHF) and the work done in the United States on historical intergenerational trauma, grief and loss (Brave Heart & Debruyn, 1998; Duran et al., 1998). The work on intergenerational trauma, also termed historical trauma, arose out of the work done on the effects of the residential school era, when Aboriginal children were forcibly removed from their families and communities to

attend residential schools that were allegedly designed to ‘civilize’ and ‘assimilate’ them. It is now well known that these children were subjected to persistent forms of violence and abuse which is well documented (AFN, 1994; Chrisjohn & Young, 1997; Miller, 1996; Milloy, 1999), as is the resultant impact on subsequent generations. The ensuing aftermath of this violence has resulted in longstanding effects that have been passed from one generation to the next; thus the term ‘intergenerational trauma.’ What is interesting in this literature is that little has been written on how education can assist with healing the impact of colonial historic violence, despite the fact that ‘reclamation of history’ is identified as one of the three pillars of healing the residential school legacy.

In part 3, I explore how healing is constructed in the literature and contextualize it within an anti-colonial and decolonizing framework. Finally in part 4, I problematize the concepts I have chosen to work with in this thesis, including violence, trauma and healing.

Part 1:
Conceptualizing Colonization and its Impact

Defining Colonization

For a number of anti-colonial writers (Fanon, 1963; Memmi, 1965; Said, 1993), colonization is conceptualized as having four dimensions—it concerns the land, it requires a specific structure of ideology to proceed, it is violent and it is ongoing. Each of these is discussed in this section.

I start with the first two dimensions, land and ideology. Both Memmi (1965) and Said (1993) theorize that colonialism and imperialism require a specific structure of ideology about colonized peoples in order to advance. They also believe that colonialism is very much about the quest for economic resources, including the land. Memmi's (1965) initial analysis of colonial relationships is rooted in his personal quest to deepen his own understanding of his identity. However, he also realized that his work would have far greater implications for adding to the general understanding of colonization. Through his own experiences Memmi (1965) came to understand that the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized actually "chained the colonizer and the colonized into an implacable dependence, molded their respective characters and dictated their conduct" (p. ix). In essence, Memmi came to realize that the colonizer cannot exist without the colonized.

Memmi also clearly articulated that "privilege is at the heart of the colonial relationship—and that privilege is undoubtedly economic" (p. xii). However, he is also quick to point out that this privilege is not solely economic, noting that "Even the poorest colonizer thought himself to be—and actually was—superior to the colonized" (p. xii). Thus, while the quest for economic resources, including land, has been at the center of colonization, Memmi's

definition does point to the notion that there was more to colonization than merely setting up colonies for economic purposes. He also notes that there is a unique, complex and hierarchical relationship that is locked in place between the colonizers and colonized that extends beyond classism.

Similarly, Said's (1993) definitions of colonialism and imperialism broadly implicate the metro or the center as the colonizer. He defines imperialism as the "practice, the theory, and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan center ruling a distant territory; 'colonialism', which is almost always a consequence of imperialism, is the implanting of settlements on distance territory" (Said, 1993, p. 9). Said makes two very explicit points in these statements that are particularly important to this research. One is that colonization was about the quest for the land and the resources; the second that, like Memmi (1965), Said views colonization as requiring a specific set of ideologies. As he (1993) notes,

Neither imperialism nor colonialism is a simple act of accumulation and acquisition. Both are supported and perhaps even impelled by impressive ideological formations that include notions that certain territories and people *require* and beseech domination, as well as forms of knowledge affiliated with domination: the vocabulary of classic nineteenth-century imperial culture is plentiful with words and concepts like 'inferior' or 'subject races,' 'subordinate peoples,' 'dependency,' 'expansion,' and 'authority.' (p. 9)

These words add another dimension to colonialism and imperialism: the fact that Indigenous peoples inhabit that land is of little consequence to the colonizer as they are merely viewed as an impediment and require control. Similarly, in a discussion about the dilemma that the colonizer finds him / her self locked into, Memmi (1965) notes: "A witticism which is more serious than it sounds states that 'Everything would be perfect...if it weren't for the natives.' But the colonist realizes that without the colonized, the colony would no longer have any meaning" (p. 66).

On the one hand, the colonizer is frustrated by the fact that Indigenous peoples inhabit the lands; on the other, the colonizer quickly realizes that he is nothing without the colonized. As a result the colonized are constructed in very specific ways to uphold the notion that they are inferior to the colonizer. This construction of the ‘other,’ the colonized subject, stands against the construction of white colonialist as superior, all knowing, civilized and capable of holding in place ongoing colonial, imperial and racist practices that become normalized. As a result the colonizer sets out to debase the colonized at every opportunity (Memmi, 1965, p. 67) to further the distance between them. The maintenance of this distance requires the body of the racial ‘other’ to be marked in very specific ways and with very specific meanings. Through producing images and imaginings of Indigenous peoples as inferior, subordinate and dependent, the making of the white colonist as superior and in control emerges. In the words of Memmi (1965): “the colonist resorts to racism. It is significant that racism is part of colonialism throughout the world; and it is no coincidence. Racism sums up and symbolizes the fundamental relation which unites colonialist and colonized” (p. 70).

Further, the racialized hierarchy that emerges situates Indigenous peoples at the very bottom of the hierarchy. The result is that the quest for land places any Indigenous person in their country of origin at risk, and Aboriginal peoples of Canada are no exception. This is an important point because it affects how Aboriginal peoples in Canada are constructed as somewhat different than people of color, who actually have no real or imagined Indigenous ties to this land. Colonizers are most concerned and threatened by Indigenous peoples of the land because Indigenous peoples have real ties and claims to land and resources. Therefore, as peoples, they represent a significant threat to the colonial empire and in the minds of the colonist must be debased.

Said (1993) also theorizes that culture played a significant role in European imperial expansion and the demise of Indigenous identities:

At the heart of European culture during the many decades of imperial expansion lay an undeterred and unrelenting Eurocentrism. This accumulated experiences, territories, peoples, histories; it studied them, it classified them, it verified them...above all, it subordinated them by banishing their identities, except as a lower order of being, from the culture and indeed the very idea of white Christian Europe. This cultural process has to be seen as vital, informing, and invigorating counterpoint to the economic and political machinery at the material center of imperialism. This Eurocentric culture relentlessly codified and observed everything about the non-European or peripheral world, and so thoroughly and in so detailed a manner as to leave few items untouched, few cultures unstudied, few peoples and spots of land unclaimed. (p. 222)

Canada was no exception to these actions; in fact, Aboriginal peoples were subordinated here in a number of ways.

The third dimension that I discuss is that colonization is violent. Here I turn to the work of Fanon (1963, 1967) who examined the process of colonization. His work is useful in understanding how the hierarchy of the colonized / colonizer is established and held in place. He also provides a psychological analysis of the impact that colonization has on the colonized. However, what is particularly useful in this discussion is that Fanon writes about the violence associated with colonization.

In *The Wretched of Earth*, Fanon (1963) analyzes the link between violence and colonialism with the intention of showing how violence was necessary to colonize peoples. In Fanon's view violence was an intentional act committed upon the body of colonized peoples and it is only through that same body that colonialism will be defeated (p. 105). While colonialism is very much about the quest for the land, Fanon poignantly describes the violence inherent in the process of colonization—something that often gets left out of conversations. Fanon does this by drawing attention to colonialism in a very profound and real way—he names it as an act of

violence. Episkenew (2009) concurs: “Despite the growing body of evidence to the contrary, the Canadian myth does not acknowledge that the nation was founded on a practice of psychological terrorism and theft” (p. 5). Personally, I think it is too easy to mystify colonialism as being only about the quest for land and resources. I have heard many people discuss colonization as an act of merely setting up colonies on foreign lands which, in my opinion, totally obscures the violence associated with the process. Fanon’s work shows that colonization did not proceed innocently. In fact, according to Fanon, white colonists became implicated in committing acts of violence and genocide.

In the preface to *Wretched of the Earth*, Jean-Paul Sartre starkly challenges Europeans and white settler society who locate at the center to read Fanon because they are implicated in acts of violence. They are not as innocent as we would be led to believe. Sartre (1963) is quite direct in the following statement:

Our victims know us by their scars and by their chains, and it is this that makes their evidence irrefutable. It is enough that they show us what we have made of them for us to realize what we have made of ourselves. But is it any use? Yes, for Europe is at death’s door. But, you will say, we live in the mother country, and we disapprove of her excesses. It is true, you are not settlers, but are no better. It is true, you are not settlers, but you are no better. For the pioneers to you; you sent them overseas, and it was you they enriched. You warned them that if they shed too much blood you would disown them, or say you did... You, who are so liberal and so humane, have such an exaggerated adoration culture that it verges on affective, you pretend to forget that you own colonies and that in them men are massacred in your name. (p. 14)

Sartre (1993) notes that Fanon’s work is important for a number of reasons: one, the book shows what colonizers did to the colonized, but, secondly, it shows what the process of colonization has made of Europeans themselves. He goes on to acknowledge that the violence was very specific and targeted:

Violence in the colonies does not only have for its aim the keeping of these enslaved men at arm's length; it seeks to dehumanize them. Everything will be done to wipe out their traditions, to substitute our language for theirs and to destroy their culture without giving them ours. (Sartre on Fanon, as cited in Fanon, 1963, p. 15)

He goes on to say,

we [the colonized] only become what we are by the radical and deep-seated refusal of that which others have made of us. Three generations did we say? Hardly has the second generation opened their eyes than from then on they've seen their fathers being flogged. In psychiatric terms, they are "traumatized" for life. ... You say they [the colonized] understand nothing but violence? Of course; first, the only violence is the settler's; but soon they will make it their own. (Sartre on Fanon, as cited in Fanon, 1963, p. 17)

These words present another important dimension to this research: that acts of violence have an impact, one that is traumatic. This will be discussed in a later section of this chapter.

I turn now to the fourth dimension of colonization—that it is ongoing. For Aboriginal peoples in Canada, colonialism has not ended. Alfred (2005) contends

there is no post-colonial situation; the invaders our ancestors fought against are still here, for they have not yet rooted themselves and been transformed into real people of this homeland. Onkwehonwe must find a way to triumph over notions of history that relegate our existence to the past by preserving ourselves in this hostile and disintegrating environment. (p. 38)

A case in point is that the quest for land is still contested territory. White settler society continues to fight for the land and the resources with little regard for Aboriginal peoples, as evidenced by the ongoing land claims. For example, the outstanding land claim by the Teme Augama Anishnabai has never been settled. Their original traditional lands stretched some 4,000 square miles; they were reduced to a small reserve of 1 square mile in 1972 (Ontario Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs, 2009)¹³. The former Chief, Gary Potts (1989) remarks, "For 112 years, we, the people of Teme-Augama Anishnabai, while trying to survive, to get along with others, and to

¹³ For further discussion on Temagami Land Claim see also Hodgins and Benidickson (1989) and Potts (1989).

avoid confrontation, have had to watch the exploitation and destruction of our traditional lands by outsiders” (p. 203).

As well there are numerous examples of the structural violence that is ongoing in most, if not all, Aboriginal communities. Warry (1998) notes,

The poverty of Aboriginal communities is directly attributable to their marginalization within the economic structure of Canadian society, as well as to the direct impact of racism and discrimination. Indian explanations of individual and community ill-health stress the negative effects of social and institutional processes originating in the dominant society. Problems of social health are ultimately linked to colonial oppression. (p. 84)

Many, if not all, Aboriginal peoples continue to live in conditions that are named or compared as Third world conditions (Barsh, 1994; Mahwiney & Hardy, 2009; Warry, 1998). Health, social and economic indicators for Aboriginal peoples in Canada continue to be far below of those of the general Canadian population (AFN, 1988; RCAP, 1996a). For example, RCAP (1996a) points out that “Aboriginal people are more likely to face inadequate nutrition, substandard housing and sanitation, unemployment and poverty, discrimination and racism, violence, inappropriate or absent services, and subsequent high rates of physical, social and emotional illness, injury, disability and premature death” (p. 107). Many First Nations communities have inadequate housing that contributes to crowded conditions (Warry, 1998). Often the basic standards that most Canadians enjoy are denied to Aboriginal peoples, including but not limited to safe and clean water supply, adequate sewage and disposal and safe heating sources (Ponting, 1997). Mawhiney and Hardy (2009) note that,

The horrific living conditions of Aboriginal peoples in Canada are difficult for many people to acknowledge. Yet it is impossible to ignore the impact that colonization has had in creating structural inequities experienced by Aboriginal peoples, as individuals and as communities. (p. 96)

Alfred (2005) also agrees, in writing that the time to make change is now, the author notes:

Signs of defeat have been showing on the faces of our people for too long. Young people, those who have not yet learned to accommodate to the fact that they are expected to accept their lesser status quietly, are especially hard hit by defeatism and alienation. Youth in our communities and in urban centres are suffering. Suicide, alcohol and drug abuse, cultural confusion, sexual violence, obesity: they suffer these scourges worse than anyone else. It is not because they lack money or jobs in mainstream society (we shouldn't forget that our people have always been 'poor' as consumers in comparison to white people). It is because their identities, their cultures, and their rights are under attack by a racist government....These young people are fighting raging battles for their own survival every day. (p. 37)

Alfred (1999) raises another important effect related to ongoing colonialism, that it becomes internalized in the colonized. He describes this internalization as a 'colonial mentality,' noting "the same set of factors that creates internalized oppression, blinding people to the true source of their pain and hostility, also allows them to accept, and even defend, their continuation of an unjust power relationship" (p. 70). Internalized oppression is discussed later in this chapter but suffice it to note that this internalized mental state "blocks recognition of existence or viability of traditional perspectives: it prevents people from seeing beyond the conditions created by the white society to serve its own interests" (Alfred, 1999, p. 70).

We also see evidence that Aboriginal peoples continue to be racially constructed in very specific ways to maintain their positionality as inferior. From a personal perspective, Aboriginal peoples live with ongoing violence directed at them on a daily basis—it is true as Fanon (1963) notes that the colonized person lives in a world of violence directed at him / her that serves to dehumanize and oppress.

I draw on these four dimensions of colonialism in the chapters that follow because they are important to understanding and contextualizing what is happening today between Aboriginal peoples in Canada and white settler society with regard to education.

Conceptualizing the Impact of Ongoing Colonialism

In writing on the impact of colonization and oppression, I have been cognizant of the need not to re-inscribe patterns of victimhood that pathologize and label Aboriginal peoples (Johnston, 2003) by perpetuating images of a hurt and wounded people in need of healing and help from the colonizer. Rather, I write of the specific impact of ongoing colonialism as counter-hegemonic to those who would discount or minimize the violence and trauma inherent in ongoing colonization. Comments such as “that’s the past, let’s get on with the future” and “we should stop focusing on the negative and look at the positive” are common responses that I have heard more than once when speaking of the effects of colonization. bell hooks (1995) writes about the dilemma that all oppressed peoples face:

All marginal groups in this society who suffer grave injustices, who are victimized by institutionalized systems of domination (race, class, gender, etc.), are faced with the peculiar dilemma of developing strategies that draw attention to one’s plight in such a way that will merit regard and consideration without reinscribing a paradigm of victimization. (p. 58)

To me, comments that perpetuate colonialism as part of the past seem to have become a naturalized response for perpetrators of atrocities, including violence that inflicts trauma. That is, “in order to escape accountability for his crimes, the perpetrator does everything in his power to promote forgetting” (Herman, 1997, p. 8). In Canada, for instance, for a number of decades, the narrative of colonial violence associated with the residential school era was left out of the national story. It is only recently that the government has acknowledged the atrocities (Government of Canada, 2008). It is imperative to speak about the history and ongoing relations between Aboriginal peoples and Europeans because as Aboriginal peoples we recognize that we need to understand the past in order to understand the present and also to understand where we are going in the future.

It is also important to understand the devastating impact that ongoing colonial and imperial imposition has had on Aboriginal peoples. Despite this negative impact, Aboriginal peoples also locate strength in understanding the resistance strategies that have assisted with survival. For me, it was not until I fully understood the processes of how colonization operated as a systematic attempt to eliminate Aboriginal peoples that I came to a full understanding of myself, my location, my family and my community. Despite the onslaught of colonialism and imperialism, my family and community have survived, and we have retained many cultural and traditional practices that contribute not only to survival but to our overall well being.

Therefore, I think it is important to contextualize any discussion on colonization within an understanding of violence and how violence has permeated the daily life experience of Aboriginal peoples. In the next sections I specifically examine three concepts: violence, ethnostress and historical trauma as three specific effects of ongoing colonization.

Ongoing violence.

Violence is defined by Aboriginal people as “a consequence to colonization, forced assimilation, and cultural genocide; the learned negative, cumulative, multi-generational actions, values, beliefs, attitudes and behavioural patterns practiced by one or more people that weaken or destroy the harmony and well-being of an Aboriginal individual, family, extended family, community or nationhood” (Maracle & Craig, 1993, p. 10). Colonization of Aboriginal peoples is continually perpetuated through individual acts of racism and violence (Lawrence, 2004) that are reinforced through dominant ideologies and the structures of society. Aboriginal peoples are denied access to social, economic and political systems that regulate, define and control all aspects of their lives. Many have internalized colonial violence and this is enacted in outward violence towards others as well as internally upon themselves as indicated through the high rates

of violence in Aboriginal families, as well as the high rates of suicide. Lane, Bopp, and Bopp (2003) argue that there is a direct relationship between the historical experience of Aboriginal peoples and the current patterns of violence in Aboriginal communities (p. 11).

Writing on the violence that Aboriginal women are subjected to, McGillivray and Comaskey (1999) state that through the Indian Act, the establishment of the reserve system, the residential school system and the child welfare systems, messages of alterity were imposed and internalized, further devaluing Aboriginal women. Violence as a tool for colonization is therefore ongoing and continues to have devastating impacts on Aboriginal communities as evidenced by current statistics. It is this colonial history that begins to account for the rate, risk, and frequency of intimate violence as it has affected Aboriginal women in Canada (p. 7). For instance, a 1989 study by the Ontario Native Women's Association found that 8 out of 10 Aboriginal women in Ontario had personally experienced family violence. Of those women, 87% had been injured physically and 57% had been sexually abused (Ontario Native Women's Association, 1989, pp. 18-19). In fact,

colonialism creates extreme dynamics of domination and subjectivity...has shaped [and continues to shape] the nature, severity, and rate of intimate violence in indigenous communities. It has influenced the internal and external evaluation of the violence and created an environment in which it thrives as learned behaviour, transmitted across generations, silenced by culture. (McGillivray & Comaskey, 1999, p. 22)

Violence has become so pervasive in many Aboriginal communities that even families who have not experienced violence in the family first hand are still subjected to ongoing racism and oppression in society and therefore are not immune to the effects that others exposed to daily violence may experience: "Many Aboriginal communities are struggling to cope with an emerging culture of violence that is rapidly being infused into the fabric of almost every aspect of social life, and is increasingly pervasive" (Lane et al., 2003, p. 7). Violence and trauma

become normalized as they permeate Aboriginal communities (McGillivray & Comaskey, 1999; Wesley-Esquimaux & Smolewski, 2004). McGillivray and Comaskey (1999) in a study of Aboriginal women's experience of violence found that normalization of violence had already taken place: "The frequency, variety, and severity of violence reported by respondents stand in startling contrast with the sense that it is an ordinary part of everyday life" (p. 9). It is not only problematic that violence becomes normalized within Aboriginal communities; there is also the danger that racialized notions of violence are continually being reinscribed as normal by dominant society. As this happens it is likely that the responses to violence perpetrated against Aboriginal peoples, men and women, will be less likely to draw public attention and the required level of services that may be deployed for others. For instance, in a recent critical analysis on the well known theme of 'cowboys and Indians' Emma LaRocque (2004) asserts that "the history of imagining and subsequently imaging the 'Indian' as 'wild' and 'savage' runs long and deep in White North America's intellectual and cultural productions" and these racialized imaginings of Aboriginal peoples remain embedded in present day society (p. 138). This further contributes to the racialized stereotyping of Aboriginal peoples as a naturally violent people, thereby perpetuating longstanding stereotypes of the 'brutal savage' (LaRocque, 1994). This is a problem in a number of ways, but in terms of this research it is particularly problematic in the context of the site of pedagogy where narratives of colonial violence may be presented. Aboriginal students and in particular Aboriginal women may be especially vulnerable in these situations given the colonial violence they are subjected to in their daily lives. As Horsman (1999) points out, "The extent of violence makes it clear that violence can never be ignored in an educational program" (p. 57).

Ethnostress.

The negative impact of the longstanding struggle against the forces of domination and control enacted in colonial violence have resulted in Aboriginal peoples being affected by a number of social and health issues. Cajete (1994) notes that it is a daily struggle for many Aboriginal peoples to retain who they are and hold on to their Aboriginal identities. This constant struggle, along with facing the day-to-day struggles of racism, discrimination and oppression, has resulted, for some, in feelings of hopelessness. In fact, “psychological distress is very much a part of everyday life for the child [adolescent and adult] of color who is isolated, denigrated and mentally tortured” (Dei, Karumanchery, & Karumanchery-Luik, 2004, p. 128). One of the effects of this constant struggle is that, over time, the oppression becomes internalized to the degree where one takes on the beliefs of the colonizers (Fanon, 1963). Psychologically and emotionally, this may result in devaluing one’s self-worth, esteem and sense of Aboriginality. Cajete (1994) notes that as a result some who have been oppressed end up in a cycle of oppression that is expressed through “dysfunctional relationships, divisive behaviors, cynicism, mistrusting our own thinking, and other forms of self-validation. We enact the negative elements of the old communal tale of the ‘crab in the bucket’. In this tale, rather than support the empowerment of each other, we present obstacles, feeling that if we can’t have it no one else should either” (p. 190).

Cajete (1994) discusses these reactions as manifestations of ethnostress, which he defines as “primarily a result of a psychological response pattern that stems from the disruption of a cultural life and belief system that one cares about deeply” (p. 189). Antone, Miller, and Myers (1986) concur: “Ethnostress occurs when the cultural beliefs or joyful identity of a people are disrupted” and for Aboriginal peoples this stress has resulted from “400 years of contact with

non-indigenous peoples...reactions surface as 'response patterns'; feelings of powerless and hopelessness that work to disrupt the life of the individual, family, community, and nation" (p. 7).

Without a doubt, Aboriginal peoples have experienced mass disruption to their ways of life that has resulted in, but is not limited to, the following: stolen land bases, suppression of Aboriginal languages, suppression of culture, appropriation of culture and tradition and the literal stealing of generations of children by the child welfare¹⁴ system and through the residential school experience. Despite resistance, and the reclamation and revitalization processes that have been occurring in Aboriginal communities, the devastating effects continue, as ongoing colonization and oppression are still evident in Aboriginal community disintegration: poor health, inadequate education and in the various forms of acting out and acting within, including alcohol and drug abuse, suicide, and other self-destructive behaviors such as violence and child abuse (Bastien, Kremer, Norton, Rivers-Norton, & Vickers, 1999; Cajete, 1994). Many Aboriginal people at the community level are unaware that a large number of these behaviours have been developed over time in response to being subjected to ongoing violence through the colonization process. As a result they are unable to articulate or even identify ethnostress as a valid explanation of understanding why or what is affecting how they feel about themselves as an Aboriginal person or as a people. Rather, Aboriginal peoples often internalize negative stereotypes and messages that result in a further devaluing of self and their people.

¹⁴ For a fuller discussion on the effects of the child welfare system on Aboriginal individuals, families and communities see McKenzie, B. & Hudson, P. (1985).

Historical trauma.

Another key element in understanding ongoing colonial violence is the impact of that violence. In this section I discuss two key concepts, historical trauma and soul wounding¹⁵, that are used to describe that impact.

Trauma is defined and described in a number of ways. Erickson (1995) notes that trauma needs to be understood as resulting from specific events but also from a “constellation of life experiences...from a persisting condition” (p. 185). The latter is often described as stress; however, Erickson contends that trauma results from continuing patterns sustained over a period of time. Clearly the long-standing and ongoing colonial violence perpetrated on Aboriginal peoples fits within this definition. A clear example is the physical, mental, emotional, spiritual and sexual abuses suffered by Aboriginal peoples attending residential schools. The mental and emotional effects of such trauma have resulted in injury to the minds and spirits of many Aboriginal peoples (AFN, 1994; Chrisjohn and Young, 1997).

Brown (1995) discusses Root’s definition of insidious trauma as the “traumatogenic effects of oppression that are not necessarily overtly violent or threatening to bodily well-being at the given moment but that do violence to the soul and spirit” (p. 107). Brown (1995) suggests that all women live in an environment of high rates of sexual assault and in a culture where sexual violence is normalized. Women in general are therefore hypervigilant to cues that may affect their safety—referred to as insidious trauma. If we extend this analysis to Aboriginal women, where the rates of sexual abuse and assault are even higher than for the general Canadian population (McGillivray & Comaskey, 1999), we can theorize that Aboriginal women would experience higher levels of insidious trauma at any given time.

¹⁵ Duran et al. (1998) note that the construct of soul wounding is synonymous with current terms including historical trauma, historical legacy, Native American holocaust, intergenerational post traumatic stress disorder (p. 64). In most instances I use the more recent term of historical trauma.

In an unpublished paper shared with me in 1996 by my late mother, Lucienne Meek, an Anishnaabe woman from northern Ontario, she described her own personal experience of emotional abuse. She contended that all Aboriginal women have experienced emotional abuse and trauma, linking it to the effects of long-standing oppression and colonization. In her paper she stated that ongoing racism, oppression, gender subordination and cultural genocide have all contributed to the emotional abuse of Aboriginal women. Patricia Monture-Angus (1995), a Mohawk woman, who wrote a book on her experiences as a law student and then later as a professor, contends that the anger and pain she experienced “are the violence that grows out of racism” (p. 35). She further notes that “pain is the instantaneous result of living racism, just as physical violence results in pain” (p. 36). Karumanchery (2003), as cited in Dei et al. (2004), also contends “that the painful, isolating and fundamentally damaging experience of racism can be appropriately addressed only if we stop using euphemisms and address the real issue and name it for what it is--TRAUMA” (p. 184).

Erikson (1995) describes the classic symptoms of trauma as ranging

from feelings of restlessness and agitation at one end of the emotional scale to feelings of numbness and weakness at the other. Traumatized people often scan the surrounding world anxiously for signs of danger, breaking into explosive rages and reacting with a start to ordinary signs and sounds, but at the same time, all that nervous activity takes place against a numbed gray background of depression, feelings of helplessness, and a general closing off of the spirit, as the mind tries to insulate itself from further harm. Above all trauma involves a continual reliving of some wounding experience. (p. 184)

Duran and Duran (1995), Locust (1998) and Bastien et al. (1999) also describe the psychological intergenerational impact of colonization as a wounding of a person’s soul or spirit. Locust (1998) sees discrimination against Aboriginal peoples’ spiritual and cultural belief systems as wounding an individual’s spirit and Bastien et al. (1999) describe the negative spiritual energy that permeates the spirit of a person. This ‘wounding’ affects the very essence

and core of the spirit of individuals, families and communities. Duran & Duran (1995) contend that for Native Americans this wounding “is felt in agonizing proportions to this day” (p. 27).

Mainstream trauma theory has also recently “begun to recognize that post-traumatic symptoms can be intergenerational, as in the case of children of survivors of the Nazi Holocaust” (Brown, 1995, p. 108). Duran et al., (1998) agree that the concept of historical trauma is known among clinicians studying Holocaust survivors, but they also acknowledge that healers and Elders in Native American communities are aware of the construct of intergenerational trauma. Citing theory drawn from the Holocaust, trauma and grief literature, these authors argue that similar to the transferring of trauma to descendants from Holocaust survivors, the impact of colonization among Native Americans are transmitted from one generation to the next (Duran & Duran, 1995; Duran et al., 1998; Brave Heart & DuBruyn, 1998). These same authors contend that the current self-destructive behaviours of Native Americans have largely been passed from one generation to another as a direct result of unresolved historical trauma. These effects originate from the loss of lives, land, and vital aspects of Native culture promulgated by the European conquest of the Americas (Brave Heart & DuBruyn, 1998, p. 60). In today’s context historical trauma includes the effects of racism, oppression, and genocide (Duran et al., 1998). While Duran et al., (1998), and Brave Heart and DeBruyn (1998) provide their analysis in an American context, there are parallels that can be drawn to a Canadian context, including, for example, the impact of colonial policy enacted through educational, social, and assimilative legislation such as the Indian Act.

In Canada, Wesley-Esquimaux and Smolewski (2004) similarly investigated how grief and trauma are generationally transmitted, linking colonial brutalities to trauma responses. Dividing the effects of colonization into five areas--physical (cultural transition); economic

(cultural transition); cultural (cultural dispossession); social (cultural dispossession); and psychological (cultural oppression) (p. 6)--they trace how the introduction of disease and massive epidemics set the stage for colonization through forced removal from lands, systematic destruction of economic, social and cultural systems, missionization and education. They further propose “that what was done to Indigenous people in the Americas had all the characteristics of genocide and, as such, evoked similar responses to trauma that researchers observe not only in people who survived genocide, but also their children and grandchildren” (p. 7).

This wounding of the soul or very essence of a person is evident with survivors of the residential school experience. It is now recognized that generations of Aboriginal people have been affected, either directly or indirectly, by the abuses suffered through what many describe as horrific experiences (Wesley-Esquimaux & Smolewski, 2004). Unless the root of the wound is healed it will continue to manifest itself in the spirit or soul of Aboriginal peoples as it is passed from one generation to the next. This soul wound is evident as many Aboriginal peoples express the deep pain and hurt over the violence enacted against them as individuals and as a people as well as the profound losses they have sustained since contact.

The effects of historical trauma are further exacerbated by what is termed “vicarious trauma,” described in the counseling literature as trauma responses that develop secondary to exposure to clients' traumatic experiences (Trippany, White Kress, & Wilcoxon, 2004). Those working in the counseling field often hear horrific narratives of abuse and violence that, over time, may affect them psychologically. Similarly, in the educational context, vicarious trauma could potentially be experienced when one is exposed, through film, video or narratives, to elements of historical abuse, violence and trauma since many educators, trained in Western methods of teaching and learning pay little attention to the emotional and spiritual aspects of

students' lives (Horsman, 1999). In instances where a student's positionality is connected to the colonial historical trauma, such as an Aboriginal student who may have attended residential school or is a direct descendant of a residential school survivor, there may even be an increased risk that the student will experience higher levels of trauma. As a result the impact of curricula dealing with historical traumatic issues such as the residential school and child welfare systems may inadvertently re-traumatize a student. Further, when one considers that Aboriginal peoples remain very much in a colonized moment it is hard to conceive how any 'wound' associated with colonial imposition could be healed when Aboriginal peoples are subjected to ongoing violence. This presents an ethical pedagogical dilemma when facilitators and teachers utilize curriculum that may evoke such responses. This situation is discussed further under historical witness.

Part 2:

Conceptualizations of Historical Witness and Narratives of Violence

Historical Witness

According to Simon and Eppert (1997),

Educators often assume that traumatic historical events can be made meaningful through hearing, reading, or viewing accounts that make apparent personal engagements with history...primary purpose of all such accounts is to provide testimony—to convey through multiple expressive forms the historical substance & significance of prior events & experiences. (p. 175)

Eppert (1999) focuses her dissertation on “reading and teaching North American literature that bears witness to historical events of trauma, violence and persecution” (p. ii). Her work has particular relevance for understanding how hearing and reading accounts of history can evoke a wide range of responses. Pedagogically this has implications for the introduction of narratives into the classroom, especially in the context of the effects discussed previously around violence, ethnostress, and historical trauma as they relate directly to Aboriginal peoples. While Eppert (1999) points out that remembering and developing an understanding of history can be a powerful force that communities can utilize to reclaim and reconstruct their connections to culture, there is the very real risk of traumatizing or re-traumatizing people. Herman (1997) supports this in that witnesses as well as victims of trauma are subjected to the effects of viewing trauma. For example, in Aboriginal communities, understanding the history of colonization, oppression and genocidal practices that were instituted against Aboriginal peoples across the country is critical in framing the present. Grande (2004) also notes that while an education for decolonization must trouble colonist education, decolonization also requires a praxis that enables the dismantling of colonist forces (p. 26). She contends that there is a need for a pedagogy that

cultivates a sense of collective agency, both to curb the excesses of dominant power and to revitalize Indigenous communities (Grande, 2004, p. 26).

For many Aboriginal students at the university level this may be the first time they have heard, studied, read and discussed Aboriginal history. Much of the history to which they were exposed through prior schooling may have been couched in Eurocentrism and thus reflected history from a dominant paradigm. In her discussion about communicating and understanding historical pain, Eppert (1999) claims that “literature that bears witness to instances of extreme suffering proves to be difficult reading. It often provokes an unpredictable complex of emotional dynamics in individuals who engage it - combinations and variations of abjection, anger, guilt, shame, denial, fear, worry, sympathy, empathy, and voyeuristic pleasure.” (p. 10). For many Aboriginal adult students, hearing for the first time accounts of the violence and abuse that many of their people and in many instances their direct relatives experienced while attending a residential school can be extremely traumatic. As well, when the history of the child-welfare system is recounted in the class orally and through readings, students react in a variety of ways that are similar to what Eppert describes with the exception of voyeuristic pleasure. In the 15 years that I have been involved in Aboriginal social work education, I have never witnessed the latter reaction amongst Aboriginal students.

Eppert (1999) also notes that, while there is growing literary criticism of various texts, there is relatively little in the way of pedagogical approaches for introducing accounts of historical witness. Similarly, Graveline (1998) adds that educators truly intent on building programmes that promote understanding of colonialism and its impact need “...to continue to challenge the western paradigms that guide today’s educational Systems...Thinking with the head (cognition) as separable from the heart (feelings) is expected and continuously reinforced in

western schooling" (p. 39). Notions of ongoing violence, ethnostress, soul wounding, historical trauma and historical witness reaffirm the need to develop pedagogical approaches that are holistic. While the classroom is deemed to be the place to learn new material relevant to a course or programme in which one is enrolled, creating opportunities for students to experience whole learning in terms of the mind, body and spirit is discouraged. Healing as an element of learning is usually discouraged and students are expected to address any personal and emotional issues outside the classroom space.

Pedagogically there is a need to understand more fully the implications of hearing, viewing and reading acts of violent colonial history when one comes to that classroom already traumatized. For example, Sharon Rosenberg (1997), in her doctoral thesis, poses the question: "How might we understand the intersections, complexities and implications of being both survivor and witness to trauma outside the therapeutic context?" (p. 42). While Rosenberg was examining the implication of feminist responses to bearing witness to the massacre in Montreal of 12 women, I draw a parallel in calling to question the implications of being asked to view traumatic historical events for an Aboriginal student. Similarly, this research assists with understanding the complexities of hearing and viewing narratives of colonization when one comes to the postsecondary classroom already exposed to ongoing familial and societal forms of violence and as one implicated in the very history of traumatic events.

The Postsecondary Classroom as the Site of Pedagogy

The site of the postsecondary classroom is one where narratives of colonial history and violence are told, as well as where Aboriginal students view and hear accounts of historical events. This site often consists of a mix of students who have come directly from secondary schools and students who are considered adult learners. In many instances, Aboriginal students

belong to the second group. Kerka (2002) notes that adult learning is often challenging, and traumatic events, such as ongoing violence, add extreme challenges to the learning process. Still, “testimony [which can take place as personal narrative, film etc.] is often understood as a vital personal supplement to impersonal documentary evidence. Pedagogically, it encompasses a means for “making history come alive” (Simon & Eppert, 1997, p. 175). If the classroom is one site for making history come alive, it is important to consider who the subjects are in that classroom and how they receive that content. It is also critical to understand how the subject positions of the students and the educator delivering the historical testimony may affect the dynamics that emerge at the site. For instance, if Aboriginal students represent only a small number in a very large group of otherwise white students, it is important to consider how the pedagogy enacted may be geared to the larger group and thus marginalize the experiences of the smaller group of students. As educators we have a responsibility to ensure that the learning environment is conducive and safe for all, not only the dominant group. Further, when we consider how Aboriginal peoples have been oppressed, marginalized and subjected to ongoing forms of colonial violence in larger society, we also have to question how systems of domination are reinforced and perpetuated in sites such as the classroom through the positionality of the educator, the use of pedagogy, the relationships with others and through the curricula itself.

As Simon and Eppert (1997) point out,

In classrooms, a community of memory is set in motion by the practical questions of how, and for what purposes, a teacher and a group of students are to engage testimonial narratives and consider what of (and about) these testimonies should be remembered, why and in what way. Decisions about which testimonies a teacher or students choose to present, what preparation teachers and students should have before engaging testimonies, and what evidence of students’ engagements teachers will demand, no doubt affect how remembrance is mediated. (p. 14)

In large part the history and narratives of colonialism in this country, including the story of contact between Aboriginal peoples and white settlers, have largely been told by white historians. Further, who decides what narratives are told in a postsecondary class is left mainly to the academics teaching the class.

Finally, educators need to reflect critically on the pedagogical value and ethic of introducing traumatic narratives into the classroom. Caruth (1995) points out that, “The difficulty of listening and responding to traumatic stories in a way that does not lose their impact, that does not reduce them to clichés or turn them all into versions of the same story, is a problem that remains central to the task of therapists, literary critics...” (p. vii). The risk of re-traumatizing people is a concern and in some instances, in order to avoid re-traumatizing, educators remain complacent and do not introduce the material. Kerka (2002) also notes that it is not always apparent that a learner may be experiencing the effects of trauma. Instead, we might see the learner missing classes (Horsman, 1999; Kerka, 2000), avoiding tests, spacing out, or having what may be interpreted as inappropriate or extreme reactions to class discussions or activities as responses to trauma and ongoing violence. In other instances “the student may leave a class quietly, perhaps holding back tears” (Horsman, 1999, p. 20). As a result,

We acknowledge that bearing witness to traumatic history can be difficult and risky. This risk leads us to justify silence as a preferred ethical and pedagogical response. But such a position fails in a necessary vigilance—a vigilance embodying the courage to witness, to remember justly, and to recognize the impossibility of its successful completion. (Simon & Eppert, 1997, p. 14)

In essence, if, as educators, we choose not to introduce historical material that may invoke strong emotive responses in students, we could also be contributing to the marginalization and suppression of that narrative. In these instances the memory of particular histories is then placed in a space of the ‘forgotten’, effectively removing any burden of responsibility from colonizers.

Further, if discourses of educational practice view reactions to trauma and ongoing violence as a lack of motivation or persistence on the learners' part, there is a failure on the educators' part to recognize the complex issues facing learners (Kerka, 2002).

Part 3:
Conceptualizing Healing

How Healing Is Constructed in This Research

Herman (1997) provides an understanding of the need for healing; pointing out that, for society and for individuals who have been subjected to atrocious acts, healing is required to bring that person back into a sense of wellbeing:

The ordinary response to atrocities is to banish them from consciousness. Certain violations of the social compact are too terrible to utter aloud: This is the meaning of the word *unspeakable*...Remembering and telling the truth about terrible events are prerequisites both for the restoration of the social order and for the healing of individual victims. (p. 1)

Herman (1997) also points out is that for some the response is to deny the atrocity or make it unspeakable. In my experience and knowledge, for many Aboriginal peoples, the experiences of the residential schools were not spoken about; even to this day there are some who refuse to acknowledge what happened at residential schools or talk about their experiences. Those whom I have heard speak about their experiences relay how difficult it is to acknowledge what has happened. In many Aboriginal communities there is also much talk about the healing that is often connected to the residential school experiences but also to the effects of the child-welfare system, ongoing racism, alcohol and drug abuse, and colonization. I have also heard healing referred to in a number of different ways, including but not limited to a healing journey, walking on the red road, resistance, participating in healing circles, decolonizing processes, grief work and spiritual work.

For the purposes of this research I focus on the concept of decolonization as it is linked to healing. As noted in Chapter two, at a fundamental level decolonization is a process that is both counter-hegemonic and self-determining. Recall, that Battiste (1998) raised suggestions that can

facilitate the decolonization process and supports the need for healing. An example of how decolonization is enacted as a process in the Aboriginal community is the ‘healing’ that many Aboriginal peoples and communities are engaged in around the effects of the residential school era. These intergenerational ‘wounds’ or ‘soul wounds’ (Duran & Duran, 1995) will likely take longer than this generation to heal and the healing will need to occur on many levels and dimensions. Battiste (1998) also affirms that validation of the collective history of oppression and colonization is an important part of the healing process.

In my view the process of decolonizing is very much about healing. This means that it takes time to become decolonized and we do not become decolonized without engaging in a lengthy process of freeing ourselves from colonial and imperial domination and control at multiple levels, including the mind, body and spirit but also within many contexts including family, community and larger society. Graveline (1998) supports this notion when she writes, “The process of taking control of our lands and our lives was facilitated by many colonial tactics, and it will take a multifaceted approach to achieve decolonization” (p. 40). Similarly, bell hooks (1995) links taking back control to self-determination, noting “To counter the fixation on a rhetoric of victimhood, black folks must engage in a discourse of self-determination” (p. 61). She uses the following example to make her point:

One student described being in a class on feminist theory where my [bell hooks] work was read. She found in that work a space of recognition and support. Yet the day it was discussed in class the white woman professor declared that no one was really moved by my work, that I was too negative. Unwilling to assert her agency, her engagement with the text, this young black woman felt both silenced and victimized. She felt like dropping out of graduate school. Had she resisted in this classroom setting, she would not have felt victimized. Instead she felt her blackness devalued even as she surrendered her personal agency and with it a sense of personal integrity. While militant response might not have gained her rewards, it would have preserved her sense of self. Teaching in privileged white institutions, I constantly encounter black students who feel victimized, who do not contextualize racist aggression so that they distinguish between the pain of being

not invited to a party or left out of a discussion from severe economic deprivation, lack of access to basic skills and resources etc. (p. 61)

I take the stand that decolonization is a critical component of healing ourselves and our communities from the domination and oppression that we, as Aboriginal peoples, have experienced, despite, as Herman (1997) points out, our natural tendency to bury memories of atrocities from our consciousness.

In this research study I am particularly interested in understanding the impact of hearing and viewing accounts of one's resurrected history. Many educators fail to take into account or recognize that reclaiming one's history can be a painful yet rewarding process. Coming to understand sources of oppression and how colonization has affected oneself, one's family, one's relations, one's community and Aboriginal societies as a whole can be devastating. hooks (1994) explains how understanding can be painful but at the same time healing:

I came to theory because I was hurting—the pain within me was so intense that I could not go on living. I came to theory desperate, wanting to comprehend—to grasp what was happening around and within me. Most importantly, I wanted to make the hurt go away. I saw in theory then a location for healing. (hooks, 1994, p. 59)

Many Aboriginal peoples that I have encountered as an Anishnaabe Kwe, a professor and a student talk about the racist experiences they encounter on a daily basis. Many also express how deeply hurt they are by some of these experiences. What makes the hurt and pain worse is that they do not feel validated or understood. Having an understanding of why that pain exists has also helped with the healing process. Much like hooks claims, I also see theory, or coming to understand the pain that many oppressed and colonized peoples carry, as an important step in healing and decolonizing. Naming racism and ongoing colonial practices can assist us in understanding some of the roots of why many of our people carry hurt, anger, shame and guilt.

For example, the narratives of the experiences of Aboriginal peoples in the residential schools recount disconnections from family, community, culture and identity (AFN, 1994).

Understanding the connections of between ongoing colonization and the abuses suffered at residential schools can also bring a sense of validation of the experience which may assist with lifting the burden of pain. Therefore, this research is also about exploring the notion of healing, but specifically within the context of decolonization and self-determination.

Part 4:
Problematizing the Concepts

I came to this research with the initial intent to focus on healing as a decolonizing possibility in postsecondary education. However, in order to examine healing in education it became abundantly clear that I also needed to examine why healing and decolonizing are important to Aboriginal peoples. My research quickly moved into the area of colonial violence where I was immediately struck by the need to explore not only violence as a construct but also the injury caused by violence. In other words, it became important to understand the violent nature of colonization, the ongoing violence that Aboriginal peoples experience every day, the injury the violence causes and the resultant aftermath of trauma that violence has on individuals, families and communities and the relationship of healing to these discourses. In this research I specifically took up exploring how narratives of colonial violence are introduced and talked about in the classroom, specifically by Aboriginal students who may come to the site already affected by various forms of violence.

However, I also recognize that the use of concepts such as healing, violence and trauma are not without problems. I realize that racialized bodies are marked and posited in very specific ways. Without a doubt the body of the Aboriginal peoples has been marked in very specific ways to maintain existing hierarchies that keep Aboriginal peoples in a particular space and place. One of the markings on the Aboriginal peoples is that of “inferiority,” which comes with a whole host of connotations. In fact one particular area of concern is how Aboriginal peoples have been pathologized. This part of the chapter examines the use of these three specific concepts. Specifically, I revisit working definitions and examine the efficacy of using concepts such as violence, trauma and healing.

Working Definitions of Violence and Trauma

Like Horsman (1999) I use the terms “violence” and “trauma,” although neither is without problems. Definitions of violence vary across the literature. For the purposes of this research I draw on McGillivray and Comaskey’s (1999) notion of violence:

Colonialism creates extreme dynamics of domination and subjectivity, which readily translate into the more intimate relations of abuser and abused. Colonialism has shaped the nature, severity and rate of intimate violence in indigenous communities. It has influenced internal and external evaluation of the violence and created an environment in which it thrives as learned behaviour, transmitted across generations, silenced by culture. (p. 22)

I draw on the defining features of this definition because it contextualizes violence in Aboriginal communities as linked to individual abuse as well as to the larger colonial enterprise. Therefore violence can include, but is not limited to, mental, emotional, physical, spiritual, sexual and colonial aspects.

Trauma often emphasizes the individual person’s response to an event (Horsman, 1999, p. 42) and can include responses to war and natural catastrophes as well as rape, domestic violence and child abuse (Caruth, 1995; Herman, 1997). However, I also draw on Alexander’s (2004) definition of cultural trauma: “Cultural trauma occurs when members of a collectivity feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future in fundamental and irrevocable ways” (p. 1). This definition is useful because it provides a framework for understanding how Aboriginal peoples have been affected by colonial violence.

Accordingly, in order for trauma to emerge as a narrative in the collective identities of a people, including Aboriginal peoples, there must also be agents who “broadcast symbolic representations” of the traumatic event. In other words, some group must be the ‘carrier’ of the traumatic event (Alexander, 2004). Alexander (2004) goes on to say that “Carrier groups are the

collective agents of the trauma process...Carrier groups may be elites, but they may also be denigrated and marginalized classes" (p. 11).

In effect, if there are no agents to undertake the telling and (re)telling of the events of colonial violence, there is a significant risk that they will become forgotten incidents in history, similar to how the Japanese slaughter of 300,000 Chinese residents in Nanking, China, in 1938 has become an obscure and forgotten incident, "the very existence of which is routinely and successfully denied by some of Japan's most powerful and esteemed public officials" (Alexander, 2004, p. 26). Alexander (2004) refers to this failure to recognize such incidents as collective traumas as stemming from an inability to carry through the trauma process whereby carrier groups have not emerged with the resources, authority, or interpretive competence to powerfully disseminate these trauma claims. Sufficiently persuasive narratives have not been created, or they have not been successfully broadcast to wider audiences. Because of these failures, the perpetrators of these collective sufferings have not been compelled to accept moral responsibility, and the lessons of these social traumas have been neither memorialized nor ritualized. (p. 27)

In this research I also refer to the psychic and collective trauma that affect the mental, emotional and spiritual wellbeing of Aboriginal peoples in response to the ongoing violence associated with the high incidence of domestic violence and child abuse, the racial violence experienced on a day-to-day basis, and the historical and ongoing violence associated with colonization. In other words, in terms of this research, violence is colonial, it is experienced in family systems and it is also found in the ongoing racial discrimination that Aboriginal peoples experience daily. In each of these examples injury is inflicted. The term 'trauma' is utilized in this research to discuss the aftermath of the violence and injury done to Aboriginal peoples.

The Efficacy of Using Violence and Trauma Concepts

Normalization of violence.

As Horsman (1999) points out: “Violence is widespread throughout society. It is not a minority issue experienced by a few women, with impact only on the rare educational interaction” (p. 35). As noted earlier in this chapter, violence has become so pervasive in society that it appears to have become normalized. A relevant case in point is Aboriginal women’s experience with violence. When 500 Aboriginal women have gone missing in Canada over the last 15 years one has to ask why there has been no national public outcry.¹⁶ Despite the publication of the Amnesty Report on the missing Aboriginal women, little has been done to address the issue. Is it because, as Alexander (2004) suggests, there are no carriers of this trauma to adequately force a public outcry? Is it because violence has become so normalized in our society? Or is it perhaps because of the racist belief that Aboriginal peoples are naturally violent and this is an everyday thing?

In her research, Horsman (1999) also notes the pervasiveness of violence in Aboriginal women’s lives:

Instructors told me that in First Nations programs they take it as a given everyone has experienced violence. If learners did not experience the residential school system itself, then they are sure to have experienced the violence of its aftermath and on-going racism, insults which will inevitably have at least assaulted their self-esteem and pride. (p. 71)

The high rates of violence in many Aboriginal communities, along with the lack of understanding of the origins and nature of violence, contribute to the stereotyping of Aboriginal peoples as naturally violent. Therefore, connecting the notions of violence, trauma and education is risky because it becomes easy to identify the Aboriginal learner as being naturally violent but

¹⁶ See report Stolen Sisters: A Human Rights response to discrimination and violence against Indigenous women in Canada (1994). Available online: <http://www.amnesty.ca/stolensisters/amr2000304>.

also as one who has been traumatized. As Dion (2002) points out, when we write or focus on the detailed suffering and loss of Aboriginal peoples, we need to be conscious that this story will “be taken up as the all-too-familiar story of the ‘poor pitiful Indian’” (p. 92) further perpetuating racial stereotyping. As well, the Aboriginal learner becomes the one with the problem. This deficit model suggests that only the learners need to change, to acquire those areas they are lacking (Horsman, 1999, p. 30).

The space of violence: Private or public.

Another important dimension around the use of terms such as violence and trauma is related to the space that violence occupies. As Horsman (1999) puts it, “Society deals with violence through silencing the extent and limiting the nuances of the stories that can be told about it. Medical responses encourage survivors of violence, and educators in general, to regard the myriad aspects of the aftermath of violence as private health problems to be faced by individuals” (p. 35). The tactics of silencing violence speak effectively to how society suppresses the talking and naming of acts of violence and its traumatic impacts. In essence, conceptualizations of violence and trauma as private individual matters provide us with a way to avoid addressing ongoing violence and trauma within our work (Horsman, 1999, p. 35). The notion of public and private spheres serves to show how that which occurs in therapeutic practice remains private and individualized, differs from pedagogical practices in the classroom which become public and community-oriented.

This binary relationship is held in place by teachers and counselors, each of whom sets boundaries for what is remembered, witnessed and re-witnessed in terms of violence, trauma and healing. It also serves to demarcate how violence, trauma and healing are conceptualized and confined to particular spaces that are held either by therapists or teachers (Horsman, 1999). For

example, despite the fact that violence permeates the classroom space, many teachers choose to send students to counselors outside the classroom rather than finding ways to decrease the levels of ongoing overt and covert violence taking place in that classroom. Many reasons for this can be found, including the fact that many teachers feel ill-equipped to deal with issues of violence and feel that such work is the domain of those in the helping professions. However, for many Aboriginal peoples this demarcation is inconsistent with holistic views of life. This is discussed further in the next section.

Notions of Healing

Notions of how healing is understood in many Aboriginal communities differ from how they are understood in dominant discourses. Horsman (1999) notes that looking at the impact of violence on learning has other dangers and suggests that focusing on the impact of trauma can lead to the notion that the learner needs to go away and somehow ‘heal’ and return only when he / she is ‘better’: “The medical model suggests the person must ‘heal’ and leave the traumatic experience behind” (Horsman, 1999, p. 45).

In the Anishnaabe communities with which I am familiar, healing is viewed as a lifelong journey or process, one that a person embarks upon as they live their life on a day-to-day basis. While part of that healing journey may, from time to time, require that the person go away do some personal work, healing is not generally viewed as taking place ‘away,’ nor is it confined to particular spaces. The notion that students are often referred to counselors or therapists reinforces the separation between healing and everyday living which is inconsistent with how healing is viewed by many Aboriginal peoples. Horsman (1999) also contends that this notion of referral is another normalizing trap for educators—that we can become normal after trauma. In actuality the postsecondary system is structured so that students are expected to leave their ‘emotional

'baggage' at the door and deal with this aspect of self in some form of counseling or therapeutic session. This reinforces the referral system through provision of counseling services which are supported by educators who often feel ill equipped to deal with the mental and emotional aspects of being.

I concur with Horsman (1999) that

our strategy must not be to separate out survivors of trauma for treatment as different from other learners. Instead, we must focus on learners as whole people, stress the importance of drawing on their strengths in all approaches to literacy learning and avoid focusing on survivor behaviours as individual problems. (p. 86)

Focusing on the whole person in the teaching-learning environment necessitates pedagogy that differs from what we see in typical university settings, where there is a heavy reliance on cognitive approaches to teaching and learning and a separation and compartmentalization of functions between teaching, learning, and supportive resources such as counseling. In suggesting a focus on holism I am not suggesting educators become counselors. Rather, alternative pedagogies must be sought that acknowledge the impact that violence and trauma have on the everyday lives of Aboriginal peoples, people of color and other groups who are marginalized and oppressed.

Medicalization of Violence, Trauma, and Healing

The discourses around trauma and healing come out of the field of health and medicine; there are, therefore, further risks in using such terms. Conrad (2007) describes medicalization as "a process whereby nonmedical problems become defined and treated as medical problems" (p. 4). He points out that critics argue that medicalization transforms ordinary or everyday experiences into pathological conditions and that the source of the problem is identified as the individual rather than in the social environment (p. 8). The process of medicalization is evident

in how the society shifts its focus of behaviours to defining specific behaviours as deviant or problematic. This shifting includes categorizing the behaviour accordingly in medical terms (Conrad, 2007). In effect, the behaviour is relabeled or reclassified as some sort of illness, suggesting that there can be a cure or treatment. Such an action also contributes to the notion that one can actually go away, be treated and become normal. For Horsman (1999), “Medicalizing violence shapes popular understanding of violence and trauma...” (p. 42).

Chrisjohn and Young (1997) also take up the problems of using terminology such as healing in their analysis of the residential school experience in Canada. They contend that the effects of the residential schools are similar to symptoms already “found for **any group of human beings subjected to severe and prolonged oppression and exploitation**” (p. 79). These authors also note that labelling Aboriginal peoples as suffering from the “Residential School Syndrome” only contributes to further pathologizing Aboriginal peoples and also places them in the position of having to prove they were, in fact, affected negatively in these schools. Chrisjohn and Young (1997) note that regardless of how useful symptom-finding might be:

it requires Aboriginal peoples to ‘demonstrate’ and accept their pathology, and to parade it before the Powers That Be, before those Powers will condescend to undertake the merest of amends; and in doing this, Aboriginal Peoples must also accept the warped, pathological history those Powers would have in the place of truth. (p. 80)

The risks associated with linking the need for healing to the impact of residential schools and other colonizing attacks are significant. Medicalizing and pathologizing not only individualizes the issue or problem the process also ignores the larger historical, social, economic, and political factors that may have contributed to the issue. Chrisjohn and Young (1997) clearly assert this problem:

Let’s get this straight: a group of people invade our lands and steal our property. They take away our children, sending them off to be beaten and exploited as a

labour force, ‘brainwashed’ (to use an unfashionable term) into rejecting their rights and their ways of life, and, at least occasionally, forced to serve the sexual appetites of their warders. Now, in order to get some kind of action addressing all of this, we must stand up and prove how sick **we** are!

We have said it before and we say it again, if it is sickness you seek, don’t look for it in the victims of genocide: in [it] resides in the hearts and minds of the people who planned, designed, implemented, and operated the machinery of genocide, and who now seek to cover it up. The ‘meaning’ of Indian Residential Schooling is not the pathology it may have created in some Aboriginal peoples; it is the pathology it **reveals** in the ‘system of order’ giving rise to it. (pp. 80-81)

Essentially, the individual becomes the one with the problem and the one with the problem is viewed as abnormal rather than the systems and people who perpetuate the violence. Linking this to the violence and trauma associated with ongoing colonization means that the use of either term presents unique challenges: if the terms are used there is the likely possibility that they will be taken up in dominant discourse as ‘problems’ associated with the ‘Other.’ In the process of medicalization the naming of both violence and trauma as outside the ‘normal’ experiences is something that affects the ‘other’ and is perpetrated by the aberrant” (Horsman, 1999, p. 44).

On the other hand, when the trauma approach to understanding the harm caused by various acts of violence was introduced, it had appeal for those working with women and girls who were experiencing violence in their lives. It had appeal, because the shift in understanding did not blame the victims (Burstow, 2003; Gilfus, 1999) and provided new insights about trauma (Burstow, 2003). While critiquing the use of the term trauma, Gilfus (1999) does outline several benefits of using the trauma theory, including that it validates the psychological injury of acts; it provides a framework for understanding many forms of violence against women which assists with drawing parallels between different types of violence as well as understanding the aftereffects of violence; it can be a source of empowerment to know that one did not bring the

violence upon oneself; and the research on trauma has led to trauma interventions that offer relief of symptoms and are helpful to victims (p. 1241). It is important to note that Gilfus (1999) goes on to investigate how the concept of trauma, like violence, has become increasingly medicalized, rendering it an individual response and pathologizing the victim (p. 1242): “Pathologizing the victim can lead to stigmatizing victims of violence (along with everyone else labeled mentally ill) since it only requires looking at the victim and not the offender, the source of the injury, or the social and cultural context of the victimization—the conditions that give rise to such violence (Gilfus, 1999, p. 1242). In the context of Aboriginal peoples and the use of the terms ‘violence’ and ‘trauma’ in this research, there are similar risks—the focusing on Aboriginal peoples as being victims of violence and the trauma versus the colonizer and colonial processes as the perpetrators.

The notion of being labeled a victim has been taken up by bell hooks (1995) who discusses how black critical thinkers and activists were unwilling to “embrace a psychology of victimhood for fear that black life in the United States would be forever seen as pathological” (p. 133), choosing instead to build a discourse focused on uplifting black people. However, hooks (1995) questioned the notion of uplifting. She noted that this approach, while

crucial to efforts to intervene on and challenge white supremacy, nevertheless created a culture of shame wherein any aspect of black life that could be seen as evidence of mental disorder, of pathology, had to be hidden or viewed as utterly aberrant. It is this untalked about culture of shame that has made it practically impossible for African Americans to acknowledge the ways in which living in a white supremacist society and being the constant targets of racist assault and abuse are fundamentally psychologically traumatic. For black folks to acknowledge that we are collectively wounded by racial trauma would require severing our attachment to an unproblematised tradition of racial uplift where that trauma had been minimized in the effort to prove that we were not collectively dehumanized by racist oppression and exploitation. (p. 134)

In other words, a double bind is created by not speaking about the psychological trauma related to colonial oppression and racism—we minimize our own experiences by not speaking about them or in doing so we risk a victim identity. hooks (1995) cites Fanon's (1993) work in *Wretched of the Earth* to explain the depersonalization of the black person to a body. In order to solve this dilemma, hooks (1995) states that it is important to engage in racial uplifting via cultural production and the development of black genius while at the same time engaging in the politics of resistance that addresses the psychological trauma we experience (p. 135).

In drawing a parallel to Aboriginal peoples in Canada, I agree with hooks (1995) that it is important to engage in uplifting our people through both cultural reclamation and revitalization, but at the same time the ongoing colonial violence in the daily lives that we live must not be minimized. The very act of naming and describing the extent of ongoing colonial violence is a political act of resistance. Therefore, despite the risks associated with writing about naming violence and trauma I contend that there needs to be space and place to name and talk about the pain associated with ongoing colonial violence without creating what hooks (1995) calls a “culture of shame” (p.143).

The benefits of using trauma theory as outlined by Gilfus (1999) can similarly be applied to the context of Aboriginal peoples. For instance, use of trauma theory can be helpful in validating the extent of psychological harm perpetrated on Aboriginal peoples as part of ongoing colonization; it can also assist with conceptualizing how violence is not merely a physical and individual act but includes several dimensions and resulting impacts; it contributes to a sense of liberation and empowerment to know that we, as Aboriginal peoples, are not to blame for the conditions and state in which we live; and research in terms of the use of trauma theory can assist with the longer-term ‘healing’ that is occurring in many of our communities.

While the discourses around trauma and healing are problematic, they do provide a useful framework for understanding the psychological impacts of the experiences of violence on the individual and community. As educators, we need to be cognizant that colonialism and the violence associated with it remain, for many Aboriginal peoples, an everyday lived experience. hooks (1995) notes that individuals who most want to focus and highlight the pleasurable aspects of black identity are those who are educationally privileged, having not only the skills and knowledge to ‘move in and out of blackness’ but also the greatest access to the structures of healing (p. 137). The impact of how colonial violence is introduced in the classroom, therefore, can have a particularly profound impact on the Aboriginal student. Despite the difficulty associated with employing the use of specific terminology, I have chosen to use the terms violence, trauma and healing for specific reasons. Similar to Horsman’s analysis of the lives of women in literacy programmes where she contends that educational institutions are one site for engaging in discourses on violence, trauma and healing, I contend that postsecondary classrooms are also sites for engaging in these discourses:

Engaging in this discourse about violence is essential if women who have experienced trauma are to be freed from silently trying to act ‘normal’ while they attempt to learn to read. They need a language about violence that supports understanding the impacts of experience of violence on the struggle to learn, and reduces the burden of shame. (Horsman, 1999, p. 59)

When Aboriginal students come to the postsecondary classroom where the history of colonial relations between white settler society and Aboriginal peoples is discussed, they are often there in an attempt to gain a fuller understanding of their history because they are directly impacted by that history. I believe that, rather than avoid a focus on violence and trauma, we need to find new ways to frame these constructs to take away the focus of abnormality and individualism.

Horsman (1999) notes:

The experience of ‘trauma’ cannot be framed as ‘abnormal’ and individualized. In literacy programming, we cannot fall into the trap of suggesting that learners can go away and ‘heal’ from trauma and come back to class when they are ready to learn. We must recognize the effects of trauma and create literacy opportunities that are viable for learners who are ‘familiar with trauma’ which will enable them to learn while they continue to ‘live beside the violation’. We cannot diminish learners by maintaining a silence about the extent of violence in society, nor by understanding their experience in terms of pathology and ill-health. (p. 78)

Similarly, while many disagree with addressing the extent of violence and trauma in a classroom, I argue that it is an impossibility for Aboriginal peoples to be in spaces and places that are free of violence anywhere in society. As a result it becomes important to identify ways to reduce the levels of ongoing violence and suggest ways to improve pedagogical approaches. This is reaffirmed in the work of Horsman (1999): “Though many argue that learners who have experienced trauma and need to ‘heal’ should be referred elsewhere for counseling, there are major problems with the attitude that learners can ‘go away and heal,’ and then come back and learn. There is nowhere that is free from violence, nowhere to retreat for ‘healing’ (Horsman, 1999, p. 81). Finally, if we do not address the issues of past and ongoing colonial violence and trauma in classroom discussions, how will we, as Aboriginal peoples, ensure that the narrative is not forgotten, quietly placed in the white amnesic mind?

Chapter Five:

Negotiating the Culture / Colonial Divide in the Classroom

The main battle in imperialism is over land, of course, but when it came to who owned the land, who had the right to settle and work on it, who kept it going, who won it back, and who now plans for its future—these issues were reflected, contested, and even for a time decided in narrative. (Said, 1994, p. xiii)

In this chapter I examine the subject positions of the Aboriginal academic, situating this within the longstanding and ongoing history of colonization. In particular I examine how colonizers and white settler society imagined Aboriginal peoples in order to carry out their colonial mission and explore how these persist in the classroom. Said (1994) clearly states in the quotation above that the main thrust of colonialism and imperialism involves land acquisition. However, he also points out that an integral part of the colonial project required a particular story about the inhabitants of that land. How that story is constructed, who gets to tell the story and how the story is told forms one of the main connections between culture and imperialism (Said, 1994, p. xiii).

In Canada, Aboriginal peoples were imagined and narrated in a particular way and through a particular lens; it is through this imagining and narrating that the development of racialized notions of the Aboriginal academic evolved and still remain evident in the classroom today. The following analysis traces, in more detail, how Aboriginal peoples were racially constructed and provides a context for understanding Aboriginal academics who might find themselves in a particular place of negotiating culture and identity in the classroom. It is clear from the interview data with the five professors who participated in this research that the terrain of the university classroom is well known to each of them. However, each professor negotiates

and navigates that terrain differently. In particular, the professors employ a variety of strategies to resist ongoing forms of racism and colonization.

Beginning with the history of Aboriginal education in Canada and then moving to identifying contemporary moments in Aboriginal education and identifying specific themes that emerge from colonial education, I contextualize the space that Aboriginal professors and students enter. Part 1 of this chapter emphasizes that education for Aboriginal peoples has always been part of the colonial regime – one wrought with violence, abuse and processes that have had devastating effects on Aboriginal peoples including genocide (Churchill, 1994, 1998). Chrisjohn and Young (1997) concur in a study on the residential schools in Canada that describes education as a political weapon, “a weapon of exploitation of indigenous peoples and their mental and physical enslavement” (p. 66). Despite strong colonial forces enacted through the government, education and church to assimilate them, Aboriginal peoples resisted, fought back and continue to fight back. For example, in the early 1970s Aboriginal peoples through the National Indian Brotherhood (NIB) began the fight to regain control over their education by coming together and outlining a policy on ‘Indian control of Indian education’ which would set the direction for the years that followed (NIB, 1972). This resistance to ongoing assimilative and colonial control in the educational sector has largely focused on cultural revitalization through strengthening language, culture and identity. Finally I discuss what the thrust for cultural revitalization in education has meant for classes where colonial history and Aboriginal peoples is discussed. In particular, I focus on Aboriginal professors who find themselves caught negotiating this culture / colonial divide.

In Part 2 of this chapter I describe the specific constraints or challenges that Aboriginal academics encounter when they enter the postsecondary classroom, tracing how Aboriginal

peoples in Canada were constructed to assist in understanding how the Aboriginal academic is also racially constructed. The body of the Aboriginal academic, influenced by long standing and ongoing colonial imperial relations with white settler society, is marked by color, language and a unique culture, as well as the fact that he / she is Indigenous to Canada.

Finally, I discuss what the Aboriginal professors in this research had to say about how they negotiate the culture / colonial divide of the classroom. Clearly, the terrain of the classroom an Aboriginal academic enters must be understood within a colonial historical context. I complete this chapter with discussion on what pedagogical insights might be gained from this. How does this knowledge inform and shape how education takes place in the classroom?

Part 1:
Education for Aboriginal Peoples as Part of the Colonial Project

The purpose of this section is to provide a lens to situate education for Aboriginal peoples more generally as a colonial encounter—an encounter between the colonizer and the colonized. I recognize that while this section of the thesis focuses on a view of colonial history as it relates specifically to education for Aboriginal peoples, the fact is that colonialism is ongoing: we continue to be directly affected by existing ongoing colonial practices. Further, it is important to note that while there are many similarities in how colonialism operates and how it is enacted, the resulting impact may be felt differently across Aboriginal nations. As Loomba (1998) points out, “Colonialism was not an identical process in different parts of the world but everywhere it locked the original inhabitants and the newcomers into the most complex and traumatic relationships in human history” (p. 2).

Briefly, colonialism required a narrative about the inferiority of Indigenous peoples that a number of scholars (Fanon, 1967; LaRocque, 2004; Loomba, 1998; Paul, 1993; Said, 1994) have noted. Loomba (1998) mentions that contact between Europeans and non-Europeans was marked by a particular narrative that categorized people as binary opposites: either civilized or barbaric (p. 57). European colonists constructed Aboriginal peoples of Canada as less than human and were of the view that Aboriginal peoples would eventually die out or become totally assimilated into European culture. Emma LaRocque (2004) contends that racialized constructions of Aboriginal peoples as inferior is reflective of “the Manifest Destiny doctrine—a longstanding belief by the majority of mainstream North Americans that America belongs to the ‘Anglo-Saxon’ race” (p. 141). Similarly, Daniel Paul (1993), a Mi’kmaq scholar writing about the colonial encounter between white settlers and the Mi’kmaq nation, claims that “These early

contacts produced all kinds of imaginative stories about the American native people. In them, the people who inhabited this land were even depicted as non-humans, hairy monsters, or subhumans" (p. 4). In *Black Skin, White Masks* Fanon (1967) explains this racialized view with the succinct sentence, 'the black is not a man' (p. 8). I employ Fanon's analysis because he clearly shows how colonized peoples are reduced to objects. My understanding is that once the colonists objectified and reduced Indigenous peoples to nonhuman status, they were able to move ahead with stealing the land and other resources. According to Fanon (1967), the black man and other colonized peoples are viewed as nonhuman because of two specific processes:

- primarily, economic;
- subsequently, the internalization--or, better, the epidermalization--of this inferiority. (p. 11)

In other words, imperialist economic domination required that the black man and other colonized peoples needed to be reduced to skin color, becoming bodies. Fanon (1967) writes that the effect of this is to objectify and reduce such a body to a triple person: a body, a race and a history related to his / her ancestors (p. 112). I come back to Fanon later when analyzing the professors' texts. For the moment, I note that when people are relegated to a place of being inferior, the nonhuman acts of colonial violence described by Paul (1993) are able to proceed without guilt or recourse.

Constructions of Aboriginal peoples as less than human are deeply rooted in racist ideology. Howard Adams (1999), a well known Métis author, scholar and activist, notes the extent of racism and its link to colonialism:

The experience of colonialism is far more than simply the expansion of the capitalist market for the production of economic surpluses. The impact of the colonial domination on the Indigenous society is total. It exploits the oppressed people, destroying their national society and replacing Indigenous cultures. In this capacity, racism plays a crucial role. (p. 6)

Loomba (1998) also notes in her discussion of racial difference and the intent to define peoples along racial lines that “race thus became a marker of an ‘imagined community’...Both nations and races are imagined as communities which bind fellow human beings and demarcate them from others” (p. 118). Similarly, Emma LaRocque (1994) adds that otherness, rooted in racism, has provided the justification for the subjugation of Aboriginal peoples and in particular Aboriginal women.

As European settlers encroached upon the land in Canada, policies and practices were enacted to further control Aboriginal peoples and uphold ongoing colonialism. Loomba (1998) refers to this aspect of the colonial regime as a process of reshaping existing structures of human knowledge: “No branch of learning was left untouched by the colonial experience. The process was somewhat like the functioning of ideology itself, simultaneously a misrepresentation of reality and its reordering” (p. 57). In Canada, this structural reordering included the institution of the Indian Act, a policy of the Federal government utilized to maintain complete control over the political, social, economic and cultural aspects of Aboriginal peoples’ lives. The paternalistic nature of the Act reduced Aboriginal peoples to child-like status and provided colonizers with further opportunity to appropriate resources, including land, and to participate in ongoing genocidal practices against Aboriginal peoples. During the process of colonization Aboriginal peoples were marginalized as their lands and resources were stolen; they were confined to specific spaces and subjected to racist polices. Adams (1999) comments on the effects of colonization:

After conquest came the dispossession of land and seizure of natural resources...Indians were confined on reserves and white European settlers on the newly seized land...genocide was part of this movement. Out of the original population of approximately ten million Indians in North America, only 350,000 remained alive after the European conquest. Of those who survived, the majority lived in third-world poverty and deprivation. (p. 137)

It is clear that in order for colonialism to advance it required simultaneous and ongoing reordering of various structures and practices. The link between this reordering also intersects with racialized constructions of the colonized. Paternalistic policies such as those perpetrated by the Indian Act contributed to the grand narrative that Aboriginal peoples are unintelligent and unable to care for themselves, maintaining the racist construction of inferiority.

This brief description of the colonial encounter between white settler society and Aboriginal peoples in Canada also frames the discussion of the history of Aboriginal education. As part of the larger colonial project of genocide enacted under the guise of policies such as protection, civilization and assimilation, Aboriginal peoples were subjected to numerous, persistent and ongoing forms of violence. One of the primary tools of colonialism was the education system, and one of the more known forms of violence perpetrated by white settler society on Aboriginal peoples was enacted through the residential schools system, established and primarily operated by various Catholic, Anglican, Presbyterian, and United churches (AFN, 1994; Barman 1996; Chrisjohn & Young, 1997; Reed, 1999). Aboriginal children were removed, many times forcibly, from their families and communities to attend residential schools, often a long distance from their home communities. Children attending these schools were forbidden to speak their own languages and through the delivery of racist curriculum, through force and domination, these institutions attempted to complete the assimilation of Aboriginal peoples into mainstream society (Chrisjohn & Young, 1997; Miller, 1996; Milloy, 1999). In applying Fanon's (1967) analysis of impact of colonization this would be considered as part of the colonial regime's goal to reduce the black person to a black body with "no culture, no civilization, no 'long historical past'" (p. 34), essentially removing the colonized, in this case Aboriginal children, from their roots, identity and culture.

Despite being taught by primarily religious orders, many “Aboriginal children were subjected to persistent violence, powerlessness, exploitation, and cultural imperialism, only to become impoverished and devastated in the cognitive and physical aftermath of schooling” (Battiste, 1998, p. 19). A number of studies have documented accounts of emotional, mental, spiritual, cultural and physical abuse, including sexual abuse of Aboriginal students while in the care of residential schools (AFN, 1994; Barman, 1996; Chrisjohn & Young, 1997; RCAP, 1996). Chrisjohn and Young (1997) provide an abbreviated list of crimes that document the extent of abuse Aboriginal children experienced during residential schools. These are specifically listed here, as a counter-hegemonic affirmation of historical writings that would suggest the residential schools ‘weren’t all that bad’ or for those who might discount the horrific atrocities committed on Aboriginal children. The fact that the abuses committed at Residential School are horrific is apparent. However, they are also unquestionably acts of genocide and crime. Spelling out the full extent of the violence as I do here, while potentially re-traumatizing to Aboriginal readers, serves to underline the trauma and its ongoing and pervasive impact on successive generations. The fact that little has been done to ensure that these stories are heard and acted upon is a crime against humanity:

Physical Abuses

- Sexual assault, including forced sexual intercourse between men and women in authority and girls and / or boys in their charge;
- Forced oral-genital or masturbatory contact between men or women in authority and girls and / or boys in their charge;
- Sexual touching by men or women in authority of girls and / or boys in their charge;
- Performing private pseudo-official inspections of genitalia of girls and boys;
- Arranging or inducing abortions in female children impregnated by men in authority;
- Sticking needles through the tongues of children, often leaving them in place for extended periods of time;
- Inserting needles into other regions of children’s anatomy;
- Burning or scalding children;

- Beating children into unconsciousness;
- Beating children to the point of drawing blood;
- Beating children to the point of inflicting serious permanent or semi-permanent injuries, including broken arms, broken legs, broken ribs, fractured skulls, shattered eardrums, and the like;
- Using electrical shock devices on physically restrained children;
- Forcing sick children to eat their own vomit;
- Unprotected exposure (as punishment) to the natural elements (snow, rain, and darkness), occasionally prolonged to the point of inducing life-threatening conditions (e.g., frostbite, pneumonia);
- Withholding medical attention from individual's suffering the effects of physical abuse;
- Shaving children's heads (as punishment);

Psychological / Emotional Abuses

- Administration of beatings to naked or partially naked children before their fellow students and / or institutional officials;
- Public, individually directed verbal abuses, belittling, and threatening;
- Public, race-based vilification of all aspects of Aboriginal forms of life;
- Racism;
- Removal of children from their homes, families, and people;
- Cutting children's hair or shaving their heads (as policy);
- Withholding presents, letters, and other personal property of children;
- Locking children in closets (as punishment);
- Segregation of the sexes;
- Proscription of the use of Aboriginal languages;
- Proscription of the following Aboriginal religious or spiritual practices;
- Eliminating any avenue by which to bring grievances, inform parents, or notify external authorities of abuses;
- Forced labour;

Enforcing Unsuitable Living Conditions

- Starvation (as punishment);
- Inadequate nutrition (e.g., nutrition levels below that of needed for normal growth and subsistence);
- Providing food unfit for human consumption;
- Exploiting child labour;
- Forced labour under unsafe working conditions;
- Inadequate medical services, sometimes leading to children's deaths;

OMMISSIONS OF ACTION

Church Inaction

- Failure to bring local incidents of abuse to the attention of higher church authorities;

- Failure to bring local incidents of abuse to the attention of federal and appropriate provincial governmental authorities;
- Failure to protect children under their care from the sexual predations of older children also attending Residential School;
- Failure to remove known sex offenders from positions of supervision and control of children;
- Acquiescence to federal funding levels below those the churches themselves believed necessary for operation;
- Starvation (as a cost-cutting measure);
- Neglect of their educational mandate;

Governmental Inaction

- Failure to adequately inspect or otherwise maintain effective supervision of institutions in which their legal wards had been placed;
- Failure to fund churches at levels sufficient for maintaining the physical health of the legal wards;
- Failure to live up to the spirit of treaties signed promising education for Aboriginal peoples;
- Collaboration with church officials in covering up the criminal behaviour of officials, both governmental and ecclesiastical;
- Removal or relocation of internal personnel critical of residential School conditions. (pp. 31-33)

Schools became one of the primary methods utilized in the colonial project to suppress and eradicate Aboriginal peoples including their ways of knowing and understanding. Regnier (1995), writing about the Joe Duquette highschool as a healing place, asserts that Aboriginal peoples, their culture and worldviews were attacked through education and other government policies. He asserts that, Aboriginal “identities were reconstructed in isolation from Aboriginal world-views” (p. 319). Similarly, Battiste & Henderson (2000) note that as instruments of transmitting Eurocentrism,¹⁷ schools “perpetuated damaging myths about Indigenous knowledges and heritage, language, beliefs, and ways of life. It also established Eurocentric science as the dominant mode of thought...” (p. 86). Further, the intergenerational transmission

¹⁷ Battiste and Henderson (2000) define Eurocentric scientific method as a way of knowing that draws on principles of empirical inquiry that certain individuals have deemed to be valued, valid, and reliable processes for acquiring knowledge (p. 118). In this case certain individuals holding this knowledge are largely white European settlers to Canada.

of Aboriginal knowledge systems as lived and understood by Aboriginal peoples was severely disrupted and damaged, including the process of knowledge creation (Castellano, 2000, p. 25). And as Chrisjohn and Young (1997) point out,

The conceptual world-view that gave rise to the genocide of Aboriginal Peoples remains in place, unchallenged; its lineaments invade all aspects of present majority thinking about Indian residential School. Unless this world-view is recognized, and the damage it has done and continues to do is brought into focus, the long-term agenda of Indian Residential Schooling will succeed. (p. 5)

Similar traumatic and inhuman experiences are recounted during what is now referred to as the 60s scoop when there was a significant increase in the number of Aboriginal children who were removed / scooped from their families, where there only crime was poverty and being Aboriginal, and placed in the care of child welfare authorities who placed them in white foster or adopted homes (Fournier & Crey, 1997; RCAP, 1996b). It was during the 1960s that the residential schools “had also become a general welfare resource for the care of children who, in the view of local Indian agents, were not being competently cared for by their parents” (Armitage, 1995, p. 113). The number of Aboriginal children removed from parental care by so-called well-intentioned social workers increased until the mid 1970s when the percentage of Aboriginal children in care as a percentage of all children in care rose as high as 65% in one province (Armitage, 1995, p. 119). “By the 1970s, child welfare agencies had succeeded residential schools as the preferred care system for First Nations children” (Armitage, 1995, p. 120). Through the child-welfare system, “the white social worker, following hard on the heels of the missionary, the priest and the Indian agent, was convinced that the only hope for the salvation of the Indian people lay in the removal of their children” (Fournier & Crey, 1997, p. 84). These authors also note that in many instances the Aboriginal identity of the child was erased through renaming, total disregard for language and culture, and the movement of children

from foster home to foster home. Aboriginal people involved with the child welfare system recount stories of being relegated to ‘servant’ status in foster homes, subjected to prolonged abuse including physical, sexual, mental and emotional and denigration of the Aboriginal culture and language (Fournier & Crey, 1997).

Both institutions, education and social welfare, “represent forms of violence that worked on each individual’s sense of who they were and how their Indianness was valued” (Lawrence, 2004, p. 105) and as a direct result have had devastating long-term effects on subsequent generations of Aboriginal peoples. For example, parents and grandparents, who were usually acknowledged as the primary producers and transmitters of knowledge, were no longer considered part of the educational process of children. In many Aboriginal communities Elders were viewed with reverence for the special status afforded to them for their wisdom, vision, knowings and understandings. As Hampton (1995) points out, “No aspect of culture is more vital to its integrity than its means of education” (p. 7). Essentially schools and government child welfare agencies broke the mental, emotional, spiritual and physical connections between children, their parents, community and culture. As a result, “many children unable to reconnect to their family and culture after the enforced isolation and anti-Aboriginal instruction, rejected their past” (Reed, 1999, p. 49). As well, the overall health and well being of Aboriginal peoples have been adversely affected to this day as result of colonial imposition (Hardy, Apaquash, & Butcher, 2000; Kelm, 1999). Aboriginal knowledges were also effectively relegated to inferior status through these institutions. For example, Aboriginal understandings of the environment, the world, as well as spiritual and cultural beliefs were discounted in the education system as being myth and / or evil. Adams (1999) comments on his personal experiences, being born what he

calls a halfbreed and having to contend with the racial violence in the school system and in general society:

I would hope that tomorrow would bring understanding, harmony and peace. After all, that is what the priest promised, and I needed to believe them. What a dreamer; what wishful thinking. My tomorrows only brought greater pain. Each succeeding day was a greater confrontation than the last. There was no escaping the unending extension of colonization, in spite of the fact that Mom tried to protect us from the racial wars. She tried to teach her children to turn the other cheek. However, because of the violence and hate I was surrounded by, I too, lashed out, fought and battled in rage and vengeance. I was a product of an unhealthy colonizers society. (no page numbers)

LaRocque (2004) points out that racialized constructions of Aboriginal peoples are also reinforced in various forms of communication and media:

It is certainly not surprising that Euro-Canadians would associate ‘savage’ with Native peoples given the constant exposure to this view from all major mainstream cultural institutions, including archival, historical, literary, and popular sources. In particular, the gross (and often graphic) misrepresentations of ‘the Indian’ in the media and the marketplace, especially through the powerful medium of motion pictures, have affirmed and re-affirmed Euro-Canadian prejudices. The power of graphic presentation is incalculable. (p. 142)

Similarly, Paul (1993) notes:

Another despicable practice used by the dominant society to demoralize the Tribes in Americas was negative brainwashing. Movies, radio, television, magazines, newspapers, books, and advertisements all depicted the Aboriginals as wanton, cruel, and heartless animals. Religious sermons, textbooks, and every other means was used to convey the message: ‘Indians are murderous, lazy, and worthless drunken savages.’ (p. 272)

These constructions of Aboriginal peoples in Canada mark them as less than human and unintelligent, producing a sense of otherness and racial hierarchy that constructs white settler society and colonists as being human, civilized and above all more intelligent. This process confines people to a particular space—a degenerate space that not only marginalizes Aboriginal peoples but also confines them to a particular state of being: “The powerful sense of otherness

that pervades European accounts of contact with the New World is central to the impact of the historical process of colonization" (McGillivray & Comaskey, 1999, p. 24).

The phasing out of residential schools began in the early 1960s, but it was not until 1996 that the last federally operated residential school on the Gordon Reserve was closed in Saskatchewan (AFN, no date). It was also during this time that changes in the educational sector were initiated when the move for Aboriginal control over Aboriginal education began (NIB, 1972) as a result of Aboriginal peoples' response to the Federal Government's 1969 White Paper. This signaled a new era in education, one marked by Aboriginal peoples' making a number of political moves to take control of their education.

Prior to 1969, "the federal government had been promoting a policy of integration in the field of Indian education" (Abele, Dittburner, & Graham, 2000, p. 5). The White Paper was introduced as policy that would effectively solidify integration of 'Indian peoples' into mainstream society (Abele et al., 2000; Mawhinney, 1994), creating what the federal government termed a more equal and just society. The policy would effectively extinguish the collective rights of Aboriginal peoples in favour of individual rights (RCAP, 1996b, p. 202), and First Nations viewed this move as "the final step in the federal government's desire to transfer jurisdiction over Indian education (among other things) to provincial government" (Abele et al., 2000, p. 5). Essentially, Aboriginal peoples would not be recognized for their unique position as First peoples in this country; this caused their mobilization in a concerted effort to object to the control and paternalistic policies that governed their lives and to thwart any further assimilative policies. The effort also led to a push for changes to the relationship between Aboriginal peoples, the government and Canadian society (Barman, 1996; Barman, Hebert, & McCaskill, 1987; Reed, 1999). Abele et al., (2000) note that the period between 1967 and 1982

was also characterized by political activism and change, both internationally and domestically. Aboriginal issues gained prominence international with the rise of Aboriginal political organizations in many parts of the world, including Canada. This was the time when we saw the formation of major Indian, Inuit, and Métis political organizations....the intellectual leadership of Aboriginal organizations in the field of education policy is particularly striking. (p. 5)

In response to the White Paper, the Indian Association of Alberta produced the Red Paper in 1970 which dealt extensively with issues related to Aboriginal education (Abele et al., 2000), including jurisdiction and control. Aboriginal peoples' stance was that Aboriginal peoples controlled Indian education for Indian people and that it was a fiduciary responsibility of the federal government to ensure adequate funding (NIB, 1972).

During this era, the preservation of culture became one of the cornerstones of Aboriginal education (Abele et al., 2000; NIB, 1972); education was viewed as the means to revitalize Aboriginal culture and economies (Abele et al., 2000; Barman et al., 1987). This period was also defined by “an emerging philosophy of Indian education as similarly bicultural, blending the old and the new into a unique synthesis...” (Barman et al., 1987, p. 5). As a result, the late 1970s and 1980s marked the development of a number of Indian cultural survival schools across Canada that were designed to ensure survival as distinct peoples through preserving culture, language, values and history (Barman et al., 1987).

Abele et al., (2000) describe the time between 1982 and 1988 as a period when “issues of greater Aboriginal involvement and control, communication and partnerships” were important (p. 14). It was at this point that there was an increased focus on “special remedial programmes to meet the unique needs of Native students” (Abele et al., 2000, p. 14). Remediation is typically used to describe specifically designed programmes that were to provide a ‘remedy’ for Aboriginal student’s lack of success in education. Oftentimes they include upgrading or writing skill development programmes. In the province of Ontario, many colleges and universities

developed various forms of Aboriginal student service support; others developed specialized programmes. Distance education, in the form of print and computer based curricula, as well as outreach types of programmes, were explored and developed in various institutions as an option for increasing access to a wider range of studies. This was particularly evident in the field of education and social work.¹⁸ As the focus on cultural preservation increased, so did the development and delivery of culturally appropriate and culturally based programmes across a variety of fields including health and justice. For example, LaRocque (1997), in a discussion on the development of culturally appropriate models in justice, points out that “insertions of culture and tradition appear as a matter of course in discussions on Aboriginal governance, or for that matter, on any community-oriented programmes related to justice, violence, women and healing” (p.76). These programmes were designed to be more flexible in exploring alternate paradigms and worldviews than those of the dominant society. In education, for example, when communities of the Robinson-Huron treaty area in northeastern Ontario were approached regarding the development of a Native social work programme at Laurentian University, the response was one of support. Aboriginal communities stated that they wanted their people to attain university qualifications in Western-based universities, but not at the cost of losing their sense of identity which is strongly linked to culture. They stressed the importance of a bi-cultural programme to ensure that their people would be prepared to work in the local Aboriginal communities and within the larger context of provincial and federal institutions that exist (Alcoze & Mawhiney, 1988). A bi-cultural programme was described as having components of both Aboriginal and Western-based approaches to social work practice.

¹⁸ For example, Queen's University in collaboration with various Aboriginal organizations, delivers a teacher's education program to various First Nations communities in Ontario, and Laurentian University offers a Bachelor of Social Work - Native Human Services degree by distance education through a combination of print-based and on-site classes.

The 1990s saw the release of two important reports that are relevant to the evolution of Aboriginal education in Canada. In 1996, the *Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* (RCAP), the most recent comprehensive research report on Aboriginal peoples in this country, was released by the Federal government. RCAP was established in 1991 with a mandate to examine the relationship among Aboriginal peoples, the Canadian government, and Canadian society with a view to proposing solutions to the problems (RCAP, 1996b, p. 2). The report pointedly reminded us that despite the tremendous efforts by Aboriginal peoples to effect positive change in all aspects of life-- socially, economically, politically and culturally--ensuing changes to the educational system have been very slow. The RCAP (1996a) notes:

For nearly 30 years, Aboriginal leaders have made policy recommendations to governments, and governments have conducted internal studies...What we find most disturbing is that the issues raised at our hearing and in interveners' briefs are the same concerns that Aboriginal people have been bringing forward since the first studies were done. (p. 440)

The report called for fundamental changes to the education affecting Aboriginal peoples, with an underlying principle that education be viewed as a core element of jurisdiction in Aboriginal self-government (p. 442). The recommendations on education support this principle by outlining a pathway of education for Aboriginal educational institutes, Aboriginal participation in mainstream educational institutes and the development of institutional capacity to enable Aboriginal peoples to be self-governing in education (RCAP, 1996a, p. 444).

The second relevant report released in the 1990s was *Tradition and Education: Towards a Vision of the Future* (1998), released by the Assembly of First Nations. The AFN document built on the previous Indian Control of Indian Education (1972) by expanding on the need to have control over their education to describing education as a vehicle that could contribute to the larger struggle for self-government (AFN, 1998).

It is important to note as well that the government had a vested interest in ensuring that the focus of Native education remained on cultural revitalization. In effect the focus on cultural revitalization assisted with getting the colonial institutions off the hook, effectively decentering the violence that is so inherent in the colonial regime.

In summary, there are several key ideas that inform the development of Aboriginal education. During the residential school era, any Aboriginal-focused education, including language and culture, was deliberately and forcefully suppressed. In the 1970s a shift was experienced with the release of the NIB (1972) document ‘Indian control over Indian education’ where Aboriginal peoples made the significant statement that it was a federal responsibility to provide adequate funding for Aboriginal education, but that Aboriginal peoples also wanted control of the education agenda. Emphasis was placed on cultural preservation as a means to counter the effects of the residential schools. Later the focus shifted to remedial programmes as a means of meeting the unique needs of Aboriginal students; this subsequently became a priority in many mainstream institutions. Here again the focus was on culturally relevant or culturally appropriate remediation. More recently, the focus has been on self-government as a goal of education.

Contemporary Moments in Aboriginal Education

Despite the fact that since the early 1970s tremendous efforts have been made by Aboriginal peoples to address issues in the educational system, Aboriginal students are still experiencing lower retention rates than the general population. For example, Aboriginal peoples still remain significantly under-represented in postsecondary institutions. Based on 1996 census data the percentage of registered Indians who were taking or had completed postsecondary education was 37%; for all other Aboriginal peoples it was 47% and for the general Canadian

population it was 50% (Malatest & Associates, 2002). Similarly, based on data reported by RCAP (1996a), while there has been a 4.4 % increase in Aboriginal students completing non-university programmes between 1981 and 1991, this figure is still below that of the general Canadian population of 15.8%. Based on the 2001 Census Mendelson (2006) notes that while the Aboriginal population is approaching parity in completion rates in the colleges that same trend is not evident in the university sector. In fact there has been a decline in the completion rates of university education for Aboriginal students from 1996 to 2001 from 3% to 2% of the total Aboriginal population (Mendelson 2006).

While various themes on Aboriginal education emerge in the literature, the main goal for Aboriginal peoples has been and continues to be its control. The main strategy used to achieve that goal has essentially been to infuse curriculum with culture to strengthen identity, along with the development of student support services that are culturally relevant or appropriate. The emphasis on culture is a reasonable route considering the history of the residential schools, the 60s scoop, and the extreme force used to remove any hint of Aboriginal culture and language from Aboriginal children. Issues of reclaiming culture and maintaining identity are also echoed by other Indigenous communities. For example, Linda Smith (1999), a leading Maori researcher and academic from Aotearoa New Zealand, states that

for some indigenous students one of the first issues to be confronted is their own identities as indigenous and their connected identities to other indigenous peers. While this may seem unusual, given that they appeared to select an indigenous program, it is often more likely that their participation in the program is related to needs which are not necessarily education - for example, emotional support or reassurance. Some may need assistance to reconnect with their own communities or to feel safe. (p. 136)

While the culturally-based approach to education does have merit in strengthening identity, it also presents challenges if that education is given only as an infusion of culture without a critical

analysis of educational context. For instance, when the infusion of culture into curricula is viewed as the answer to increasing retention and success, the gaze is turned toward the Aboriginal student as lacking, in this case, culture. Razack (1998) critiques the growing popularity of cultural difference models utilized in the educational system:

What makes the cultural differences approach so inadequate in various pedagogical moments is not so much that it is wrong, for people in reality are diverse and do have culturally specific practices that must be taken into account, but that its emphasis on cultural diversity too often descends, in a multicultural spiral, to a superficial reading of differences that makes power relations invisible and keeps dominant cultural norms in place. (p. 9)

This effectively diverts the gaze away from the systemic and historical barriers that exist, which, Razack (1998) contends, replaces any concrete attempts to diversify the teacher population:

If white teachers can learn the appropriate cultural rules, we need not hire Black teachers, and we need not address racism. More important, pluralistic models of inclusion assume that we have long ago banished the stereotypes from our heads. These models suggest that with a little practice and the right information, we can all be innocent subjects, standing outside hierarchical social relations, who are not accountable for the past or implicated in the present. (p. 10)

In essence, attention is diverted away from the ongoing racism and oppression that continue today and have underpinned assimilative practices in education.

More than 30 years ago, Emma LaRocque (1975) had the foresight and vision to see that bringing a culturally relevant education to Native peoples would not be enough to address the significant retention and access issues. In 1975 she wrote:

Much has been said and written on education by and for Native people. There is a new surge of interest and effort among some schools and universities in Canada to bring about education relevant to Indian students. While these new endeavors cannot be minimized, it is this author's contention that education by and for Native people is not sufficient. (p. 2)

LaRocque goes on to point out that Native students have not responded positively to the educational system. Some of the reasons that contribute to their poor success rates have been

identified as a lack of pride in their Indianness and poor self-esteem related to the perpetuation of stereotypes. Lack of respect for and knowledge of Native peoples among non-Native peoples also play a part (p. 2). In essence, even in 1975 LaRocque could see that the issue of underlying racism would need to be addressed.

More recently, in her doctoral dissertation, Verna St. Denis (2002) critically examines why, despite the changes in Aboriginal education, completion rates still remain lower than those of the general Canadian population. The author interrogates how cultural discourse has been taken up in education research, literature and Aboriginal education, exploring how this discourse remains deeply embedded in the colonial enterprise (p. 12) through an examination of how educators, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, have taken up the culture concept as a way to address the problems and issues of retention and success of the Aboriginal student. Culturalized discourse seems to have become the mainstay of what now constitutes Aboriginal education, as evidenced in the many culture-based programmes and culturally appropriate services being provided to Aboriginal students. St. Denis (2002) points out that “a cultural difference analysis does not equip Aboriginal teachers and students to name the racial violence to which they are subjected; instead they are asked to witness and even participate in white supremacist practices against their own best interests” (p. 295). St. Denis uses the following example to make her point: “Aboriginal teachers are solicited and asked to participate in educational processes that invite minimizing of historical oppression. An Aboriginal teacher is asked to provide the ‘heart and soul’ of Aboriginal culture, and not a guilt inducing analysis provided by ‘politicians’” (p. 296). Again, this keeps the focus on those who are subjected to racism and discrimination (St. Denis, 2002, p. 310) rather than challenging dominant colonial and imperial practices. The author

specifically challenges the notion that cultural and cultural difference provide sufficient explanations for the educational failure of Aboriginal students; that educational strategies which emphasize a positive cultural identity and engage in cultural revitalization will be sufficient to counter educational inequality; and that Aboriginal teachers will, by their mere presence in schools, help eradicate educational failure. (p. 15)

Infusing curriculum with culture and providing support services that are deemed ‘culturally appropriate’ therefore keep the focus on the Aboriginal student as the problem--in this case, one who lacks culture and identity. Razack (1998) succinctly summarizes the deficit model:

It is not our ableism, racism, sexism, or heterosexism that gets in the way of communicating across differences, but their disability, their culture, their biology, or their lifestyle. In sum, the cultural differences approach reinforces an important epistemological cornerstone of imperialism: the colonized possess a series of knowable characteristics and can be studied, known, and managed accordingly by the colonizers whose own complicity remains masked. (p. 10)

As an Anishnaabe woman and an academic, I am troubled by this double jeopardy. On the one hand it is important to recognize the role that culture plays in retaining the unique identity of Aboriginal peoples in this land; on the other hand, however, white settler society, including the institutions they govern, can effectively relieve itself of any responsibility in perpetuating ongoing colonial violence and racism if it is seen to support initiatives that favour their definition of culture which in my opinion, largely focuses on elements of producing ceremony, song or dance. In a discussion on language and cultural content in teacher education Leavitt (1995) identifies several aspects central to discussions on culture including social, cognitive, linguistic and material components. However, he raises a similar point noting that most of the emphasis is placed on the material aspects. “Spiritual beliefs and legends, for instance, are treated as artifacts, and these, together with descriptions of kinship patterns, transportation and hunting techniques, and the names of languages, tools, and food plants, make up a static set of data about Indian and Inuit peoples” (p. 127). Aboriginal peoples and their

respective cultures are treated as unchanging or frozen in time yet definitions of culture consistently identify cultures as continually evolving and changing. In a discussion on Aboriginal education Hampton (1995) explains that “Indian cultures have ways of thought, learning, teaching, and communicating that are different from, but as valid as, those of white culture” (p. 28). He further notes that cultures do change over time: “It is the continuity of a living culture that is important to Indian education, not the preservation of a frozen museum specimen” (p. 29).

In discussions on culture Baldwin, Faulkner & Hecht (2006) and Inglis (2005) also note that there are a multitude of definitions of culture citing the early works of Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952) who documented over 150 definitions of the term. The fact that Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952) documented such a variety of definitions suggests the wide variations in the use of the term. Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952) as cited in Baldwin et al (2006) came to the following definition of culture:

Culture consists of patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behavior acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiments in artifacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional (ie., historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values; culture systems may, on the one hand, be considered as products of action, on the other as conditioning elements of further action. (p. 9)

Further, Baldwin et al (2006) note that cultures change over time as they are influenced by physical, economic, and political forces and the very notion of culture itself is also in motion. Therefore one would expect that the defining features of culture would change over time.

Faulkner, Baldwin, Lindsley and Hecht (2006) analyzed and documented 313 definitions of culture across a wide variety of disciplines post 1952 definitions analyzed by Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952). They determined that there are seven different types of contemporary definitions which include:

- *Structure/pattern:* Definitions that look at culture in terms of a system or framework of elements (e.g., ideas, behavior, symbols, or any combination of these or other elements).
- *Function:* Definitions that see culture as a tool for achieving some end.
- *Process:* Definitions that focus on the ongoing social construction of culture.
- *Product:* Definitions of culture in terms of artifacts (with or without deliberate symbolic intent).
- *Refinement:* Definitions that frame culture as a sense of individual or group cultivation to higher intellect or morality.
- *Power or ideology:* Definitions that focus on group-based power (including postmodern and postcolonial definitions).
- *Group membership:* Definitions that speak of culture in terms of a place or group of people, or that focus on belonging to such a place or group. (pp. 30-31)

Inglis (2005) also identified eight general aspects of culture which include:

1. *Culture comprises the patterns of ideas, values and beliefs common to a particular group of people, their ‘characteristic’ ways of thinking and feeling...*
2. *The culture of one group differentiates it from other groups, each of which has its ‘own’ culture...*
3. *Culture contains meanings. Culture is meaningful...*
4. *The ideas, values and beliefs of a group are profoundly implicated in motivating people to act in certain ways...*
5. *The ideas, values and beliefs of a group are embodied in symbols and artefacts...*
6. *Culture is learned...*
7. *Culture is arbitrary...*

8. *Culture and forms of social power are intimately bound up with each other.*
(pp. 7-10)

These aspects highlight that culture has a number of defining features making it difficult to ensure consistency in its usage.

Inglis (2005) also provides the following significantly succinct definition of culture: “*what different groups of people believe, think and feel*” (p. 11). Battiste and Henderson (2000) similarly link culture to worldview stating that culture “is the collective agreement of the members of the society about what is accepted, valued, and sanctioned--both positively and negatively--and about what will be the society’s protocol and beliefs” (p. 56). These authors also extend the definition of culture to include Indigenous knowledges and traditions.

Coming back to the early discussion, what happens in models based on cultural is that the focus on culture is only on selective aspects and usually center on ceremony and / or ritual. Consistent with the previous definitions, Aboriginal cultures are much more than the material and ceremonial aspects that are often stereotypically referred to. Although these are important, culture also consists of ways of being, ways of understanding and ways of coming to knowledge. In models of cultural difference, Aboriginal students are often reduced to having no culture if they are not seen to be participating in ceremony and / or knowing of the subject.

What is particularly valuable about the contributions of LaRocque (1975), Razack (1998) and St. Denis (2002) is that they challenge us to re-examine and re-think ‘cultural difference’ and what constitutes Aboriginal education within existing structures of colonialism and imperialism, including re-examining appropriate pedagogy, which is part of this research’s focus. Understanding the subjective position of the educator as well as the intent and type of pedagogy utilized in the postsecondary classroom is an important part of this study.

Specific Themes Emerging From Colonial Education

Some specific themes emerge from an overview of Aboriginal education that are vital to understanding the conditions that Aboriginal peoples encounter when they enter a postsecondary classroom. First and foremost, it is imperative to recognize that one of the greatest challenges confronted by Aboriginal peoples when they enter any classroom space is the longstanding and ongoing history of colonialism, oppression and racism. These conditions inform the current and ongoing dynamics that operate in that space. I am particularly concerned that the actual classroom is a space where racism continues to be perpetuated. For example, it is evident that the racialized construction--to be a ‘real Indian’ one must practise and participate in culture and spirituality--still exists. This notion that Aboriginal peoples have only two choices treats “Indian history as if it were frozen at a fixed point in time; as if Indians cannot change and adapt with the rest of humanity. It is not taking into account the fact that considerable change has and is occurring in all peoples, and certainly in Indians” (LaRocque, 1975, p. 11).

Secondly, the structures that hold together the academy are colonial and therefore influence what is taught, how it is taught and who teaches it. Hampton (2000) calls on educators to recognize that:

It is essential that we face the fact that current Canadian universities are products of the traditions, cultures, and languages of European immigrants. In general, the institutions, policies, and practices of English and French immigrants to Canada have been based on the assumption that their way is universal, comprehensive, true, and right. (p. 210)

This warrants some discussion of the power and control inherent in the space of the postsecondary classroom. The backdrop for this discussion is the history of deliberate suppression of any form of Aboriginal culture or language, as evidenced with the residential schools.

Third, as Battiste (1995) writes, “Indian education, although difficult to define, is a significant process to all Aboriginal parents and communities. It firmly raises the issue of humanity: What does it mean to be an Aboriginal person?” (p. vii). We know that the history of education for Aboriginal peoples has been based on assimilative practices: practices that were designed to eradicate the native. For Aboriginal peoples, the issue of providing education is linked to resistance to further assimilative tactics; it is rather viewed as a way to strengthen identity as peoples. The maintenance of a distinct identity in Canada is critically linked to being First peoples of this land. At first glance it would appear that a culturally-based education would readily assist Aboriginal peoples with the reclaiming of their unique identities in this country. However, the classroom for many Aboriginal students is a space where ongoing forms of racism continue to be perpetuated in classroom relationships as well as in the curriculum. Violence in the classroom therefore continues in a neocolonial form. While a culturally-based education provides a student with a stronger sense of his / her own culture and identity, it does not appear to address the ongoing forms of violence that exist within the institutions. It is obvious from the statistics that some 30 years of attention to developing culturally-based education models has done little to address the high rates of attrition that still affect Native students. As a result the classroom in postsecondary institutions can be viewed largely as a space under siege, a space where a particular type of violence continues to be perpetuated. If Aboriginal education is conceptualized as primarily cultural, then this in itself presents a challenge. The next section of this chapter will examine how Aboriginal professors negotiate these constraints and conditions.

Part 2:
Aboriginal Academics in the Classroom

I start this section by drawing on the experiences of Patricia Monture-Angus (1995). In her book she identifies the contradictions that she faced in academia as related to two primarily two factors: race and gender. She asserts,

It should be easy to recognize that women are under-represented in the academic fold. There are still fewer people of colour and Aboriginal people who hold faculty positions within Canadian universities. Aboriginal women and women of colour are dramatically under-represented in institutions of ‘higher learning.’ Universities remain a bastion of White male privilege. My experience of the university, and in particular the demands of an academic career, are complicated by the fact that I am both Mohawk and woman. (p. 54)

Monture-Angus provides numerous examples of the race / gender terrain she found herself negotiating in academia. In searching for solutions to negotiating the terrain of law school, Monture-Angus (1995) poignantly reminds us of the significant impact race and gender has:

Many times during the last six years of my teaching career, I have felt either confused about or uncomfortable with certain aspects of my job. This feeling is rooted in my difference either as a woman or as an ‘Indian’ or some combination of the above. I have named these uncomfortable and confusing experiences contradictions. The experience of contradiction is my expression for a state of being that I often slam into head first and the experience leaves me overwhelmed and motionless. I now understand my relationship with the university as a process of negotiating those contradictions. The negotiation part of this process implies there is no good solution to my experience of contradiction. Often naming the experience is the best solution I can hope to secure. (p. 54)

I draw attention to this particular quote because she describes the significant toll negotiating racism and sexism take and she also emphasizes the importance of naming these experiences. Like Monture-Angus, Part 2 of this chapter names the experiences of racism that Aboriginal academics are up against in the postsecondary classroom. While the Aboriginal professors interviewed in this research do not tell the reader anything inherently new, I think it is important to reiterate and restate the challenges and contradictions that Aboriginal academics continue to

face despite the fact that there are many that would suggest that significant change has occurred. Devon Abbott Mihesuah, a professor of Applied Indigenous Studies and History at Northern Arizona University and a member of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, has published a number of books related to Native peoples and their experiences in the academy. In the preface to a more recent edited book by Mihesuah and Cavender (2004) she notes the difficulties of even challenging the academy:

Native and Academics explores methodological and theoretical questions within American Indian / Native American studies scholarship about Indian agency, author credibility, and the ‘New Indian History.’ But the book almost did not happen. I was told by numerous Native and non-Native colleagues not to pursue the idea of writing about researching Natives that takes issue with standard methodologies and interpretations of researching and writing about Natives. ‘You’re making a very big mistake,’ said one....Those scholars who told me not to pursue *Native and Academics* are those who have become comfortable in their cushy jobs and refuse to speak out against the status quo. More than ever, I am glad I did not take their advice. Also on the positive side, Native intellectuals and our non-Native allies are speaking up, challenging methodologies used to write about Natives, in addition to the policies and behaviours of search, promotion, curriculum, and award committees--both subtle and blatant--that keep Natives subsumed. (p. X)

Similar to Mihesuah (2004) this chapter is in itself an anti-colonial strategy for educational institutions still remain largely white institutions where there are few bodies of color and even fewer Aboriginal scholars.

One of the ways that Monture-Angus deals with the racism she encounters is that she actually resigns from her faculty position in the law school and takes up a position in another institution in a department of Native studies. She writes,

In an effort to minimize the numbness and pain that results from experiencing contradiction on a daily basis, I made a conscious decision a year ago to leave the law school. After making this decision, I was fortunate to secure a position at the University of Saskatchewan in the native studies department. For less than a year now, I have been experiencing the university from a different and welcomed perspective. I am both healthier and happier now that I have found an

environment where my ways of being as a Mohawk woman are not as alien as they were in the law school. (p. 54)

Clearly, not only are Aboriginal peoples underrepresented in the academy but contending with racism has an enormous impact on an individual's sense of wellbeing. The fact that Monture-Angus finds safety and reprieve in a Native Studies department is not unusual either. This seems to be a space where many Aboriginal academics find themselves. In fact, many of us, myself included, find that we are confined to Native studies departments or similar departments despite having degrees in other disciplines. So while the space of Native studies can feel particularly supportive and nurturing, I would also contend that it is a space that the academy reserves for the Aboriginal academic. Elizabeth Cook-Lynn (1998) makes a related point:

While there are images of Jewish intellectuals, European intellectuals, British scholars, African novelists, there is no image of an American Indian intellectual. There is only that primitive figure who crouches near the fire smoking a sacred pipe or, arms outstretched, calls for the gods to look down upon his pitiful being. Worse, the drunk, demoralized Chingachgook sitting along the road...Or the Red Power militant of the 1960s. (Cook-Lynn, 1998, p. 111)

The above highlights the reality that the image of an Aboriginal person as a scholar is one that does not exist in most people's minds. It is not hard to understand that Monture-Angus was likely viewed by those in the academy as someone completely out of her 'defined' and regulated space—a concept I will come back to shortly. Monture-Angus herself even found it hard to imagine herself as a professor: "Even after six years of university teaching, it is hard to image myself as the professor" (Monture-Angus, 1995, p. 3).

The quotation by Cook-Lynn (1998) also highlights how the Aboriginal academic is thought of as a cultural / spiritual being, a drunk or a militant but never a scholar. Even the militant is imagined as a radical. In this view, whenever Aboriginal peoples resist ongoing imperialism and colonialism, they are labelled as militant and aggressive. In an earlier writing on

the issue of ‘voice’ LaRocque (1990) identified the labelling of anger as militant as an excuse by Euro-Canadian society to “not hear us” and a way to reduce Aboriginal peoples to having psychological problems (p. xvii).

What is interesting about the way Cook-Lynn (1998) makes her point is that she situates the racialized image of an Aboriginal person as a cultural / spiritual being alongside the image of a primitive being or one from the past. LaRocque (1975) also points out that “the present perspectives of Native peoples as simply Nature-lovers, Dirty Indians and Red-Power militants prevents them from being seen for what they are—human beings” (LaRocque, 1975, p. 33) or in this case as academics. LaRocque (1975) succinctly notes how Aboriginal peoples are essentially “faced with only two choices: to remain Indian (synonymously associated with staying on reserves or in the bush) and eventually perish, or to join society, which is erroneously linked with becoming white” (p. 11). Neither of these two choices would conceivably include becoming a scholar. Both LaRocque (1990) and Cook-Lynn (1998) contend that these constructions of Aboriginal peoples are rooted in racism.

These scholars also make another relevant point and note the challenges that Aboriginal scholars have in publishing and being invited to participate in societal discussions other than those that perpetuate racialized images of Aboriginal peoples. Cook-Lynn (1998) notes that this challenge exists despite the fact that Aboriginal peoples are one of the fastest growing populations in America, have growing numbers who have earned doctorates and run their own universities. Similarly, LaRocque (1990) recounts the extreme difficulties in being heard:

The interplay between audience reception and publishing cannot be minimized. As one of those earlier Native writers, I experienced and studied what may be called the Native-voice / white-audience dynamic. The interactions were often poignant. On another level, we were again rendered voiceless no matter how articulate we were. Apparently unable to understand or accept the truth of our experiences and perceptions, many white audiences, journalists, and critics

resorted to racist techniques of psychologically labelling and blaming us. We were psychologized as ‘bitter,’ which was equated with emotional incapacitation, and once dismissed we did not have to be taken seriously. (p. xvii)

Cook-Lynn (1998) raises a similar point referring to the proliferation of the *new Indian story*. She notes that despite the fact that there are many Native poets and novelists who are professors at American universities writing and carrying out research, their work has little influence on mainstream scholarship, art and dialogue (p. 112). She contends that existing and entrenched stereotypes are also responsible for the lack of attention paid to the scholarly writings of Native peoples. However, what is out there and being consumed by the public are stories that perpetuate racialized images of Aboriginal peoples, not the stories that contribute to Aboriginal sovereignty.

It is because of these racialized constructions even their scholarly writing is expected to fulfill the fantasies of the insatiable consuming public. One of the examples that Cook-Lynn (1998) uses are romance novels which depict the exotic forbidden interracial love and intrigue but are mixed with elements of history. She critiques this mix as problematic because of the distortion that results. Another example includes the novels of Tony Hillerman which are based in the genre of mystery. His non-fiction novels weave elements of history and culture and “not even the Navajos and Hopis from whose cultures the plots and characters are fashioned, know what is real and what is not real” (Cook-Lynn, 1998, p. 117).

LaRocque (1990) raises yet another important point and that is what she refers to as “softsell Native literature” (p. xvii). She notes,

Personal narratives, autobiographies, children’s stories, legends, interviews with elders, cultural tidbits, and ‘I remember’ sorts of materials were encouraged. Here, I must hasten to say that it isn’t the Native efforts I am criticizing; given all the suppression, misinformation, and stereotypes that exist, we can never speak enough or do enough correction and debunking. It is the white Canadian response to and use of this literature I am addressing. (p. xvii)

Similarly, Cook-Lynn (1998) points out that the genre of biography or life story is particularly problematic to Aboriginal academics. This method of the ‘Indian informant model’ of transmitting and producing stories has had acceptance not only in the literary world; it has also gained acceptance in the academic world. Cook-Lynn’s (1998) criticism of this genre is that there seems to be no end the writer will go to in search for the ‘real story’ or the stories that are the ‘truth’. As a result they spend considerable time living with Native peoples to understand the Native experience in order to produce a story based on this experience that will be viewed as a truthful account:

In the telling of these stories, the writer almost always takes sides with the ‘informant’ who give him / her specific answers to specific questions. The writer / biographer is a believer. That is the nature of the relationship between the Indian informant and writer, and that’s what gives the story its authority for the reader. (p. 123)

Cook-Lynn (1998) draws attention to the notion of authority: that is, to talk about something you must have had a ‘special experience’ (p. 115). This extends to both Native peoples themselves who are the informants and to those who produce stories about Native peoples, whether Native or not. This notion of experience is linked to authenticity and essentialism. Cook-Lynn provides the example where Russell Means, a well-known activist with the American Indian Movement, is asked to speak on all issues related to Aboriginal peoples:

It’s sad but true that to run an alcoholism treatment center on any Indian Reservation in the country (as an example of furthering this ‘been there done that’ notion of authenticity) your own years of alcohol abuse are your major credential. This idea is called ‘essentialism’ in lit-crit jargon, and it is thought by critics—who paint everyone who speaks out with the same brush—to make its defenders ‘intellectually disreputable’. (p. 115)

Racialized constructions that exist about the Aboriginal academic are also similar to the constructions of Aboriginal peoples and peoples of color in general. Mohanram (1999), Trinh (1989) and LaRocque (2004) are helpful in reaching a deeper understanding of how Aboriginal

peoples come to be viewed and represented in specific ways. These writers discuss how bodies of color are viewed and constructed through the colonial lens and how they come to be viewed as bodies out of place and having body but not mind.

Mohanram (1999) is particularly helpful in her examination of the discourses on the marked body and on identity; she brings into the discussion the concept of landscape and space and stresses the importance of the environment in shaping identities. Drawing primarily on the works of Levi-Strauss and Alfred Crosby (1999), she examines how the racialized body is produced by the landscape and can be located only in fauna and flora (p. xvi). As Mohanram (1999) points out,

subjects have a close relationship with the landscape that surrounds them, a relationship which shapes their bodies and perceptions, forms their knowledge and informs their sense of aesthetics. Such an awareness suggests that place and landscape are not inert but things which actively participate in the identity formation of the individual. Not only does a sense of place participate in the construction of a perception of physical identity, it is also central to the formation of racial identity. The category of the ‘black body’ can come into being only when the body is perceived as being out of place, either from its natural environment or its national boundaries. (p. xii)

In the first chapter of her book Mohanram (1999) describes how the black body is differentiated by race and space: “First, whiteness has the ability to move; second, the ability to move results in the unmarking of the body. In contrast, blackness is signified through a marking and is always static and immobilizing” (p. 4). Drawing on the works of Levi-Strauss and Crosby, she traces how the black body becomes fixed and frozen in time. This analysis is useful in understanding how Aboriginal peoples in the classroom are also viewed as bodies out of place.

Mohanram (1999) also uses Levi Strauss’ anthropological work on Natives in several countries, including Africa and North America that show a close relationship between the native and his / her environment to explain how racial and spatial differences are inextricably linked (p.

7). Levis-Strauss constructs a model using the bricoleur and the engineer to assist with understanding how knowledge production is produced within a particular environment. The bricoleur is described as “the indigenous ‘scientist’ who uses intuition, imagination and signs from the natural environment.” The engineer, however, “uses abstract thoughts, concepts and scientific knowledge” (Mohanram, 1999, p. 8). Mohanram (1999) critiques Levi-Strauss’s distinction because it essentially confines the native to an intuitive and primitive role and the engineer to a more advanced position (p. 9). This shows a clear division created between mind and body, with the engineer constructed as the one with the mind, and the native as the body. While Levi-Strauss did not place differences in knowledge production into a hierarchy per se, Mohanram (1999) points out that the effect of his classification “is that the engineer is located within a metropolitan modernity which appears to result in an abstraction and a removal from the ‘natural’ environment, the plants, trees, insects, birds and beasts” and the engineer is always white (p. 8). In this analysis the Native or Indigenous person becomes confined to a particular category. Mohanram (1999) summarizes:

To sum up, the distinction between the two functions at two levels in the text. First, at the level of language, wherein the bricoleur is entrapped in the web of nature, fauna and flora, and the magical world. The engineer, however, is discursively connected to the laws of physics and chemistry in anthropological discourse. Second, the difference between the bricoleur and engineer starts functioning within a discourse of development rather than one of difference—the bricoleur’s intuitive knowledge and mythological thought is primitive in comparison to the engineer’s ability to think in the abstract. Furthermore, in this text, the bricoleur is always raced as black; the engineer white. (p. 10)

Since the engineer is associated with modernity and science and the bricoleur with the primitive and the environment, it is not hard to conceive how Aboriginal peoples come to be viewed as and confined to belonging to a specific space--the environment--and as intuitive, mythical, primitive and, most certainly inferior.

Extending this further, Mohanram (1999) uses Mary Louise Pratt's analysis of the Linnaeus classification of plants to show how this systematization also constructs the natural world as chaotic: a world that needed to be brought to order by the engineer (p. 10). Mohanram notes:

The implied 'chaos' of the natural world was brought to order by this classification. Here the premised chaotic nature of the natural world is a retroactive construct whose sole function is to be a binary opposite to the order of Western classification. It is precisely the Linnaeus' system of classification, which was able to bring order to what is not yet known, that underpins the difference between the bricoleur and the engineer. (p. 10)

Here we see the hierachal arrangement that constructs Natives peoples' system of knowing as inferior because they can classify only that which is seen. Similarly, Trinh (1991) notes this racialized hierarchy: "Maintaining the intuitive, emotional Other under the scientific tutelage of the rational, all-knowing Western Subject is an everlasting aim of the dominant which keeps on renewing itself through a widest range of humanistic discourses" (p. 20). Essentially, Native peoples are classified as prehistoric beings and white scientists are classified as progressive and associated with advancement.

Mohanram's analysis provides a context for linking Cook-Lynn's assertion that there is no Aboriginal academic in people's minds to constructed racialized identities. In this instance the black body or the body of the native is identified with his / her environment, which is viewed as the natural and primitive, while the white body is neither marked nor confined to a particular place. The knowledge produced in the environment of the natural is viewed as inferior, primitive and chaotic, standing in binary opposition to scientific knowledge.

Does this mean, however, that the native can never move out of the natural and be associated with modernity? Will the Aboriginal academic ever be viewed as a scholar? Appadurai "locates the binary opposition between the indigene and the European produced in

Linnaean discourse within the usage of the term ‘native’, which for him functions as a respectable substitute for terms like primitive” (as cited in Mohanram, 1999, p. 11). He critiques the usage of the term native, stating “that while the etymology of the word native indicates a person who is born in and thus belongs to a certain place, in practice it refers to only those people who belong to certain parts of the world at a distance from the metropolitan West” (p. 11). As a result, Mohanram (1999) points out that, for Appadurai, natives not only become incarcerated in a particular place; they also become “prisoners of a mode of thought, as the bricoleur so obviously is. The science of the concrete ultimately becomes the space of incarceration and, in extension, the place of blackness” (p. 11). The ‘black body’ is viewed as a body out of place when that body is out of the natural environment. Aboriginal peoples in the academy can be viewed as bodies out of place. The marked body of the native effectively becomes immobilized and imprisoned in a mode of being. Mohanram’s analysis is particularly helpful in unraveling why Patricia Monture-Angus found a sense of safety in a Native Studies department but could not find the same in a law school. If we extend Mohanram’s analysis to Monture-Angus’s situation she would be viewed as a body out of its environment. In the academy Native academics are confined to Native studies departments; it is only more recently that we have seen more Native academics being hired in other disciplines.

Mohanram (1999) turns as well to Crosby to develop further the trope of mobility— which bodies can move freely and which cannot. Crosby constructs the Neo-European, a European away from Europe, as being able to shape his / her environment to his / her advantage, unlike Levi-Strauss, who contends that the Native is shaped by his / her environment (Mohanram, 1999, p. 13). Basically Crosby notes that Europeans brought with them diseases to which they were immune, along with animals and plants, to create an environment that would

resemble Europe when they colonized various parts of the world. The Indigenous peoples “are held immobile against the repeated onslaught of the settler, who alone has the ability and freedom to move and change his landscape” (Mohanram, 1999, p. 14). As white settler society advanced across Canada, it reproduced another Europe. Mohanram (1999) concludes: “The Caucasian is disembodied, mobile, absent of the marks that physically immobilize the native (p. 15) essentially able to move about and occupy spaces and places freely.

Confined to the category of the culturally different and fixed in the space of the natural, Aboriginal peoples find themselves in a dilemma where they cannot turn to strategies of cultural revitalization in the classroom without confirming that they are indeed confined to the space of being of culture but not mind. I turn to Trinh Minh-ha’s (1991) work as well as the more recent work of Emma LaRocque (2004) to assist with unraveling this problem. While Trinh (1991) writes primarily from a woman of color’s perspective, her work has relevance to Indigenous peoples and to this research on Aboriginal professors and students because she provides insight into identity, authenticity, marginalization and displacement. LaRocque’s (2004) work is also particularly relevant to the issues of identity and authenticity.

Trinh Minh-ha (1991) defines identity and some of the problems of defining identity in the following passage:

Re-departure: the pain and frustration of having to live a difference that has no name and too many names already. Marginality: who names? Whose fringes? An elsewhere that does not merely lie outside the centre but radically striates it. Identity: the singular naming of a person, a nation, a race, has undergone a reversal of values. Effacing it used to be the only means of survival for the colonized and the exiled; naming it today often means declaring solidarity among the hyphenated people of the Diaspora. (p. 14)

While Trinh Minh-ha speaks to a number of problems that arise in any discussion on identity, I draw on her definition of identity because she uses it simply as the naming of a person,

place or race. I also like the way she immediately problematizes the concept by pointing out that those who have been colonized undergo changes to identity in response to colonization; her point is that in order to survive the colonized have been faced with having to renegotiate their identities. It is my understanding that this is similar to the experiences of many Aboriginal peoples. If we use the residential school era as an example, Aboriginal identity as linked to culture, tradition and language was forcibly suppressed through a number of tactics, many of which involved various forms of abuse. Monture-Angus (1995), in a discussion on the importance of naming and identifying herself, asserts that “not being in control of the process of naming [oneself], that is defining who you are, serves as one of the most express examples of silencing (p. 31). In the past, as a survival tactic, Aboriginal peoples suppressed their languages and took traditional ceremonial practices underground, away from and out of the purview of the colonizer. Today we see a definite shift, in that many Aboriginal peoples are outwardly reclaiming and outwardly practicing and naming their identity as Aboriginal peoples through language and cultural practices. This shift is viewed by many as necessary for continued survival, but it is also a form of resistance to ongoing colonization.

Trinh Minh-ha (1991) also writes about spatial differences, noting that the margins are where the colonized have learned how to survive and that this is a space we know well. Based on my own subjective experiences and knowledge, I have to agree. Trinh (1991) notes the double bind of the margin: “The margins, our sites of survival, become our fighting ground and their site for pilgrimage. Thus, while we turn around and reclaim them as our exclusive territory, they happily approve, for the divisions between margin and center should be preserved, and as clearly demarcated as possible, if the two positions are to remain intact in their power relations” (p. 17). If we go back to the example of Patricia Monture-Angus:

In an effort to minimize the numbness and pain that results from experiencing contradiction on a daily basis, I made a conscious decision a year ago to leave the law school. After making this decision, I was fortunate to secure a position at the University of Saskatchewan in the Native Studies Department. For less than a year now, I have been experience the university from a different and welcomed perspective. I am both healthier and happier now that I have found an environment where my ways of being as a Mohawk woman are not as alien as they were in the law school. (1995, p. 54)

One site of survival for Monture-Angus was indeed a Native Studies department. It is at this site that she found a place where she could reclaim control over her sense of being. It also became a place where she reclaimed her voice, documenting her journey and experiences. Extending Trinh's (1991) analysis to this example would suggest that Native Studies is exactly where colonizers want the colonized to be. In moving to the margins, white settler society remains at the center and in control which is precisely where the colonizers want to be.

Another example of this double bind is found in the marginalization of First Nations peoples to lands reserved for 'Indians'. While the reserves have provided us with an ability to maintain our identity, they are also spaces where we are marginalized and left as forgotten. Trinh's (1991) analysis points out the double bind of the margins. Acknowledging the margins acknowledges the center and creates a dilemma.

In Native, Women, Other: Writing postcoloniality and feminism Trinh (1989) also examines the question of roots and authenticity. She notes that Third-World Women are often put in a precarious position where they are encouraged to be proud of their culture but at the same time are marked as different. She goes on to explain:

To persuade you that your past and cultural heritage are doomed to eventual extinction and thereby keeping you occupied with the Savior's concern, inauthenticity is condemned as a *loss of origins* and a whitening (or faking) of non-Western values. Being easily offended in your elusive identity and reviving readily an old, racial charge, you immediately react when such guilt-instilling accusations are leveled at you and are thus led to stand in need of defending that every ethnic part of yourself that for years has made you and your ancestors the

objects of execration. Today, planned authenticity is rife; as a product of hegemony and a remarkable counterpart of universal standardization, it constitutes an efficacious means of silencing the cry of racial oppression. We no longer wish to erase your difference, We demand, on the contrary, that you remember and assert it. (p. 89)

In this passage Trinh highlights the dilemma that is created around authenticity and Aboriginal peoples. LaRocque (2004) also takes up the notion of the ‘vanishing Indian’ noting that:

despite centuries of expecting the ‘Indian’ to vanish, the Indian has not. Nor have the *real* Native people. But the ever-vanishing romanticized ‘Indian’ is now propagated as the only pure expression of Indianness, the only ‘authentic’ Indian. And what is it that will mark a Native as authentic? Essentially, a layered but predictable configuration of ‘cultural difference’ has emerged out of this process. Fused together as one are the largely stereotyped notions of Indian culture and ‘tradition,’ the ingredient that gives Indian culture authenticity. Apparently - and as gleaned from a variety of schools, programs, and the arts – the marks of cultural authenticity revolve around certain notions of customs, legends, linguistics, ceremonies, and the environment. And central to this is the current sacralization of elders, whose function it is to impart wisdom and advance ‘healing’ through spirituality and ‘forgiveness’. One can take from this that political action or decolonization is discouraged. (p. 147)

In many ways we (Aboriginal peoples) have become so concerned with identifying who the ‘real Indians’ are that our attention has been diverted from other issues that are important to us—for instance, land claims. As a result of this preoccupation with who the ‘real’ Aboriginal peoples are, many of us find ourselves spending significant amounts of time defending ourselves, who we are and where we come from, forgetting that at the root of the issue are racism and ongoing colonialism. On the other hand, as Monture-Angus (1995) suggests, it is important for us to name ourselves as a way of resisting ongoing colonialism. Monture-Angus (1995) talks about the importance of naming because it is symbolic: “Growing up ‘Indian’ in this country is very much about not having the power to define yourself or your own reality” (p. 3) and later she again asserts that “not being in control of the process of naming, that is defining who you are, serves as one of the most express examples of silencing that I can think of” (p. 31). LaRocque

(2004) succinctly acknowledges the double-bind that Aboriginal peoples find themselves locked into noting:

[that] ‘authenticity’ in legendary form exacts a deadly price, for the Noble savage can only exist in a timeless vacuum. If the Indian did not vanish physically, he had to remain culturally and chronologically motionless. As such, he can only be primitive, with ‘traditions’ and ‘traits,’ rather than fully human with a contemporary culture or history. The moment the Indian steps out of timelessness, that is, comes into focus as a real culture or historical figure, he or she is deemed assimilated or non-Indian. (p. 147)

It is clear that racialized constructions of Aboriginal peoples are one of the more prevalent constraints that Aboriginal professors find themselves up against. Racism is pervasive and continually manifests itself in ways that reduce Aboriginal peoples to places of inferiority. The next section affirms the insidious nature of racism but also shows the ways in which the Aboriginal professors interviewed in this research are very much aware of the race / culture divide.

Negotiations in the Classroom: What the Aboriginal Professors Say

It’s hard to be a teacher. It’s even harder to be an Indigenous teacher because you constantly have to work between two worlds. (Cajete, 2000, p. 189)

Cajete, a well known educator and scholar from the Tewa Santa Clara Pueblo, like Monture-Angus (1995) reflects in this quote his understanding of the difficult terrain that Indigenous peoples have to negotiate in the classroom. Similarly, the professors in this research spoke to the challenges and constraints they encounter every day while teaching in various postsecondary institutions. Several themes emerged in these interviews with Aboriginal professors.

Early on, one of the central themes became apparent: The fact that there are few Aboriginal professors working in the academy is related to a number of factors. For example, as

a result of the images noted in the previous section by LaRocque (2004) of the “dying Indian” and by Cook-Lynn (1998) of the “spiritual / cultural Indian,” the scholarly landscape does not include Aboriginal peoples—why would they be included if the belief is that authentic Aboriginal peoples do not really exist or, if we do, we only perform ceremonies. It was clear from the interviews that a good part of the discussion about the classroom experiences of these Aboriginal professors centered on both the dilemmas and the strategies they employ in negotiating a variety of aspects related specifically to culture and identity.

Negotiating culture: The only real Indian is the spiritual / cultural Indian.

The constraints previously mentioned first surface in the persistence of the idea that the only ‘real Indian is the spiritual Indian’. Aboriginal professors are intensely aware of this, as the interview with P1 demonstrates. The following excerpt from an interview with him highlights how this professor is acutely aware of how dominant society continues to view Aboriginal peoples:

S: What kinds of, uhm, materials did the Intro course cover?

P1: Ahh I kinda changed it up each year in response to what students said the previous year. And when I first started I was very cautious about doing the anthropological approach. I didn’t want that. So I tried to keep it issues based which made it very political. So one week we would talk about justice issues, the next week would be education and the week after that land claims or something. And what people were saying is that they weren’t getting enough of the culture and so I tried to work that in with the same approach. So that we were doing the issues but framing it from, uhm, what were the aboriginal cultural approaches to this issue prior to contact with newcomers and then how did that change, how did that relationship change the nature of the way we did educating, the way we did justice. And then what are some of the ways culture inform our way forward. So, because I saw cultural solutions as way kinda the way to address each of these

issues. So I would try and do that as, uhm, a way of finishing the day. So we had a positive ending.

S: What do you mean by culture approaches?

P1: I mean, ah, approaches that are based within the Indigenous ways, like the Indigenous cultural ways of knowing, ways of relating, ways of doing. So, uhm, for example, if we take governance. How is that we made political decisions in our communities before contact? And then how did contact change that? How did colonialism change it? So we would talk about the Indian Act, government and things like that and then what are some of the ways we can alter that structure, looking to the culture for solutions. That might mean longhouse governance if your Six Nations or it might mean clan governance if you're Anishnaabe. So that's what I mean by cultural approaches.

S: When you taught the course the first time the students felt you didn't have enough culture pieces in the course at all or?

P1: They, they said I was expecting. Well the thing is you get such wide diversity, some people saying oh it's not political enough and then saying its way too political. So you do get contradicting statements. But I did feel the first time round people said they were expecting more culture and didn't get it. But I think what they really meant is they wanted to know things like sweatlodges and dreamcatchers.

S: Ah, ok

P1: And I think a lot of it came from the non-Aboriginal students

S: And did you move the course into those kinds of pieces as well?

P1: Only as it related to those issues. So if having sweats in prison helped people in kinda find their path and moved away from ah you know what do you call it-- reoffending and that would be how it came up. But it wouldn't be to dissect the sweatlodge to teach kids how to do it.

In essence, white people typically expect Aboriginal professors to be doing culture, in some form, even in the classroom. Trinh (1989) eloquently explains the dilemma in which P1 finds himself in her discussion on specialness as it relates to the subject positions of the dominant and the Other. As she states,

My audience expects and demands it; otherwise people would feel as if they have been cheated: We did not come to hear a Third World member speak about the First (?) World, We came to listen to that voice of difference likely to bring us what we can't have and to divert us from the monotony of sameness. (p. 88)

In the excerpt from the interview with P1, he understands that what the students are really demanding is culture and spirituality in the form of “sweatlodges and dreamcatchers”—after all, that is what they expect from an Aboriginal professor. In my own experience, these are ‘stereotypical’ requests that I often get from non-Aboriginal peoples. If we can provide or produce culture in the presentation or in a class we are actually viewed as the more authentic Aboriginal. LaRocque (2004) also notes the extreme pressure that Aboriginal scholars face to perform and be the ‘cultural Indian’. If Aboriginal scholars do not adhere to these preconstructed images of Aboriginal peoples, LaRocque (2004) notes, that there are significant risks including not only losing our audiences but also potential jobs in the academy, government and even in Aboriginal communities. In the excerpt above, P1 is acutely aware that if he does not do culture in the classroom he runs the risk of not meeting the expectations of some students, that they will be disappointed. In order not to alienate these students, he strategically negotiates taking up culture in the class to incorporate culture talk as one of the solutions to the impacts of colonization. However P1 limits his culture talk to what he refers to as cultural approaches rather than speaking directly about the actual rituals associated with spiritual and ceremonial practices. It is as if he draws the line or sets a boundary about how much culture he is willing to include. So

he engages in the culture talk but limits actual performance of cultural ceremony. This culture talk is threaded throughout the interview with professor 1.

In revealing what she covers in the classroom, P2 explained that she finds a lot of students come into her course “to learn about Aboriginal culture.” As a result she states: “I am very cautious, and don’t want to teach culture in the classroom, but I want them to have an understanding of what we mean when we say a holistic approach.” When probed for an explanation, P2 also acknowledges that students expect Aboriginal professors to take up the practice of culture in the classroom:

S: Uhm you said that you were careful not to introduce culture into the classroom. Can you just explain?

P2: Yes. What I find is that usually when students take the elective, say, uhm they come in and I say, “Introduce yourself and tell me where you’re at in the programme, why did you choose to take this course.” And I find a lot of students will say, “I came into this course because I wanted to learn about aboriginal culture.” And so what I end up talking about is, “what culture are you talking about?” And I use a lot of my own self in the teaching, so I’ll refer to things like, “Do you think you want to learn my culture? Do you want to learn Ojibwe culture? Do you want to learn Haida culture?” Like, I tend to do it more like that and try to get them to figure it out. I ask all kinds of questions, and then you know talking about, like, “Would you think that people from the Atlantic coast such as myself have the same kinds of cultural practices and languages and how we live compared to an Innu sister, and so on?” Getting them to say, “Omigod, how can I be so crazy?” Or I’ll say to them, because they’re all so diverse, uh uh I’ll say things like, “So tell me what’s black culture.” Of course, they think that’s ridiculous, because there’s Caribbean, there’s ... Africa’s a continent so there’s tons of issues (giggles). So that’s another way that we can get to what I’m talking about. So that’s why I take that initial approach to it. The other thing that I want

to look at is misconceptions, like there's just AN aboriginal culture, and we're all kind of the same. So I'm trying to blow that out of the water to begin with.

P2 extends her concern further and expresses concerns about cultural appropriation. She also links culture to identity. She states:

I've seen, I've heard, that non-Aboriginal instructors will actually do a smudge at the beginning of their classes, and things like that, and I find that a little offensive, frankly. And I want to caution them around things like that cultural appropriation is going into these New Age shops and buying our medicines and not knowing what they're for, who picked them, and the fact that they're being sold for money you know. And that you can't convert to being a Native person, it doesn't work that way. They need to go to their own identity, their own family.

Professor 4 provides a similar account of how students expect racialized (romanticized) constructions of spirituality and culture:

And in the...course that I have, one of the things that I do is because people get really frustrated in it. I think they're expecting romanticized stuff. And I'm not a traditional teacher, so I don't teach traditional knowledge. I mostly teach about what the field looks like, how people do research in it, what's appropriate, what's not appropriate, what's decolonizing, what's re-creating about it, and whatever else.

Similarly Professor 3 expressed resistance to romanticizing Aboriginal peoples: "I didn't want to sensationalize what Aboriginal people have gone through. Like, sensationalize homelessness, or sensationalize alcoholism, or whatever."

Authenticity.

Closely linked to the negotiating the terrain of spiritual / cultural being, professors also have to contend with whether or not they are in fact viewed as authentic. Bonita Lawrence

(2004) points out in her analysis that “even a casual exploration of urban white attitudes suggests that white Canadians regularly engage in a vast number of ‘conversations’ about Indianness. These range from a generalized tendency to believe that Native people have died out, to high levels of resentment when Native people assert their hunting and fishing rights, to the increasing prevalence of New Age desires to appropriate Indian realities” (p. 135). The discourses that are operating and perpetuated are that the real Indian has vanished; Lawrence (2004) goes on to point out that “the few that exist must manifest absolute authenticity—on white terms—to be believable as Indians” (p. 135). Again, this notion of authenticity has been effectively attached to the racialized image of being a ‘cultural and spiritual’ Indian (Lawrence, 2004; LaRocque, 2004).

In the excerpt that follows P1 speaks directly to the issue of authenticity and it is in this dialogue that we see how acutely aware he is of the discourse operating around authenticity:

S: Do you think that uhm or how do you think that your own position, because you’re Aboriginal, affects how the course material comes across both to the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students?

P1: I think they are more likely to believe it’s authentic. And I kinda hate that word but there does seem to be that feeling of uhm well sometimes it’s called bias I guess. But because that person’s an Aboriginal person then I am getting truthful retelling or recounting of history. That something comes out in the course evaluation a lot is I got an authentic picture of how Canadian history really happened.

S: From both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal?

P1: I can’t tell that if they’re Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal because it’s anonymous. So that what I sense is what they are really saying is that all their

lives they've had history taught from a European perspective and to get a different perspective on that is somehow more authentic or at least balanced, I don't know.

While P4 is not able to differentiate whether these perceptions come from Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal students, he does also go on to say that because his experiences are not related to living on the reserve he does "get reserve Indian students who will say well you know it's not like that or... And so I have to kinda say that's not my experience but I do think that you're right or I have had students from the North and I don't know what it's like to be from the North but they can bring that and they can say." In essence P1 is caught in a double dilemma where his authenticity can be called into question from both non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal peoples.

P2 also raises the issue of authenticity, but in a slightly different way. P2 actually believes that authenticity is important. Noting the importance of providing a real experience for the students, she brings in community guest speakers and Elders in order to produce an authentic voice.

P2: Because all my work experience has been in terms of social work and has been with Aboriginal peoples and communities... I draw on articles that are written by Aboriginal educators, sometimes social workers but not always...and also I bring in guest speakers from the community...I've had survivors of residential schools, young adults who were adopted by white families and treated horribly...Also aboriginal service providers who have worked with them... So you get the real voices and the real person there in the room.

She also links the students with the community by taking them to the community:

P2: "Often we take them to visit an Aboriginal agency and talk to some of the people there about their work, what are the issues that they are struggling with and what are they doing about those kinds of things."

This is an example of bringing the authentic voice into the classroom. Recall the earlier point that Cook-Lynn (1998) raised in relation to the role of the native informant: that is to talk about something you must have had a ‘special experience’ (p. 115). In the above excerpt P2 brings in Native people who can convey an authentic experience and voice. This notion of bringing an authentic voice to the classroom is tricky terrain for an Aboriginal professor. On the one hand, it is important for Aboriginal peoples to assert their unique identities as original peoples of this land; on the other, bringing an authentic voice to the classroom may perpetuate the racialized constructions of Aboriginal peoples as being only cultural / spiritual beings.

P4 also speaks about the notion of real lived experience. In the following excerpt, she speaks at length about why she feels it is important to use her own personal experiences as the platform for her classes. I pondered about this excerpt for a time; while she is talking about situating oneself in relation to her work, she is also regulating herself through the idea of authenticity. She appears to be responding to the notion around ‘authentic voice’ and questioning herself and whether she can talk / lecture about Native issues / experiences where she does not have direct experience. She negotiates her authenticity throughout the excerpt; not until the last sentence does she finally conclude that what students really want is the voice of an authentic Aboriginal person. She identifies herself as authentic, but she carefully notes that she is not the expert on all Aboriginal peoples:

S: How do you think your own, like who you are, affects the delivery of your class?

P4: I think it has a big impact. Because I try to speak from my perspective and I tell people what my biases are. I say, I’m First Nations. And I don’t have a Métis perspective. I don’t have an Inuit perspective. If I could approach teaching like an academic. Unless I can bring someone from that perspective, for example Inuit.

So I have a First Nations bias. I grew up on the reserve, I'm not Bill C31, I'm not an urban Indian. Maybe I'm turning into one, I don't know. So I tell people what my bias is, and I think that's important. When I co-taught with [Professor X], he talked about his perspective. He just said, I didn't grow up on a reserve. I'm trying to learn my stuff now, my language and whatever else. And he tried to present it like people's lives are like a journey or a path. Like you don't stay in the same place. So I think that context is really important.

For me, I've never felt comfortable with anybody else doing this, and I don't think I would do it presenting yourself like you're an expert in everything. Your students might have that expectation, but just saying, I don't know this other stuff, but this is my field, this is what I know, this is based on my experience. And a lot of what I talk about, the examples that I give, are based on my experience, whatever it is. The only experience I could talk about the residential school system is the impact it had on me because my mother went. Because in my father's family, they didn't go. So that's what I try to do. Or what was my experience in the public school system. I go, You know, we're not exactly learning Aboriginal worldview and language there, either. It's not like the problem isn't there anymore because the residential schools don't exist anymore. So I try to speak as much as possible from my own experience, or whatever people have told me. I'll say, someone told me this story about how this happened. I think that's really important, because I think if you don't do that, then I think you're almost misleading people.

S: Because then it's all book, academic knowledge. You do use a lot of mixing of experiences, your own or the experiences of others. You even talked about using video as a method of bringing in other people's experiences.

P4: Especially when it's a context that I don't know. Like if we're doing big land claims stuff, comprehensive things, a lot of it is in BC and the north. Not a lot in Ontario. I don't know it. Like I mean, I know it academically, I could present on

it, have a nice lecture. But it's not the same as them seeing exactly what the actual impact is. And people like hearing it from people who know their own voice.

In a discussion of authenticity and identity St. Denis (2007) points out that accentuating authentic Aboriginal cultural identity has become highly regarded. She goes on to note that some of the requirements of authenticity include: "speaking one's First Nations language, having knowledge of and participating in a myriad of spiritual practices, and knowing traditional stories and other cultural practices" (p. 1076).

In a similar vein P4 asserts herself as authentic by specifically stating that she is First Nations and grew up on the reserve, and by identifying this as the platform from which she expresses her views. What seems to be tied to her notion of authenticity is the notion of experience. In P4's view, to be regarded as an authentic Aboriginal person you need to have some specific experiences that are either similar to what St. Denis notes above or have some other lived experience such as having survived the residential school. St. Denis (2007) points out that the whole issue of identity politics is rooted in colonial history. The reality is that ongoing colonial and imperial imposition continues to affect Aboriginal peoples in very real ways.

The next section focuses on another concept related to authenticity. It is not enough that as a professor your authenticity as a real 'Indian' is called into question; your authenticity as a real 'academic' closely follows suit.

You're not really an academic.

In this section I look at the ways professors spoke about how they negotiated their identity as academics. In the following excerpt we hear P3 articulate her growing frustration at not being taken seriously as an academic. What is both telling and fascinating in her description is that three Aboriginal female academics find themselves attempting to 'educate' one white

female academic about the connection they have to the urban Native community and the importance of this connection in carrying out teaching and research as Aboriginal professors. In P3's own resistance to perceived ongoing covert racism, she finds herself in a place where she actually questions her own intelligence:

S: So why do you think that that has happened throughout your whole history of schooling, that the Aboriginal voice is lacking? How do you understand that?

P3: I think it comes down to colonization and the fact that there are not a lot of Aboriginal people in university, there are hardly any professors. If you just look even at high school, the dropout rate. So we don't have people in power positions. It's coming, it's happening, because you're sitting here and I'm sitting here. And the more that happens, it's going to be easier. But I think that's the reason why. And I think we think differently. I think about being a circle in a square. We're constantly struggling, right?

And I'm jumping now to as a faculty member. We had a meeting, and talking about curriculum at [a university], it's called the Aboriginal Roundtable, to try to strategize about curriculum and things like this. It was [three professors who are Aboriginal]. We're all Aboriginal. We were meeting with one person who wasn't. And we were all saying the same thing over and over and over again, about the connection we have to the [Native] community. It was about half an hour. [One of the Aboriginal professors] would say it, and then the person would have a question back, "Yeah, but such and such and such and such." And then [a second Aboriginal professor] would say it. And then as we were talking, I was thinking about "how can I say it?" And then I said that in my research, even though I'm involved in research in the urban Aboriginal community, it affects [other Aboriginal communities]. It affects wherever those people are from, in a direct way, not in an indirect way. She wasn't getting it. She was thinking about people thinking in a very linear fashion as opposed to a circular fashion, and I think that that's the problem that I have with my supervisor. He doesn't get the way I think.

But I get the way he thinks. I can see how he's thinking. But I'm not able to put it into words that he can understand. And the same thing happened in this meeting. And we tried over and over and over again for the right words. We're not talking about three stupid women, eh?

S: No.

P3: And so it was very interesting. And then she left the room. And I'm like, "Wow, we think so different from her." It was like an eye-opener for me. So I think that's part of the problem, the institution thinks differently than we do.

While the talk in the above text is convoluted and difficult to track, this participant is attempting to highlight the difficulties that she and two other Aboriginal professors face in the academy in trying to articulate the importance of establishing connections to the urban Aboriginal community. The white female academic fails to understand the importance of community connections to research and teaching, nor does she seem to understand the effect this connection might have on the work Aboriginal academics do in the institution. These three Aboriginal women felt unheard and P3 becomes so frustrated she finally asks the question, "We're not three stupid women eh?" It is hard to imagine three well educated and articulate Aboriginal women being put in this position and made to feel as if there is something wrong with them. From an anti-racist, anti-colonial lens this appears to be a racist strategy to wear down the colonized / oppressed to the point that they are finally silenced or exasperated enough to give up trying to make any change. The example also shows how strongly racial hierarchies are held in place.

Here is another example of how 'you're not really an academic' plays itself out. When asked about her experiences with dealing with racism and oppression, P4 responded: "Unfortunately, yes. Because certain ways of being aren't really recognized. The institution is set

up almost to be the anti to what it means to be Nishnaabe, which is the opposite of humility" and then went on to explain:

there are institutional things that make it very challenging. Like I can see why retention is difficult. Because people feel compromised all the time. Students feel compromised, and I tell them. It doesn't get that much better when you're faculty. People make assumptions about what you're supposed to be, and if you're not that... Like, it's a very conscious decision to play the game or to not play the game. I don't know anybody who doesn't think about it that way. I shouldn't say that way, but who isn't aware that they're being compromised, and that they have to strategically decide to do things or not do things. And these are the consequences, or do something else that you're going to do to make it up. So, institutionally, you are compromised...Because I find that when I'm involved in projects, it's often as an add-on, you're an afterthought still. With students, unfortunately, you're still dealing with a lot of stereotypes. I'm glad people ask the questions, but it shows me that there's still a lot of ignorance. Even when I was a graduate student, the completely and utterly bizarre things that people would say to me when I presented, like I want you to stand under the Native mural. I'm like, Why? You didn't make anybody else do it. You're singled out. So I find that it's institutional, and sometimes it's very subtle. I've had non-Native faculty say things to me like: You got away with that because you're Native.

In the above excerpt P4 notes the tokenistic position in which Aboriginal academics are often placed: as 'add-ons' or 'afterthoughts' to projects. Tokenism is another form of racism whereby Aboriginal peoples are brought in to various projects to bring some specific expertise and legitimacy to the work. That expertise often takes the form of cultural knowledge and experience, again perpetuating the racialized construct of the cultural Indian.

Negotiating the role of the Indian expert.

Yet another negotiation professors find themselves engaged with occurs in the role of being the expert on everything Native, or the native informant. P1 spoke of the importance of encouraging sharing of experiences and knowledge among students, but highlights attempts to dispel the idea of being the expert:

I guess I'm really honoured because they do say that. Everyone is a different level and they all have their different experiences in the area and so I try to communicate that I don't know everything. I may be the one teaching the course but there are so many different things that I don't know so if you do know the stuff *please share it*. And I think it's that openness that stated up front like that that makes it possible for students to feel that way later.

P1 further notes that his being the teacher does not mean that he is the expert on everything. He implies that there is an expectation that he should be an expert on everything and in particular anything related to Aboriginal peoples. Monture-Angus (1995) also noted a similar experience as a professor of law where she was expected to have an understanding of everything related to Aboriginal legal issues “from tax to criminal law, from child welfare to incorporations, from the *Indian Act* to the constitution. No non-Aboriginal person is expected to develop an expertise in all aspects” (p. 60) and yet if you are an Aboriginal professor in the academy you are likely called upon to comment on a wide range of topics that may be completely out of your area of expertise.

In the following excerpt P3 discusses her reactions to what she is teaching in the classroom in reference to Aboriginal history and anti-oppression. This quote is interesting because P3 seems to be negotiating her own identity as a new professor but also her role and

expectations as a Native professor. Is the notion of being required to be a Native expert also part of what she fears?

P3: But one of the things that this course is doing for me, is (sighs) it's doing the same thing that it did with my PhD coursework, but it's more positive. I'm not feeling as, I am not feeling hypocritical, I'm feeling more like I'm learning more why I might be the way I am, why my sister is the way she is, why my family is the way they are, and why Aboriginal people are the way they are. But not feeling hypocritical about it because of the recognition of colonialism and what it really has done. And I didn't get that from my PhD programme, it wasn't enough focused on what our people have gone through and why our parents were they way they were, and how we are the way we are, and how we might be as parents. That you know, the seven generations prior and the seven generations coming, and that effect. And I didn't get that, and maybe if I got that in my coursework through my PhD programme, I would have felt a little more comfortable, and not felt that it was a constant struggle.

Concluding Comments

This chapter emphasizes that education has always been and continues to be part of the colonial regime – one wrought with violence, abuse and processes that continue to have had devastating effects on Aboriginal peoples. Despite strong racist and colonial forces that continue to be enacted in the educational system, this chapter shows how Aboriginal professors are acutely aware of the risks associated with negotiating the culture / colonial divide in the classroom. Questioning ongoing colonial relations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples, as well as the difficulties that arise around the conditions of teaching, is central to framing notions of how culture is negotiated. In essence Aboriginal peoples are often viewed as authentic if they do culture in very specific and regulated ways—the Aboriginal academic is no exception to this. Constructed racialized images of Aboriginal peoples such as the spiritual or

cultural being also serve to organize subjects--academics, as a case in point--into positions of authenticity. This hegemonic ordering, for the most part, controls to some degree how and what curriculum is taught. In the above examples, the professors are acutely aware of the discourses operating around culture, authenticity and being Aboriginal peoples. Despite this, they find themselves having to negotiate culture in the classroom even when they do not want to. This points to the issue of how the Aboriginal professor negotiates not only how one teaches but what knowledge is transmitted and by whom. In the next chapter I examine how all of this affects the Aboriginal student.

Chapter Six:

How Do Students Negotiate the Culture / Colonial Divide?

I start with a story in which Patricia Monture-Angus (1995) reflects on sitting in a first-year Property Law class for 8 months and hearing no mention of the relationship between First Nations and Canada:

I was so shocked I could not say and did not say a word about the total disappearance of First Nations, First Nations history and belief, or the colonial relations Canada was built upon. The entire system of property law in this country is built on a great lie--that colonial myth. 'Columbus discovered America and claimed for the Europeans!' None of my colleagues in law school saw we were surrounded by that colonial myth or that the property law system they all supported was built on a great lie which disappeared all of my people. None of my colleagues knew the impact that Canada's colonial past was having on me as an Aboriginal person in my class at law school and this compounded the experience of alienation and isolation. Nobody in that law school was conscious of the fact that they were lying and I was overwhelmed at being expected to quietly participate in the disappearance of my people. (p. 81)

Unfortunately the incident described above is all too familiar to many Indigenous students that I have come to know. Classroom spaces, in particular postsecondary classroom spaces, are supposed to be spaces where one can engage freely and intellectually. However, in the above example, it is clear that not all students feel this sense of liberty—in fact, the Aboriginal students in this research recount a similar sense of alienation, isolation and silencing.

In Part 1 of this chapter I examine the subject positions of Aboriginal students. I do this by first contextualizing the classroom space that Aboriginal students enter by describing the current challenges and constraints they encounter when they enter the postsecondary classroom, keeping in mind that the terrain of the university classroom is a colonial space – a space where ongoing colonial violence continues. I examine what has been produced in the literature about how Aboriginal students negotiate space and race in the classroom. Like Aboriginal professors,

Aboriginal students are constructed in particular ways. I therefore extend the analysis of racialized constructions of Aboriginal professors to Aboriginal students, who also find themselves in a particular place of negotiating culture and identity in the classroom.

In Part 2, I discuss what the Aboriginal students in this research had to say about how they negotiate this culture / colonial divide of the classroom. The narratives confirm that the terrain of the university classroom is well known to each of the students interviewed, meaning that the terrain of the university classroom is one where Aboriginal students find themselves in the position of negotiating culture and racism and that they are all too familiar with this kind of negotiation.

Part 1:
What Constraints / Conditions Do Aboriginal Students Face?

It is well documented that both educational experiences and outcomes for Aboriginal students in the education system are poor (Malatest, 2002; RCAP, 1996a). Researchers and educators across the Americas have highlighted a number of factors that contribute to this issue, including, but not limited to, inconsistent education policies (RCAPv3 1996); the longstanding effects of the residential school era resulting in a lack of identity and a lack of knowledge about Aboriginal cultures (AFN, 1994; Barman et al., 1987; Malatest, 2002); racism (LaRocque, 1975; RCAP, 1996a; Malatest, 2002; St. Denis & Hampton, 2002); and limited access and available supports (Malatest, 2002). Malatest (2002) notes five specific barriers that Aboriginal students face: historical, which involves the residential school system and the assimilative nature of post secondary education; social, which concerns lack of academic preparation, social discrimination, unemployment and poverty; cultural, which references cultural differences; family-related, which denotes family responsibilities; and individual / personal, which highlights issues related to self-concept and motivation (p. 20). These researchers also stress that “no program or initiative will be effective unless it factors in the entire scope of barriers. Institutional attempts to overcome one barrier to Aboriginal access will inevitably face the entire pattern of barriers” (p. 14). RCAP (1996a) also made 44 recommendations for Aboriginal education, each one pointing to a number of issues that Aboriginal peoples face in the education system. Some of these included increasing the number of Aboriginal people in educational leadership, administrative and support positions; increased access to all levels; curriculum that includes Aboriginal perspectives and worldviews; involvement of Elders; Aboriginal language classes; increased mechanisms for family and community involvement; and education to combat racism (p. 475).

Vernon Douglas (1987), a well known Aboriginal educator, contends that the reason that Aboriginal peoples know little about their own history and culture is a result of discriminatory legislation, specifically the Indian Act and the residential school system (p. 181) -- two specific colonial mechanisms designed to bring the 'Indian' under control. He links this lack of understanding about self to the development of low self-esteem, feelings of inferiority and despair; this concept is also supported by RCAP (1996a). RCAP (1996a) notes that schools, rather than nurturing Aboriginal students, typically erode identity and self-worth (p. 434). As a result, Douglas (1987) advocates for integration of cultural perspectives and the history of Aboriginal peoples into all provincial curricula (p. 181) which is consistent with what others have recommended (AFN, 1994; RCAP, 1996a). What I found useful about Douglas (1987) that differed from Malatest (2002) was that he stressed a two-pronged approach to Native education: the education of Native peoples and improved education about Native peoples for everyone (p. 184). Essentially Douglas (1997) advocated strengthening Aboriginal culture, tradition and language as a means to strengthen Aboriginal identity; in addition, he recognized that education also needed to happen in society as a whole to counter ongoing colonial and imperial imposition.

While Douglas' (1997) first approach focuses on a cultural solution to an issue that may not be viewed as cultural, he does assert that changes need to occur within larger society, which suggests that he is quite aware that the source of the problem is not culture but rather ongoing colonial imposition. Despite the findings in these reports and the enormous efforts put forth by Aboriginal peoples, Aboriginal students, much like Aboriginal professors, continue to enter sites such as the postsecondary classroom to find themselves confronting a number of conditions that are the result of the longstanding and ongoing history of colonialism and oppression, including

racism. Further, the colonial structures that hold the academy in place affect what is taught, how it is taught and who teaches in that space.

Aboriginal students, like students of color, are marked first as culturally and racially different when they come to the classroom. However, Aboriginal students are also marked by the fact that they are Indigenous to this land and therefore have a specific history that informs how they are viewed both as Aboriginal peoples and as students. In this regard they remain a threat to the advancement of colonialism and imperialism. Recall from the previous chapter that historical constructions of Aboriginal peoples as less than human and unintelligent played a significant role in ensuring that colonization proceeded with little regard for the Indigenous peoples of the land. Like the Aboriginal academic, Aboriginal students are subjected to the same racialized constructions about Aboriginal peoples that support ongoing colonialism.

In educational institutions Aboriginal students are specifically marked as ‘at risk,’ a marker that inscribes a victim identity and labels Aboriginal students as inferior. With Aboriginal professors, inferiority is constructed as ‘not being a real academic,’ whereas Aboriginal students often find themselves constructed as ‘disadvantaged’ or as not being in ‘real academic programmes’; it is also assumed that if they are in a mainstream programme, they surely must be receiving some sort of unearned advantage. Johnson (2003) notes the possible problem with risk-models: “At-Risk models constructed to define and ‘treat’ failures of American Indian families and tribes exemplify colonist schooling practices including paternalism and remedial models focused on the individual or family rather than systems of domination and control” (p. 182). Johnson is not against remedial programmes per se; rather, he calls into question supporting at-risk ideology without critical analysis and attention to the effects of ongoing colonialism and imperialism. As Johnson (2003) notes, at-risk models fail to account for

“complexities of reservation life, the relation between sacred places and tribal identity, the history of ‘legal’ land-grabs and Indian peoples’ long-standing resistance to such maneuvers because the argument [at-risk] was developed from theories and value constructs outside of American Indian histories and value systems” (p. 183).

In an extensive study in the United States Deyhle (1995) concluded that racialized beliefs about Navajo students are embedded in a model of assimilation:

For Anglos, these assimilationist beliefs are generally used to frame either the need to ‘change’ Navajos to fit into the outside world or to adjust educational and economic opportunities downward to be ‘appropriate’ for Navajo culture. Either way, Navajo culture is seen as undesirable. (p. 419)

As with at-risk models, the Aboriginal student is viewed as the source of the problem, deficient in some way, which results in poor educational outcomes. In the example above by Deyhle (1995), culture becomes the reason for academic failure, reinforcing existing racial hierarchies by keeping the gaze on the Aboriginal student as the problem. Deyhle (1995) goes on to explain: “To accept Navajo culture and language would be to confer equal status, which is unacceptable to the Anglo community” (p. 419).

Schick and St. Denis (2005) report that “in Canada, especially on the prairies, a common code for racial difference is ‘cultural difference’ – a quality that racial minority children, especially Aboriginal children, are said to have and which is given as the reason for any lack of school success” (p. 306). The residential schools are the base of the trope of culture as an impediment to progress. That is, it is argued that Aboriginal peoples were initially subjected to education geared to ‘civilize’, an assimilative thrust underpinning residential schools. Today, Aboriginal children are still labeled as being different because of their culture and language but are also labeled as ‘at-risk’ because they may not speak the dominant language nor participate in dominant ways of life. As Schick and St. Denis (2005) point out, the notion of cultural difference

connects education failure to the ‘other’ (p. 306). This is an important point in the discussion of Aboriginal students—supporting the fact that they come to the education system already marked as deficient and inferior.

Further, in the analysis that follows, Aboriginal students in this research also have to contend with negotiating their own identity as they are called into question if they do not fit the ‘stereotypical constructed image’ of what a real ‘Indian’ should portray. In fact, as with Aboriginal professors, Aboriginal students themselves are often called upon to be the Native experts in the classroom or play the role of the cultural / spiritual beings and advisors. When Aboriginal students do not speak their own language or participate in cultural events, they are labeled as ‘not real Indians’. Recall from Chapter five that Aboriginal peoples are viewed as ‘real Indians’ when they are seen to practice spiritual and cultural rituals. Ella Shohat and Robert Stam (1994) refer to this as the ‘burden of representation,’ the racialized construction of Aboriginal peoples that marks them in a specific way, as unchanging and homogenous. “Representations of the dominant groups, on the other hand, are seen not as allegorical but as ‘naturally’ diverse” (p. 183). The insidious nature of these constructions puts Aboriginal students in the precarious position of negotiating their own identity. At either ends of these spectrums they are caught in a web that holds in place white supremacy.

In addition, the institutional environment of the university is also a space that for many Aboriginal students is ‘foreign.’ It is not often, for instance, that Aboriginal students find themselves reflected in the institution – in everyday classroom curriculum as voiced by Monture-Angus (1995) in the opening quote to this chapter; in the buildings; and / or in the faculty and staff employed at the institution. The classroom space itself is influenced by the relationships in

the classroom as well as the curriculum and the pedagogical approaches employed. It is this space that I discuss further in the upcoming sections.

How Do Aboriginal Students Negotiate Race in the Classroom?

The space of the classroom, what is transmitted in that space and the relationships that occur in that space are all affected by longstanding and ongoing colonial and imperial practices. Belcourt-Dittloff and Stewart (2000) refer to the practices and processes associated with colonization as rooted in historical racism,¹⁹ which has and continues to have a profound effect on Native Americans. Unfortunately racism is embedded in society, its institutions and individuals; it thus affects people in many different ways. Derman-Sparks and Phillips (1997), both educators who have been teaching anti-racism for over 20 years and who have written a book on their classroom experiences and on anti-racist pedagogy, refer to this as structural racism or white supremacy, which they say is not merely about the perpetuation of existing stereotypes but is a form of racism that is embedded in societal structures (p. xi). These same authors go on to define racism “as an institutionalized system of economic, political, social, and cultural relations that ensures that one racial group has and maintains power and privilege over all others in all aspects of life” (p. 2). Baez (2000) further differentiates institutional and individual forms of racism and notes that individual notions of racism typically emphasize overt and covert acts by individuals, whereas institutional racism is characterized by an organization’s rules, cultures, habits, beliefs and symbols, that work to produce a space that marginalizes certain racial or ethnic groups (p. 333).

¹⁹ Belcourt-Dittloff & Stewart (2000) draw on the work of Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998, noting “The notion of historical racism is an outgrowth of the fact that American Indian people have long experienced racism and oppression as a result of colonization and its accompanying genocidal practices (p. 1166).

Without a doubt one of the major challenges that Aboriginal students face is racism – societal, institutional and personal (Adams, 1999; Monture-Angus, 1995; St Denis & Hampton, 2002). As Schick and St. Denis (2005) point out, “Without acknowledging racism and race privilege in curricular practices, the effects of colonization continue” (p. 296). While Schick and St. Denis (2005) focus on critically examining curriculum in pre-service teacher-education programmes, their work can also be extended more generically to other classroom spaces. They note:

To varying degrees, students and teachers learn to dis / identify with the history, images, and language of schooling. These discourses inform them of the extent to which they do or do not belong in this particular public institution. Students who easily fit within dominant cultural practices of the classroom see the school reflected back to them. We maintain that the construction of racial dominance is a significant part of what students lean in schools no matter who is in the classroom. (p. 298)

The quote above presents a myriad of issues that highlight what Aboriginal students face when entering educational institutions. Aboriginal students hear, view and read what is transmitted not only in the curriculum and in the space of the classroom; they are also affected by what is reinforced in the classroom and institution itself. In many instances Aboriginal students do not hear or see themselves reflected in the curriculum or in the institutions. The reality is that many Aboriginal students find themselves in mixed classrooms where they represent only a very small number. The risks associated with being smaller in number are accentuated by the racialized discourses that also inform how Aboriginal peoples and students are constructed. For instance, it would be extremely difficult to sit in a class when you are only one of a handful of Aboriginal students and racialized discourses are perpetuated in both the curriculum as well as the classroom ‘talk’.

In a reflective analysis on teaching Canadian Native literature LaRocque (2002) notes that both Native and non-Native students arrive in university classrooms “with a disturbing combination of absence of basic knowledge and misinformation about Aboriginal peoples and issues” (p. 213) which presents a significant pedagogical challenge. LaRocque (2002) notes that educating this audience requires deconstruction of previous misinformation before learning can occur. She highlights some of the challenges that have arisen in mixed classrooms:

It soon became clear to me that I was teaching in no ordinary ‘cross-cultural’ circumstances. Not only were there many cultures represented in my classes, there were educational, socio-economic and racial chasms, as well as deeply divergent political experiences. Both the differences and similarities derived from the common schoolground of western bias posed (and continue to pose) unique pedagogical challenges. (p. 213)

She also contextualizes these challenges by identifying the fact that during the 1970s and 1980s there were few Aboriginal role models available at universities and that Native Studies as a discipline was further marginalized as it “was largely treated as a cultural sensitivity, remedial program, not as a serious scholarly field” (p. 213). This presents a significant challenge to any professor attempting to provide a critical lens in teaching Aboriginal literature and / or teaching from an anti-colonial perspective. The above quote also affirms the challenges that are presented in mixed classrooms for both Aboriginal professors and students.

The difficulties Aboriginal students encounter in mixed classrooms is also supported by the findings in an earlier ethnographic study by Wilson (1991) on Canadian Sioux Aboriginal highschool students completed in the late 1980s. In her research, Wilson (1991) posits some reasons Aboriginal students’ find it difficult to make the transition from reserve schools to public highschoools located off-reserve. It is not surprising that the Aboriginal students interviewed in her research cited numerous clear examples of the racism that they faced in the classroom as well

as how “attendance policies in the school were used to get rid of kids who did not fit in” (p. 375).

Wilson (1991) notes that:

students had clear perceptions about the cause of their lack of success in high school. They perceived that they were isolated in the school—isolated from the system, from the white students, and from the teachers...Students said that they were unprepared for learning in an unfamiliar culture. They were not prepared for the racial prejudice that they encountered regularly. They were not prepared to work in a setting where they had no support. (p. 378)

What is particularly telling in this research is that these same students did extremely well in their elementary schooling on-reserve where they were supported by teachers and a system that encouraged and nurtured their success. In contrast the experiences at highschool were extremely difficult. Wilson (1991) notes that,

they needed all their time and energy just to survive in the school In effect, these students were transitioning from a position of security and eminence to one of an underclass. To cope with the trauma caused by that transition, students chose the adaptive strategy of dropping out of school...To them, staying in school would have been an unwise choice. Their adaptive strategies required withdrawal because the setting was impossible. They chose psychological survival. (p. 378)

As noted in Chapter five the space of the classroom can be viewed as a space under siege, a space where racism continues to be perpetuated and one where violence is perpetuated. The only recourse for some students is to leave the system as a way to survive.

RCAPv3 (1996) highlighted that Aboriginal students who manage to continue in Canada’s formal education system report regular encounters with racism and denial of Aboriginal values, perspectives and cultures in the curriculum and the life of the institution (p. 434). Similarly, St. Denis and Hampton (2002), in their review of the literature on racism and the effects on Aboriginal education, stress that despite all the changes to education racism continues to be a significant obstacle for education and employment of Aboriginal youth. That literature

review further suggests that while racism is often cited as an issue that Aboriginal students face, the literature interrogating racism and Aboriginal peoples is limited. They note:

The literature identifies and names the ‘denial’ of racism as a problem. It is not only institutions that deny and therefore avoid the problem of racism, but also individuals within those institutions who deny the problem of racism and denial occurs both in Canada and in the United States. Ironically, those who must bear the effects of racism and white supremacy may also deny and / or avoid the problem of racism. (St. Denis & Hampton, 2002, p. 10)

Hence, while racism is often cited as an issue that Aboriginal students must contend with, there is little literature that discusses how Aboriginal students actually negotiate racism in the classroom.

Schick and St. Denis (2003) examine a critical question about how best to teach anti-racist courses in a teacher education programme, drawing on their experiences in teaching predominantly white-identified pre-service education students. While the article focuses on white students, I draw on it purposely for insight into classroom dynamics. The authors report that students resist anti-racist education and come unprepared to undertake social and political analysis where they are implicated (Schick & St. Denis, 2003). Similarly, in an extensive study on Navajo youth and racism, Deyhle (1995) found that when students, teachers and administrators reduce, minimize or silence the experiences of racism that Aboriginal students experience, this can have a detrimental effect on educational outcomes for Aboriginal students. This same researcher also reaffirms racism as a central reason for Navajo students leaving school.

Deyhle (1995) uses the concept of ‘racial warfare’ to make her point that Navajos and Anglos conflict economically, politically and culturally both in the school and in the workplace; therefore schools are not neutral terrain but rather a place where racial conflict is played out. This researcher maintains that Anglos maintain both political and economic power and that there

is very limited space for Navajos to participate. Deyhle (1995) contends that her data supports “Navajo students’ perception that Anglos discriminate against them and that they have no reason to believe that their cooperation with the educational regime would bring advantages in either schools or in the workplace” (p. 409). Despite the fact that Deyhle (1995) challenges the cultural difference model she engages with the discussion of racism by including notions of cultural difference by arguing that the experiences of racial and cultural warfare must be placed at the center of any explanatory model of education or work experiences. She notes later in her article that “racism and cultural beliefs, particularly the issues of assimilation and resistance, are at the heart of the interactions between the Navajos and Anglos” (p. 412) citing that the Anglo view is rooted in an assimilative model that posits Navajo culture and language as a problem that needs eradication.

Deyhle (1995) also found that young Navajo students respond to racism in their schools by withdrawing or resisting education. Interestingly she notes:

For Navajo students, one of the most life-affirming strategies is to embrace reservation life and traditional Navajo culture. Indeed, the students in my study who were able to maintain Navajo / reservation connections gained a solid place in Navajo society and were also more successful in the Anglo world of school and workplace. (p. 404)

This suggests that culture does play a significant role in educational success. However what is important is that the success is also contingent upon acknowledging and addressing the significant amount of racism that exists in the school system.

In summary, the literature identifies a myriad of factors that affect Aboriginal student success in the classroom. While “racism continues to be a significant obstacle to the education and employment of our youth” (St. Denis & Hampton, 2002, p. 3) it is distressing that there is little literature that interrogates the extent and impact of the racism. The next section of this

chapter clearly identifies racism as a real and ongoing problem that Aboriginal students interviewed in this research must contend with in postsecondary classrooms. It is important to contextualize these experiences within the broader context of how Aboriginal education has been defined and regulated by the colonist regime. The racial hierarchies that hold in place colonial structures of the mind clearly posit Aboriginal peoples as inferior.

Part 2:

What Are the Negotiations From the Aboriginal Student's Point of View?

Who Are The Students and What Did They Come Expecting?

The students who were interviewed in this research were briefly introduced in Chapter three. This section expands on who these students are with a view to understanding what they initially expected from their educational experience.

S1 is Anishnaabe with mixed heritage. She is a social work student in a large urban center and has taken several courses related to colonial history and Aboriginal peoples. Out of a class of 47 she was one of four Aboriginal students in the class.

There's two who identified as Nishnaabe-Kwe. There's two that identified as Aboriginal, but no idea who they are, and no idea blood quantum like that ... it's been, you know, the dirty family secret. So most of the class are either, well they're all non-Aboriginal.

Her intent in getting an education is “to be able to give back to her community.”

S2 is a male Anishnaabe completing a degree at a large urban university. He is currently in his 2nd year and is enrolled in a Native studies degree. One of the intentions that S2 had in coming to school was to explore a career change.

It really is a nice break you know. I want to take a whole different direction, in another career. I've been in employment, I've touched in health, I'd like to look at something maybe in education...but not so much teaching in high school. But maybe like perhaps in university, or maybe in, in college. I want to look at that whole area.

S3 is a 32-year-old female Anishnaabe of mixed ancestry. She describes herself as a mix of Anishnaabe and Irish and locates herself as from the Marten clan. She has lived in a large

urban city all her life. She recently completed a degree in social work, taking a course in Native issues in the last year of her programme. During her classes she recalls being one of only two Native students in classes of approximately 50 students.

S4 is a 50-year-old female from the Mohawk Nation. She grew up on a reserve and spent her primary school years in a band-operated school. “I guess I could say I grew up in that traditional culture. My family didn’t go to church, they didn’t become Christians. They lived in a long house, or lodge, ‘long house’ they called it, traditional culture.” She did note that she didn’t speak her language: “For the same reason, being on a reserve in southern Ontario, you were so exposed to the cities and towns around us. I remember that when we went to school that my Dad was the pro-education one: ‘Get out there and get jobs, get an education.’” When asked about why she chose to start taking courses she recounted “I even felt that inferiority feeling, I didn’t know how... my own lack of education. Even my speaking abilities. I remember feeling lacking that, I felt embarrassed, I felt not understanding, and I don’t know.” And that is one of the reasons she started taking courses. S4 recounts,

I saw the struggles. I started to hear things in the circles, I saw the problems my husband was having with the guys, you know, and I felt so sorry for my people. Like, you know, this is terrible! To have to go through what I went through. Nobody should have to go through that. We need to have an education; we need to have something that allows us to live wherever we want to live.

In essence this speaks to what others aspire to as creating a better life. Another reason she started pursuing courses was to learn more about her culture.

S4 is enrolled in a Native-based social work programme. Class sizes vary from 5 to 25 students. While many students are Native in the classes she has taken, she did say that there were

also international and non-Native students in the classes especially in the non-social work classes.

S5 is a 26-year-old Anishnaabe woman of mixed ancestry—Anishnaabe and Irish / French. She grew up in a small northern community in Northeastern Ontario and later moved to a midsized city. She completed a college-level and a university-level social work education. S5 took a number of courses that dealt with colonial history and Aboriginal peoples. She notes, “Well, all my courses at college were directed towards Native material, Aboriginal material, because it was an Aboriginal-based course. And at [university] I took what was called a First Nations perspectives course. It was about history, and colonization, and recent research.”

When asked about course content in her university courses, S5 replied “Residential schools, they didn’t talk a lot about cultural stuff, like teachings and stuff like that. They did a lot around when it was first contact, and that stuff...More residential schools, more like after the government had already established itself in Canada.” Her intent in taking the courses / programmes was to “gain a better understanding of my culture, because I didn’t have a good understanding of it at the time because I wasn’t raised that way. I had a little bit of it, but not a lot.” She went on to explain that her expectations were largely fulfilled with the college-level programme but she felt that her university-level courses did not add any new information in terms of culture.

In terms of the classroom environment, S5 noted the difficulties experienced in a class where there were number of non-Native students and she was the only Native student. S5 also noted that until the middle of the semester she was the only self- identified Native student in the class of approximately twenty-five students.

S5: Miraculously, by the middle of the semester there was. It’s like, there wasn’t any that would identify. But one girl said, “You know, my grandparents’

grandparents' grandparents' were." So it's quite odd for somebody who'd never identified. This was a 4th-year class that we took, and I went to school with her all the way through, and we took Aboriginal theory in 3rd year. She was in that class, she didn't say anything. We took 4th-year theory, she didn't say anything.

S6 identified herself as from the Mohawk Nation and attended university in northern Ontario. She recalls being "out of my element up here in the north, because my people are all Mohawk, and up here, I've run into mostly Ojibwa and Cree." She is currently enrolled in a Native-based social work degree programme and has taken several courses that deal with the history of Native peoples and colonization. S6 had attended university and college in the past, but came to a point in her life that she felt that she lacked proper qualifications. This motivated her to enrol in a Native-based social work degree programme. She noted that she had become "disillusioned with the whole concept of what a university had to offer" Native students so became interested in programmes offered at the First Nations University and other programmes that were culture-based.

S7 is a 30-year-old Anishnaabe woman who recently graduated with her Masters in a health programme. She grew up in north eastern Ontario in a mid-sized city. Her intent in taking Native Studies courses was to learn more about being an Aboriginal person because she grew up in a family that denied her Aboriginal identity until she was in high school.

S8 is an older Anishnaabe woman who was in her 4th year of a Native-based social work programme. She has lived her life on-reserve. She is also a graduate of a college-level, Native-based programme. S8 was "determined to come back and do this type of work [social work], because I feel that our communities really need workers and helpers" and this led her to pursue university studies. In the Native studies classes she was only one of a "few" Native students in a

class of about 50 students. In the Native social work classes the majority of the students were Native and the class sizes were relatively small, with about 10-15 students.

While the Aboriginal students interviewed came to university with varying expectations, more than half of the students interviewed said that education was part of fulfilling a desire for knowledge about their history and identity as First peoples.

The search for culture and identity is related to colonizing effects of residential schools, child welfare practices and the general colonial and imperial spaces in which they live every day. S4 recounted that culture was suppressed in her family as well as her husband's family and they were on a search.

S4: Even when my kids got older, this was all coming about, and my husband felt this need to know too [about his culture], because he remembers his father especially and his grandparents “doing certain things, sort of like in secret he said, you know. Like they would have sweet grass and they would go in circles with the other aborigines, and they all spoke Native, their language. And they would do these things, you know, smudging, and my Dad was telling me some things, but never enough,” because his mother’s religion would sort of overpower, not in a bad way, because that was what she was taught. And he also remembered some things that older people told him when he was growing up, just bits and pieces of things, maybe they were like seeds, I guess. But at a point in our lives, we started searching for that again.

In this particular excerpt S4 provides some insight into how her husband's family coped with colonial imposition to assimilate, noting that his family resisted through carrying on with cultural practices secretly. In S4's own family of origin she notes how religion affected her own cultural knowledge as she describes that she only knows bits and pieces. For S4 the search for her own culture and identity is rooted in how her family responded to ongoing colonization. In looking to the future she clearly wanted something different for her own children:

I didn't want my children's lives to be the same as what I had come through. It was so awful, what I had to live through. It was very violent in my family later on. Even my mother, who had never drunk, she had turned to that. And all my family members. All the stories I hear, when I hear of the violence in the communities, I think what it is, I disassociate myself from it, I never want to accept that I was actually a product of that. And my Dad was in residential school as a child. His father died and his Mom remarried, and he went into the residential school down in that area, which was called Mohawk College. And they called it the "mush hole," I remember that...but there were quite a few members that went into the training school, the residential school.

And I had no idea what went on with my father until only maybe within the past 10 years. And he would never talk about it, but his behaviour, today I look back on it, and now I understand. What really hurts me and angers me even is, I think to my parents, I think, "I wish you would have said something to us." I think as a child, we have that ability to accept anything that parents tell us, as long it's the truth. And today I know that. I know that today. I just thought, I wished he would have just told us what was happening to him. We would have understood, and maybe things would have been different, you know. And it took me a long time to forgive my Dad and my parents for the damage that we went through and that.

And so today, and especially coming to school and learning what I've learnt, but even before that, going through treatment, that's when a lot of it started. I started *to realize that there was nothing wrong with me [emphasis added]*, in the sense that I thought I was bad, or whatever. I really couldn't even blame my father, because I didn't know what happened to him. I just figured, you know... And I didn't even know that this was going on in other communities, in other families, even like, you know. So it took a lot for me to understand that. First of all, nobody said anything.

In the first paragraph of the previous excerpt S4 makes associations with not wanting to be marked as an Aboriginal person coming from a family and community of violence and

alcohol abuse. She uses the word ‘disassociate’ to express this demarcation. Her words emanate a deep sense of shame associated with these negative behaviours that have come to be associated with her father’s attendance at residential school. In an effort to escape she goes to school hoping she can ensure that her children are not exposed to the same experiences she was. It is through her education that she makes the link between her families’ level of violence and alcohol abuse to processes of colonization and in particular the residential schools. It is also evident from her narrative that she has carried deep pain from her childhood experiences around this loss. S4’s experiences are similar to those mentioned by many other Aboriginal students. Coming to postsecondary education assisted S4 with understanding her own history and assisted with alleviating a heavy burden of shame and anger.

It is not difficult to understand why Aboriginal students come to classrooms where the history of colonization and Aboriginal peoples is discussed to support their search for culture and identity. However, what is interesting is that Schick and St. Denis (2003) also found that white students also come to similar classes “to learn about the cultural other [Aboriginal peoples in their article] and be informed of strategies for how they will ‘deal with’ the other in the classroom” (p. 2). Recall also from Chapter five how Aboriginal professors interviewed in this research also describe their negotiations with being expected to perform culture in classrooms. In their narratives these expectations largely came from non-Aboriginal students in the classroom. When non-Aboriginal students come to the classroom to learn about the cultural ‘other,’ an enormous burden is placed upon Aboriginal professors and students to conform and / or produce culture or risk having their authenticity called into question. Having two groups of students, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, coming to the classroom from two very different underlying assumptions has the potential to create a significant tension in classroom dynamics.

Two Aboriginal students also mentioned that their intent to obtain a university education was related to assisting their community. In my own experience, working in the Aboriginal community and in the field of Aboriginal education, I have consistently heard that many students aspire to ‘give back to their community.’’ Other students expressed the need to assist with what I refer to as self-determination although still within the context of Aboriginal community. For example S2 noted that he wanted a career change, but went on to say: “I always heard that education was important, to go out there and to pursue higher learning,” but he had never really understood what that meant. He now sees that education is important: “We needed to take control of our affairs, because we knew what was best for our people.” It is clear that S2 understands that control over Aboriginal affairs has not rested with Aboriginal peoples. Education is viewed as a means to regain this control.

Of the remaining four students, one student had been adopted into a non-Aboriginal family and had no exposure to Aboriginal peoples or culture, two students spoke of feeling they received little in the way of Aboriginal culture in the family system and the fourth student noted that despite having being raised experiencing her culture, she felt disillusioned with mainstream education and was searching for education that had a stronger Aboriginal cultural component. Clearly, many of the Aboriginal students interviewed come to university looking to further their understanding of themselves as Aboriginal people and strengthen their cultural identity.

In an article on identity, Jackson (2002) notes that in fact the process of identity negotiation is often viewed as a loss or gain or exchange of something. He goes on to point out that some individuals “may feel at risk of having important values, norms and traditions that constitute his or her identity seized or attacked by a more dominant force; hence he or she may concede one or more of these dimensions to maintain some self-preserving aspect of life” (p.

245). There is no doubt that the longstanding history and ongoing colonial and imperial practices, in particular educational practices, that Aboriginal peoples are subjected to have disrupted the transmission of traditional knowledge, languages and cultural practices, all of which contribute to the development of positive identity (Goulet & McLeod, 2002; Kirkness, 1992; Miller, 1996). I want to come back to one particular area that is of importance in understanding the context of these students' lived experiences: of the eight students interviewed half recounted effects of residential schooling personally or intergenerationally in their family system. One student had personally attended residential school, two had a parent who had attended, and one had a grandmother who had attended. The interviewee whose grandmother had attended residential school also gave two children up for adoption—one of whom was the father of the interviewee. As well, one interviewee whose parent had attended residential school found himself being 'given away' to his aunt and uncle. In the following excerpt, S2 discusses one of the direct impacts of residential schools:

That's why we have these circles for residential school survivors eh. I know for myself, like my mother went to a residential school out in Saskatchewan, and I used to wonder why she gave us away. I mean, I was only 2 years old when I was given to my auntie and uncle. She never would have kept any of us...She was a young girl who went to school, came back home, started having children, and just wasn't able to bond with us. [pause] We now understand, but it took many, many years to figure it out.

In terms of her identity as an Aboriginal woman, S7 found that coming to university and taking Native studies classes helped her reconnect with her culture and her father:

S7: Yes, because there are people, my grandfather made birch bark canoes. It's been through school that I'm learning about my culture. I've learned about my culture through school, where I've learned to connect with my Dad. And I think

my Dad, my Dad has a degree, obviously because he became a teacher, in French. In totally nothing related. Like he obviously, there was probably never Native Studies when he was going to school. And he was probably one of the few aboriginal people getting a degree at that time. And so he does respect having an education. And the fact that the material was coming from an academic institution sort of made it very respectable for him. It's like, you know, if I would have heard from some guy on the street about our culture, my Dad wouldn't have believed it. My Dad's like that, the fact that it was coming from the university, he was respectful of that, the material that I was getting, and he was interested. It's the first time that he'd ever been really interested in culture.

What is interesting about S7's narrative is that she inserts the notion of respectability into her talk. What I hear from S7 about her father, who was given up for adoption and whose birth mother was a residential school survivor, is that she interprets her father's response to her learning about history and culture as it relates to Aboriginal peoples in the university system as being respectable. Immediately after she makes this statement she talks about what would have been less respectable to her father is if she had learned about her culture from 'some guy on the street'. Recall my analysis in Chapter five on the development of racialized constructions of Aboriginal peoples as being uncivilized and inferior and the colonizer as being civilized and superior. In this narrative it appears that S7's father has internalized feelings about his own people teaching culture and identity as being less respectable.

There also seems to be an element of associating Aboriginal peoples with 'street people'—which would be consistent with racialized constructions that exist about Aboriginal peoples. It would have been good to explore this in more detail with the participant at the time but I did not pick up this particular cue. However, the residential school and child welfare systems did rob many Aboriginal peoples of the opportunity to grow and develop within their

own family and community systems. The residential schools are also responsible for indoctrinating Aboriginal children with a belief that their languages and cultures were inferior. As a direct result, many residential school survivors were left with internalized feelings of low self esteem and shame as Aboriginal peoples (Chrisjohn & Young, 1997). It is no surprise then that many of interviewees in this research are searching for knowledge and understanding of their own culture and identity, which seems to assist them with feeling ‘connected’ with family as with S7 above.

In the instance of S4, her search for culture and history enabled her to understand that, in fact, there was nothing inherently wrong with her. This reminds me of bell hooks’ (1995) notion of how a culture of shame (discussed in chapter four), has been created that limits black people’s ability to identify the effects of racism and oppression. Instead, shame becomes internalized and hidden versus understanding and acknowledging that the pain is related to the dehumanization caused by racism and oppression (hooks, 1995). S4 comes to the realization that there is nothing wrong with her, a victim identity, when she begins to add knowledge about colonization and the residential school systems. This allows her an opportunity to broaden her understanding of the impact of that colonization, which has directly affected her family. As bell hooks (1995) points out:

Collective failure to address adequately the psychic wounds inflicted by racist aggression is the breeding ground for a psychology of victimhood wherein learned helplessness, uncontrollable rage, and / or feelings of overwhelming powerlessness and despair abound in the psyches of black folks yet are not attended to in ways that empower and promote holistic states of well-being. (p. 137)

As a result, identity reclamation and retrieval are very much a part of the journey that many Aboriginal peoples undertake to empower themselves and become self-determining, evident in the narratives of the students interviewed. In the previous chapter professors also felt

that identity was an important element of Native / Aboriginal studies courses because they believed that many Aboriginal students come to the classroom expecting to build their own sense of Aboriginality. Goulet and McLeod (2002) also note that experiences such as cultural camps²⁰ can provide a unique sense of belonging and connection to the land, Elders, and other elements. They contend that Aboriginal students return to their everyday lives with a much better sense of what it means to be an Aboriginal person and also a renewed strength in being able to face the day-to-day challenges of being an Aboriginal person in Canadian society (p. 369). Similarly, recall from Chapter four, hooks (1995) contends that racial uplifting must take place within the context of cultural production but she also acknowledges the importance of engaging in resistance that can address psychological trauma (p. 135). It is this notion of psychological trauma or the impact that racism has on individuals that I take up in the next sections where I describe in detail how Aboriginal students in this research are especially hit by the racism they experience in the classroom.

Negotiating Racism

All the students interviewed described their classrooms as mixed. Many students described difficulties in being in mixed classrooms where they were underrepresented in the classroom. In these interviews it became obvious that the primary negotiation the students were confronted with was racism. Given that Aboriginal students came to the classroom expecting to increase cultural awareness, it is evident that they are especially affected by the racism experienced in the classroom. The rest of this chapter focuses first on describing and naming the many forms of racist experiences that Aboriginal students confront. Secondly, I describe

²⁰ Cultural camps are rooted in Aboriginal pedagogy and provide students with an opportunity to engage in cultural immersion with Elders, the land, other students, and faculty. For further description see Goulet and McLeod (2002).

Aboriginal students' emotive responses to ongoing racism to emphasize the traumatic effects of racism. Finally, I examine the strategies they employ to resist ongoing colonialism and racism.

The next two sections, *Naming racism and Emotive responses to racism*, of this thesis have been the most difficult to write—in part because the narratives of these students also mirror many of my own experiences and / or the experiences of family members and close friends. Part of me feels a deep sense of hurt but I also feel a sense of rage as I am confronted by the face of racism – how extremely damaging it can be to the heart and soul of people and in this case not just any people, but my own people. At times, it has been distressing to reread the narratives these students shared of their experiences in the classroom. My own mind goes to a place where I wonder how this still could be happening and I am sadly reminded of Fanon's words in *Black Skin, White Masks* (1967): 'the black is not a man' (p. 8). I am also reminded of the more recent words of Patricia Monture-Angus (1995) as she struggled to understand her own anger at facing racism in the academy as a student and a professor. She writes, "What I am naming as anger feels more like thunder, thunder in my soul. Sometimes, it is a quiet distant rumbling. Other times it rolls over me with such force that I am immobilized" (p. 68).

As well, while this work is focused on identifying pedagogies that may assist with reconciling or coming to terms with ongoing colonial and imperial imposition, it is important to name the range of emotions that Aboriginal students experience as they negotiate the colonial divide in the classroom. I believe this is important because it assists validating that what we are experiencing is real; it also prevents people from becoming amnesic about the impact that ongoing racist and colonist practices have. Moeke-Pickering et al. (2006), in an article that was presented at the World Indigenous People's Conference on Education in 2005, assert that:

White amnesia, a disease rooted in racism, is a common strategy used to ignore the historical and ongoing injustices perpetrated upon Indigenous peoples. These

learned behaviors and associated attitudes stem from a lack of acceptance and continued denial among non-Indigenous academics about their potential roles as anti-colonisers and anti-oppressors. White amnesia allows non-Indigenous peoples to continue in their day to day world without seeing or involving themselves in other worldviews that would challenge their understanding of their oppressive practices. (no page numbers)

Similarly, Danieli (1998), in relation to Holocaust survivors, also notes that social silence and disavowal of pain and loss only force the oppressed to conclude that nobody cares either to listen or to understand. Moreover, the social apathy that arises relative to interrogations of race and racism only serves to impede the possibilities of intrapsychic healing for the oppressed (p. 4). Naming pain and loss assists with validation and acknowledgement that colonization has and continues to have an enormous effect on Aboriginal peoples.

Patricia Monture-Angus (1995) describes the impact of hearing accounts of racism in the classroom; she outlines an incident in her law class where students were analysing the case of a Black woman facing eviction. During an altercation the police kicked down the door to this woman's apartment and the woman was shot twice and killed. Monture-Angus recounted that she found the experience of listening to the analysis of this law case brutal and hurtful. She explains:

By the time I spoke I was almost in tears. What it was that I had identified was that we were talking about my life. I do not know when I am going to pick up the phone and hear about the friend who committed suicide, the acquaintance that got shot by the police, the Aboriginal prison inmate that was killed in an alleged hostage taking, ironically two days after two Aboriginal inmates in Stoney Mountain had killed a White prison guard. *This is my life.* I do not have any control over the pain and brutality of living the life of a dispossessed person. I cannot control when that pain is going to enter into my life. (p. 16)

Monture-Angus's story clearly articulates the context that many Aboriginal peoples must live with. While I do not want to re-inscribe a 'victim' identity, I think it is important to understand the history and context from which Aboriginal students come. Students come to the classroom

carrying with them not only their own familial and community history of colonial and imperial imposition and the effects this has had; they also come from an ongoing experience of living in a society where racism and violence are perpetuated on many levels as a daily experience. On a similar note hooks (1995) writes:

In many ways race talk surfaces as the vernacular discourse of white supremacy. It repeatedly tells us that blacks are inferior to whites, more likely to commit crimes, come from broken homes, are all on welfare, and if we are not we are still whining and beggin ole massa and kindly miss ann for a handout. Even when we win literary prizes it lets the world know that up in the big house folks are not really sure that judging was fair, or the writin that good. (p. 4)

While hooks writes from a black women's perspective on racism, the relevance of her statements also rings true for Aboriginal peoples. I recall countless times where I have heard how we are the poorest, have the highest rates of suicide, the highest rates of unemployment, the highest rates of disease, the highest numbers of people in jails--the list goes on and on. Many of us even have to justify how we attained a degree because we are told that we surely could not have been subjected to the same standards as everyone else! Racism exists in many forms and is continually shaped, reshaped, and reinforced through social, cultural and political structures.

There is no doubt that Aboriginal students and professors live with racism every day and that racism is embedded in institutions, practices and individuals. Aboriginal students in this research provided a number of examples affirming that racialized constructions still exist. These students must contend with being viewed as unintelligent; as well, if they take courses in Native studies to learn more about their own history or culture, those courses are viewed as 'not real' academic courses. At the same time they are called upon to be the Native experts and / or the cultural Indians, but on the terms of other White students or professors. As if these negotiations were not enough, they are also subjected to silencing techniques to ensure that they remain in a particular space. So while this section focuses on narratives of racial oppressions and may seem

to tell us things we already know, this is deliberate on my part because I firmly believe that it is imperative to understand not only the extent of racism but how Aboriginal students negotiate that racism in spaces such as classrooms. What is apparent is that these students use a variety of strategies to cope with and resist ongoing oppression. Therefore, through a narrative analysis, this section describes the range of emotive responses Aboriginal students have in living a racialized and colonized existence in the classroom.

Naming racism.

Denial of racism.

There is no question that racism exists and Aboriginal students find themselves facing racism on a daily basis. However, in my opinion, one of the most frustrating forms of racism occurs when there is denial of its very existence. It is extremely difficult to address racism when those around you do not feel or see that racism is operating. Sometimes you are made to feel that you are actually imagining it or you are told that you are too sensitive. In either case there is an emotional toll. In the following excerpt S5 notes the difficulties she encountered where she was one of only two Aboriginal students in a class of twenty-five:

S5: Yes, we sat in a circle.

S: But the material was still delivered in a way that was mostly lecture, even though you were sitting in a circle?

S5: Yes. They [non-Aboriginal students] did a lot of talking. It was a hard class because it was filled with all non-Aboriginal people. So it was a lot of clarifying for them, a lot of correcting material. It was a difficult course.

S: Difficult in what way, do you mean?

S5: Listening to them talk.

S: Why?

S5: Just because of their points of view.

S: Like what, for example? This was the university class, right?

S5: Yes. [the professor who was Aboriginal] would talk about underlying racism and stuff, and people [non-Aboriginal students] didn't see it. So it was really hard to keep explaining it over and over. It's like saying, "I'm not racist. I have a black friend." She [the professor] didn't see that what they were saying was racism in itself, without even realizing it.

S: So what did you do? Or how did you challenge them?

S5: I challenged them, I had to. Because, you know, the teacher could do it, and the teacher did it, but there's only so much the teacher can say or do. So they would look to me for, "So what do you think?" kind of thing. It was like that in a lot of my classes.

What is interesting to note is how S5 describes the amount of 'space' taken up in classes to explain course material on colonial history and Aboriginal peoples to non-Aboriginal students and to provide explanations of racism. S5's frustration was exacerbated when the professor, while talking about how racism exists, failed to see that the constant barrage of questioning by the students in the class was also racist. Derman-Sparks and Phillips (1997) note that White students often employ a variety of strategies to place doubt of or negate the racist experiences in the lives of people of color. These authors contend that people of color are often placed in the position of proving that racism is actually occurring (p. 53). Similarly, St. Denis and Hampton (2002) contend that denial of racism is problematic and Schick and St. Denis (2003) note that in fact many White students come unprepared to critically analyze racism where they might be

implicated, noting that such course content challenges their self-images as already knowledgeable and sympathetic to difference (p. 3).

In another example S1 reaffirms that denial of issues such as racism in class presents difficulties for Aboriginal students. In the example that follows S1 is responding to a professor's lack of addressing why some Aboriginal peoples are not required to pay taxes. Rather than addressing the misconceptions in the classroom his response is one of total avoidance, thereby perpetuating the myth that Aboriginal peoples receive some sort of unearned monetary advantages that the rest of Canadian society do not. There is no critical analysis of the fact that it is Canada who enjoys wealth from resources and land that were appropriated from Aboriginal peoples. S1 notes the professor's response:

S1: Yeah, because I felt that like when he said "I'm not going to touch that," I felt like, "Well, why not?...I think it could have been a learning moment for a lot of my classmates, to understand that it's not because we get free taxes. We don't get free taxes, no. It's part of our treaty rights. And our treaty rights have been so screwed up.

Similarly S5's frustration with the constant need to clarify and correct material can be viewed as White students' refusal to acknowledge the racism in the experiences of Aboriginal peoples' lives. The burden of responding to racism in the classroom is initially laid upon the Aboriginal professor. However when the professor does not hear, see or respond to the racism that is operating, the Aboriginal student is put in the difficult position of having to respond. Clearly this student is literally left to her own resources to respond to her classmates who look to her for some sort of response. If she responds and names the racism inherent in the assumptions being made, she is at risk of being attacked by her peers. If she does not respond, she fulfills pre-existing racialized constructions that Aboriginal peoples are unintelligent. Further the issue of

Aboriginal peoples receiving ‘free taxes’ is entrenched in the minds of her peers, which conjures up all sorts of racialized constructions.

Being silenced.

Yet another negotiation that Aboriginal students are confronted with is the strong undercurrent to remain silent. The following example shows how one student negotiates the everyday experiences of racism and feelings associated with responding. S8, who attended residential school, shares her feelings of guilt for speaking out in the class discussion about the residential schools.

S8: ...still today, I have that shyness. I don’t speak up much, because I’m so used to having that guilty feeling about speaking up. But that’s what I’m working on with myself now, to speak up.

S: Do you sometimes feel, like because you say that you feel guilty, do you sometimes feel that by saying and acknowledging some of these things that you’re hurting somebody else? Or what is it that’s making you feel guilty for speaking up?

S8: I feel that I’m intruding on somebody’s way of thinking.

S: Oh yeah.

S8: And if you’re bringing out the truth about it, they may say, “That’s not true.” You know what I mean?

S: Okay.

S8: So that’s a big thing if we speak up. And still today, like for instance, yesterday my daughter and I were with this team, and you know, we’re status Indians, so if we speak up saying... Like [my daughter] coaches hockey too, so she knows a lot about hockey. They [non-Aboriginal people] look at her as if, “Oh

yeah, your hockey's nothing." You know, they have the attitude that Native people can't do things. So you have to defend, so you almost feel like... you don't feel good, because you know you still have that thinking that you're intruding on their lives, you know what I mean? Because you're not allowed to have that.

What is also important about this example are the words she uses to describe what she is feeling:

I have that shyness.

I don't speak up much

I'm so used to having that guilty feeling about speaking up

I'm working on with myself now, to speak up.

I feel that

I'm intruding on somebody's way of thinking. (Excerpt 'I' poem S8)

This student has been effectively silenced. When she does speak up / out she feels guilty for speaking the truth. As well, in the last sentence she says "because you're not allowed to have that." What does this mean? That we, the oppressed, are not allowed a voice--that we are not allowed to speak up, that we are not allowed to call into question non-Aboriginal peoples. It is in these words that the full realization of racism comes through. Aboriginal peoples are not allowed or expected to be thinking, participating beings. Instead we are objectified, reduced to non-beings, and must remain silent.

Patricia Hill Collins (2000), a well-known Black feminist scholar, recounts how she grew into being conditioned to be silent:

Beginning in adolescence, I was increasingly the 'first,' or 'one of the few,' or the 'only' African-American and / or woman and / or working-class person in my schools, communities, and work settings. I saw nothing wrong with being who I was, but apparently many others did. My world grew larger, but I felt I was growing smaller. I tried to disappear into myself in order to deflect the painful, daily assaults designed to teach me that being an African-American, working-

class woman made me lesser than those who were not. And as I felt smaller, I became quieter and eventually was virtually silenced. (p. 13)

Although Collins (2000) draws on her own experiences as an African American woman I draw on her example to highlight how, over time, silencing happens in response to ongoing racism. S3 recounts an example of being silenced in the excerpt below:

S3: I had a very bad experience with a feminist teacher. I took a course called “Women, Power and Change.” And they did content on Asians, Caribbeans, and different types of women, and where they’ve come from. And she had one reading on Aboriginal women. And I tried to bring in the fact that feminism isn’t necessarily an Aboriginal value. It’s about balance, not about woman power, and that men need to be involved. Whereas the feminist approach she took was very “women only” and “women only space.” That kind of thing. I tried to present to her that it wasn’t necessarily about that. And she really shut me down, and dismissed my comments. I found that she was very rude about it, and didn’t want to hear another perspective.

It is distressing to hear and learn the extent to which people are silenced because of racial oppression. As Collins (2000) points out, children are subjected to silencing tactics at a very young age. In this regard Aboriginal peoples are no different. While silencing is a racist tactic to keep the oppressed controlled, Monture-Angus (1999) offers some further insight. She writes about hearing the experience of a man who had went to residential school and how he recounts “surviving by looking the other way at night when things happened in the bed beside him” (p. 25). This author also notes that it was not only violence that was picked up in the residential schools; it was also this ability to look the other way, which she contends is a consequence of colonialism (p. 25). Similarly S8 (in an earlier excerpt), a student who went to residential school, speaks of difficulty with speaking out and the feelings of guilt it evokes for her. This begs the question of whether Aboriginal peoples are also called to look the other way as a form of

remaining silent. Clearly, silencing the other was and continues to be a tactic of colonial imposition.

You're not intelligent enough.

Connected to racialized constructions of Aboriginal peoples as inferior, Aboriginal students also contend with being viewed as unintelligent. This is evident as S2 speaks of earlier experiences where he was told that he “wasn’t university material. I wasn’t cut out to do this kind of education learning.” Many Aboriginal people I have spoken to have recounted similar experiences. On a personal note I too was told in high school that I would never succeed at university.

S2 goes on to make the links between his own experiences and how his grandfather was treated in the residential school system:

It’s the same thing like you know in the residential schools, my grandfather was only able to go up to grade 6, he couldn’t go any higher than that. As you know, he had to be put to farming. That sort of same mentality, and that was back in the 80s [his experience]. I couldn’t believe that you know...But I don’t regret, I don’t regret going to work and doing other training on the job that has brought me to where I am today. But to say that to somebody you know, you know it’s not good. It’s not positive. Now here I am, I’m getting good grades, I’m getting there. By the end of this year, I’ll be half way done, on the way to my degree.

Recall from Chapter five how racialized constructions of Aboriginal peoples confined them to a particular space. In the example above, one of those spaces is the marginalization of Aboriginal peoples to particular types of jobs and work. The underlying view that Aboriginal students are thought not to be ‘intelligent enough’ to move on to college or university is rooted in the racialized construction that Aboriginal peoples are less than their White counterparts. Those who do move on to college and university become marked as students who must have been admitted

under a special admission policy; they are marked as ‘at-risk’ students and are viewed as certainly requiring some sort of remediation and / or assistance.

Some Aboriginal students internalize feelings of inferiority, believing that there is something wrong with them. For instance, in an earlier excerpt S4 recounted that she has experienced both familial and community levels of violence. Her father was also a residential school survivor, which S4 had much difficulty in understanding. In my conversation with her she explained that it was difficult for her to understand why he behaved the way he did. It was not until she began her own journey and search through attending therapy and then later postsecondary education that she came to understand how colonization had directly affected her family. What is particularly poignant about her comments is that she finally came to the realization that ‘there was nothing wrong’ with her. Clearly S4 had internalized feelings of low self-worth. Fanon (1963, 1967) describes this as a process of internalized oppression where the colonized begins to accept what the colonizer believes of him / her. bell hooks (1995) refers to this as the development of a victim identity, which I come back to later in this chapter.

Native studies courses are not real academic courses.

As if it is not enough that Aboriginal students are called into question as individuals, the very programmes and courses in which they may enrol are also targets of direct racism. Similar to Aboriginal professors, Aboriginal students find themselves having to contend with racialized constructions of inferiority that attack Native-based programmes and Native Studies courses. In the excerpt that follows, S7 spoke of the importance of feeling respected in the classroom. The excerpt also shows how very aware Aboriginal students are of themselves as Aboriginal subjects, as well as how the course content and their peer responses to that course content affect them.

S: ...Was there anything else going on in the classroom with the non-aboriginal students? How were they reacting to the material and to the Native students?

S7: Well, I was always happy when classmates who were non-aboriginal were taking it seriously, and were actually really respectful. Some were just like another assignment, they don't really care about what issues there are. But there was one guy I remember...He took his assignment really seriously, and he was really serious about the issues. It was all about self-government. I like that that he was very respectful. But there were students that weren't. But I think the ones that weren't, by the end of the course, they were. And I honestly think some were taking it because they thought it was a bird course.

A number of issues arise from S7's statements. Her notion of a respectful environment for learning included respectfulness for the content being covered. She connects respectfulness to whether or not Native Studies courses are taken seriously. It is in this statement that she is acutely aware that Native Studies are not considered real university courses. What is apparent in her narrative is that there are students who downgrade Native studies classes as 'not real' academic classes – hence the referral to 'bird course.' Again it is as Cook-Lynn (1998) points out: the image of the Aboriginal scholar does not exist in most people's minds. If there is no image of an Aboriginal scholar, it would be equally hard to see Native studies courses as scholarly or academic.

In another example S1 describes how her peers reacted when course content relating to the impact of colonial imposition on Aboriginal peoples was introduced. S1 noted that "A lot of people just sat there and *rolled their eyes* anyways. And that's where we were getting a lot of these pre-contact / contact / Indian Act / you know residential schools / decolonization." This is yet another example of how content on Aboriginal peoples experiences is downgraded in the academy. Both students and professors have to contend with the fact that Aboriginal peoples and

the content related to Aboriginal peoples are viewed as out of place in the academy. In the minds of dominant society Aboriginal peoples are constrained by the racialized construction of being only spiritual / cultural beings. We see a similar account described by another interviewee below:

S7: ...I ended up telling [the professor] I'm part Aboriginal. And so he started talking to me about the course. He was giving me a bit of the outline. So that was really good for me, because then I did end up registering for it. And you know what, I do remember also some other students that I partied with, and they were joking around, "Yeah, I'll take Native Studies as an elective." And they started to laugh, and it was like a big joke for them, taking Native Studies.

S7: I didn't like it, obviously. I think partly they thought it was a bird course. But I think the other part, they thought it was just silly that people would take Native Studies. I didn't like that, because I had registered for it. But what I did like is there was this girl I was going to school with from my high school, and we were in the same program and she was getting rides with me to school. So she decided to register for it too, because she wanted rides with me. [Laughs] I think she might have taken it, thinking it was a bird course or something.

Here again we see the full extent of how Native studies courses are positioned in the academy; as marginal, inferior and non-academic. This presents a complicated challenge when Aboriginal students come to postsecondary courses seeking knowledge about their own culture and identity only to find themselves, the very courses they enrol in and the content of those courses as downgraded and labelled inferior. How deflating and demoralizing is that?

When asked about how the issue of downgrading Native studies courses was dealt with in the classroom, S7 noted the following:

S: And how was that dealt with in the classroom? When it wasn't respectful?

S7: Everyone was treated the same. It didn't matter whether you were aboriginal or not. We were all sort of... like he didn't sort of point anyone out.

This interviewee brings another issue to the surface by noting the discourse operating around treating everyone equally regardless of color. Treating everyone the same is rooted in a color-blind strategy to address racism: if we are blind to the color of a person then we are not racist. Derman-Sparks and Phillips (1997) provide a number of examples to show how this strategy has serious weaknesses, including:

Not noticing someone is Black, for example, denies that person a history and culture, just as noticing only that someone is Black denies individuality...Colorblindness justifies withdrawal from social action by assuming that racism will cease to exist when people stop noticing racial and cultural differences. (p. 52)

Simply treating everyone the same denies people not only their history, culture and individuality; it also denies the fact that racism may be operating in the classroom. In the excerpt above by S7, racism is perpetuated by the professor and students as they all seemed to have engaged in downgrading Native studies and the knowledge produced in the discipline which marginalizes and inferiorizes Aboriginal knowledges.

Called to be the Native expert.

When Aboriginal students are called upon and recognized that they may in fact have some unique knowledge and experiences, they find themselves locked into a role of having to respond to everything and anything related to Native peoples. The students interviewed in this research discuss how they are positioned as the Native informants in the classroom to provide support to what a professor is saying and / or to provide legitimacy for the professor. S7 recalls:

The one thing that was interesting, I did have an English course where there were two Aboriginal people. And me, I don't always get lumped into that sometimes. I

don't know why, a few say I look it, but sometimes... There was one guy, who looked very Native. And every time there were Native issues – because we talked about this one book about Native issues – they'd point to him in the class and they'd ask him to share his examples and feelings. I always felt bad for him because, you know what I mean, he was always the one singled out.

It is clear that S7 understands how another Aboriginal student has been marked by 'look', code for skin color, as being Aboriginal. As a result her interpretation is that this student becomes targeted as the Native informant. S7 remains silent but appears to feel guilty at her own complicity and 'feels bad for him'. The negotiation is a difficult one since calling attention puts herself at risk of being interrogated as a Native informant.

In another example S5 spoke of feeling 'set up' when expected to do a presentation on Aboriginal theory.

S5: And then I had to present an aboriginal theory, because I was Aboriginal.
That's what she gave me.

S: She didn't give you any choice?

S5: No, we didn't have a choice on what we were presenting on. So me and the two Aboriginals, we presented on it.

S: How did that make you feel?

S5: Well, I did well. I thought, well this is going to be a bird! But when I came to the exam, it was a problem. Because we couldn't write on what we had presented on. So she purposely set it up so that I couldn't write on something that.

S: Something that you would have been strengthened in. So if you could have presented on another theory, then you would have learned that theory really well and could have written your exam on something that you knew just as well.

S5: Yes.

S: So did you feel a little put off about this?

S5: Yes, I didn't think it was fair that she did that, because she wasn't doing that to other students. What about women's issues?

S: She wouldn't know that other people had that background. That's really unfortunate.

S5: Yes, and you didn't do that for feminist theory.

S: For somebody that might have taken a women's studies course.

S5: Exactly.

In this example S5 was marked as an Aboriginal student and therefore expected to take up the role of being the Native informant on Aboriginal theory. What is interesting is that other students were not marked in the same way. S5 uses the example of the other female students not being expected to be informants on feminist theory. In fact the professor had no way of knowing what the knowledge levels of the students in the classroom were unless she specifically asked. In my view the above example clearly shows what I would call a deliberate attempt on the part of the professor to ensure that the Aboriginal student was disadvantaged under the guise of being Aboriginal 'sensitive' or 'friendly'. The reality is that other students in the classroom also come to that space with particular knowledges and experiences but there is no expectation that they are required to present on their area of expertise. What is distressing is that this student was enrolled in a School of Social Work where anti-racism and emancipatory pedagogies are professed-- begging the question of who is being emancipated. White students? Because it certainly was not the Aboriginal student in this example.

Like many of the students interviewed, S5 also described a number of examples of being called upon to be the Native expert in classes.

S: Were you the only one [Aboriginal student] in the class, besides this other one that self-identified later?

S5: Yes.

S: So do you think that the teacher or the profs treated you any differently than they treated the rest of the class when they were teaching the material?

S5: Only in the way that I think they *expected me to know* this.

S: And how did that make you feel?

S5: Well if I didn't know, I just said I didn't know. I only said I was "*never an expert*, this is what I've been told or taught." And that's how they presented all their material. So it was really comfortable to present it, to say it that way, that I didn't always know.

In the following example S3 clearly expresses conflicting emotions about being called to be the Native expert.

S3: I felt good about it at the time because I was willing to learn, but at the same time it was a little bit of pressure at times, with other students always looking to me for certain answers about the aboriginal community, like I was the spokesperson or something. Whereas, I kind of appreciated that, because I really like to share things that I have learned and things that have been passed on to me. But at the same time it could be a bit of pressure.

When asked how this could have been done differently, S3 responded "I think it would have been nice if he had had more Aboriginal people coming into the class. Such as resource people and visitors, and that kind of thing. That would have been nice." This would have freed S3 from

the role of being the Native expert to a role of being a student. Clearly the student found herself in a dilemma of having to respond to the request of the professor but at the same time feeling a degree of vulnerability as a student.

In another example S5 recounts her difficulties in being called to be the Native expert.

S5: I had another prof at [university] who introduced aboriginal theory into our class, who was not Aboriginal. She let the class get out of control. I ended up having to mediate that class.

S: And how did you feel about that?

S5: I was very upset. I was very angry.

S: What do you mean by “out of control”?

S5: Like not addressing the sweeping remarks. You know, “my friend Fran is from this reserve, and they have all this money. Aboriginal people have a lot of money, you know, on the reserve.”

S: The prof wasn’t dealing with this?

S5: No

In the same incident, because the professor did not deal with the issue appropriately S5 felt targeted.

S5: But every... because she let that happen once in the class, it continued to happen for the rest of the year. So I was constantly having to say something.

S: So how did you feel in that class?

S5: I felt pinpointed. I felt like I was the token person.

Clearly the constant call to represent your people is one thing but when that call requires of you

to behave and respond in a specific manner, as a cultural ‘Indian’ or as an expert, in order to be believable it is as Shohat and Stam (1994) note, the burden of representation “can indeed become almost unbearable” (p. 183). When I interviewed S5 she had a range of emotions in recounting the incidents from anger, exasperation and sadness. Clearly she was still carrying a heavy burden related to what had transpired in the class.

Called to be the cultural Indian.

In recounting how she felt about being the Native expert S3 noted that:

I think there’s a lot of focus, too, on the ceremonies. And I think people are really interested in that, and mystified by it at times too. Throughout my college and university years, I was participating in a sweat probably every 3 months if I could. So I was really, really involved, I was going up to the reserve [name removed] every weekend for sharing circles. So I was really, really involved at the time. So in that sense, I didn’t mind sharing about those kind of things but as far as the historical perspective, I felt that would be better left to somebody who was also Aboriginal and somebody who was a little more educated on it at the time, I guess.

In this example we also see that being called to be the Native expert also includes playing a specific role as the Native expert / the cultural ‘Indian’. This student is also acutely aware that people are generally interested in her as a cultural being as she explains that they are mystified by ceremonies / culture. Here again the Aboriginal student becomes believable only as an authentic Aboriginal person and subsequently Native if they are seen to fulfill the racialized expectations of non-Aboriginal students and professors as being cultural spiritual beings. This same student further recounted her experiences in a class taught by a non-Aboriginal professor:

S3: I think...I was asked to educate other students quite a bit. I believe it was, I think I was the only Aboriginal student in his class at the time, so oftentimes, I

think every week pretty much, he would get me to do the smudge²¹. And so eventually, I started trying to get other people to partake in that. And oftentimes he would ask me for, I guess, to explain things a little further. Or if he was right in saying something, he would ask if I felt it was okay what he said. And things like that.

While the professor in this case may have felt that he was being inclusive by involving the student in educating other students in the classroom, no attention is paid to the fact that the student may have felt coerced into conducting the ceremony. In research this practice would be considered unethical because participation is not viewed as fully voluntary (Berg, 2007; Wilkinson & McNeil, 1996). Yet in the space of the classroom it seems that such a practice largely goes unnoticed. Equally important to note in this example is the gender inequity: the professor was an older white male and the student a young Aboriginal woman. This places the young Aboriginal woman in another awkward position of having to respond.

Everyday racism.

Finally, Aboriginal students must also contend with negotiating racism as an everyday lived and ongoing experience outside the classroom. S7 recounted an incident of experiencing oppression when out in public – a waitress assuming she was not going to pay:

S7: I was very angry. I was really upset with her. She actually thought I didn't pay for my drink. She thought I was [indiscernible] I was like, I'm going to do that? She thought I was going. I was going to the washroom or something, but she thought I was leaving without paying.

²¹ Smudging is part of a sacred cleansing ceremony often done at the start of a sharing or healing circle. Smudging is the lighting of a sacred medicine, oftentimes sage or sweetgrass, and participants in the ceremony bathe themselves in the smoke to clear their eyes, ears, hearts and mind (Fitznor, 1998, p. 34).

The incident is like many others that I have heard where Aboriginal peoples are racially marked as deviant and criminal. I recall many instances, as a child, where we were followed in stores to make sure we were not up to no good or stealing something. More recently while in a store I witnessed three Native children being followed. At first, I did not think much of it, but as I looked around I noticed that the attendant was not paying the same attention to other White children and adults.

When asked about her experiences with everyday racism and oppression, S5 said “I see two kinds of oppression. I feel the oppression that Aboriginal people feel. And I also feel it from Aboriginal people, because I’m too white [referring to her lighter skin color]. I feel both.” She seemed to be recounting the oppression she feels from both within her cultural group as well as externally, S5 went on to explain her feelings about this:

So you kind of feel alone, because you don’t really identify with everything that mainstream people feel. And then you’re not really accepted into the First Nations community. So you’re advocating, but you’re not really accepted. So it’s kind of like, well, do I continue doing it, even though I’m not accepted, in hopes that I get accepted? Or should I let that bother me? And I just say, to hell with it now. I’m tired of it.

Similarly S1 speaks about her white-skin privilege. She notes:

I’ve definitely got white-skin privilege. And I was really upset, because I’m like, “I’m Aboriginal.” And they looked at me, “all women of colour.” And they looked at me again, “Just because you have white skin, you do get those structural benefits. But you are a woman of colour, so you’re twice screwed.

S4 also recounted feeling prejudice from her own community although in her instance it was not related to skin color but the source of her education.

There were situations for me, my situation as a young, young child, having to move from the reserve. Like I lived in the States, and when I came back into the school on the reserve, I faced even then the prejudice from my own community members. I remember that, I still remember even the words from some of my...the fact that you were in school first here on the reserve, then you moved away, then you came back. And you talk a little bit different. I remember, we had a bit of an accent. And it was just like almost, “you don’t belong here. You moved away.” Or stuff like that, what young kids say. “Don’t you live in the States?” “Why are you back here?” I don’t know, I don’t even know where it came from. I just know we somehow felt different on the reserve. And I think my Dad too, was a veteran of the war, and he was given a house, built for us on the reserve.

I discuss the struggles of mixed-ancestry Aboriginal students more fully in the next section. For now, the examples in this section serve to show the many different ways that Aboriginal students are called upon to negotiate racism on a daily basis, both within the postsecondary classroom and in broader society. These negotiations include denial of racism, being silenced, being viewed as unintelligent and hearing that Native-based courses are not viewed as real academic courses. Further, when an Aboriginal student is acknowledged for having unique knowledges and experiences they are then called to be the expert on everything Native and / or are called to perform as cultural beings. In addition, outside the classroom Aboriginal students are subjected to everyday ongoing societal racism. Undeniably there seems to be no escape from racism for Aboriginal peoples, and, in this case, the Aboriginal student.

Emotive responses to racism / Colonization talk in the classroom.

In chapter four of this thesis I reviewed the literature on the impact of ongoing colonial violence. Recall that several authors (Brave Heart & Debruyn, 1998; Duran et al., 1998; Wesley-Esquimaux & Smolewski, 2004) made the link between historical colonial violence and

subsequent effects. Fanon (1963, 1967) also identified the psychological impact of racism. These works are useful in understanding the emotional upheaval colonial violence causes and the subsequent emotional toll generationally. The intergenerational connection of the impact is particularly important in gaining a fuller understanding of how current ongoing colonial violence may impact an Aboriginal student. Encountering narratives of the impact of colonial violence on Aboriginal peoples, when you yourself are an Aboriginal person, in an environment where extreme racism continues can be particularly challenging. I agree with Dei et al., (2004) that in the “North American contexts we are inundated by racialized / racist discourse in every moment and in every space” (p. 127). These same authors note that:

Psychological distress is very much a part of everyday life for the child of color who is isolated, denigrated and mentally tortured. It is very much a part of the life for the adolescent who is exhausted at the thought of dealing with another racist incident where s / he is forced to feel like an outsider, trapped under a spotlight that allows everyone to see and know what s / he really is. It is very much a part of the racialized adult who wakes up every morning to a reflection that is the ‘wrong’ color—a reflection that will inevitably cause him / her to know pain, humiliation and fear. It is part of racialized parents’ lives when they realize that their child will know the same fear, humiliation and pain through which they struggled. (p. 128)

Similarly, there is no question that Aboriginal students interviewed in this research find it extremely difficult to listen to the narratives of historical and ongoing colonial violence perpetrated against Aboriginal peoples in an environment where they are constantly barraged by racism. Aboriginal students in this research describe emotive responses varying from sadness, anger, shame, embarrassment, feeling overwhelmed and the feeling of being under a microscope. I agree with Karumanchery (2003) as cited in Dei et al., (2004), who contends that ongoing racism is emotionally damaging and that naming the effect as TRAUMA is the only real way to begin addressing it. As noted in Chapter four on the discussion of trauma there are a range of emotive responses when one is exposed to traumatic experiences. These include emotions

ranging from restlessness, numbness, anger, helplessness, closing of the spirit (Erickson, 1995), wounding of the spirit (Bastien et al., 1999; Duran & Duran, 1995; Locust, 1998), grief (Brave Heart & DuBruyn, 1998; Duran et al., 1998; Wesley-Esquimaux & Smolewski, 2004), and self-destructive behaviours (Brave Heart & DuBruyn, 1998; Duran et al., 1998). Clearly their responses are indicative of being caught in the ‘cycle of oppression’ having been exposed to sustained environments of racism and oppression.

Aboriginal students interviewed in this research also had moments of enlightenment about coming to a deeper understanding of their own colonial oppression. I describe these moments as ‘aha moments,’ which are times when the student comes to a fuller realization of the enormity of the devastation that colonial imposition and racism have had on their communities as well as their own families. This awareness and critical understanding can be very uplifting in that it frees a person from the belief that there is something inherently wrong with him / her.

Sadness and anger.

Two of the most frequent responses to colonial talk in the classroom are sadness and anger. S2 talks about his deep sadness in hearing about the residential school experiences in the classroom when in his own family system he had a number of relatives who attended:

S2: And some of the stories that uh were told in terms of the residential schools and its effects, uhm which wasn’t too pleasing of course, because it also touched in my area in terms of Saskatchewan. Because there were quite a few residential schools in Saskatchewan, and he [the professor] talked a little bit about some of my relatives that would have been mistreated them. And it brought me back, I said, I know where that school is, I went there so many times, I drove there. I felt it was *so sad* to see that, some of them would look out the window and wouldn’t be on the other side. Couldn’t go over there to see them. More or less trapped in there. I really found that quite hard. I didn’t go to the residential school, but a lot of my family did, my mother did.

At this point in the interview S2 became very quiet and a look of utter sadness swept over him. It is apparent that S2 connected hearing about the residential schools to his own lived familial experiences and knowledge. His descriptions of the residential schools are what one would expect about those that are incarcerated. For example, he uses the descriptions of looking ‘out the window’, ‘couldn’t go over there to see them’ and ‘more or less trapped in there’ which suggests incarceration. Clearly this was a difficult moment as he took in the full impact and effect of how his own family was also incarcerated.

When asked about responses to difficult material, S7 notes her sadness as extreme. She also recounts her anger at the church – a system of colonization. She offered the following:

S7: Yes, for sure, like. And I don’t know how it came up in our family, but I knew my Grandma went to residential school. It came up somewhere that she had gone to this residential school, or I might have asked when we took it in class, “Did Grandma go there?” But for some reason, I knew. And when I was learning about it, there was an extreme feeling of sadness, for my Grandma. I think my Dad had anger towards her, because she gave him up. But I didn’t have so much anger towards her anymore, because I think it’s a lot of life’s circumstances is why she gave him up. And that was one of the circumstances, probably because of the way she had to grow up in that place. So yes, I was extremely sad for my Grandma having to go there. And I felt more forgiveness towards her, like, that my Dad was adopted out. There was always that kind of “Why did she do that?” you know.

S: Did your Dad... Did she have other children as well?

S7: She had another son.

S: Was he adopted out as well?

S7: He was adopted.

S: So both of them were.

S7: We've never met him. She's never met him. He's somewhere.

So like I said, some things just sort of started opening my eyes.

S: Did you have any other reactions?

S7: I was angry at the church. Actually, I was pretty angry at the church and the Catholic system, and Christianity.

What is particularly important to note in the above excerpt is S7's early statement that she may have asked her family about residential schools when it came up in class. Until that point in her life she did not have a full comprehension of the effects of residential schools on her family system. When Aboriginal students come to understand the devastating impact of ongoing colonial violence and then begin to make the links personally it can be a time of extremely mixed emotions – sometimes requiring supportive counselling. In the above excerpt we see a range of feelings from extreme sadness and anger as S7 recounts and reconciles what she knows from her own family system with the new knowledge she receives in the classroom.

In another example S4 talks about the anger that students feel because they do not speak their Indigenous language, which she understands is a direct result of language suppression in the residential schools.

S4: That's where it came out the most. Aboriginal languages came out, and I remember. I could see the students, the *anger* was coming out. It would come out in the classroom because of the language, and people are angry because they don't have their language.

In addition to feeling overwhelmed by the content in the classroom S4 also expressed anger and frustration at her own father for not telling her about his experiences at the residential schools. This participant found it difficult to hear the residential school narrative in the classroom because

of her own familial history. She became quite emotional in describing her feelings about how it is discussed in the classroom.

S4: And we started talking about residential school. And that's when I started to bring up those memories from home again. That's when I remember thinking about my Dad. Like if he would have just told me, you know. Anyway, I was getting angry at him, so angry, that it was just being thrown out in the classroom [emotional]. I'm sorry.

Still carrying a heavy burden of pain and anger at how colonial violence manifested itself in her family, this student appeared to find some solace in the new-found understandings of her father's behaviour.

Shame and embarrassment.

Narratives of violence are difficult to listen to for most people, but when one is the target of the violence in that narrative it becomes even more so. In the next example S5 talks about similar feelings of sadness and anger, but she also contends with feelings of shame because White ancestry implicates her in the ongoing colonial narrative. She quickly resolves this by saying how she feels more connected to her Aboriginal identity.

S5: I was *sad, and angry*. And at the same time, because I'm part white, I felt *shameful* too. So it's a fine balance. But I *empathized* more with the Aboriginal side of me. Like, I look at that part of it, and I feel more *anger and frustration*, and knowing that it's still happening today... It was hard, listening to it. But they never talked about how horrific the abuse was"

Bonita Lawrence's (2004) book on identity negotiations of mixed-blood urban Native peoples stresses the complexities that they must contend with on a daily basis. Lawrence (2004) points out that "in speaking of urban mixed-blood Native identity, what can never be forgotten is the

context in which such identity issues are being articulated—within settler states whose claims to the land depend on the ongoing obliteration of Indigenous presence” (p. 12). While S5 certainly has lighter skin color and could potentially choose to self-identify as an Aboriginal person or not, she takes a stand and asserts her Aboriginal identity. Lawrence (2004) goes on to point out that when ‘mixed-bloods’ assert their Aboriginality

they are also taking cultural genocide seriously—both in terms of the phenomenal pressures that most urban mixed-blood families have faced historically to minimize, deny, and in every way virtually eradicate their Indianness and the absolutely unchallenged everyday assumptions permeating the dominant culture that Indianness will continue to dies with mixed-bloodness and urbanity. (p. 12)

In the excerpt below S5 goes on to speak about how she also felt oppressed from within the Aboriginal community because of her lighter skin color as well as from the White community because she is an Aboriginal person. This was similarly discussed by two other participants in this research. Despite the oppression and the extreme isolation she feels from the Aboriginal community, S5 clearly asserts her Aboriginal identity. As well, despite being in an Aboriginal-based programme she finds herself in a place of negotiating her identity in a space one would have thought of as safe—a class of primarily Aboriginal students. In fact this is far more than negotiation; it would be better referred to as ‘shielding’ or ‘protecting’ oneself from an onslaught of violence. She refers to this as a state of “constantly defending” herself. What is interesting in this student’s experience is that educators also need to be aware of the effects that ‘not fitting’ in with the class can have on a student’s ability to take in new learning:

S: When you had those experiences about feeling oppressed from both sides of the community, both the white and the Native communities, were there any supports to help you through those kinds of experiences? Did you talk to anybody?

S5: Well, I talked to my mom about it, but nobody else, really. It's not all Aboriginal people that I've run into who were like that. There were only a select few, and I had the worst experience at [a college] in my class, and it was the students in my class who were like that. Not the teachers, but the students. So it kind of really gave me a bad taste of going into another programme with First Nations people, because I'd have to be constantly defending myself. So you feel very lonely, and I didn't have a lot of friends in college.

S: That was hard.

S5: Yes, it was hard. It was a hard 3 years. I almost dropped out a few times. So no, I didn't

S: Why did you keep at it then?

S5: Because I got a lot of encouragement from my family. And it was, "If you don't want to go back to university, if you don't want to do something else, at least you'll have something under your belt."

Despite wrestling with feelings of extreme isolation from both the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal community S5 continued on with her education showing much strength and resiliency in resisting ongoing oppression.

Similarly, S3 speaks about struggles she contended with in negotiating her mixed ancestry; however, she has another layer that added to the complexity of her identity as a child who had been adopted and raised by a White family.

S3: And those became really emotional at times because I could see myself in those, in the adventures of April Raintree, a person who is *struggling both with the white identity within herself as well as the Native identity*. And that was something that was for myself as well, that fear of "Am I going to be accepted from the Aboriginal community at the same time? How can I incorporate this into my life, because it's something that's very valuable for my healing journey?"

This is reminiscent of Patricia Monture-Angus's (1995) sense of outrage as she sat in her law class and found herself in the narrative being described in the classroom. While Monture-Angus's sense of outrage was related to what Aboriginal peoples have had to contend with as the targets of colonial violence, S5's feelings of shame are related to her White ancestry and being implicated as the perpetrator of that colonial violence. Both described the class content as extremely difficult to listen to. We also see that the colonial narrative affects students of mixed ancestry in very profound ways as it strikes their sense of identity in a very different way.

S4 also spoke about the difficulty in listening to narratives that portray Aboriginal peoples in a negative light. She comes to a fuller realization that how history is told actually omits Aboriginal peoples from the story unless it is in a negative light. As she continues to talk S4 realizes that she herself knows little of her own culture and history. What is important to note is the words she uses to describe how this makes her feel—"dumb" and "embarrassed."

S4: I don't know if I'm supposed to be bringing this up, but why does everything seem to be so negative on our part? Isn't there anything good that happened in our history? But then I thought, we don't have any of our actual Native history in that book. But I remember that, and I remember students were picking up on that. I remember that first year. They were taken aback just as much as I was, and I'm a Native student, you know.

S: So how were you feeling about that?

S4: I felt really ... for myself, I *felt really like dumb*, that I *didn't know my own culture*, my own history. I didn't know the facts, I really didn't know the facts. And I was *embarrassed* about that. But I also remember feeling that, "Are these non-Native students in this course," like this is almost year-end now, like "what actually are they taking away from this to really understand it? If I'm Native, and I'm not really even understanding it at this point, what are they understanding?"

Typically people who are oppressed internalize a range of feelings and thoughts about themselves as individuals and as a people (Fanon, 1963, 1967). Further, in many classrooms history is told from a particular perspective or worldview that excludes Aboriginal peoples. If Aboriginal peoples are included in the narratives, they are depicted in particular ways which include being primitive, less intelligent, and / or a dying race. In the excerpt above we can see that these racialized constructions have filtered through and have been internalized by S4. While S4 has developed a level of conscientization²² that Aboriginal peoples are depicted only in a negative way, she has not been able to resolve internalized feelings of inferiority, as illustrated in her use of the words “dumb” and “embarrassed.”

Overwhelmed.

Very often people who are oppressed and face racism on a daily basis end up feeling overwhelmed and give up. In many instances this leads to quitting or leaving the educational system. The excerpt below illustrates one Aboriginal student’s feelings of suffocation as identified by the use of ‘couldn’t even come up for breath’ when confronted with curriculum on Aboriginal peoples and colonial history in a number of her classes and assignments. This also speaks to the violation and trauma that Aboriginal students experience in negotiating their history, culture and identity in the classroom.

S4: ...because of the other classes, everything was just interrelated and overlapping. And in D’s [name omitted] class, that was probably the class where it came out the most, because of the child welfare stuff and the displacement of family.

S: So how did you feel at this point?

²² Conscientization is a concept developed by renowned educationist Paulo Freire. This term is also referred to as critical consciousness and focuses on developing an understanding of the oppressive elements of the world including social, economic, and political (Freire, 1970).

S4: Oh, *I wanted to quit*. Not only that, I didn't realize I still had a lot of residue from my own background that I hadn't really come to terms with.

S: But then you're getting this stuff from an academic.

S4: And it was just so overlapping in every class. It was almost like you couldn't even come up for breath. And the assignments we had to do, the literature we had to read, and....

S4 goes on to express her feelings further. In this next excerpt we see the daily trauma this student had to contend with. Not only was she dealing with classroom experiences; there were a number of familial events that intensified her feelings of being overwhelmed. We must see this within a larger context of the overall health of Aboriginal peoples before dismissing this one student's experiences as relevant only to her particular situation. For instance, Aboriginal peoples experience higher rates of violence in their lives, have higher rates of significant illnesses such as diabetes and heart disease, and have higher rates of mortality at younger ages than that of the general Canadian population (RCAP, 1996a). As a result, Aboriginal peoples' lives are complicated by a number of factors that exacerbate the intensity of feelings that a student may have when confronting narratives of ongoing colonial violence in the classroom.

S4: I remember this essay that we had to do. It was on that book, what was it called now? It was so much into the violence, you know. And in that particular book, the author of that book was in fact non-Native, where they worked together with an Aboriginal person on this project but it's more this person's book. And I knew that when I was reading the book. And I remember this person trying to give his concept of aboriginal culture, but I thought, "there's something different here. It doesn't sound like a Native person talking." There seemed to be these gaps. And his whole intent seemed to be to just throw this explicit violent picture out to the readers. And as I was reading it, I... oh God. On top of that, in my first year we had a death in our family, my husband's mother... First of all, the first

term was psychology, my brother got killed. Oh God, he actually got killed the day I was going to write my psychology exam. Like, this is so weird when I think about it. And my mother-in-law was sick, dying of cancer. So all through that, she passed away in March. I was writing exams and studying. That was the first year. So the second year, we had a memorial, and it was still so raw.

This same participant (S4) later noted that one of her classmates *dropped out* as a method of coping.

S4: There's anger, and it just goes hand in hand. Because like I said, some of the students. She was in residential school, she couldn't speak her language, and she's sharing her story. I remember that day, I looked at her. She dropped out of that class.

S: Because of this, do you think?

S4: Partly.

S: Because you said that you thought of this, too.

S4: Yes, the workload too. The workload, and when you're trying to work through your work and you have this whole big thing behind you and you're trying to funnel it out into this little stream, into something that... O my God!

Clearly the context of this student's life affected her ability to deal with difficult course content. However, her context is not unlike many Aboriginal students. S4 also acknowledges that learning about ongoing colonial violence is difficult.

Under a microscope.

In this next excerpt S4 talks about feeling as if she were under a microscope, which Monture-Angus (1995) also says was her response to the deep pain she experienced in hearing about the lives of Aboriginal peoples in classrooms where little regard is conveyed to those

whose lives the narratives may affect. "I felt very, very much under a microscope, even if it was not my own personal experience that was being examined" (Monture-Angus, 1995, p. 17). What is particularly interesting about this participant's dialogue is that she quickly moves to understanding the extent of the impact of what is happening in class in terms of her own personal experiences in counseling. Had she not had prior counseling, she would have likely found it difficult to cope with the intensity of her reactions to confronting her own colonial narrative.

S4: I remember that in D's class, there was a good mixture of Native and non-Native students, because they were taking that because they're in Law and Justice or something. And I remember sitting, it was getting stronger, especially in the mixed class. I remember sitting in there feeling, especially me in my generation maybe, under a microscope. It's like you're standing there talking about ME, you know. My peers are hearing this, and I'm so embarrassed...I was embarrassed, I was... If I hadn't had the therapy and the treatment that I did have, I think that it really have blown me away. I know it would have, for sure.

In the following excerpt S4 goes on to expand on how she views what happens in the classroom in response to difficult material such as the colonial narrative. Here she notes that the range of emotional response is similar to what she went through in her own personal counselling session, which suggests that the range of emotions that an Aboriginal student might experience can be quite intense. This points to the profound emotional effects that confronting historical colonial narratives in the classroom may have on an Aboriginal student.

S4: We all have a history, and you have no choice. It *becomes a counselling session*, you can't avoid it.

S: You have to go somewhere with it.

S4: It just comes out in the classroom. What I experienced in my counselling sessions and in treatment centre, it's the same kind of thing that's going on in the

classroom. And I feel that. When I went first to the mainstream [counselling], and then I went to where some Aboriginal people were, this was going on and they couldn't handle it. That's how it branched off into these Native treatment centres.

S: So you actually see that being carried into the classroom or students needing to have some kind of counselling

S4: Oh God, yes. And you know what, because again of what I've experienced and the knowledge that I've learned about human behaviour and so forth, I would see some of the students, the way they were, and it was like *displaced reactions*. It wasn't really directly at that, but their *anger* would be, because I know that some students would stand outside or whatever, angry.

S: They wouldn't know where to put it [anger]?

S4: *They wouldn't know what it's about, but something triggered something [unknown source of anger]*. But it all, I think some of it boils down to is the same thing, "this is me you're talking about, and I'm getting a dirty name here."

There is no doubt that S4 feels the material on colonial violence is distressing to Aboriginal students. Her perception is that they would likely need some sort of counselling, which suggests a profound emotional / psychological reaction that could be described as traumatic.

Monture-Angus (1995) also contends that even when she did explain her painful emotional responses to classroom content that the classroom facilitator was ill equipped to respond. In reflecting on her experiences in her 1st-year law class, Monture-Angus (1995) notes,

When we had to deal with the issue of rape, or whenever the issue of rape had to be dealt with, be it in the rules of evidence or whatever, people took great pains to make sure that they were not inflicting any harm on any of the women in the room. 'You never know when one of the women in the room in the class that you are teaching has been a victim of rape.' But as an Indian woman, I have never had the same courtesy extended to me when the issue was clearly racism. (p. 16)

Aboriginal students interviewed also sought out sources of support to assist with dealing with difficult material in the classroom. For instance, some students noted that they spoke with their spouses or their peers and others felt Elders would be an important source of support. One participant attended workshops to gain a better understanding of herself and her culture. One student noted that she might cry later when she left the classroom.

Aha moments and feeling validated.

While students have a variety of responses to talk about racism and colonization in the classroom, they also have reactions that assist with esteem building and strengthening a sense of identity. In this first quote S4 talks about how her increased awareness of the colonial narrative became a vehicle in helping her understand her own oppression:

S4: I didn't really realize that until way later in my life, actually until recently, how much that impacted me. I didn't even know that I was being exposed to *racism and prejudices*. I had no idea, even in my young adult life. It was only until more of these studies came about and I started to learn more and getting into ceremonies, and even more so when I came to university. I've only been here 4 years. I remember one day in class when all of a sudden it really just hit me, in a different way. "So that's what happened to me!" You know. So I remember those things that went on in the classroom. It was awful.

S4 goes on to describe feeling *psychologically damaged* from her early life experiences and relates how this seems to surface in Native studies courses:

You're trying to create an academic studying and content to it. But at the same time, which doesn't happen in any other course – you know, if you go to take psychology, or sociology, and so forth, I don't think most of those students in there have had a background that's psychologically damaged. I don't think. But in the Native course...

I think what is important here is that this participant highlights that students come to the classroom carrying with them the effects of a number of lived experiences. In this case the student carries her early traumatic life experiences that relate directly to her family's experiences with a colonial institution – the residential schools. In the classroom she becomes acutely aware of how her family history relates directly to the history of colonial violence in this country. This student, like many Aboriginal students I have spoken to, was never exposed to a critical historical analysis of colonization in this country; as a result her understanding of colonial history has been limited to what was transmitted to her in her previous schooling. While it is beyond the scope of this research this also suggests that there is a need to address gaps in how history is communicated at the elementary and secondary school levels.

The next excerpt highlights one student's response to hearing about difficult material such as the residential schools in the classroom. S8 attended residential school as a young child and she relates her experiences to that being described in the classroom.

S8: I found it very difficult to listen to, because she was talking about, you know, she was talking about all the things in residential school, especially that book *Stolen from our Embrace*, that was by Ernie Crey and how they were really abused in BC. I mean, BC sounds, some of the stories in that book are mostly from BC. So that was a lot of abuse there, and I didn't know that. That's what really shocked me. But some of the other things they were talking about in residential school that were the same as we lived, I said, "Hey, that's me you're talking about." So I sort of felt out of place, but yet I spoke up. I was wondering, "should I speak up? Maybe I shouldn't speak up," because there's non-Natives in the classroom too, eh. So I was almost like verifying what the teacher was saying.

[Note: this student was one of only a few Native students in a class of 50]

Her responses to colonization talk in the classroom ranged from feeling shocked at the abuses suffered by Aboriginal peoples in residential schools and at the same time feeling an awakening

to the recognition that she could see herself in the residential school narrative. I refer to this as an ‘aha’ moment. What is also interesting in her narrative is that she wrestles with speaking up because there are non-Native peoples in the classroom. She goes on to explain that she feels a bit guilty.

S6 also has an ‘aha’ moment when she comes to a fuller realization of the impact of colonial imposition on Aboriginal peoples. What is particularly noteworthy about the narrative below is that she points out how the colonial narrative is minimized. My understanding of this is that the colonial narrative is one that many, especially non-Indigenous peoples, would rather forget, denying the full impact that colonial violence has on a people.

S: Well, how did you feel about it then?

S6: Well. At the time, I guess, I was blown away. I was, not traumatized, but I really felt like I had my eyes opened. Like, “Look at this! This is what’s happened.” As if I had never seen it before. But I think what it was is just I had never looked at it before in that way, or from that angle. So when I hear about it now, it sounds almost minimized.

S: Because you’ve heard it so many times?

S6: Because I’ve heard it so many times, yes. And I think it’s partly maybe because it is minimized to an extent, and also because I have been desensitized myself, because of hearing it many times.

In the next excerpt S3 identifies hearing about the *residential schools* and *child welfare system* and its impacts as difficult.

S3: She [the professor] got us to write a reflective paper. She wanted us to reflect on how the colonization process has impacted us as individuals. So what I did, I started to look at the material that I was given around *residential schools*: the traumas and the different type of issues that had come up as a result of that, the

loss of language, the disconnection from family, having to give up a way of life and completely change that, having been scolded, and those kind of things. So I could really see how my adoption was definitely a direct result of the colonization process. And also, the impact of alcohol in the community as a maladaptive coping technique with all of the abuses that have happened.

In the excerpt that follows, S3 goes on to describe a range of responses she experienced when confronted with difficult material in the classroom. This same participant went on to talk about her reactions to the course content as she recognized herself in the colonial narratives. Her own story is one of being adopted out, but also being a child of mixed ancestry.

S: Did you ever feel, have an emotional reaction to some of that content?

S3: Very much so, I think through my own process of *self-discovery* and learning about my own identity. I think a lot of the information was just *devastating*, just to know the type of things that had taken place. She allowed us to read a book by Isobel Knockwood about the residential school in Shubenacadie, I believe it was, out in the East Coast. Although she never spoke physically about the abuses, it was always that you understood that those things were taking place. And it didn't have to be in your face.

For many Indigenous peoples the only history we have known has been the story told from a white Eurocentric perspective—one that depicts Indigenous peoples as primitive, less than human, unintelligent and a dying race. Coming to a fuller understanding that these constructions are rooted in racism and that the resulting impact on oneself, family, community and other Indigenous people is related to ongoing colonial violence can also be a very validating experience. S8 expressed her own feeling of validation as an Indigenous person to Canada.

S8: And he says, “You know, Canada belongs to Native people.” I always remember that statement, or something to that effect. I went home, and I told everybody that.

S: It’s pretty powerful.

S8: It is, because people don’t understand where we come from today. And that gave me a lift all the way through. I always thought about that.

S: Oh, good for you.

S8: Even though I was still going through all these....

S: Still working through your stuff.

S8: Yes, but that kept me going. Because I live for our children, for our people and our community, and all our Native people.

Obviously, coming to a fuller understanding of the colonial narrative that shows the history of Aboriginal people and white settler society from a critical lens can be both validating and uplifting.

Resisting ongoing colonialism and racism.

On a more positive note, despite the significant challenges that these Aboriginal students confront, they identified a number of ways that they negotiate racism in the classroom. They also identified a number of personal strategies including making use of what is available institutionally that have assisted them in a more positive way to deal with ongoing racism and colonial imposition. These strategies include including having safe places to express feelings, education and critical consciousness raising, accessing available Aboriginal supports including Aboriginal traditional supports, actively resisting racism, being acknowledged and validated, adequate debriefing, and being warned ahead of time that course content might affect them

emotionally. While these may appear to be merely reactions versus personal strategies I name these as strategies of resisting ongoing colonialism and racism because they appear thought out and / or there is suggestion that the response is done with intent. In my view a more reactive response would imply an unplanned response to an event or stimulus. It is also important to note, that these students were well on their way to successfully completing their degrees. In fact, one student had recently graduated with her undergraduate degree in social work.

Not self-identifying as Native.

One way to resist ongoing colonialism and racism is to actually deny one's own identity. If one can distance oneself from labels and racialized constructions, a cushion against daily barrage and attacks is formed. I draw on a quote used earlier when I introduced S5. She commented that it was not until the middle of the semester that she knew there was another Native student in the class, despite the fact that the course content dealt with a lot of Native issues:

S: Were there other Aboriginal students in the class?

S5: Miraculously, by the middle of the semester there was. It's like, there wasn't any that would identify. But one girl said, "You know, my grandparents' grandparents' grandparents' were." So it's quite odd for somebody who'd never identified. This was a 4th-year class that we took, and I went to school with her all the way through, and we took Aboriginal theory in 3rd year. She was in that class, she didn't say anything. We took 4th-year theory, she didn't say anything. It was amazing.

In this quote S5 questions and finds it 'odd' why a student wouldn't self-identify. S1 provides some insight into why some students do not self-identify as an Aboriginal person. In the dialogue she connects the possible reason for someone not self-identifying as an Aboriginal person as

rooted in the discourse of shame. This is evident in the use of the phrase “dirty family secret.”

She was one of 4 Aboriginal students in a class of 47.

S1: It's an elective. There's two who identified as Nishnaabe-Kwe. There's two that identified as Aboriginal, but no idea who they are, and no idea blood quantum like that ... it's been, you know, the dirty family secret. So most of the class are either, well there all non-Aboriginal.

Students fail to self-identify for a variety of reasons. Some students are looking for anonymity as Professor 4 pointed out in her interview; others do not want to be targeted as different, and others resist becoming confined to the role of the Native informant. Still others are likely uncomfortable with self-identifying because of the racism and the classroom environment itself. Sadly, it becomes easier to try to remain invisible or deny one's race.

Safe places to express feelings.

In the excerpt that follows, S3 points to the need for safe places to express the intense feelings of anger that are evoked in response to the narratives of colonial violence in the classroom. She also speaks to how her feelings and reactions are validated by the professor, which seems to assist her with reconciling her emotional response to addressing racism in the classroom.

S3: But with regard to [an Aboriginal professor], she also, she has a very strong voice, and she uses her anger as a motivator. So she would help us to be able to feel like it was okay to be angry, like it was okay to get worked up over it [colonial narrative]. We never felt like we had to keep quiet and be stifled. If we got worked up, she was very encouraging, because she was worked up about the material. The passion that she had kind of encouraged us to feel like it was okay to feel our feelings.

Another student noted the importance of having a place to vent intense emotions which supports the need for specific Aboriginal student supports. This same student also noted the importance of using her own Aboriginal traditional medicines to assist with dealing with difficult material.

These both suggest a thought out strategies to deal with the challenges that arise in the classroom. This next excerpt may be viewed as more reactive in nature but the fact that S1 is aware of where ‘safe places’ are located is also indicative she has a planned action or strategy when needed.

S1: Well, sometimes it just includes me going into [professor’s] office slamming the door and screaming [*venting*]. That has happened twice. It’s happened a lot more with the coordinator of Aboriginal Student Services. Other times, it’s been you know, I walk in and I go straight to the medicines....

This same student (S1) also sought out support of her female friends (peer support).

S1: I have so many strong female friends, like they women of colour in my life...then I bounce it off the other aboriginal girls. Plus I also have the wonderful luxury of being one of the Aboriginal peer supports at [named university]. I can go into the office where there’s medicine [here she is referring to Aboriginal traditional medicines], all the time. There’s an auntie [older female support person] there to listen to me [Aboriginal student support services]”

It was apparent in these interviews that Aboriginal students seek out and are aware of spaces where they feel safe to express themselves and spaces where they can find strength and rejuvenation. These in themselves become strategic acts that assist with resisting ongoing forms of racism and colonialism.

Education and raising critical consciousness.

S5 thought that anti-racist education for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples was a good place to start as a way of dealing with ongoing oppression:

S5: Education. I mean, it's the same thing that you would say that you'd want to do for white people. You want to educate them about the oppression, you want to advocate for change, and you want people to start slowly changing their stereotypical views. It's kind of the same thing, First Nations people have been socialized to think that white people are the enemy.

This same student (S5) also felt it was important to make links to other oppression:

S5: I think maybe what would have helped was... Like if you're going to fight against oppression, you need to fight it on all levels, for everybody who's oppressed, not just your own oppression. So maybe if they had more of a thought process like that, that might have helped. It's okay to say, "Yes, you've been oppressed. These are my oppressions." But just because you're not disabled, and talking about the different kinds of oppression and how they're all linked together. And how they all stem from... you know, where they come from, and link them together and make them common. Maybe they would have been more.

Another student (S1) suggested creating spaces to raise awareness and knowledge levels about Aboriginal peoples:

S1: The Aboriginal student counselor also suggested being more open to inviting people to various events including ceremony. "Last year she said, "So, why don't you invite your classmates, as a whole? Maybe one or two will come. See what we're doing." I said, "Oooh, okay." So I invited my professor, who's really open about stuff, really really on the ball about aboriginal issues. I tell him that I would like to make an announcement, and he said, "Ok, Go ahead."

Despite pressures to remain silent about racism, Aboriginal peoples continue to engage in educating society because it is viewed as a critical first step in raising consciousness.

Certainly educating society about Aboriginal peoples and the longstanding history of colonialism is also an act of ongoing resistance. However, the onus of responsibility for educating and raising critical consciousness about racism cannot rest only with Aboriginal peoples. Non-aboriginal peoples must also take up this responsibility.

Available Aboriginal student supports.

Another student thought academic supports were an important strategy to assist with dealing with the course content on colonial violence and the emotions it raised, especially when she attempted to write her papers for the course.

S8: Like helping me with my work to get through it, because I was having a hard time. I came in as a mature student.

S: Like academic support.

S8: Yes. Writing papers, I found that very difficult for me. Where to start... Still today I'm not that good at writing papers, but I understand the concept of writing papers now that I'm going through it, finishing all the learning that I've done and just listening was...

S2 noted the importance of peer and community supports as well as supports offered through Aboriginal student services.

S2: My other friend there, we teamed up to work on some of the courses. That's what the TYP was about, to help one another out. So no one's out there floating around feel like they're lost eh. You need that in an institution... to help your fellow classmates, because you'll get ahead that way. I think that's what this place is, and what it's designed to be, with support.

However, not all students felt comfortable using Aboriginal student services. In the excerpt below by S3 she felt it wasn't always welcoming.

S3: There's Aboriginal Student Services, which I didn't really feel comfortable accessing, because I felt it was dominated by a very few students. So I actually never accessed that service.

S: What do you mean, "dominated"?

S3: There were a few people who were hired as peer workers, and they were always in the office. And it was their friends who came by, so I just didn't feel comfortable going into the situation where I saw a clique.

On a similar note, when S4 was asked about whether she accessed Native student services, she highlights the importance of the confidentiality and anonymity required for some Aboriginal students. In most postsecondary institutions the Aboriginal student population is relatively small and oftentimes students know one another. Using a counselling service in an Aboriginal student service may pose some difficulties for a student if there is the perception that they may become stigmatized for using the service. Students who access services such as counselling also must contend with being marked as 'needy', 'inferior' and / or 'in need of help'. These demarcations are especially difficult to negotiate when one comes to the site of education already marked as racially different and deficient.

S4: The only time that I accessed that was after the two deaths. I couldn't do my exam, so my professor in psychology let me go to Special Needs and do it. And I went to the mainstream. I really didn't want to go to the Aboriginal counselling service...Because I know some of them. I think that had some bearing on it...

Yet another student expressed the following:

S1: I would not have gotten this far in university without Aboriginal student services.

S7 also noted that she was drawn to other Native students like herself which she found helpful.

She also utilized the Native Student counsellor:

S7: Well, I was drawn... at the time I was drawn to Native things because I was just learning about being Native. There was one other Native guy from the phys. ed. department, the only other Native guy that was visible. A nice guy, an awesome guy, and we always hung out together. Like immediately, I was drawn towards him because he was Native. I'll get back to that question in a minute. But we connected for this one, we had to do this canoe trip down rapids, whitewater canoeing. And he and I were paired up together. We were the only ones that made it through the rapids. I think it has to do with aboriginal heritage [laughs]. ?? That was our first meeting, so we really connected after that. So we had the Native Studies course together, he took it as well. And yes, when I had other questions about certain things, I didn't know what a sweat lodge was or what certain things were that they were talking about, and I'd ask him. Because he knew right from the reserve. And so, yeah, even emotional things, I'd ask him. "Did your grandmother go to residential school?" So he was the only one I could refer to. There were other aboriginal people in the class, but I only knew him.

And then the other thing was that I really got connected to Native Student Services...She was very friendly and very helpful, and whenever I needed to send off – we had to send off our marks to our reserve – they were extremely friendly there. So that really helped me feel comfortable to go and talk with them. And so I built a bit of relationship. And then when I had questions, I'd go see [the counsellor].

Recall that S4 noted that "If I hadn't had the therapy and the treatment [*professional support*] that I did have, I think that it would really have blown me away. I know it would have, for sure"

and also had *peer support* “I guess knowing that the other students were feeling the same way...We talked to each other...We actually had support, but I actually felt, it seemed like I was always in the position to be the one *giving the advice...*”

Certainly there are mixed reactions to accessing available Native student supports. Aboriginal students appear to be very aware of the risks associated with accessing such services. Despite the challenges and risks, however, Aboriginal students continually stress the importance of such services in postsecondary institutions.

Available traditional supports.

Students also highlighted the importance of having available Aboriginal traditional supports to assist them with dealing with some of the emotional responses they have and in dealing with ongoing racism.

S2: We have that here at *First Nations House*. We have our grandmother and our grandfather Elders here, that are not just healers but they’re counselors and teachers as well. They go outside the First Nation to the other colleges to give those words of wisdom and encouragement, and you know to allow the students to know that our door is open. We’re here eh. But in terms of lodges and things like that, we more or less go to outside. If you live in your own community whatever maybe Anishnaabe Health, healing practices. There is a garden that we have here at the Hart House, where they grow herbs and stuff like that.

Despite the risks associated with being forever marked as at risk, in need and / or of culture not mind S2 has identified Aboriginal traditional supports as an important service for Aboriginal students. S6 also commented that traditional supports assisted her to deal with difficult material:

S6: Um... Well, I guess talking to the Elders, because we’re in Six Nations, and we had a lot of, I think more, visiting Elders than we ever do up here at [university named], or anywhere else. And whether that’s because it was so close

to Six Nations or because many of the faculty were from Six Nations, or what, I'm not sure. But it just seems like there was always someone there that you could talk to.

Additional supports that assisted S3 are found in the following excerpt. Here again we see that she notes the importance of Aboriginal traditional supports and use of traditional medicines.

S3: I felt that I had some good support within my classroom. The other aboriginal student in the class, I was very close with her and we talked quite a bit. I felt that I could approach C. She had an *open door policy*, so I did go to her office quite often. I also, having been doing my placement at Native Child, I had therapists and counsellors around me who were always willing to be helpful. I attend a 12-step group, I go to AA [*self care*]. So that was also one of my supports. The self care was going to circles and participating in ceremonies, smudging on a daily basis, using my hand drums.

S3 and S2 also noted the importance of having both Elders as well as non-traditional persons available to assist students. S3: "I think it would be good to have somebody who is an Elder, or somebody, even two – a male and a female – to be able to say that 'you can talk to me as an instructor.' For the instructor to say that. But there's also somebody who's not connected, who you can see..." and

S3: Also, a non-traditional person. Because I think that from my experience, I've seen a lot of Aboriginal people in classes who have no connection with, say, ceremony. They may have been raised on a reserve for a lot of their lives, but they're in the city now, and they may not have ever had anything outside of a Christian upbringing. So for them to hear about these things and not know, I think sometimes they feel a little lost. But that really shows the impact of the Indian Act and residential schools and the reserve system, and all of these things that cause....

S2 also recounted the sadness he felt when hearing about the experiences of the residential schools and how *the use of spirituality and tradition* helped him deal with the hearing this material: “When [the professor] went into that, he forewarned us this was not an easy topic to discuss. I think one of the things that I respected him for was that he passed around one of these [holds up tobacco tie], but it was bigger, he would go around the whole room, to give us that strength and the knowledge that was supposed to be shared. It was quite good.” This same student (S2) also spoke of how *ceremonies* were also helpful. “Our TA did a ceremony to welcome us into this programme ah. That was nice, and we were able to do that outside.”

S2 also noted that one professor used spirituality (medicine pouch) to assist with dealing with difficult materials in the classroom:

I think that part of the reason why we passed the medicine pouch and the ties around, I think it's something that can bring out a lot of feeling, a lot of memories. I think he wanted to do it in a way that would not cause a big chaos. You know yourself, a little bit of that negative energy coming from not just Aboriginal students but from non-Aboriginal students. How could we have done that to these people! He was able to keep the classroom very neutral and to understand this part of history, and then the after-effects.

S1 also pointed out the importance of using pedagogical approaches such as the circle that are reflective of Aboriginal traditions. S1 noted too that use of the circle should also be in the context of providing traditional Aboriginal teachings. Otherwise the use of the circle without the teachings only furthers feelings of frustration.

It is important to note that while some researchers and authors critique culture as an answer to responding to racism, these students do find value in drawing on it as a source of strength. Without this strength it would appear that Aboriginal students would find it much more difficult to deal with the daily ongoing racism in the institution and in their classes.

Active resistance.

Students also provided a number of examples where they actively challenged and resisted ongoing racism in the classroom. In class with a non-Aboriginal professor, recall the example earlier where S5's expresses extreme difficulty when she faces sweeping racist remarks in the classroom. The example also highlights that speaking up does come with an emotional price, leaving the target of the racism with feelings of victimization

S: So what ended up happening? What was the outcome of that?

S5: It was an awful class. I was really upset. I approached the prof after class and I told her that if she ever wanted to teach aboriginal theory again, she needed to have an aboriginal teacher doing it.

S: And what was her response?

S5: She asked me why. I said, "Because the class was out of control. And they were saying things that were extremely racist," and I took offence to it. And she apologized. She didn't realize.

S: She didn't realize what she had done.

S5: She didn't realize what had happened in that class. It was never fixed. That was the biggest problem. She never turned around and brought an aboriginal prof into that class to fix.

While an Aboriginal professor may not have been able to handle the issues that arose in the space described by S5, there is value in considering the impact that professors have in facilitating class discussions. The experiences that S5 recounts about hearing racist remarks in the classroom obviously had a profound and lasting effect on her. Clearly the descriptions of the professor's lack of response in addressing the 'sweeping' generalizations about Aboriginal peoples is

troublesome, especially in light of the course being described as one on Aboriginal theory. Again the burden of representation fell to the Aboriginal student. S5 had a choice, to remain silent or to speak out / up. She chose to speak to the professor about it but felt that the professor's response was inadequate because the issue was never dealt with in the class. The narrative also shows how some Aboriginal students take up their role as Native informants in a different way—to educate professors on the impact of ongoing racism in the classroom. In the above excerpt S5 is intent on addressing racism and calls upon the professor to work to resolve it. In fact, I think this student was quite courageous in even approaching the professor. Many students would not feel that they had enough personal power to do so.

In talking about receiving course content from a non-Aboriginal professor, S1 noted that:

S1: He was very good at acknowledging [Aboriginal peoples], like in the first few weeks of school, and I hadn't identified. And I'm *fair enough*, that if I didn't tell you I was Aboriginal, you might not even notice. Some people do, some people don't. And within that class, I'm sitting towards one of the walls, and my friends were in front of me, and they said, "Will you just start speaking?" Because they could feel my anger, like my energy. Not at him, but at my classmates.

In this example she is speaking about the student reactions to the course materials (eye rolling).

In an effort to counter the ongoing racism in the classroom, S1 finally asserts herself:

S1: And he was very cool when, I put up my hand, and he said, "Yes?" And I told him I was Indian number ... I gave him my number. And he was like, "Okay." Because I did it in such a forceful, strong way. But he never tokened me. Even though he knew I was aboriginal, I didn't become the token.

S1 also gave several other examples where she challenged oppression or racist statements made in the classroom

S1: You know, my social policy class last year, we were discussing the need to pay taxes. And the professor was saying that anybody who gets out of paying any of their taxes are criminal. And I can understand that from a perspective of this is what's paying for our health care, our education, and social work jobs, so on, and I put my hand up, and said, "Are you saying that it's a bad idea for me to exercise my treaty rights?" And he went, "That's a whole other can of worms, I don't want to touch that." Well, if that's a can of worms, we're in social work, go where you're not comfortable.

S1 also attempted to provide an educational experience to her classmates in an effort to reduce the tension and ongoing racism in the class. She invited her class to a sweatlodge, but also had to contend with inappropriate comments. This is the risk associated with introducing culture into the classroom.

S1: I explained what a sweat lodge was. And I actually said, "Pardon me, did I hear that right?" And the person, because I didn't know who had said it at that point, would not respond. When I found out, I did confront her on it. I said, "I think that was a little bit racist."

But she still goes on in her attempt to increase awareness and understanding.

S1: One of my strongest beliefs about people, but predominantly aboriginal people, is we're resilient folk. We've been kicked down so many times. We should not be able to have this conversation. You shouldn't know about giving me this [holding tobacco]. This should not be happening. But why is it? It's because no matter what happened through assimilation and colonization, yes we've lost a shitload, but something didn't last as well. I'm worried about it for Creator Knowing that this was to continue. Because we've forgotten so much, we've lost so much of that growth space, and that growth space has been filled with poison. We have *to heal that poison* from the ground up. And for Aboriginal people, and for all people, we have to recognize the poison and remove the poison.

Being acknowledged in the class.

S8 felt that “there should be more support from professors. Like I was talking about the one that taught us about residential school. There should be more support and understanding. I think what happened is that she didn’t expect a person to be from residential school in that classroom.” S8 was relating her experiences about how she felt a professor could have responded more appropriately to her as she had attended a residential school. S8 went on to offer the following:

S8: And residential school, I think, is a very important topic. And even teachers who teach about it should have that compassion.

S: Compassion. How would you see people being more compassionate, you know, a teacher?

S8: They have to understand what that child is going through. And to me, they have some... Like they have the Elder on campus, but I’ve never gone to that person.

S8: Yes, so you want to have some kind of connection. Even to have other students have compassion.

S: For each other.

S8 Yes.

S8: And then when you bring that out and you don’t have someone to say, “Did that really happen to you?” Or, “Do you believe me? Or do you think I’m a liar?” I guess that’s the way I felt. I’m learning to live with this on my own and I need to go through it because I want to get out of it. I want to get out of it.

S: So if you said something that was really important about it, it’s almost like it would be nice if people would validate that what you said is the truth.

S8: Yeah.

S: And just say “yes.” That was really hard, that must have been really difficult. It’s different than just going on to something else and not even acknowledging it.

S8: Yes, even a professor to go out and say, “You know, that’s good what you said.”

S: “Thank you.”

S8: Yes, “thank you.”

S: “for sharing that.”

S8: “That must be hard for you, you did good.” “Yes, I did.” So that’s what some of the professors would have to say about it.

Clearly, even a simple thank you or an acknowledgement on behalf of the professor is important when a student shares something personal.

Debriefing in the class.

As with most classes in the university setting, little attention is paid to a student’s mental emotional wellbeing: most of the focus is on cognitive learning. In the following example S7 notes the importance of having part of the class dedicated to dealing with the emotional aspects of learning the course content on colonial violence. She points out that this would have been particularly helpful for Aboriginal students.

S7: I guess it would have been good for me to have like a part A and part B, sort of like. Yes, I need to understand the information, but there should have been maybe a part B to kind of help Aboriginal students. In my case, in particular, I think probably a lot of emotions were coming up for me. It was just a really hard year, because I was struggling with my first year of university, trying to get good grades, and this issue was kind of going on.

S: And all this material was new to you. Wow.

S7: Well, to tell you the truth, which is kind of funny, well not funny, but I almost didn't get through my first year. There was just too much information overload, and I think that added issue of trying to understand who you are was an added kind of complication. All of it together, and I almost didn't get through. And I remember my Dad came through. So it was kind of ironic.

Similarly S2 notes how tutorials assisted with both cognitive learning and emotional responses to the course content on Native colonization. These tutorials were in addition to regular classes and were offered specifically as a method of debriefing and assisting all students with developing a better understanding of the course content. In instances where the course content affected students on a mental-emotional level, the tutorials served to assist with debriefing and resolution of feelings:

S2: ...We talked about it, but I think that all the Aboriginal students were able to share their experience about their mother or father, or grandparents, so that the other non-Aboriginal students could hear. They said, "Wow, your family went through that." They were quite mindful. I don't think that we were there to pick on them and make them feel guilty. The TA was there to make sure that it was a respectable group here. Because we had to do presentations. Again, we passed around the tobacco and we were able to smudge.

What is interesting is that the Aboriginal students perceive the debriefing sessions as a safe place to express their feelings and emotions even with non-Aboriginal students present. Perhaps one explanation is that the tutorials are viewed as more appropriate places to vent emotions by all the students. On another note it may be that the use of Aboriginal traditional medicines and ceremony assists all students on a mental-emotional level.

In the next excerpt S4 also speaks to the importance of debriefing, but stresses the

importance of debriefing immediately after a class that addresses colonial violence. She goes on to talk about how the lack of debriefing actually affected her in other courses. Despite the fact that she supports debriefing, this student also noted that there was too much emphasis on the residential school systems and other negative events that Aboriginal peoples have had to contend with.

S: What I also hear you saying, though, is that because the debriefing's not done and it's not done immediately, that actually hinders a student from being able to come to terms with it a lot more quickly.

S4: I think so. And it affected my studies.

S: It affects all your other courses as well.

S4: It does. The other thing is this, I found that they were so repetitive. That residential school part there, to me I thought it was just too much in all the classes. Even the other students, where they were complaining, "We already did this over there, we already talked about that." I said, "From what I think, and from what I've been reading, it is important. And I know I've heard this too. But sometimes when you're trying to address something, you're actually enabling it to continue. You're actually promoting the negative... We do need to move on, but we do need to address that. But there has to be something to offset it as well, to become.

S4 went on to say the following: "I really felt that that particular class could have had some kind of a debriefing" or and increase level of support." S4 also noted that it might be a good idea to have *a specific course* for dealing with difficult material: "To me, there's not enough courses. Maybe there needs to be an additional course to address that in." S4 went on to express her frustration at the lack of debriefing opportunities due to class times:

And what I also think is that through the classroom, I think it's unfair that we have to be

able to learn the academic part, be affected by that. But I think it's really unfair, because we're trying to make things better, but I don't think... it can't really truly be effective trying to apply it to just this academic classroom of the teaching. I don't think that would work with anybody.

S4 sums up the importance for professors to take the time to deal with the emotional impacts as part of the curriculum in the following: "But say if you provoke something in the classroom, address it then and there... You've affected us."

Warning students ahead of time of the emotion the material may cause.

As important as debriefing after the fact one student also noted that it would be helpful for students to be forewarned that the content may produce an emotional response.

S7 noted that there were things that could have assisted her coming to terms with some of the material in the classroom. She recounts:

S7: Yeah. I remember [a professor], another person, ran a stress workshop. But she made it a bit cultural. I think that might have been the first time I smudged, and the first time I was ever introduced to the Medicine Wheel.

S: Looking back on it now, do you think that there could have been things – it would vary, right? – that could have been done in the classroom that would have assisted the Native students in the classroom deal with some of this stuff?

S7: Yeah.

S: If you think back on it, what kinds of things would you suggest or recommend that might be useful for classes like that?

S7: Well, I think he should state that this could bring up issues for Aboriginal people.

Self-reflection.

Students also thought self-reflection was an important strategy. A wide range of activities assisted S3 in dealing with difficult materials. Her professor “got us to *write a reflective paper*. She wanted us to reflect on how the colonization process has impacted us as individuals. So what I did, I started to look at the material that I was given around residential schools...”

S1 also spoke of the importance of *self-care*: “I don’t want to be a walking wounded, so I usually find a way to deal with it. I think we as a culture have been so wounded, I’m there trying to help those who can’t help themselves right now. But I’m also fully aware that I have to take care of myself.”

Professors that are knowledgeable.

Finally one student noted the importance of having professors that are knowledgeable about the course content on colonial violence:

S1 offered: there are professors, *they need to learn* [increase knowledge levels]. They haven’t the faintest idea. Like I mean, that was last year in my anti-oppression class. Last year in my practice class, I was told I was not allowed to write a paper on aboriginal social work perspectives, when we were doing ah self studies, you know, different modalities of social work, because I could take an elective in that next year. I was told that in my first year politics, not everything is about aboriginal perspective. But even if I did a paper on a topic that is not aboriginal-related, I am aboriginal. I have an aboriginal perspective. I find that is discrimination in the classroom.

Concluding Comments

This chapter has highlighted the range of ongoing colonial and racist negotiations with which Aboriginal students must contend. The way in which they negotiate these situations varies, but it is important to note, that because of ongoing colonial imposition and racism,

Aboriginal students come to the classroom carrying with them individual, family and community histories of experiencing ongoing colonial violence. Clearly the impact that colonialism has had on the lives of these Aboriginal students is not only profound, but can also be named as traumatic. Equally important is that these students take courses in Native colonial history to learn more about themselves and their history but also to learn more about their culture and identity as Aboriginal peoples. As they confront narratives of ongoing colonial violence and genocidal practices in the classroom, these students also have to cope with a classroom environment that can be fraught with racism, very hostile and destructive to their own sense of wellbeing. In fact some of these students describe profound difficulties in dealing with both students' and professors' racist beliefs and attitudes. As supported in this research, this is especially apparent in mixed classrooms where Aboriginal students are usually represented in small numbers. In this context it is not difficult to understand why a significant number of Aboriginal students do not continue their education. The question that became apparent in this research is whether mixed classrooms can actually be reconstituted as safe spaces for Aboriginal students seeking to learn more about colonial history and Aboriginal peoples. This question is discussed in Chapter seven relative to the exploration of pedagogical options that might be appropriate.

On another note, these same students also described and employed a variety of strategies to resist ongoing colonial and imperial imposition. These strategies are important because they highlight the resiliency, strength and persistence of Aboriginal peoples in gaining an education despite the profound barriers that exist. I close this chapter with a quote by Monture-Angus (1995) who also came to understand the need to empower herself versus being reactive. She states:

The experience of racism is one that is done to us. We react to racism. Even our pain and anger are reactions. It is objectification. We must begin to be subjects to the extent that we can be. Effectively, you then end your own silence and to a lesser degree, your exclusion. Exclusion is a different perspective. It is what is done to you collectively as members of a distinct group. To end exclusion, we must do more than offer our pain, but we must also offer our visions of what must come.

This process of gaining control over your experience is essential. Therefore, what is just as important as the ways in which we are silenced, are the ways in which we receive and maintain our voices. We receive our voices when we become empowered and overcome the silencing. (p. 29)

Chapter Seven:
Closing the Circle:
Invoking an Appropriate Pedagogical Response in the Classroom

In this thesis I have analyzed the perceptions and experiences of a small group of Aboriginal students in postsecondary education to garner a deeper understanding of how they confront narratives of colonial violence in the classroom while at the same time live and experience colonial violence on a daily basis. Recall from earlier chapters that my hope in this research was to identify pedagogical approaches in postsecondary classrooms that would contribute to the larger reclamation and decolonization process for Aboriginal peoples. My original supposition was that confronting narratives of colonial violence could be quite painful and possibly traumatic. I also interviewed Aboriginal professors with the view that they might also be able to add some understanding on Aboriginal student's reactions to the narratives of ongoing colonial violence in the classroom and an appropriate pedagogical response. Therefore Part 1 of this chapter contextualizes the discussion of pedagogy in the postsecondary classroom by reviewing the key findings in this research in light of what scholars are saying about appropriate pedagogy with difficult course content.

In keeping with an anti-colonial framework, this chapter also brings in the voices of the Elders whom I draw on for their understanding as it relates to Anishnaabe worldview and pedagogy. Recall that an anti-colonial framework brings to the center Indigenous worldviews while still identifying the enormous impact that colonization plays in the lives of Aboriginal peoples. Therefore, I draw on the interviews of two Elders to acquire some understanding of how healing from ongoing colonial violence and trauma is understood and how this might inform pedagogy in the postsecondary classroom.

In Part 2, the final section of this chapter, I focus on drawing conclusions and making recommendations on what might constitute an appropriate pedagogical approach in the delivery of a curriculum that contains narratives of colonial violence on Aboriginal peoples when that violence is ongoing.

Part 1: Summary of Key Findings

This thesis confirms that despite some changes to the educational system Aboriginal students and Aboriginal professors still confront significant challenges when they enter sites such as the postsecondary classroom. First, they find themselves contending with racialized constructions of Aboriginal peoples that are perpetuated and held in place by very strong and compelling forces. What is abundantly apparent in this research is that Aboriginal students and Aboriginal professors, like Aboriginal peoples more broadly, are imagined, narrated and regulated in very specific ways; it is through this imagining, narrating and regulating that the development of racialized constructions of the Aboriginal student and Aboriginal academic evolved and remain embedded in the classroom today. Specifically, Aboriginal students come to postsecondary educational sites marked and carrying a huge burden of representation. These students enter sites such as the postsecondary educational institution racially marked as ‘at risk’, a marker that not only inscribes a victim identity but also constructs them as inferior and unintelligent. When they are successful it is assumed that they have received some sort of assistance or unearned advantage. Similarly, Aboriginal professors find themselves marked as inferior and / or at worst not even regarded as ‘real academics’. When Aboriginal students and professors enter the classroom they are further regulated by having to respond in very specific ways as the ‘Native informant’ or the ‘cultural / spiritual Native’. These methods of regulating serve to maintain existing hegemonic hierarchies. Further, Aboriginal students and professors alike contend with living with racism on a daily basis.

Despite being racially marked and constructed as inferior a second critical finding was that the Aboriginal students interviewed in this research were determined to come to university to fulfill a search about their own history, culture and identity as Aboriginal peoples. These

students recount numerous examples of how ongoing racism and colonialism have contributed to their lack of knowledge about their own history, language, culture and identity. They cite a number of individual or familial experiences with residential schools, churches, child welfare systems, as well as ongoing, daily experiences of racism and violence. As a result of Aboriginal peoples' experiences with the destructive nature of ongoing colonialism there has been significant erosion of their land bases, languages and cultures, elements vital to a people's identity. Many have also internalized racialized notions of Aboriginal peoples as inferior, which was also evident in the narratives of the students interviewed in this research. Native studies or courses with a large component that covers colonial history and / or courses that cover Aboriginal culture are therefore sought out to assist with building and strengthening identity. The students interviewed in the research affirm that increased knowledge and awareness of ongoing colonial violence can also be very empowering and healing.

As noted in Chapter five, the focus on culture and identity has also become the main strategy that has emerged in Aboriginal education since the early 1970's. Culturalized discourse has been critiqued (LaRocque, 1975; Razack, 1998; St. Denis, 2002), noting that a cultural difference analysis does not equip Aboriginal teachers or students to name the racial violence to which they are subjected (St. Denis, 2002), that it replaces any attempts to diversify teacher populations (Razack, 1998) by diverting the gaze away from the ongoing systemic and historical barriers that exist, and essentially masks White settler societies' role in perpetuating ongoing colonial violence. On the other hand, there are also clear indications that a strong cultural identity assists with retention of Aboriginal learners (Deyhle, 1995) and that Aboriginal students find strength through participating in culture including ceremony as a means to combat ongoing racism and colonialism. This creates a double bind for both Aboriginal professors and Aboriginal

students who find themselves racially constructed as cultural / spiritual beings and challenged when they turn to cultural revitalization strategies without confirming the imaginations of the colonizer that they are indeed of culture not mind.

Another critical finding in this research is that the Aboriginal students interviewed described very profound experiences of racism in mixed classrooms where colonial history and the impact on Aboriginal peoples is presented. In fact, it was evident that racism was the primary negotiation these students faced. The experiences with racism were especially difficult and painful in classes when they were only 1 or 2 Aboriginal students in a larger class of non-Aboriginal students. Further, there is no doubt that the participants in this research found listening to narratives of colonial history difficult. Listening to your own story in a space when you are under the constant threat of having to defend yourself against racism takes an enormous psychological toll. Emotive responses to racism varied from sadness, anger, shame, and embarrassment, to feeling overwhelmed and feeling under a microscope. It is not hard to conceive how difficult learning can be when one is overcome by psychological distress in the classroom.

One of the most frustrating aspects that Aboriginal students identified in negotiating racism in the classroom occurs when peers and professors deny its very existence. Aboriginal students spoke at length about how difficult this was for them as they found themselves providing repeated explanations and clarifications when the burden of proof is left to them. Another powerful form of racism that these students confronted is being silenced. Silencing ensures that talk of ‘racism’ is shut down or is effectively minimized. Both denial and silencing allow racism to continue without question and could be identified as the more covert types of

racism because they are sometimes difficult to ‘see’ and ‘hear’. Further it is extremely difficult to challenge racism when there is denial or silencing of its very existence.

There are also more overt types of racism that Aboriginal students must contend with, including racialized constructions of Aboriginal peoples as inferior. Constructions of inferiority become evident through statements that have been made to the Aboriginal student such as being told you are not ‘university material.’ Internalized oppression, taking on the belief of the colonizer, is also evident in statements of low self-worth. For example, one student held the belief that there was something wrong with her until she came to an understanding of the impact of ongoing colonization on her family and herself. As if these more overt forms of racism are not enough, these same Aboriginal students recounted being confronted with racist sneers that devalued and downgraded the Native studies courses in which they were enrolled.

Aboriginal students and professors are also called upon and expected to perform as ‘Native informants’ in the classroom. That is they are put in a position where they are expected to respond to everything related to Aboriginal peoples, despite the fact that they themselves are learners in the classroom. This burden of representation is inflicted upon Aboriginal students by both professors and peers who are non-Aboriginal. One particularly poignant narrative is one student’s experience with feeling ‘set up’ as the Native expert. Recall from Chapter Six S5’s description of an incident where she was expected to present on an Aboriginal social work theory because she was marked as an Aboriginal ‘expert’ and then later in the course of the exam was not allowed to discuss anything on Aboriginal theory. Other students also expressed conflicting emotions related to being put in the position of the ‘Native informant.’

Aboriginal people are also called to be the Native informant in very regulated and specific ways. The call to be the ‘cultural Indian’ is clearly another major negotiation that both

the Aboriginal student and professor must contend with. Aboriginal professors are critically aware that they are expected to provide course content that covers colonial history of Aboriginal peoples and White settler society, as well as provide / do culture in the classroom. They are also aware that Aboriginal students come to the classroom expecting to build their own sense of Aboriginality. However, the Aboriginal professors in this research know the terrain of negotiating culture in the classroom is tricky because non-Aboriginal students come with an expectation about Aboriginal culture that fulfills a different purpose in their imagination: one that includes perpetuating racialized constructions of Aboriginal peoples as only spiritual and cultural beings. Aboriginal professors interviewed for this research consistently vocalized that they provide aspects of the culture in the classroom but do so cautiously because they do not want to perpetuate existing racialized constructions of Aboriginal peoples.

In many of the examples shared in this research, the Aboriginal student and professor are not regarded as Native informants or as authentic Natives unless they take up the role of a cultural or spiritual being. Despite the risks associated with being called to be a ‘cultural’ being, many Aboriginal professors draw on the traditional teachings which are inherently cultural as a source of pedagogy and worldview. Again, this is a slippery slope for the Aboriginal student and professor who seek to draw on their cultural teachings as sources of strength and empowerment. Both students and professors interviewed in this research recount a number of examples where they are expected to produce culture or respond to interrogations about Native issues. If they are not able to respond according to the predetermined discourses operating around the ‘authentic Indian’ they run the risk of being further alienated. In my opinion it is an abuse of power when a professor asks an Aboriginal student to take up providing a cultural ceremony for the class who

are predominantly non-Aboriginal under the guise of being respectful of Aboriginal culture, especially when that professor is an older white male and the student a young Aboriginal woman.

It is abundantly clear that Aboriginal students and professors as well as Aboriginal / Native studies courses are viewed as out of place in the academy. This is difficult terrain for both the Aboriginal student and professor to negotiate as they find themselves not only defending and legitimizing their very existence in the academy, but also confronting and challenging ongoing hegemonic and racial constructions that work to keep them in a place of inferiority and / or out of the academy in the first instance.

I think it is important to re-iterate that the narratives of Aboriginal students are largely informed from their experiences of being in mixed-race classrooms, where they were often a small minority. Therefore, the findings of this research and the subsequent discussion on pedagogical strategies are discussed in this context.

Finally it is important to also state that these narratives had a profound effect on me; initially I felt a strong sense of sadness and hurt that racism was so alive and well in spaces that contend to be educationally safe. Later, as I worked through these emotions, I became outraged at just how pervasive racism, a form of violence, is and that these students were subjected to this daily. Upon further reflection I have come to another place, and that is that I must acknowledge the strength and resiliency of Aboriginal peoples. In doing so I do not want to diminish the profound racist experiences that Aboriginal students and Aboriginal professors confront daily. Aboriginal professors and students identified a range of strategies that assist them with daily negotiations of ongoing colonial violence. The next section recaps the range of strategies that Aboriginal students and professors draw upon to negotiate the difficult terrain of the classroom. These include strategies of resistance as well as those that are empowering.

Strategies of Negotiating Difficult Terrain

Aboriginal students interviewed for this research have developed significant strategies to survive and resist ongoing colonial violence in the classroom. Of particular importance is that these students spoke at length of the value of having access to cultural ceremonies, medicines, and traditional supports such as Elders in assisting them with dealing with the ongoing colonial violence. For those who have limited knowledge of their own culture and identity as Aboriginal peoples, the search is particularly important. What is also evident in the narratives of these students is that they also describe a profound sense of relief and validation, described as 'aha moments', as their own awareness and critical consciousness about the devastating and ongoing impact of colonization are increased. This awareness is extremely important in validating one's own experiences with racism and oppression as real. Therefore, while coming to this awareness can be painful, it can also be liberating. It is the increased awareness that comes with finally understanding yourself, your family and your community more deeply. It is the awareness that you can stop carrying the shame about who you are, that you can stop devaluing yourself, and that you can stop 'blaming the victim' of the longstanding and ongoing colonial violence with which we live. It is at these times that there also appears to be a need for cultural supports for Aboriginal students. So while many of the students draw upon traditional cultural supports this is also coupled with the development of critical consciousness on the impact of colonization.

On the other hand, while coming to the realization of the profound effect that ongoing colonialism has had on yourself, your family and community can be an extremely validating and uplifting experience, it can also be a time of psychological distress. The students interviewed for this research described a number of strong emotive reactions to racism operating in the classroom. These reactions are further compounded by being confronted by what can be construed as difficult curriculum. The students identified a number of strategies that have

assisted them in varying capacities with negotiating these challenges: being briefed in advance that some course content may be particularly difficult and may cause an emotional reaction; being acknowledged and validated in the classroom; being provided opportunity to adequately debrief from material that is particularly difficult; and continued education about the impact of ongoing colonization on Aboriginal peoples for everyone. The latter was identified as an important part of raising critical consciousness about racism and oppression. In addition, Aboriginal students identified the importance of having ‘safe spaces’ to express feelings related to environments where racism continued to operate and / or when they were trying to come to terms with understanding ongoing colonial history. Recall from the previous section that part of the desire to take courses on history as it relates to Aboriginal peoples is related to the significant devastation of culture and language that these students have experienced in their own family and community systems. Rather than finding spaces that are safe and nurturing many of these students find themselves in highly charged and racist environments—ones where they must defend themselves. Similarly, Monture-Angus (1995) notes: “In my more than 10 years as a student and my 5 years as a professor, I have never experienced the classroom as a safe place” (p. 67).

Finally, Aboriginal students consistently stressed the importance of available Aboriginal supports including, traditional cultural supports despite the risks of being further marked as ‘of culture and not mind’. They named a number of such supports, including available smudging, access to traditional medicines, access to Elders and / or Traditional people and access to ceremonies. None of these strategies are difficult pedagogical and support measures to provide in educational institutions. However, it is clear that not all of them can be provided by student support services alone. There are some pedagogical strategies that can be provided in the

classroom. However, if a professor decides to take up aspects of culture as a means to provide support to Aboriginal students in the classroom, as some of the professors in this research have done, it must be with full knowledge of the risk that there will be students who consume the Other (hooks, 1992) in ways that reinforce dominant racialized hierarchies. I would suggest that in classrooms where Aboriginal students are few this be negotiated outside of the classroom with students who may want to have access to such supports, rather than creating a space where ‘culture’ is not only consumed by non-Aboriginal students but the Aboriginal students and professor alike are made a spectacle²³. Otherwise the strategies that are utilized as a source of strength and support may be reduced to perpetuating racist constructions of Aboriginal peoples and exacerbating the very problems that they are attempting to overcome.

The two Elders interviewed for this research concur. When asked about the impact of colonization on Aboriginal peoples, one Elder noted that education was traditionally found in the bush where one learned how to live off the land and to survive in the harshest conditions. She added that this notion of self-reliance changed as a result of colonization. As a result of colonial imposition, she contends, that many Anishnaabe students come to postsecondary with ‘damaged spirits’. In her experience many of these students therefore come with histories that may include having been abused and / or suffering from drug and alcohol abuse. She explains, “So as they come to school in the postsecondary setting and they hear these things [narratives of colonial violence], it’s like, ‘this is not real, this is not what’s happening’. But they don’t know, but they know something’s going on in their spirit...things are starting to surface, they don’t even know what it is.” In this excerpt this Elder is referring to Aboriginal students’ reactions to hearing and / or viewing accounts of colonial violence in the classroom. Her perception is that students initially go into a state of denial as a way to deal with the strong emotions that surface when

²³ For a fuller discussion on spectacle see S. Hall (2001).

confronted with these particular narratives. The second Elder also noted that many Aboriginal peoples are unaware of the effects of colonization because ‘it’s hidden’. It is not until they come to school that they learn about how colonization directly affected their people.

Elder 1 also went on to explain that at this point in their education many students will leave the class and return home making some sort of excuse for their absence:

E1: And a lot of times, they’ll make an excuse of ‘well, I have a family member who’s sick’. And they’re finding ways sometimes to get out...because the truth, maybe the content of the subject, is that they’re just not ready for that. They haven’t started their healing, and a lot of times, 99% of the time, they start their healing in a school environment

What I found particularly interesting is that she inserts the notion of healing into her talk and that she asserts that the vast majority of Aboriginal students start healing from the effects of longstanding colonial violence during their postsecondary education. She restated this a second time later in the interview as well. Elder 2 also reiterated the importance of healing. In this regard pedagogy becomes critically important in classrooms where narratives of colonial violence are introduced. The impact that curriculum has on a student can be extreme and professors / educators need to be attuned to the effects of delivering material that can evoke such an emotional response. At the very least, I would contend that ethically this would be no different than conducting research on a topic that could potentially be harmful to a participant. Why would teaching difficult material be any different than asking difficult research questions on the topic? Like a researcher, a professor or any other educator needs to be aware of the impact that words and images may have on a learner.

Both Elders stressed the importance of identity and noted that many still do not know who they are as Aboriginal peoples.

E1: But they come here, to the postsecondary. It's a whole new area. Even just coming to the building, sometimes it's stressing and intimidating, because they still don't know their identity eh? They're not even familiar with the clan system, they're not even familiar with their spirituality...so they haven't even had a notion of that until when they start their journey and start asking questions and going out and listening. I think that's when they start their change and realise, "I'm ok, ok I can handle a little bit of this" And they'll keep going, but they'll struggle. They'll leave, they'll come back, they'll leave, they'll come back.

E2: ...remembering who you are and what you are. And also knowing that we walk in two different worlds...it's a very hard thing to do.

Elder1 links the struggle with identity to lack of self-esteem and self-confidence. It is her perception that many Aboriginal students lack self-confidence and that this is the result of colonization.

Both Elders identified a number of strategies that could assist Aboriginal students.

E1: they're quiet. They just clam up and they just listen. And thoughts are running through their minds. One of the ways, probably right at the beginning, probably doing a lot of social sharing, social gatherings. Maybe introducing circles and maybe doing fun stuff to actually build them up. So they know that a lot of these topics, they sound horrible, but as a people, we have survived over 500 years. We have a high tolerance...I think even just with acknowledging that we're not here by ourselves. And looking at identity.

Similarly, Elder 2 noted that healing circles were important in assisting students with understanding the impact of colonization. Elder1 spoke of the importance of providing students with an opportunity to share personal experiences as a way to assist the student through particularly difficult material.

E1: Sometimes, too, for her [student] to even maybe share, even if she just hears the stories, but how did that affect her? What was she feeling knowing that her father [or parent] was there [residential schools]? What was her connection? What was the behaviours in that household? To have a little understanding and then you go through the content of it. She'll make a connection. It wasn't him so much, but it was what was imposed on him, how it impacted him.

Another strategy that this Elder pointed out was the importance of providing professors--in this case Aboriginal professors--spaces / places to debrief and receive support themselves.

In discussing the importance of culture and identity for Aboriginal students and professors, the Elder also pointed out the links to the land:

E1: We have a strong link to the land, eh. And to people. We have that strong link. Because we've heard Elders say, 'Without the land we are nothing. Without a language we are nothing' ...and that's what makes us really strong to make sure we don't lose those, our spirituality.

While culture has become the mainstay for dealing with the retention of Aboriginal students, this research affirms that negotiating the culture / colonial divide is very tricky and difficult terrain. As noted earlier in this thesis, taking up culture is problematic (LaRocque, 2004; Razack, 1998; St. Denis, 2002). Similar to LaRocque, Razack, and St. Denis, Ladson-Billings (1995) critiques the 'cultural' approach to education in her review of literature. She notes that in essence the goal of culturally appropriate, congruent, responsive and / or compatible educational strategies has been how to 'fit' students constructed as 'other' into a hierarchical structure that is defined as a meritocracy. She challenges this, noting that she is unclear how these goals actually do more than just reproduce current inequities and that models based on culture "seem to connote accommodation of student culture to mainstream culture" (p. 467). However, despite this problem, Ladson-Billings (1995) still maintains that "culturally relevant pedagogy must

provide a way for students to maintain their cultural integrity while succeeding academically" (p. 476). She notes that denying one's identity and culture as a way to succeed academically is not acceptable and challenges educators to identify relevant pedagogies. I would have to agree with this point. Why would Aboriginal students be expected to give up elements of their culture which includes their unique ways of knowing and understanding of world which may be expressed through language, knowledge, thought and at times, ceremony? Why should Aboriginal students not be able to participate in education with their full identities? Based on what students and professors shared in this research there is enormous value in a cultural connection in the classroom. This is affirmed by Deyhle (1995) who conducted a 10-year intensive study on issues related to retention of Aboriginal students in mainstream schools. She found:

Failure rates are more likely for youth who feel disenfranchised from their culture and at the same time experience racial conflict. Rather than viewing Navajo culture as a barrier, as does an assimilation model, 'culturally intact' youth are, in fact, more successful students. (p. 420)

In Deyhle's (1995) study it appears that being able to draw upon one's cultural identity is a source of strength and assists Aboriginal students traversing the race divide. Certainly the strategies they seek in terms of cultural supports are important in building a strong sense of Aboriginal identity. Ladson-Billings (1995) identifies three criteria of a culturally relevant pedagogy: "an ability to develop students academically, willingness to nurture and support cultural competence, and the development of a sociopolitical or critical consciousness" (p. 483). Although her study focused on Black African-American students and teachers, she does offer some insight into the need for pedagogy that ensures students are supported in a classroom environment and acknowledges their identity and culture as well as develops a critical consciousness about how education is a sociopolitical institution of knowledge transmission. Similarly, Grande (2004) critiques the underpinnings of 'Indian' education as not simply the

quest to ‘civilize’ or deculturize a people. She points out that education of Native peoples “was a project designed to colonize Indian minds as a means of gaining access to Indian labor, land, and resources” (p. 19) and therefore it was and continues to be very much a sociopolitical endeavor. The students in this research also affirmed the importance of raising critical consciousness about the ongoing racism and colonial violence experienced by Aboriginal peoples in their own country. I agree with St. Denis (2002) when she affirms this point in her thesis, noting that “culturally relevant education must entail more than supporting cultural revitalization; it must also include a critical race and class analysis in Aboriginal education (p. 323). It must be recognized that the postsecondary classroom remains a significant site for the reproduction of racism and colonialism. In the next section I discuss pedagogy more fully.

Part 2:
Teaching Difficult Knowledge and Pedagogy

Despite the fact that there is robust literature in the area of anti-racist (Calliste & Dei, 2000; Dei, 1996; Dei & Calliste, 2000; Dominelli, 2002; Kumashiro, 2000) and critical pedagogy (Lather, 1998; McLaren, 2003) in the preparation of teachers at the elementary and secondary levels, there is little literature that focuses on pedagogy specific to Aboriginal learners in postsecondary systems (Schick & St. Denis, 2005). As well, St. Denis and Hampton (2002) point out that while there is much written that identifies racism as a problem that Aboriginal students must contend with, little is written that interrogates how they negotiate this terrain. Since there is a paucity of research that focuses strictly on Aboriginal postsecondary students and pedagogy, I have drawn upon literature and research that relate to experiences of students of color, pedagogy and difficult learning, and pedagogy that supports emancipatory and liberatory goals in education.

Difficult Knowledge

Pitt and Britzman (1998) define difficult knowledge as a concept that signifies both representations of social traumas in curriculum and the individual's encounters with them in pedagogy (p. 755). I draw on this work because these authors call pedagogy into question when learning references knowledge of social traumas. Certainly narratives of violence and genocide would fit within Pitt and Britzman's definition of difficult knowledge. In the same vein, narratives of ongoing colonial violence perpetrated on Aboriginal peoples told and re-told in classrooms would constitute difficult knowledge since these narratives are laden with representations of oppression, violence and in some instances genocide. For an Aboriginal

student these narratives are especially difficult because they themselves and their families are the casualties in the story of ongoing colonization. Pitt and Britzman (2003) note that “both philosophical and pedagogical views of ‘difficult knowledge’ question the relationship between education and social justice because they assume, albeit differently, a kernel of trauma in the very capacity to know” (p. 756). It is clear from this research that narratives of ongoing colonial violence are difficult knowledge for an Aboriginal student—to engage in critical discussions is difficult for any learner, but it is especially difficult when one is the casualty in the narrative. To complicate situations of difficult learning further, each of the students interviewed for this research also spoke of contending with a range of racist experiences in these same classrooms.

Similar to the notion of difficult knowledge, Simon and Eppert (1997) explore the pedagogy of witnessing testimony about the Nazi genocide of European Jewry.²⁴ Simon and Eppert’s work offers further insight into what might constitute an appropriate pedagogy for viewing and hearing historical accounts that could be traumatic and also difficult. These authors point out that there are pedagogical, ethical and epistemological considerations that must be taken into account when one calls others to ‘bear witness’: to listen and remember events that are traumatic. While my research does not focus on the concept of ‘bearing witness’ specifically, it does examine pedagogical implications of introducing material covering colonial violence on Aboriginal peoples when Aboriginal students are the subjects in that narrative.

In Chapter four we learned of Simon and Eppert’s (1997) contention that pedagogically history comes alive through testimony and the experience of bearing witness imposes obligations on those who experience it:

²⁴ I draw on this work for insight and certainly do not want to diminish the experiences of Jewish peoples.

When memory and history are brought together in these aspirations, testimony imposes particular obligations on those called to receive it—obligations imbued with the exigencies of justice, compassion, and hope that define the horizon for a world yet to be realized. (p. 177)

These same researchers go on to note that there is also an ethic involved in testimony that “recognizes the impossibility of fully narrating the experiences” (p. 177). They argue

that ‘bearing witness’ to historical trauma demands (but does not necessarily secure) *acknowledgement, remembrance*, and some indication that the provision of the testimony has been of *consequence*. One must bear (support and endure) the psychic burden of a traumatic history, and acknowledge that memories of violence and injustice press down on one’s sense of humanity and moral equilibrium. As well, one must bear (carry) and thus transport and translate stories of past injustices beyond their moment of telling taking these stories to another time and space where they become available to be heard or seen. Finally, through words, images, or actions, one must indicate to others not only why what one has seen or heard is worthy of remembrance but also how such remembrance may inform one’s contemporary perceptions and actions. Thus witnessing is completed not by merely enduring the apprehension of difficult stories but by transporting and translating these stories beyond their moment of enunciation. (p. 178)

Extending Simon and Eppert’s (1997) analysis to narratives of ongoing colonial violence would suggest that educators have a pedagogical and ethical responsibility to set the tone and context of the classroom experience where students may be required to ‘bear witness’ to historical trauma. In this research Aboriginal students are not called to give personal testimony on traumatic events and / or history per se. However, they are in classrooms where professors utilize text, video and other sources that narrate traumatic experiences such as the residential school experiences. For example, one student interviewed in this research did attend residential school and found this content particularly difficult when she realized that the professor and her peers were talking about ‘her experiences.’ In Chapter six another student, S4, also questioned the focus on the negative aspects of colonial history and Aboriginal peoples. She asks: “Isn’t there anything good that happened in our history?” In the same conversation this student poignantly notes her reaction to hearing accounts of colonial history: “this is me you’re talking

about, and I'm getting a dirty name here." These examples affirm the profound and ongoing racial marking of Aboriginal peoples in the classroom through text, video and talk. Other students in this research also noted that they were affected by the material because they had family members such as a father and grandmother who had attended residential schools and had similar traumatic experiences described in the course content. In these examples, if the professor in the classroom simply introduces narratives that speak to traumatic events through lectures, readings and discussion without contextualizing that event, the people implicated in the event, and the trauma, it is an impossibility to expect that the students at that site will be able to acknowledge and understand the event in a way that does not retraumatize or reinscribe the colonizer / colonized relationship.

For instance, I recall a recent story where an Aboriginal student was asked to read a particular poignant account of the sexualized violence of Aboriginal women in a course. The student recounts that the professor did not contextualize the historical colonial narrative of violence and the impact that racialized constructions of Aboriginal women have. Further, the professor did not alert the students that the materials were particularly graphic and might evoke strong emotions. Without adequate preparation for reading, viewing and hearing the difficult material, this Aboriginal student asserted that she found the material extremely difficult and offensive to get through. However, this response was further exacerbated by inappropriate comments in the classroom which in her view were offensive and hurtful. This incident along with another where the same professor failed to address racist comments in the classroom led this student to withdraw from the course. As well, earlier in this chapter Elder1 talks about her experiences with Aboriginal students leaving postsecondary, only to return and leave again several times as a result of encountering difficult material. Both these stories stress the

importance of ensuring that students are adequately prepared for confronting difficult material in the classroom. This is especially important for students who may see themselves reflected in the story. Professors have an ethical responsibility to do no harm in their research and similarly I would contend that they have the same responsibility in the classroom. Therefore, I agree with Simon and Eppert (1997) that there is an obligation pedagogically and ethically when one comes to ‘bear witness’ to traumatic events, but I would also add that professors have a similar ethical responsibility in introducing difficult material in the classrooms.

I also want to draw on another notion that Simon and Eppert (1997) suggest. In response to the moral and ethical responsibilities of bearing witness to significant traumatic events Simon and Eppert (1997) note that in order to remember, give testimony and / or bear witness that the context of such exchanges is best suited to take place within a community of memory. According to these authors,

To participate in a community of memory is to struggle with the possibility of witnessing, a practice quite different from a passive attention to legalized interventions seeking to arrest time by prescribing and regulating what are to count as the significant memories of a community’s past....This renewal is accomplished by argument and deliberations that inform performative re-tellings of what members deem should be passed on. In this context, one commits to historical narrative by performing (teaching) them. The poetics must be done in ways that ‘involve’ all members. The quotation marks surrounding ‘involve’ signal the recognition that not every participant is positioned to take part on equal terms. Such deliberative moments are not free of historically formed material and cultural disparities. There should be no pretension that communities of memory are necessarily harmonious spaces, free of relations or power and insurgency. The greater the diversity of social identities, the greater the likelihood that commitments to remembrance (and the identities implicated in such remembrance) will conflict. Such conflicts cannot be worked through without taking into account the realization that historical knowledge depends on those whose histories have prevailed. (p. 187)

From my perspective Simon and Eppert bring to the surface an underlying tension that exists when narratives are communicated in sites such as a postsecondary classroom. Historical

narratives are not without points of contention as identified in the grand narrative of colonial and imperial imposition and violence imposed upon Aboriginal peoples in this country. This narrative largely goes unnoticed on a day-to-day basis and when it is told and re-told it often encounters much resistance. What Simon and Eppert (1997) acknowledge is that there is resistance and conflict when difficult knowledge is communicated.

Simon and Eppert (1997) introduce the notion of ‘communities of memory’ as sites of remembrance and testimony, ones where those who are implicated in the narrative can participate. Again, I extend this analysis from those who are ‘bearing witness’ to those who may be implicated in the traumatic story such as the Aboriginal students in this research. I suggest that this notion of ‘communities of memory’ could provide some important pedagogical insight in classrooms where Aboriginal learners might find themselves not only facing difficult curriculum but also in mixed classrooms. For example, it may be possible for professors to consider ‘inviting’ students who may see themselves reflected in the story to create a quasi ‘community of memory’ as a way of assisting students to deal with difficult material. Earlier I mentioned that at one institution debriefing circles were held with Aboriginal students who required support outside the classroom. In this sense debriefing circles could also be considered as having similar functions to ‘communities of memory’ where they become a space and place where remembrance takes place but also where community support is created to assist with dealing with the emotions that are evoked. Simon and Eppert (1997) note that communities of memory have the following functions:

An ethical practice of witnessing includes the obligation to bear witness—to re-testify, to somehow convey what one has heard and thinks important to remember. Communities of memory are locations in which such obligations can be worked out. More specifically, they are productive spaces in which to name, distribute, produce, and practice expressive resources that enable a witnessing which establishes living memories and admits the dead into one’s moral

community. In this sense, communities of memory are locations in which one can: (a) work through the difficulties of responding to the symptomatic questions elicited by testimonies of historical trauma, and (b) decide which testimonies, and what aspects of them, should be retold to whom and in what ways. (p. 187)

Pedagogically I contend that this has important implications for professors teaching about the colonization of Canada. Classrooms are, in fact, sites where notions of remembrance, witnessing and testimony occur through historical narratives. Drawing on this, the pedagogical implication becomes one where attention is drawn to how the historical narrative on ongoing colonial violence on Aboriginal peoples is introduced in the classroom, what parts of the narrative are told and retold, and by whom and in what ways. Simon and Eppert (1997) also point out the significance of paying attention to the detail of the preparation of teachers and students before engaging in testimonies. What I particularly like and think is relevant to my own research is that Simon and Eppert (1997) note the importance of taking the time to explore and work through responses to bearing witness to events that may be traumatic.

being pedagogically mindful of the opportunity presented in the practical tasks of remembrance also requires time and a conversational structure in which to explore and work through responses to specific testimonies in regard to both questions of comprehension and the demands of witnessing. In other words, the activities that structure a community of memory must include not only support for struggling with the symptomatic questions testimony elicits, but also provision of a structure within which it is possible to meet the obligations to bear witness to the testimonies one has encountered. (p. 187)

There is no doubt that confronting knowledge of ongoing colonial violence is difficult content for Aboriginal students. Parallels drawn from Simon and Eppert's (1997) work on testimony and bearing witness to difficult knowledge provides some useful insight into what might constitute an appropriate pedagogy. In the next section I examine what educators are writing on what constitutes pedagogy that is decolonizing and could be supportive of Indigenous values of self-determination as a source of possibility.

The Possibilities of Transformational Pedagogy

Despite the problems with many of the pedagogical strategies employed, there are some success stories that provide glimpses of what is working. Before examining some of these successes I want to come back to Fanon (1967) who provides an in-depth understanding of the violent nature of colonialism and the deep psychological effect colonial violence have on people who are oppressed. Fanon's (1967) theoretical understanding of colonialism and the process of decolonization provides insight on what might constitute transformational pedagogy that might assist with a way out of or away from ongoing colonialism. Derman-Sparks and Phillips (1997) note that Fanon (1967) describes two central responses of oppressed people to ongoing colonialism: either to continue participating in one's own oppression or to begin resisting one's own oppression. While I think there is debate in the either / or binary that this suggests, I draw specifically on the notion of resistance for clues to transformational pedagogy. In conceptualizing a definition of anti-racism, Derman-Sparks and Phillips (1997) draw on the work of Fanon (1997) and his notion of radicalization: "in which the individual rejects the oppressor's ideology and engages in attempts to develop alternatives to awaken the consciousness of his or her people and to participate in the struggle to transform society" (p. 27). These authors contend that "the individual who is radicalized sees the struggle for liberating one's own people as part of the larger struggle of others who experience oppression" (p. 27). It is in this vein that I explore what might be a transformative pedagogy: pedagogies whereby increasing one's awareness of ongoing racism and colonialism can become part of liberating one's own peoples. The term, 'transformational pedagogies,' in this thesis, therefore refers to those pedagogies that assist individuals with understanding oppression and work towards bringing about societal change or transformation.

I start with the work of Kevin K. Kumashiro (2000), who conceptualizes and critiques four primary approaches to anti-oppressive education. These four approaches are “Education for the Other, Education about the Other, Education that is Critical of Privileging and Othering, and Education that Changes Students and Society” (p. 25). He notes that the common thread in the four approaches is

that oppression is a situation or dynamic in which certain ways of being (e.g., having certain identities) are privileged in society while others are marginalized. They disagree, however, on the specific cause or nature of oppression, and on the curricula, pedagogies, and educational policies needed to bring about change. (p. 25)

Kumashiro (2000) explains that ‘Education for the Other’ primarily focuses on the improving the experiences of the student who is Othered. Like the Aboriginal students in this research, Kumashiro (2000) explains that in this approach schools are viewed as places where students who are Othered are treated in harmful ways through various forms of discriminatory practices. He notes that proponents of this approach stress the importance of creating safe spaces / services for those students who are the targets of discrimination and support pedagogy that affirms difference. As a strategy of resistance to ongoing colonial violence, the creation of safe spaces and services was clearly articulated by the Aboriginal students interviewed for this research. However, as Kumashiro (2000) notes there are least three problems with this approach: the focus remains on the Other as having the problem; the Other needs to defined and named; and it does not address the issue of multiple identities.

The second approach, ‘Education about the Other’, is described as one that focuses on what all students come to know and / or should know about the Other (Kumashiro, 2000). In this approach researchers “have argued that schools and teachers need to work against these two [what society defines as the acceptable norm and existing stereotypes] harmful forms of

knowledge that are reinforced in school" (Kumashiro, 2000, p. 32). As Kumashiro (2000) points out, this approach calls on educators to increase their students' understandings of different ways of being through increasing knowledge about the Other. The risk with this approach is that Otherness may become essentialized and that teaching about the Other often positions the Other as the expert (Kumashiro, 2000, p. 33). As noted in Chapter six, Aboriginal students recount difficult experiences of being called to be the Native and cultural informant. Rather than promoting an anti-oppressive classroom, this strategy may inadvertently cause the Aboriginal student to participate and perpetuate his / her own racialization. As a potential solution, Kumashiro (2000) suggests that teaching about the Other should not occur to fill a gap in knowledge about the Other, but rather disrupt the knowledge that already exists: "Students need to learn that what is being learned can never tell the whole story, that there is always more to be sought out, and in particular, that there is always diversity in a group, and that one story, lesson, or voice can never be representative of all" (Kumashiro, 2000, p. 34).

The third approach, 'Education that is Critical of Privileging and Othering,' is based in critical theory and "advocates for a critique and transformation of hegemonic structures and ideologies" (Kumashiro, 2000, p. 36). As Kumashiro (2000) notes the strength of this particular approach is that it "calls on educators not only to teach about oppression but to try to change society as well" (p. 38). The problem with this approach is that there is the risk of conveying the notion that oppression has the same effect on everyone and that raising consciousness will actually lead to change (Kumashiro, 2000, p. 38).

Kumashiro (2000) advocates the fourth approach, 'Education that Changes Students and Society,' in which oppression is viewed as discursively produced. In this approach oppression originates not only in the actions or intentions of individuals or in the broader structures and

ideologies of society but is theorized as originating in discourses that frame how people think, feel, act, and interact (p. 40). Kumashiro (2000) believes that this approach assists individuals with working through or ‘labouring’ to stop harmful knowledges and thereby assisting with bringing about change in oppression. He notes: “the importance of *laboring* to stop repetition and rework history / discourse can also be seen when this type of effort is attempted in the classroom” (p. 42). Drawing on the works of Felman (1995) Kumashiro (2000) states that anti-oppressive education involves crisis: that is, anti-oppressive education is unsettling and can leave a student paralyzed or stuck. Kumashiro (2000) notes: “though paradoxical and in some ways traumatic, this condition should be expected: by teaching students that *the very ways in which we think and do things* can be oppressive, teachers should expect their students to get upset” (p. 44). While I partially agree with Kumashiro (2000) in that it is important to move students from just taking in knowledge to assisting them with bringing about transformative change in the way that they may see, hear, understand and act in situations of oppression, I find it difficult to situate an Aboriginal student in this. Do the learning and the crisis include the Aboriginal learner? If so, how is the safety of Aboriginal learners supported in a classroom where they might be the minority? How is the crisis that is presumed in this approach managed so as not to inflict more trauma on students who have been marginalized and oppressed? Is the expense of this approach and learning once again on the backs of Aboriginal peoples, people of color and those who are Othered?

Finally, Kumashiro (2000) acknowledges, and I concur, that more attention should be paid to examining how theories and philosophies, including Indigenous philosophies, yet unexplored, might provide insight on assisting us to “think differently about what it means to teach, learn, and to engage anti-oppressive education” (p. 47). What I found particularly helpful

about Kumashiro's (2000) article is that it provides an excellent analysis of some of the existing challenges with anti-racist and anti-oppressive pedagogies. I take up some of these notions later in this discussion.

Delgado Bernal (2002) notes that 'although students of color are holders and creators of knowledge, they often feel as if their histories, experiences, cultures, and languages are devalued, misinterpreted, or omitted within formal educational settings' (p. 106). Students of color and Aboriginal students learn very early what gets counted as knowledge in the educational system. This is affirmed in this research where Aboriginal students find themselves being subjected to a variety of racist tactics to downgrade their ways of knowing through, for instance, silencing and degradation of Native studies as a programme of academic study.

It is clear that models premised on cultural deficit do little to support success for Aboriginal learners. As Ladson-Billings noted in 1995, the next step after breaking from models of cultural deficit or cultural disadvantage is to posit effective pedagogical practices that address student achievement and reaffirm students' cultural identity, while at the same time developing critical perspectives that challenge inequities that schools (and other institutions) perpetuate. I would call this a transformative pedagogy in that her approach is to develop a critical consciousness while at the same time challenges existing racial hierarchies. She terms this 'culturally relevant pedagogy' (p. 469). While the underlying principles that Ladson-Billings suggests are useful, the use of the term 'culturally appropriate' may be somewhat problematic in that it would still reinforce the notion of cultural deficit.

It was noted in Chapter four that Horsman (1999), whose research focuses specifically on violence and the impact on women's lives, especially in literacy, also provides excellent insight into the connections of violence, trauma and learning. In this section I draw on her notion of

bringing the whole person to learning. She writes, “for the woman who has experienced trauma, engaging all aspects of the self in a creative learning process can support integration and connection within the whole person and so facilitate literacy learning” (p. 169). While Horsman’s (1999) research focuses on literacy students, it also offers some interesting learnings on pedagogy. Like the Elders and Aboriginal students interviewed in this research, Horsman (1999) advocates for a holistic model of education: one that supports attention to the mind, body, emotion and spirit of a person, especially when a student may have or is experiencing violence and trauma. In this research I have argued that Aboriginal students do in fact live within an environment of ongoing colonial violence, evident for example, in the racism experienced in the classroom as well as in their daily lives. Applying Horsman’s analysis would therefore also support holistic pedagogy in this context. Horsman (1999) does make the point that holistic pedagogy is not for everyone and there may be instances where it would be difficult and / or inappropriate to include. She notes:

However, minimal acknowledgement of all aspects of the person is crucial in all programming. Recognition of all elements can take place through minor changes in approach. For example, the freedom to get up and go out of the room, or fetch a cup of coffee may be a valuable physical movement to lessen stress and discomfort. Literary learning might become more possible if time for learners to talk about fear and how they might cope with literacy learning in the face of terror is included in class. (p. 170)

While it may not always be feasible to include holistic pedagogy in all postsecondary classes, there is value in considering a holistic pedagogy when introducing difficult material. Even simple freedoms as suggested by Horsman would assist learners in addressing some of the difficulties they may be experiencing. Naturally I am not professing that this would deal with all of the violence and trauma that may also be perpetuated in the classroom. Horsman (1999) identifies a number of strategies that include but are not limited to the following: creating ‘space’

in the academic programming for students to speak and / or write about any relevant issues that arise in the class that affect them personally; supporting rekindling of one's spirit; exposing the ways in which power relations diminish women who are survivors of violence; creating an environment where abuse and violence is made visible and not tolerated; treating students respectfully and worthy; teaching to and supporting students' strengths; and supporting culture-based initiatives and traditional spiritual practices which build cultural pride, understanding of oppression and increase a student's self-worth. Essentially Horsman (1999) recommends that educators re-examine pedagogy with a view to exploring how a programme may incorporate the whole person into the learning or at the very least how minor modifications could be made that would be more holistic. Horsman (1999) is clear that,

opening up to include the whole person must not, however, become a focus solely on pathology and 'damage' to each aspect of the person, instead balance is need between recognizing possible damage and drawing on strengths and every aspect of the person to enhance all learning. (p. 170)

I now turn to the work of Sandy Grande (2004) who, in her book, calls into question Aboriginal peoples' continued focus on a number of matters, including production of 'tribally centered curriculum'. She describes this curriculum as typically focusing on language and culture. While there are a host of reasons why Native peoples have focused on history and more 'tribally centered curriculum' and research, Grande (2004), like St.Denis (2002) in Canada, contends that this focus has contributed to the culturalization of Native issues and concerns. Grande (2004) notes: "American Indian scholars have largely resisted engagement with critical educational theory, concentrating instead on the production of historical monographs, ethnographic studies, tribally centered curriculums, and site-based research" which has contributed to keeping "American Indian education on the margins of education discourse" (p. 1). In an earlier work Grande (2000) similarly challenged the focus on issues of identity,

asserting that “dominant modes of identity theory are universally employed to explain the conditions of all ‘marginalized peoples’ [which] erases the particular concerns of American Indians and, in this way, contributes to the continued assault on Indigenous social, political, and economic rights,” obscuring the real tribal issues of self-determination and sovereignty (p. 344).

Grande’s (2000, 2004) work largely focuses on examining how critical educational theory might be useful to Aboriginal educators, researchers and theorists. Similar to Kumashiro (2000), Grande (2004, 2008) challenges both critical theorists and American Indian scholars to examine the foundations of their respective paradigms with the view to looking at ways that critical theory and Native worldview might intersect to produce a new pedagogy:

The predominately white, middle-class advocates of critical theory will need to examine how their language and epistemic frames act as homogenizing agents when interfaced with the conceptual and analytical categories persistent with American Indian educational theory and praxis. They will especially need to examine the degree to which critical pedagogies retain the deep structures of Western thought—that is, the belief in progress as change, in the universe as impersonal, in reason as the preferred model of inquiry, and in human beings a separate from and superior to the rest of nature.

American Indian scholars will similarly need to challenge their own propensity to privilege local knowledge and personal experience over the macroframes of social and political theory. As valuable as the production of public confessions, historical narratives, ‘collected wisdoms’, and autobiographies is, there is much more to the Indian story. Thus, while the whitestream market may crave ‘the Native informant,’ it is up to indigenous scholars to resist the notion that experience is self-explanatory and work instead to theorize the inherent complexity of Indian-ness. (Grande, 2004, p. 3)

Grande explores ways to deconstruct existing Western theory and presents what she terms an Indigenous liberatory theory, a new *Red Pedagogy*. Grande (2000) uses the following working definition of Red Pedagogy:

as that which maintains: (1) the quest for sovereignty and the dismantling of global capitalism as its political focus; (2) Indigenous knowledge as its epistemological foundation; (3) the Earth as its spiritual center; and (4) tribal and traditional ways of life as its sociocultural frame of reference. (p. 355)

These four underpinnings to Red Pedagogy are also consistent with what Indigenous educators in Canada have similarly identified as successful elements of a decolonizing or anti-colonial pedagogy. For instance, the four year Native Social Work degree offered at Laurentian University has been in existence since 1988 and is based on ensuring students in the programme understand colonization / decolonization from a critical lens, understand the importance of traditional cultural practices and worldviews, and also learn how to apply social work practice that is relevant to Aboriginal communities (Alcoze & Mawhiney, 1988).

One of the critical elements that Grande (2008) raises in her discussion on Red Pedagogy is the importance of connecting any liberatory project to Indigenous sovereignty. She notes,

it is critical that American Indians work to maintain their distinctiveness as tribal peoples of sovereign nations (construct effective means of border patrolling) while at the same time move toward building inter- and intra-tribal solidarity and political coalition (construct effective means of border crossing). Such a Red pedagogy would transform the struggle over identity to evolve, not apart from, but in relationship with, struggles over tribal land, resources, treaty rights, and intellectual property. A Red pedagogy also aims to construct a self-determined space for American Indian intellectualism, recognizing that survival depends on the ability not only to navigate the terrain of Western knowledge but also to theorize and negotiate a racist, sexist marketplace that aims to exploit the labor of signified ‘others’ for capital gain. Finally, Red pedagogy is committed to providing American Indian students the social and intellectual space to reimagine what it means to be Indian in contemporary U.S. society, arming them with a critical analysis of the intersecting systems of domination and the tools to navigate them. (p. 241)

Grande’s focus on the quest for sovereignty is consistent with what Aboriginal peoples in Canada have asserted as broad goals for education (AFN, 1998; NIB, 1972; RCAPa, 1996). In a more recent writing Grande (2008) notes that Red pedagogy is not a method per se but rather a space of engagement “where indigenous and nonindigenous scholars encounter one another, working to remember, redefine, and reverse the devastation of the original colonist ‘encounter’” (p. 234). What I particularly appreciate about Grande’s Red Pedagogy is that it fosters a sense of

collectivity, provides a framework for critically analyzing colonialism and centers Indigenous knowledges.

Grande (2008) posits the following seven precepts to assist with negotiating and decolonizing education:

1. *Red pedagogy is primarily a pedagogical project...* pedagogy is understood as being inherently political, cultural, spiritual, and intellectual.
2. *Red pedagogy is fundamentally rooted in indigenous knowledge and praxis.* It is particularly interested in knowledge that furthers understanding and analysis of the forces of colonization.
3. *Red pedagogy is informed by critical theories of education...*
4. *Red pedagogy promotes an education for decolonization.* Within Red pedagogy, the root metaphors of decolonization are articulated as equity, emancipation, sovereignty, and balance...
5. *Red pedagogy is a project that interrogates both democracy and indigenous sovereignty...*
6. *Red pedagogy actively cultivates praxis of collective agency...*
7. *Red pedagogy is grounded in hope...* (p. 250)

I now draw attention to the work of Graham Smith (2000), a well-known Maori educator, from Aotearoa (New Zealand). Building on the works of Paulo Freire (1973) Graham Smith (2000) argues that Maori peoples underwent a significant shift in the 1980s in response to major concerns about language and culture loss. He asserts that Maori people decided to take back control of their education by assuming “increased responsibility for developing the social transformation of their own lives” (p. 64). During this time a concerted effort to revitalize the

Maori language was initiated by the development of the Te Kohanga Reo initiative, a preschool immersion programme (G. Smith, 2000). Drawing on the learnings from this movement G. Smith (2000) identifies four specific understandings that have broad relevance and applicability to educational transformation for many Indigenous peoples, including Aboriginal peoples in Canada. These four understandings include naming your world, taking action, unlearning, and developing models of resistance for wider application. While naming your experiences is a critical element, Maori people also took significant steps in mobilizing and taking action to bring about transformative changes. G. Smith (2000) notes:

The second critical point is that Maori adults *developed critical understandings and insights to the point where they resolved to take action themselves* to change their lives. Maori became increasingly aware of notions of power relations, economic disparities, and ideological persuasion and were subsequently more able to deconstruct the existing structural impediments implicit in education and to take the further step of developing their own resistance initiatives. (p. 65)

The third notion of ‘unlearning’ points to the un / relearning that Maori peoples themselves undertook to release themselves from hegemonic and colonial thinking that blindly assisted in supporting the dominant White (Pakeha) settler society in maintaining an educational system that was eroding Maori language and culture (G. Smith, 2000). G. Smith (2000) notes: “A major component of this deconstruction was for Maori teachers to positively reinforce and validate those practices that they intuitively felt were culturally appropriate” (p. 65). Finally, the insights that were achieved through the development of the Te Kohanga Reo initiative have also assisted Maori peoples with the development of further resistance strategies throughout the educational system, including the postsecondary system.

Based on these four understandings G. Smith (2000) further identifies six key core principles that are implicit in bringing about what he calls transformative change to the educational as it affects Maori peoples. These include:

The principle of self-determination or relative autonomy... The principle of validating and legitimizing cultural aspirations and identity...The principle of incorporating culturally preferred pedagogy...The principle of mediating socioeconomic and home difficulties making schooling an important priority despite the socioeconomic circumstances....The principle of incorporating cultural structures that emphasize collectivity rather than individuality...The principle of a shared and collective vision and philosophy...Its power is in its ability to articulate and connect with Maori aspirations, politically, socially, economically, and culturally. (p. 68)

Both G. Smith (2000) and Grande (2008) similarly contend that education is at once political in that it should promote self-determination / decolonization, collective agency, culturally preferred pedagogy / Indigenous knowledge and articulate with Maori / Indigenous political, social, cultural, economic and intellectual aspirations. Both assert that critical analysis of colonial structures and processes is critical to transformative change in education. Recall from Chapter two that Linda Smith (1999) and Battiste and Henderson (2000) advocate the importance of centering Indigenous knowledges. Dei and Asgharzadeh (2001) also acknowledge this important standpoint of articulating an anti-colonial discursive framework.

Graham Smith (2003) in a keynote address to the Alaskan Federation of Natives Convention, further identified three sites that contribute to transformation in education: conscientization, resistance and transformative action (transformation). He points out that we must recognize that there are multiple sites of engagement that are important to transformative change, and that an individual or groups may enter the transformational cycle at any of the three junctions. In terms of the Aboriginal students interviewed in this research many could be viewed as moving around the cycle in a variety of ways. For instance, conscientization implies increasing a level of awareness about a particular issue and in the case of this research this would be around the narrative of ongoing colonial violence. Ultimately the goal of transformative

learning or education is to free ourselves from continued domination and colonial violence.

Graham Smith (2003) resists using the term ‘decolonization’ to describe transformative change:

The term ‘decolonization’ is a reactive notion; it immediately puts the colonizer and the history of colonization back at the ‘centre’. In moving to transformative politics we need to understand the history of colonization but the bulk of our work and focus must be on what is it that we want, what is we are about and to ‘imagine’ our future’. (p. 2)

In Chapter two’s review of Indigenous research methodologies, Battiste and Henderson (2000) assert strong spiritual and environmental elements as well as emphasis on community relations in research. Similarly, in another chapter on ‘Decolonizing cognitive imperialism in education,’ Battiste and Henderson (2000) advocate for education that is holistic and assert that “the educational experience must be designed to enhance Indigenous knowledge and the transmission of that knowledge must be effected holistically” (Battiste & Henderson, 2000, p. 92). These authors contend that enhancement seeks to include the person’s vitality or spirit. They also advocate for separate Indigenous schools at all levels of public education (Battiste & Henderson, 2000, p. 92). The notion of holistic education is consistent with what Grande (2008) and G. Smith (2000) assert. Building on her previous work, Battiste and Henderson (2000), like Grande (2008) and G. Smith (2000), also view the importance of centering Indigenous knowledges within the school systems, emphasizing that there must be room in the educational system for both knowledge systems (Battiste & Henderson, 2000, p. 92).

Finally, I return to the work of Patricia Monture-Angus (1995) who notes that her experiences as a student have also affected her teaching. In preparing to teach, she reflected upon the many ways she had been silenced and excluded. She notes,

What I have come to understand since that time, and now understand to be my responsibility, is the responsibility to be empowering and not merely reactionary. The experience of racism is one that is done to us. We react to racism. Even our pain and anger are reactions. It is objectification. We must begin to be subjects to

the extent that we can be. Effectively, you then end your own silence and to a lesser degree, your exclusion. Exclusion is a different experience. It is what is done to you collectively as members of a distinct group. To end exclusion, we must do more than offer our pain, but we must also offer our visions on what must come.

This process of gaining control over your experience is essential. Therefore, what is just as important as the ways in which we are silenced, are the ways in which we receive and maintain our voices. We receive our voices when we become empowered and overcome the silencing. And there is an important connection between overcoming silencing and ending collective exclusion. It is much easier to exclude a silent so-called minority, than a vocal one. (p. 29)

Monture-Angus suggests pedagogy that supports and encourages students to find their voices, resists further objectification and regains a sense of liberty in one's self.

I close this section with words from Sandy Grande. Through her own journey, Grande (2005) notes that her own desire to transgress intellectual borders is an effort to strengthen and contribute to the growing field of critical indigenous education. From her work, she notes that she has learned

that experience is far from self-explanatory: that language and the ability to name one's own experience are precursors to emancipation; that teachers, schools, and Western frames of intelligibility still desire to 'kill the Indian and save the man'; and that Native America is not only a place but also a social, political, cultural, and economic space. Ultimately, however, I learned that transgression is the root of emancipatory knowledge, and emancipatory knowledge is the basis of revolutionary pedagogy. (p. 5)

Pedagogical Considerations for Difficult Learning

This final section provides some insights into what could constitute a pedagogy in delivery of curriculum that is deemed difficult learning. Education provided for Aboriginal peoples has always been part of the ongoing violent colonial regime—fraught with tactics to undermine Aboriginal peoples' self-determination, ways of life and ways of knowing. Certainly this research is indicative that hearing, viewing and discussing narratives of ongoing colonial violence when you are directly impacted by that violence is difficult learning. In addition

Aboriginal students come to postsecondary classes with the burden of being predefined and constructed as at-risk, inferior and not real university-level students. While some Aboriginal students internalize these negative racialized constructions, leaving them in a vulnerable position, others have developed a variety of strategies to resist these constructions and also thwart ongoing racism.

Based on the findings and analysis in this thesis, I propose the following pedagogical responses in an effort to minimize the reproduction and perpetuation of psychological violence in classrooms where narratives of colonial violence are part of the curricula. My view is that the ongoing violence in the classroom creates a reaction that may be traumatic for Aboriginal students in that it can produce extreme reactions of anxiety, fear and anger. This is especially apparent in classrooms where narratives of ongoing colonial violence are discussed. One of the primary goals of this research has been the search for appropriate pedagogy in the delivery of such difficult material.

At the level of the classroom:

1. Professors must begin to *understand and acknowledge through their pedagogy* that Aboriginal students come to the classrooms burdened by racialized constructions and likely live in a state of ongoing colonial violence. Professors must take up this challenge without contributing to further victimization. Approaches that are anti-racist and anti-colonial focused are required. This means that there must be direct acknowledgement of the ongoing abuses and acts of genocide directed at Aboriginal peoples. There is no doubt that introducing narratives of colonial violence is difficult. However, anti-racist education must engage and pay close attention to those who have been the targets of oppression, racism and colonialism. Typically anti-racism

focuses on White settler society or the oppressor / colonizer and little attention is paid in a classroom to the effect on those who are the targets. Understanding and acknowledging that students come to the classroom already carrying a huge burden is critical. As noted in Chapter 6, Schick and St. Denis (2005) contend that without acknowledging racism in education the effects of colonization continue.

2. Professors who are teaching difficult material must *engage in holistic pedagogical* approaches that give attention to the emotive aspects of a student's being. I acknowledge the fine line between the political and therapeutic in this regard. However, in this context it is impossible to separate as the degree of trauma demands a pedagogical response that is holistic. The mind, body and spirit are typically disconnected in most postsecondary classrooms. To further expect that students only focus on one aspect of their being, the mind, in the classroom is to perpetuate that the body and spirit are of no matter. To perpetuate this disconnection is to run a high risk of perpetuating ongoing colonial violence and in my view, pedagogically unethically. As well, to focus only on the emotional aspects without engaging in critical analysis risks perpetuating a victim identity and further racialization.
3. Professors must be prepared to *engage and confront racism* in demonstrable ways in the classroom environment by taking a firm stand against any acts of racism and violence, whether covert or overt. To do otherwise is to perpetuate violence.
4. Professors must engage in *creating spaces* where Aboriginal students can connect with other Aboriginal students or at the very least students who may also be experiencing oppression based on race. Despite, the difficulties associated with

perpetuating the notion that Aboriginal students have a ‘problem’, there still remains the need to create safe spaces because the level of racism in institutions demands that attention is paid to this. All the students interviewed in this research spoke of the need to have shared experiences with other students as these assist with easing the ongoing pain. Therefore, I still contend that supportive environments are critical to assist Aboriginal students in negating the traumatic effects of living in an environment that is inundated by racism. To do otherwise is to perpetuate an environment of ongoing racism and colonial violence and therefore perpetuate violence.

Institutionally:

1. Policy changes in hiring practices are required that encourage the hiring of Aboriginal professors across a number of disciplines. These policy changes must be followed by the provision of institutional supports for Aboriginal professors. Otherwise there is a high risk that the professor will face extreme forms of racism that make it difficult to be successful.
2. Anti-racism must become a part of the institutional culture. This means that non-Aboriginal peoples must take up the challenge and responsibility of examining their own participation in both overt and covert racism. This also means that people working in postsecondary institutions must make concerted efforts at disrupting existing racialized hierarchies. I recognize that it is an extremely difficult task to undo racism and I am not naive in believing that changes to large educational institutions can be done in the short term. However, I do have hope that over the longer term, with sustained efforts, that change can occur.

3. Finally, educational policy changes are required at all levels and not only postsecondary systems. While it was beyond the scope of this research study there is no doubt that racism and ongoing colonialism exist and are perpetuated in society including secondary and elementary school systems. How else would students arrive in postsecondary systems carrying racialized constructions of Aboriginal peoples? Therefore, I contend that these recommendations also have relevancy to other educational systems.

Closing the Circle: Final Reflections

Upon completing this thesis I was very disheartened because the struggles the Aboriginal students and professors in this research shared are not all that different from the struggles I have heard and read from Aboriginal students and professors some 30 years ago. While the works of Fanon (1963, 1967) and earlier Aboriginal writers like Emma LaRocque (1975, 1994) provide excellent insight into racism, and the effects ongoing imperial and colonial imposition have on Indigenous and Aboriginal peoples, the fact that their work is still relevant today is indicative that little has changed. I am also disheartened because when the question is posed about why Aboriginal students are not accessing postsecondary education, or why Aboriginal students are not succeeding, there is little mention of the racism and the profound effect it has. For example, a few years ago I went to a presentation by a senior Aboriginal advisor in a Canadian university. He asked the audience the question of why the retention rates for Aboriginal students are low. He identified a number of different reasons for their lack of success; he did not identify or mention racism as a factor. Once he finished the 50 or so participants were asked to respond. This group of participants was a mix of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal senior administrators and academics. As I sat there listening to the comments the same question kept coming up: Why are Aboriginal

students not succeeding in education? What was surprising is that he could not give us the answer and he was looking to the audience for answers. As I sat there sensing the discussion was coming to a close, I finally found myself compelled to get up and name what I thought the issue was. I talked about this research and the fact that Aboriginal students named numerous examples of the ongoing racism that they face in postsecondary institutions--every day, day after day. I also stated that I did not hear in this dialogue any reference to racism. I challenged both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples to start working toward co-creating a reality that was free of racism. It was at that moment the speaker had to acknowledge that yes, in fact, racism is a factor but I could sense his reluctance to name it. So, yes, after completing this thesis I am disheartened and tired.

Having said this I am also a fighter--a soldier determined to find ways and means to name the ongoing colonial experiences as they have been described in this research--as violent and traumatic. It is my hope that one of the primary pedagogical contributions of this work has been to produce a narrative of the impact of ongoing colonial violence on Aboriginal students and professors. This narrative is not new, but it does reaffirm that colonialism continues to have devastating effects on Aboriginal peoples. It also reaffirms the pervasiveness of violence in our society despite the fact that many would rather ignore or downplay the level of violence that exists. Further this work strongly counters narratives that suggest that racism has diminished. This research is also indicative that colonization is ongoing, violent and traumatic. There is no doubt that the Aboriginal students interviewed for this research describe a significant psychological toll in an environment of ongoing colonialism that is especially difficult when revisiting accounts of historical and ongoing violence.

This research also leaves a number of areas that require further indepth conversation and analysis. These include but are not limited to the following: What is the pedagogical ethic of introducing narratives that are violent and may be traumatic in the classroom? Is it better to altogether to abandon mixed classrooms when teaching difficult materials? What places / spaces are best suited for topics that include raising critical consciousness of ongoing colonization and the impact on Indigenous peoples? Can the bind of culture-based education which may include critical consciousness of ongoing colonization be delivered in a way that does not perpetuate racialized constructions or are we forever bound in the colonized / colonizer binary?

Finally, a word on my methodology. It has been a struggle to employ the Anishnaabe method embedded in an anti-colonial discursive framework and supported by six tenets of decolonizing methodologies described in Chapter two. I can say unequivocally that this research is informed by an Anishnaabe worldview in that I have consistently worked in a way that is culturally and spiritually grounded in my own knowings and that of the Elders who have taught me. While this may not always be apparent to the reader, I did start this research with an offering of semaa (tobacco). In so doing, I immediately grounded this research spiritually. I have, over the course of this journey, made many offerings of tobacco to participants and others, including Elders, as a way to ensure this research remained true to this aspect. However, I have struggled with writing this part of the methodology in a clear and concise manner. This is likely because Aboriginal teachings are not always received in such a linear manner. Despite this I did thread the use of the sacred circle into my writing of this thesis. As well, in Chapter two I identified six tenets to assist me with maintaining a decolonizing and anti-colonial method. These included the following:

1. Research must be set with a historical context that includes supporting the rewriting of Aboriginal history from an Aboriginal vantage point;
2. Aboriginal knowings, worldview or philosophies must be brought to the center in any research which deals specifically with Aboriginal tradition, culture, spirituality and ways of being;
3. Divesting of colonial power must include transfer of the Aboriginal research agenda to Aboriginal peoples. Aboriginal peoples must be involved as active and meaningful participants throughout the research process;
4. The research must be meaningful to Aboriginal peoples as defined by Aboriginal peoples;
5. There must be respect for individual and community uniqueness; and
6. Research is a relational process.

I believe that this research is set within both a historical and contemporary context of Aboriginal peoples experiences of colonization. This is evident in the early background chapters of this research. I believe that this research is informed by Anishnaabe traditional protocols for gathering information and sharing narratives. However, I do recognize that this aspect may be disputed because I have also engaged with Western analysis and discourses. In terms of divesting colonial power I have attempted to engage participants in this research as much as was possible. In the end participants seemed happy for me to continue on my journey and work. The words of an Elder helped me sort this out – “You have a story to tell and the people believe it is important.” I believe this also captures the notion that this research is meaningful to my people.

Finally the last two tenets speak to respect and relationships. I believe that I have been respectful in my approach to working with my own people. I have honoured traditional protocols wherever I went and with whomever I spoke. I have discussed and presented this research in bits and pieces over the years and have always received feedback that this is an important story to tell. I also know that I have worked respectfully. I know this because my measure of how I respect the values, beliefs and knowings of the Anishnaabe is rooted in how my mother might respond to my work and the way that I walk. If I receive her blessing, then I know that I have worked in a good way – one that is respectful of our people.

Miigwech! Miigwech! Miigwech!

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Appendix A
Invitation to Participate

**ADDRESSING HISTORICAL TRAUMA:
EXPLORING EDUCATION AS A CENTRAL TENET IN HEALING**

This research study may be of interest to you if you are either an:

1. Aboriginal student who has taken at least one course (in the last 2 years) that deals with historical colonial history of Aboriginal peoples and white settler society in Canada; **OR**
2. Aboriginal professor/lecturer who has taught or is teaching a course that deals with historical colonial history of Aboriginal peoples and white settler society in Canada

This research study is an exploration of how Aboriginal historical colonial history that is violent, traumatic and ongoing is introduced into post secondary classrooms. It is hoped that the results of this study will contribute to a growing understanding of decolonization strategies and Aboriginal pedagogical approaches in post secondary education.

If you agree to participate in this study there will be a one-to-one interview with the primary researcher that will take approximately 1 ½ - 2 hours of your time. The interview will be at a mutually agreed upon place and time.

Participation is strictly voluntary and you may withdraw at anytime. All interviews will be audio-taped with the consent of the participant. Please be assured of complete confidentiality. Your name and comments will remain confidential and anonymous. Any identifying information will not be used in reports that are generated from this research.

If you are interested please contact:

**Sheila Hardy, PhD Candidate
Sociology & Equity Studies in Education,
OISE of University of Toronto
shardy@oise.utoronto.ca
705-690-0927 (primary researcher cell phone—confidentiality assured, please leave a message)**

Appendix B

Interview Schedules

INDIVIDUAL SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS WITH ABORIGINAL STUDENTS

Miigwech (thank you) for agreeing to participate in this interview. Although I will ask a series of questions these are guides for the discussion. I would like this interview to be more like a conversation. Please feel free to elaborate as you would like.

1. Tell me a little bit about yourself? (Probes will be used to obtain, age, place of birth, where attended school, languages spoken and cultural affiliation).
2. Tell me about the courses you've taken in Native or Aboriginal studies? (Probe for details of course content that deals with colonial violence and trauma)
3. What did you hope to gain in taking a Native / Aboriginal studies courses?
4. Generally, how was the course content introduced in the class? i.e.: lecture, group activity
5. How was the material that dealt with genocidal or oppression policies (violence/trauma) and practices related to Aboriginal peoples introduced in the class?
6. How did you first react to hearing or viewing (videos etc) accounts of these genocidal and oppressive policies and practices?
7. How did you come to terms with the feelings/emotions/reactions described above?
8. What are your experiences with ongoing oppression, racism, violence etc.
9. What supports were available to help you sort through these experiences? Which supports did you access?
10. What hindered your coming to terms with your reactions?
11. What could have been done in the class itself to facilitate your coming to terms with this kind of content?
12. Describe your understanding of wholistic education?
13. How do you understand Aboriginal pedagogy (teaching/learning approaches)? Would these be useful in a university course on the history of oppression, violence, stories of trauma etc
14. How do you understand healing? How do you understand healing and education?

INDIVIDUAL SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS WITH ABORIGINAL PROFESSORS

Miigwech (thank you) for agreeing to participate in this interview. Although I will ask a series of questions these are guides for the discussion. I would like this interview to be more like a conversation. Please feel free to elaborate as you would like.

1. Tell me a little bit about yourself? (Probes will be used to obtain, age, place of birth, where taught, languages spoken and cultural affiliation).
2. Tell me about the courses you've taught in Native or Aboriginal studies? (Probe for details of course content that deals with colonial violence and trauma)
3. What did you hope students will gain in taking a Native / Aboriginal studies courses?
4. Generally, how was/is the course content introduced in the class? i.e.: lecture, group activities, etc. Does the introduction of this course content differ depending on the composition of the class? How does your own positionality affect your delivery?

5. How was the material that dealt with genocidal or oppression policies (violence/trauma) and practices related to Aboriginal peoples introduced in the class?
6. What are the reactions in students to hearing or viewing (videos etc) accounts of these genocidal and oppressive policies and practices?
7. How did students come to terms with the feelings/emotions/reactions described above?
8. What are your experiences with ongoing oppression, racism, violence etc.
9. What supports are available to help students sort through these experiences? Which supports do they access?
10. What could have been done in the class itself to facilitate students coming to terms with this kind of content?
11. Describe your understanding of wholistic education?
12. How do you understand Aboriginal pedagogy (teaching and learning approaches)? Would these be useful in a university course teaching on the history of oppression, violence, stories of trauma etc.
13. How do you understand healing? Healing & education?

INDIVIDUAL SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS WITH ABORIGINAL ELDERS

Miigwech (thank you) for agreeing to participate in this interview. Although I will ask a some questions these are guides for the discussion. I would like this interview to be more like a conversation. Please feel free to elaborate as you would like.

1. I am interested in further my understanding of how the history of contact with European society has impacted Aboriginal peoples. Considerable losses have been experienced by Aboriginal peoples through institutions such as the residential school system and child welfare system. How do you understand the impact this has had on individuals, families and communities?
2. How should these losses or acts of violence be introduced to post secondary classrooms?
3. What specific teaching strategies that are based in Aboriginal ways and understandings that would be beneficial and appropriate to use in post secondary classrooms?
4. How do you understand trauma and healing? How are these linked to what has happened in the past? How are these linked to what is happening now (to Aboriginal peoples)?
5. How do you understand wholistic education?
6. How do you understand healing in education?

Appendix C

Consent Form

Consent to Participate in Research

Dear _____

I am a PhD candidate in the Sociology and Equity Studies department at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto working under the supervision of Dr. Sherene Razack. My sub-specialization is Aboriginal education. I am inviting you to participate in a research project entitled "*Addressing Historical Trauma: Exploring Education as a Central Tenet in Healing.*" The overall purpose of this research project is to explore of how Aboriginal historical colonial history that is violent, traumatic and ongoing is introduced into post secondary classrooms. In particular the research is exploring how curriculum materials on oppression and colonization of Aboriginal people are introduced in post secondary classroom, the effects the content has on Aboriginal students and finally how teachings approaches can be developed from a wholistic perspective. It is hoped that the results of this study will contribute to a growing understanding of decolonization strategies and Aboriginal pedagogical approaches in post secondary education.

The research project was developed out of a perceived need that changes to Aboriginal education need to address changes to teaching approaches at the post-secondary level. It is hoped that this research will make an important contribution in the development of approaches to Aboriginal education.

As a participant in this research you are agreeing to participate in a 1 1/2 -2 hour in-depth conversation or interview with the primary researcher (Sheila Hardy) to discuss your experiences in taking Native / Aboriginal studies courses that deals with content around colonization of Aboriginal people. With your permission, this conversation will be audiotaped. You will also be invited to participate in a talking circle with other participants at a later date. The purpose the talking circle is to bring together participants to discuss the research findings and to assist with developing an understanding of the issues. You may choose to participate only in the individual interview.

Since this research study does focus on Aboriginal historical events that are violent and traumatic there is a risk that the interview may cause some emotional responses. Every effort will be made to ensure that you are in a comfortable and private environment for the interview. Please note that you are free to discontinue the interview at anytime. As well, if you feel the need to speak to a resource person or a counselor I will provide you with a list of agencies you may contact.

The audiotape of this interview will be kept strictly confidential, and individual responses will be grouped with other individual responses so that confidentiality is maintained. This will be done prior to presenting the data to the group who come together in the talking circle. In this way confidentiality will be maintained. The audiotapes will be transcribed and analyzed by the primary research. Your name will not appear on any transcripts and the tapes will be stored in a locked filing cabinet located in a locked office at Laurentian University. The only other person who will have access to the data, without any identifying information, is my research supervisor, Dr. Razack. The audiotapes will be destroyed five years after the completion of the research study. Identifying information will be deleted or disguised in any subsequent publication of the research findings. This research will be primarily utilized for my doctoral dissertation and later may be presented at conferences and published in the form of a book or journalled articles. You will also be forwarded a summary copy of the thesis upon completion.

Your participation in this research project is strictly voluntary and you have the right to withdraw at any point during the research. Your decision to participate, or not to participate, will not in any way affect your grades, course work, or relationship with staff and faculty in any way or manner. If you are willing to participate in this research project please read and sign the attached consent form. If you have any questions or concerns please feel to contact either myself or my supervisor via the information below.

Miigwech (Thank you) for your assistance.

Sheila Hardy

Researcher: Sheila Hardy
Phone: 705-675-1151 ext. 3429
Shardy@oise.utoronto.ca
Department of Sociology and Equity Studies in Education
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto

Supervisor: Dr. Sherene Razack
Phone: 416-923-6641 ext. 2529
Srazack@oise.utoronto.ca
Department of Sociology and Equity Studies in Education
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto

Dear Sheila Hardy:

This is to confirm that I agree to voluntarily participate in this research project entitled “*Addressing Historical Trauma: Exploring Education as a Central Tenet in Healing.*” I am aware that the overall purpose of this research is to explore of how Aboriginal historical colonial history that is violent, traumatic and ongoing is introduced into post secondary classrooms. In particular the research is exploring how curriculum materials on oppression and colonization of Aboriginal people are introduced in post secondary classroom, the effects the content has on Aboriginal students and finally how teachings approaches can be developed from a wholistic perspective.

I understand that the information obtained in the individual conversations/interviews will be first used to prepare a doctoral dissertation by Sheila Hardy. I am also aware that my identity is protected ensuring both anonymity and confidentiality. I am aware that the researcher will ask me to participate in a talking circle at another date but that this will be covered under a separate consent form. I am also aware of the potential risk of an emotional response during the interview to the topics of discussion. I am aware that I can choose to stop the interview if I feel unable to continue. The researcher will provide me with appropriate referral information to resource people and counseling agencies should I request these.

I know that I may withdraw from the study at any time, without affecting my grades, course work or relationships with staff and faculty.

Participant's Signature: _____

Primary Researcher's Signature: _____

Date: _____

Researcher: Sheila Hardy
Phone: 705-675-1151 ext. 3429
Shardy@oise.utoronto.ca
Department of Sociology and Equity Studies in Education
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto

Supervisor: Dr. Sherene Razack
Phone: 416-923-6641 ext. 2529
Srazack@oise.utoronto.ca
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