THE VOICES OF FIRST NATIONS AND MÉTIS EDUCATORS:
nahtōhta (listen), *kiskēyita* (learn) and *nistōhta* (understand)

A thesis
submitted in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree
of

Master of Education
at
The University of Waikato
by
CORNELIA DAWN LALIBERTE

The University of Waikato
2016

For my Mother and Father

ABSTRACT

This thesis begins by considering some of the learning practices of First Nations people prior to colonization. It discusses the influences that the colonial education system has had on disproportionate numbers of First Nations and Métis students over time, both through policy and practices. It considers both their ongoing expectations of and resistance to a system that is perpetuating ongoing disadvantage. It proposes both an Indigenous lens and a critical lens through which to critique the historical discourses, policies and pedagogies that have continued to emerge.

A collaborative story then exemplifies the experiences of two Métis and two First Nations educators in Saskatchewan as they move from their homes and families into formal education and then strive through the tertiary system to become teachers and school leaders themselves. As these educators position and reposition themselves within their own experiences in education, a more transformative path forward is revealed. Intertwined throughout is a critical story of the importance of social justice if we are to ensure that more Métis and First Nations children can achieve at school and take their rightful place as citizens of their own country and the wider world. Advice from the late Simon Kytwayhat, a respected Cree Elder, "*nahtōhta* (listen), *kiskēyita* (learn) and *nistōhta* (understand)" is a central learning for Indigenous people themselves and for non-Indigenous people.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CONTENTS

FIGURES

TABLES

INTRODUCTION

First Nations and Métis students in Saskatchewan, Canada have been historically labeled by inequalities in educational outcomes, between them and their non-First Nations and non-Métis counterparts. Métis and First Nations people are also over represented in areas of society that perpetuate an underclass, including: higher rates of poverty; higher rates of incarceration; higher levels of drug and alcohol abuse; higher rates of diseases with poorer overall health and shorter life spans; higher rates of unemployment and suicide; as well as other areas of social disadvantage (Pelletier et al, 2013). In Saskatchewan, First Nations and Métis students have a long history of being disproportionately underserved by education and a system that has failed to adequately respond to this issue. This is a story that is common to other Indigenous populations across the world (Shields, Bishop & Mazawi, 2005)

This thesis considers these problems against the past and present education policies aimed at improving participation in education and lifting achievement outcomes of First Nations and Métis student. It also investigates the discourses that perpetuate an education system of disadvantage for these same students. The thesis presents a collaborative story, told through the experiences of two Métis and two First Nations educators in Saskatchewan, as they position and reposition themselves within the contexts of their own personal and professional experiences.

All four educators were graduates of either the Saskatchewan Urban Native Teacher Education Program (SUNTEP) or the Indian Teacher Education Program (ITEP), and all hold Masters degrees in education. They all have classroom

teaching experiences and experiences within educational leadership in the province of Saskatchewan, Canada.

I am also a Métis woman and a graduate of SUNTEP with classroom teaching experience and experiences within educational leadership. In this thesis I take the role of the researcher and therefore have an outsider position, however, as a Métis woman educator who shares many of the same experiences as these participants, I am also an insider.

The central question framing this thesis is:

What can we learn from the experiences of two First Nations and two Métis educators in Saskatchewan when we consider their experiences of education through Paulo Freire's cycle of conscientization, resistance and transformative praxis? In order to answer my research question, the following three sub-questions were posed through a series of group-focused interviews as conversation (Bishop, 1996):

1. As a First Nation/Métis educator, describe your experiences in education. What was/were the moment(s) that you started to reconcile your First Nations and Métis culture and pedagogy to the way you were taught in school?

2. As a western trained First Nations and Métis educator, how have you come to understand what you had to stop doing that may have been perpetuating the underachievement of Métis and/or First Nations? What have you had to start doing?

3. How and when did you start theorizing and transforming your practice?

In order to answer my research question, the collaborative story of positioning and repositioning unfolds alongside Freire's notion of conscientization, resistance and transformative praxis within critical theory. While I have used Freire's notion of critical theory I am not attempting to undermine First Nations and Métis theory. I am trying to find ways to deconstruct, retheorize and restate. I conclude my thesis by returning to Indigenous theorizing in order to understand.

This thesis is arranged as an introduction followed by five chapters. The introduction introduces the research and poses the research question. Chapter one uses literature to justify the research and set the context. In Chapter two, I outline the methodology and methods before discussing the research procedure and explaining the data collection used in the thesis. I also introduce my place in this research and the research participants. Chapter three presents the findings told as a collaborative story, alongside insights into my own experiences of growing up Métis and becoming a leader within First Nations and Métis education. In Chapter four I discuss my research findings and seek to understand the collective messages that have been shared with me. Chapter five concludes by considering these messages from within an Indigenous framework then presenting possible limitations and implications for wider application and study.

CHAPTER 1

1.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces some theories and key concepts that have influenced me in my study. It then explores some of the historical and contemporary colonial discourses related to the education of First Nations and Métis people. This section begins by establishing what learning was like in pre-contact times. It continues by considering educational policies in Saskatchewan intended to affect more positive outcomes for students from these same groups. It also considers some of the outcomes of these discourses and policies on the students and teachers for whom these policies were targeted.

This research hypothesizes that by coming to understand the past and present colonial context, and by understanding First Nations and Métis theory and critical theory we can unlearn aspects of the colonial discourses imposed through education and relearn new, more emancipatory ways to proceed as educators.

1.2 Indigenous Theory

Indigenous theory is ancient and connected to place.

1.2.1 Saskatchewan Indigenous Theory - Nahtōhta, Kiskēyita and Nistōhta

Saskatchewan is a geographically large province and is the traditional territory for various different First Nations and Métis groups. Saskatoon, the city in which I live, is located within traditional Cree and Métis territory. Throughout my career in First Nation and Métis education I have had the opportunity of working alongside many Elders. The late Elders Simon and Alma Kytwayhat were ones that assisted me in my journey. I worked closely with Alma for a number of years. She was married into Makwa Sahgaiehcan First Nation and was originally from

Thunderchild, First Nation. She was a division Elder with Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools where we benefitted from her strong cultural leadership and theorizing before her passing. Prior to that she had worked with the Office of the Treaty Commissioner. Similarly, her husband Simon Kytwayhat was an Elder at Oskayak high school in Saskatoon for a number of years before his passing. Simon's teachings have had a lasting impact on Oskayak high school and are still used there today.

Simon's teachings, as any Elder would say, were not his own, rather they were teachings that had been passed down from generation to generation. He spoke passionately and eloquently about the Cree concepts for *nahtōhta* (listen), *kiskēyita* (learn) and *nistōhta* (understand). These concepts while interrelated were also cyclical. He explained that the roles of teachers and students are to listen then to learn in order to come to true understanding. As a part of my thesis writing, these understandings have been recently confirmed for me by another Cree cultural knowledge holder, and expanded upon (D. Kanewiyakiho, personal communication, July 14, 2016).

Nahtōhta is about the act of listening (D. Kanewiyakiho, personal communication, July 14, 2016). From Simon's teachings I have learned that whether teaching occurs through traditional or through dialogic means, both the teacher and the student have a cultural responsibility and role in actively listening to one another. This action of active listening is what *nahtōhta* means, to listen deeply, not just with your ears, but with your head and your heart. *Kiskēyita* is about the act of learning or about coming to know by internalizing and connecting with the concept. *Nistōhta* is about coming to an understanding through these processes of deep and active listening (nahtōhta) followed by kiskēyita or internalizing the

learning (D. Kanewiyakiho, personal communication, July 14, 2016). Later in this chapter I discuss other traditional pedagogies.

In First Nations communities, Elders were and still are recognized for being learned and theorists. Although in Canada there has not been much Cree epistemology (worldview) or ontology (ways of being) written about in academic literature, this is starting to slowly change. I believe this change to bring Cree knowledge to the fore might be a push from First Nations people to have their theories heard and valued. It might also be the realization from the mainstream that their own theories are not working for First Nations people and they need to try something different, or it could be a bit of both.

Dr. Neal McLeod is from Saskatchewan. He works for Trent University in Ontario. In Dr. McLeod's book *Cree Narrative Memory,* he discusses the importance of narrative in shaping Cree epistemology. McLeod (2007) states that:

> Listeners and readers must also acknowledge the humility that old people have in Cree narrative. While there may be oral narratives that are very close to the original, old people hesitate to claim that they know one completely. Many begin with *"namoya mistahi e-kiskeyihtaman"* ("I do not know very much"). This simple phrase is important in understanding Cree narrative memory. People did not believe they had the power over the narrative, or owned it; rather, they believed they were conduits, that there was a balance between the individual and the tradition (p. 16).

Both Elder Kytwayhat and Dr. McLeod speak to Cree epistemology and the importance of narrative.

Willie Ermine is also from Saskatchewan and works for the First Nations University of Canada. Ermine (2007) talks about an ethical space of engagement in our narratives or in our encounters with one another. That within dialogic encounters such as these, there is an ethical space.

1.2.1.1 Ethical Space

Ermine (2007) states that when societies from different worldviews come together to engage with one another, an ethical space for dialogue should be formed in which to begin the engagement. It is the space that is unseen and unnamed but can be felt or experienced by one another. This is a concept I will come back to later in this study.

While the study is about First Nations and Métis people in Saskatchewan it is important to consider Indigenous theorists elsewhere as well.

1.2.2 US Indigenous Theory

Sandy Grande is an Indigenous professor in the United States. In her book *Red Pedagogy,* Grande examines Indigenous theory and compares it with critical theory. She states that in the US there has been a tendency to place Indigenous theory under the umbrella of critical theory. However, her book seeks to understand where Indigenous theory might compliment and where it might contradict critical theory. Grande (2004) states:

> Indigenous peoples themselves – need more than a spirit of resistance, they need a pedagogical structure that provides the methods of inquiry and analysis that expose, challenge, and disrupt the continuing colonization of their land and resources. Revolutionary pedagogy has the potential to provide such a structure as they have the analytical robustness and

ideological inclination needed to sort through the underlying power manipulations of colonialist forces (p. 88).

Grande (2004) argues that critical theory is not originally Indigenous as it did not begin with Indigenous peoples themselves, rather she states:

> Critical pedagogy is born of a western tradition that has many components in conflict with Indigenous cosmology and epistemology, including a view of time and progress that is linear and an anthropocentrism that puts humans at the center of the universe. Moreover, one of its primary informants, Marxism, is prone to promulgating its own oppressive grand narratives by dismissing Indigenous cultures as "primitive" or precapitalist entities. If, however, critical pedagogy is able to sustain the same kind of penetrating analysis it unleashes on capitalism, it may evolve into a valuable tool for Indigenous peoples and their allies, fighting to protect and extend Indian sovereignty over tribal land and resources (p. 88).

I am respectful of Grande's writings for in this study I use Freire's notion of critical theory as a framework from which to understand and retheorize the positioning and repositioning of two First Nations and two Métis educators.

As Freire (2012) has hypothesized, answers from within oppressed people's own experiences and using their own collectively understood metaphors might be a logical first step in understanding their own condition. This study is about how First Nations and Métis educators in Saskatchewan, might come to understand that the answers they seek are within their own culture, as they struggle to reconcile their own Indigenous ways of being within the dominant and pervasive culture of mainstream education.

1.2.3 Kaupapa Māori Theory

Kaupapa Māori theory is ancient as well, although resurfaced in the 1970s partly due to the conscientization of Māori people and resistance to the dominant culture. Kaupapa Māori is rooted in Māori epistemology. Graham Smith (1992, cited in Mahuika, 2008) states that there are:

> Six factors that…form part of the culturally specific framework that underpins kaupapa Māori. These elements are: 1) Tino Rangatiratanga; 2) Taonga tuku iho; 3) Ako Māori; 4) Kia piki ake i nga raruraru o te kainga; 5) Whanau; 6) Kaupapa (p. 7). [1]

Mahuika (2008) claims that Kaupapa Māori has its theoretical underpinnings in Critical Theory, whereas Eketone (2008) claims that Kaupapa Māori is more aligned to Constructivism. Although some may argue that the dominant non-Indigenous group socially constructed both Critical Theory and Constructivism and therefore neither underpins Kaupapa Māori. Whatever the case there are clearly some strong connections especially the belief that all people, especially those who may be being oppressed or marginalized, legitimately have the right to be more self-determining.

In New Zealand a kaupapa Māori model of determining Indigenous epistemology and pedagogy to promote Māori identity, culture and language integration has demonstrated success for Maori students through the conceptualization and development of kura kaupapa Māori. The kura kaupapa Māori schools have been defined by Māori, taught through the Māori culture and in the Māori language.

---

[1] Translated into English, there concepts are: Tino Rangatiratanga (Māori self-determination); Taonga tuku iho (the knowledge or treasures from the past); Ako Māori (reciprocity and cultural learning and teaching); Kia piki ake i ngā rarurau o te kainga (lifting up or responding effectively to the problems); whānau (family and extended family); Kaupapa (shared agenda or vision)

However, kura kaupapa Māori sit separate to the mainstream system and only a very small percentage (less than 5%) of the Māori population are taught in this system that includes: *kōhanga reo* (pre-school), *kura kaupapa Māori* (primary school), *wharekura* (secondary school) and *wānanga* (tertiary). These institutions all operate according to Māori cultural values, beliefs and preferred pedagogical practices, and all engage in teaching and learning through the medium of the Māori language. Kura kaupapa Māori are committed to improving the success of Māori students nationwide by defining curriculum and pedagogies that are located within a Māori world view, and through the strengthening of reciprocal and respectful relationships between institutions and their Māori communities. These positive initiatives by Māori reflect growing trends for Indigenous peoples to strive to position their epistemologies and world-views at the center, rather than at the margins of educational policy and practice (Smith, 1999). According to the New Zealand Ministry of Education's, July 1st roll returns on the Education Counts (2014) website, 7.1% of Māori students are enrolled in total Māori immersion schools that include mainstream Māori language and bilingual classrooms and the kaupapa Māori schools referred to above. How Māori students in the mainstream understand themselves as Māori and the implications this has on their life chances and success is related to why I am seeking answers to my research questions in Saskatchewan.

1.3 Critical Theory

Paulo Freire is most well known for his important work in critical theory. This body of theorizing challenges us all to consider and understand how power plays out in society and the role we ourselves may contribute to the oppression or liberation of others. In Pedagogy of the Oppressed, Freire (2012) identifies three

critical positions for liberation. Within the first area Freire states that it is essential for oppressed groups to first "concretely "discover" their oppressor and in turn their own consciousness" (p. 61). I believe he is speaking about critically understanding yourself and your own positioning; your own consciousness. Second, Freire (2012) discusses resistance. What do we need to resist and stop doing that is leading to oppression? And, how can we enact more liberatory discourses? Finally, he defines praxis as being both reflection and action; Freire (2012) contends: "there is no transformation without action" (p. 87). Being able to both theorize and practice new ways of freeing ourselves, and those we have oppressed. Critical theory envisions that just as conditions of inequality and injustice have been socially and politically constructed, so too can these conditions be deconstructed, and their hegemonic impacts overcome in ways that can transform the oppressor - oppressed relationships between the dominant privileged and the less privileged and marginalized individuals and groups (Freire, 2012).

As previously stated, Freire maintains that the solutions need to come from the oppressed people rather than just from the oppressor. He asserts that when solutions do emerge from the oppressed group, the solutions will be powerful enough to free both groups. Critical theory has long challenged the inequity and social injustice created and maintained by the location of authority and power in the hands of a privileged few. When seeking to affect change for First Nations and Métis children in education, it seems clear that solutions need to be sought from First Nations and Métis peoples themselves, if they are to fully benefit these people.

1.4 Key concepts

In this next section I list a number of key concepts that are important to my study and I explain them briefly.

1.4.1 Discourse

McLaren (2015) describes discourse as a family of interrelated concepts that are linked to one another. Burr (2015) suggests that: "discourse refers to a set of meanings, metaphors, representations, images, stories, statements and so on that in some way together produce a particular version of events" (p. 75). As such, discourses can be located universally and can serve to shape our perspectives. McLaren (2015) states discourses and discursive practices shape our ways of understanding in relation to the world as it is only in language and through discourse that social reality can be given meaning.

Foucault describes discursive practices as "a body of anonymous, historical rules, always determined in the time and space that have defined a given period, and for a given social, economic, geographical, or linguistic…" (as cited in McLaren, 2015, p. 145). The elder Simon's concepts of "*nahtōhta* (listen), *kiskēyita* (learn) and *nistōhta* (understand)" could therefore be seen as discourses and used to shape a new social reality.

1.4.2 Positioning

Positioning is about locating oneself within a particular discourse (Burr, 2003). It is understood to be a dynamic process in which one can locate and relocate themself numerous times. It could be seen to be the discourse within which you position yourself and therefore come to understand your social reality. If you are located within a deficit position for example, you might see yourself lacking agency or others as being the problem.

1.4.3 Conscientization

Conscientization or critical consciousness is a term that I first met through the writings of theorist Paulo Freire. As discussed previously, Freire described conscientization as a process of being critically self-aware (Freire, 2012).

1.4.4 Resistance

Resistance is also a conscious effort. The act of stopping doing something after you have developed a critical consciousness about how that action may be leading to further oppression.

1.4.5 Transformative Praxis

Freire describes transformative praxis as being both action and reflection; both theory and practice. That is once you have developed a critical consciousness, stopped engaging in oppressive acts, or after this process of reflection, then there is room for actions that will be more inclusive, such as transformative actions that could change social oppression.

1.5 Historical Colonial Discourses

1.5.1 Education in Pre-Contact Times

Prior to contact with the European colonizer, each of the numerous First Nations groups in Canada had systems in place for educating their children as well as ways in which to recognize the gifts in children (Battiste, 2002). Children themselves were viewed as gifts and as being closest to the creator given that through birth they had most recently left their spirit selves with the creator to enter their human existences (D. Kanewiyakiho, personal communication, July 14, 2016). On the other hand, older people have more life experiences than younger people do, thus it was the Elders that had the formal role of the teachers within the tribes. Within the tribes there were those who had gifts and talents and thus

specific roles as a result, such as the healer. Healing is a gift that is bestowed upon only a few. When a child is young the Elders would have recognized if that child had a special gift and would have worked with the child and the tribe to nurture that gift (Ermine, 2007). This situation of identifying and nurturing the creative potential and talents from a very young age is one that is common to other Indigenous peoples, such as the Māori people in New Zealand (Royal, 2006).

Elders taught through various means. Sometimes teaching was done through transmission teaching, particularly when there was an exact task to be learned, such as, certain stories and ceremonies. Transmission teaching was used when there was an exactness required in what was being learned. Other times observation and modeling were used, particularly when teaching daily activities geared to give children the necessary skills for survival (Goulet & Goulet, 2014). Other times teaching and learning would have been constructivist (through social engagement, constructing new knowledge based on the prior understandings that learners and teachers bring to the task), done sometimes through storytelling. As Simon suggested above, when Elders told certain stories it was the listener's role to determine meaning or value from the story.

Learning also occurred through inquiry and exploration where the land and natural environment was the classroom (Goulet & Goulet, 2014). The intergenerational, passing on of knowledge through such teaching and learning ensured the First Nations' peoples lived as one with their environment and enjoyed a holistic level of wellbeing, albeit it was in conditions that were often harsh. The purpose of traditional education was about the survival of the collective. Elders and knowledgeable others did an effective job of educating the

children thus ensuring they grew up to become productive members of the tribe (Goulet & Goulet, 2014).

First Nations and Métis people in Canada are quite diverse and I understand that caution should be used before making generalized statements regarding traditional pedagogical practices given it is difficult to make definitive statements with any accuracy. None-the-less both transmission and constructivist pedagogies were used when First Nations and Métis children were taught traditionally. First Nations and Métis children were viewed as having Creator-given strengths with a life mission (Hanks & Fast, 2002). The worldview concept of children as born-thinkers with strengths allowed children to pursue their interests and potential. The children realized their strengths through inquiring about the world around them and co-constructing new knowledge within their community and within their culture, building upon their own prior knowledge and experiences (Berryman, 2008). First Nations and Métis pedagogy and constructivism view learners as capable problem solvers. In constructivist classrooms, teachers are co-learners and co-inquirers and students work together to co-construct new knowledge in collaborative groups (Hanks & Fast, 2002).

Parents' roles in teaching and learning included modeling daily tasks for children such as, but not limited to hunting, food gathering, preparing and making clothing from hides, preparing food and housing. Teaching and learning in pre-contact times was a community and ongoing effort that built the capacity and collective success of the people.

1.5.2 Education Post European Contact

In the beginnings of European colonial settlement there were mutual understandings and relationships between the First Nations people of Canada and the Europeans. During the early fur trade era, First Nations people were valued for and sought for their knowledge of the lands, of the harsh climate and their survival skills. The Royal Proclamation of 1763, that stated explicitly that First Nations people reserved all lands that were not ceded by or purchased from them by the crown, reinforced these respectful relationships.

The 1763 Royal Proclamation therefore formed the basis of the rationale for the treaties in Canada. As it explicitly stated that First Nations lands needed to be ceded or purchased, all of the numbered treaties in Canada included a clause for the First Nations people to "cede, release and surrender" the land encompassed by the treaty to the Crown. In return for ceding their land the First Nations people would receive reserved lands. The treaties also included provisions for the establishment of schools on reserves. Treaty number six was signed in 1876 and covers the geographic area in which I live in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. All treaties were negotiated agreements that First Nations people believed were well intentioned, laying the foundation for a respectful and collaborative path forward.

The same year that treaty six was being negotiated and signed, in 1876, the Government of Canada passed the Indian Act. Unlike the treaties, the Indian Act was not a negotiated agreement. It controlled every aspect of the lives of First Nations people and defined who was and wasn't an Indian. It was intended to assimilate all First Nations people and education was seen as a key factor in assimilation.

Europeans brought with them to Canada their own view of education while disregarding the fact that the First Nations people here already had effective social systems in place before European arrival. Rather, Europeans viewed First Nations people as savages and without faith. Thus, the schools that were set up first were church run schools that were intended to "civilize and Christianize" the First Nations people (Milloy, 1999).

In Europe some education had been administered through churches, through day schools and boarding schools. Therefore, in the early 19th century the Canadian government worked with the churches to establish day schools, residential schools and industrial schools throughout Canada.

Residential schools were quickly set up throughout Canada and First Nations children were forcibly removed from their homes to attend these schools. The goal of the Canadian government was "to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politic and there is no Indian question, and no Indian Department…" (Retrieved from https://treaty6education.lskysd.ca/book/export/html/64). Although residential schools were not initially included within the Indian Act, an amendment incorporated in 1894 made attendance at these schools by First Nations' students, mandatory.

Residential schools however, were not intended to teach First Nations and Métis children an academic curriculum, rather they were intended to teach laboring skills such as farming and/or cooking and cleaning. Non-First Nations and non-Métis children were not sent to residential schools, they were sent to schools that focused on academics so they could enter university and obtain a career

afterwards. As such, education for First Nations and Métis children in Canada by its very curriculum could be viewed as being about the determined creation of a brown underclass.

The residential school system was not the education that was envisioned and negotiated in the treaties by First Nations people. Provisions for schools and education on reserve was included in some of the treaties, although education as a treaty right never actualized in Canada until 1972 when the National Indian Brotherhood tabled a policy paper entitled "Indian Control of Indian Education" (National Indian Brotherhood, 1972). This policy paper marked the beginnings of First Nations controlling education on reserves.

Currently in Canada there are two different forms of education operating, provincial and federal. Each province has a Ministry of Education that operates public education. Each province also has First Nations that operate from a federal government level. Each reserve in Canada receives their education funding from the federal government not the provincial government. As a result, there are inconsistencies in the levels of service provided and funding received between provincial and First Nation schools. First Nation schools receive less funding per student for education funding than provincial school divisions receive for students in provincial schools. Less funding for education has resulted in an uneven playing field for First Nations children in Canada that still continues today.

1.6 Current Colonial Discourses

1.6.1 Mainstream Solutions Perpetuating the Disparities for First Nations and Métis Students

Current discourses are shaped by our past. Melinda Webber (2009) a Māori academic in New Zealand explains, discourses are "forms of social practice,

which are ultimately tied to the cultural affirmations of groups of people, a person's adoption and use of particular discourses would signify his or her alignment with or membership in particular groups" (p. 2). Discourses that deficit theorize students in education most often result in remedial or compensatory approaches to teaching Indigenous children based within a context of having to fix a problem. Shields, Bishop and Mazawi (2005) explain the cycle of logic that the mainstream uses to perpetuate this theorizing and thus perpetuate the status quo of deficiency and remediation:

> The cycle of logic (description, explanation, prediction and prescription) is fundamental to deficit thinking. It becomes cyclical and self-perpetuating because the practice, especially at the intervention level of, for example, compensatory programs and remedial approaches, reinforces the original analysis of how one explains and thus deals with deficiency (p. 123).

As such, short-term solutions are often prescribed by the mainstream. Such deficit discourses often lead to quantitative, educational achievement data, being interpreted as evidence of deficits in the language, culture, knowledge bases and experiences of First Nations and Métis students and their communities, and seldom as evidence of deficits in the curriculum and pedagogy being provided by the education system.

Another post-residential school response is to provide remedial learning programs to help compensate for the learning that educators have tested for and believe is missing from the child's prior knowledge and experiences. This testing and remedial regime for many First Nations and Métis students often begins on entry to formal education with English oral language and literacy testing and remedial

programs that continue throughout their schooling, whether the students and their families, believe they need it or not (University of Regina, 2014).

The mainstream has been prescribing solutions to fix the "problem" and this is often referred to as closing the "achievement gap". Located within this discourse of an achievement gap is the deficit view of First Nations and Métis children that suggests there must be something wrong with them, their culture and then home backgrounds. Ladson-Billings (2006) referred to this "achievement gap" as being more of an "education debt". She describes the national debt of the U.S. as being "all previously incurred annual federal deficits" (p. 4). She then goes on to relate yearly educational "achievement gaps" for Afro-American students as being akin to a yearly deficit budget. Furthermore, she suggests that since the "achievement gap" is not a new phenomenon it is actually more akin to incurred deficits over a number of years thus an "education debt". Ladson-Billings (2006) states "that this all out focus on the "achievement gap" moves us towards short term solutions that are unlikely to address the long-term underlying problem" (p. 3).

1.6.2 Cycle of Having our Problems and Solutions Defined by the Mainstream

The burden of continual underachievement rests heavily on the First Nations and Métis people themselves and while they do have and understand many potential solutions, for example they do hold the knowledge and can teach when it comes to identity, culture and language, they are seldom trusted with the power or resource to bring about the changes that are required. Rather, traditional cultural knowledge of some specific groups are reified through publication in textbooks and taught as the panacea that is relevant and generalizable for all. Despite the dominant culture buying into the perception that First Nations and Métis identity,

culture and language will increase academic achievement, they continue to maintain the resource and power to define how this will happen and the aspirations and academic achievement of these groups continues to be unrealized.

Furthermore, when these dimensions are integrated and taught in mainstream classrooms and the outcomes for Métis and First Nations does not change, it reinforces the pathology of Métis and First Nations peoples rather than being viewed as the system's own responsibility to change. Arguably the change required would benefit from equal power and responsibility being shared with both non-First Nations and non-Métis people and First Nations and Métis people's willingness to collaborate. As Bishop and Glynn (1999) comment "reforming education to focus on only Māori or even all minority children would perpetuate their marginalization and leave the majority culture unchanged; power relations cannot change unless both parties participate" (p. 132).

In Saskatchewan, while there are a few schools that have and are demonstrating pockets of success for Métis and First Nations students, this certainly is not the norm.

1.6.3 Implications for teachers within a culture and language response

An emphasis on content integration or culturally appropriate education could result in teachers viewing First Nations and Métis children as culturally deprived or cultureless beings who need to be taught to be proud of who they are by teachers as the 'experts'. Within this discourse the dominant culture does not acknowledge that the pride of First Nations and Métis students' cultures come with the students into the school system. Furthermore, it does not acknowledge that the system itself may be preventing their Indigeneity from flourishing.

There is much literature negating the notion of teachers viewing students as empty vessels to be filled with knowledge (Freire, 2012; Sleeter, 2011), and there is increasing research that reflects on the problem of viewing minoritized children as cultureless beings and teachers taking on the role of filling them with their own culture (Bishop & Berryman, 2006; Bishop & Glynn, 1999; Shields, Bishop & Mazawi, 2005). Freire (2012) describes this discursive position of viewing students as lacking something and teachers as the experts whose role it is to fill them up with what they lacking, as "banking education". Within the context of mandating culturally appropriate education, as we have done in Saskatchewan, we must ask ourselves if we are asking teachers to take on the role of a bank clerk, as all knowing, within a notion of "banking education".

Every human is born into a culture of which they are a part. As a Métis woman I always knew that I was Métis. Both of my parents are Métis and I am Métis. I did not need my schooling experience to tell me that nor did I need my schooling experience to attempt to make me proud of it. One of the risks for First Nations and Métis people in having non-First Nations and non-Métis teachers taking on the roles of cultural experts in schools is cultural appropriation. There is the fine line for Indigenous people between having white allies and having Indigenous knowledge appropriated. We need to find a balance and from my experience this balance is difficult for non-Indigenous educators to mediate. What I have experienced are educators either refusing to incorporate Indigenous content or on the other end of the continuum are those that try to be experts on Indigenous knowledge and tell children who they are.

I have also learned that there are implications for First Nations and Métis educators who try to take on the role of the "cultural expert". First such a role

within a school could result in teachers abrogating their responsibility for making changes in the way they do things given they can simply go and ask the Indigenous teacher, the "expert" to take responsibility. Second there is power that comes with any role in which you are viewed as an "expert". The power is again with the teacher to define what Indigeneity is or is not and not the Indigenous students. Thus the implication for the cultural teacher is the same, coming to view themselves as experts rather than seeking to acknowledge or learn from their students' funds of knowledge, as defined by Moll, Amanti, Neff, and Gonzalez (1992) to refer to the historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for well-being of their students or their families.

1.6.4 Implications for First Nations and Métis students within a culture and language response

Implications for First Nations and Métis students might be that their funds of knowledge or prior cultural knowledge and experiences are belittled and not able to be brought into the classroom. Therefore, their own cultural reality is not affirmed within the classroom.

Another implication for First Nations and Métis students is that they may feel that the First Nations and Métis culture they are being taught is tokenistic, incorrect or being devalued and irrelevant. Urbanization of First Nations and Métis people in Canada has resulted in many children and youth not being as connected to the communities in which their parents came from. Urban Métis and First Nations students today may have a different cultural experience than that of even their parents. As an example, I attended predominantly urban schools. I do not know what it was like to hunt, fish and trap food like my father did. Albeit my father

23

would take me fishing recreationally I am used to going to a grocery store for my food. Although my cultural experiences are different to that of my dad, this does not mean I am less Métis than he is. His traditional cultural experiences are reinforced in schools today rather than my own cultural experiences. As culture is not static and is consistently evolving, what does that teach our youth about their own identity if they do not have the same experiences they are being taught about? Western textbooks and resources have similarly redefined Indigenous peoples and locked us into 'their' perception of our own history.

1.7 Overview of provincial First Nations and Métis Educational policies

Educational policies often set the direction for the discourses that perpetuate the mainstream educational systems and structures. The incorporation of First Nations and Métis content into the provincial curriculum has been a major area of focus for Saskatchewan since 1982. There are many discourses that perpetuate this situation including and as driven by education policy, beliefs that by teaching First Nations and Métis children about their own culture their educational achievement will increase. This sits alongside the discourse of, in order to increase educational achievement the dominant culture needs to teach First Nations and Métis children to be proud of who they are.

The focus on integrating cultural content knowledge into the curriculum was first articulated with the establishment of a Native Curriculum Review Committee in 1982. In 1984 this committee became a permanent structure called the Indian and Métis Education Advisory Committee. In 1989 the Ministry of Education renamed the committee to become the Indian and Métis Education Advising Committee. That same year the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education introduced

the Indian and Métis Education Policy from Kindergarten to Grade 12. In 2000,

the Indian and Métis Education Advising Committee was renamed as the

Aboriginal Education Provincial Advisory Committee. In 2008, the Ministry of

Education renamed the advisory committee again to the First Nations and Métis

Education Provincial Advisory Committee (FNMEPAC). The committee

maintained that name until 2013 when the committee ceased. The people on the

FNMEPAC and its predecessors were predominantly First Nations and Métis

people working from within the powerful dominant culture's education system.

As the colonial history of education for First Nations and Métis people in Canada

was aimed at eradicating First Nations and Métis people's culture and language, it

is no surprise that First Nations and Métis people working from within the system

then, worked towards implementing a culture and language response. After all,

this part of the curriculum had been missing or poorly operationalized previously,

and it was what these people had missed from their own education. Furthermore,

while they had the power, agency and mandate to add-on to the curriculum they

did not have the power or the agency to deconstruct the education system itself or

the policy mandate to bring about more deeply seated reform. In fact, the policies

that flowed continued to perpetuate deficit discourses of the learning needs of

these children and the at-risk environments from which they emerged. However, a

new discourse, the discourse of diversity began to emerge.

The Indian and Métis *Education Policy from Kindergarten to Grade 12* was first

printed in 1989 and reprinted in 1995, 1997, 2001 and 2003. Other such policies

that directly affected First Nations and Métis education in Saskatchewan were

also printed, including; *Best Practices for Meeting the Learning Needs of At-Risk*

and Indian and Métis Students, which was published in 1996 and was then revised

and reprinted in 2004 (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education) to become *Building Communities of Hope, Effective Practices for Meeting the Diverse Needs of Children and Youth*. This represented a shift in targeted focus on Métis and First Nations students to a focus on "diverse needs of children and youth". The 1996 and 2004 policies began an orientation of community education in Saskatchewan that lasted for over 25 years. Community schools were intended to provide services to meet the socio-economic needs of children including, but not limited to; breakfasts, lunches, Elders, and wrap around supports. Teachers were still expected to teach First Nations and Métis content in their classrooms as the *Indian and* Métis *Education Policy from Kindergarten to Grade 12* was still in effect.

In 2003, the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education introduced *Building Partnerships: First Nations and Métis Peoples and the Provincial Education System: A Policy Framework for Saskatchewan's Prekindergarten to Grade 12 Education System.* This policy stated the Ministry of Education's "commitment to partnerships and to shared management and governance arrangements with First Nations and Métis peoples in the provincial education system" (p. 9). The policy framework identified the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education's recognition that "while much has been accomplished through these efforts [previous policies], the anticipated outcomes for First Nations and Métis children and young people in the provincial education system have not been realized" (p. 6). This policy then intended to shared responsibility and governance with First Nations and Métis people. Either recognition that the government cannot increase academic achievement of First Nations and Métis students on their own or aspiring not to continually hold the responsibility of academic underachievement for First

Nations and Métis students and "share the responsibility" with First Nations and Métis people themselves.

In 2009, the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education introduced another new policy framework entitled; *Inspiring Success, Building Towards Student Achievement: A First Nations and Métis Education Policy Framework.* This policy framework is currently still the relevant policy in Saskatchewan. The vision articulated in the 2009 First Nations and Métis Education policy framework is: "A provincial education system that foundationally places First Nations and Métis ways of knowing in the learning program to create a culturally responsive education system that benefits all learners" (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2009, p. 17). This vision articulated important concepts; one was the integration of "First Nations and Métis ways of knowing", another was "to create a culturally responsive education system", and another was that this culturally responsive education should "benefit all learners".

This policy framework introduced for the first time the terminology "culturally responsive education". This term was not used in any other previous policy frameworks for First Nations and Métis education in Saskatchewan. A Google search will give you approximately 4,060,000 hits for those words, culturally responsive. As such, there is much literature written about culturally responsive education (to name a few Bishop & Berryman, 2006; Castagno et al, 2008; Gay, 2010; Sleeter, 2011). There are also considerable differences in its interpretations from creating contexts for learning where students are able to use their own cultural knowledge to construct new understandings (Bishop & Berryman, 2006), to teaching reified cultural knowledge as a part of the curriculum. As already discussed, from the perspective of a Métis consultant working in First Nations and

Métis education at the time of this policy being introduced, this came after a long history of First Nations and Métis content integration into the curriculum in Saskatchewan. Therefore, "culturally responsive education" might well have been taken by some educators in Saskatchewan to mean, "culturally appropriate education" and exactly what we had been doing in Saskatchewan since the 1980s. Therefore, "culturally responsive education" in Saskatchewan now may be no different to "culturally appropriate education", that is what we have been doing since 1989. That is merely the ongoing incorporation of First Nations and Métis content knowledge into the curriculum.

In New Zealand, in an initiative called Kia Eke Panuku that aims to raise the achievement of their Indigenous Māori students, "culturally responsive and relational pedagogy is understood to be contexts for learning where learners are able to connect new learning to their own prior knowledge and cultural experiences" (http://kep.org.nz/dimensions/culturally-responsive-and-relational-pedagogy). From the resources section of the Kia Eke Panuku website they suggest that teachers achieve culturally responsive and relational pedagogy by understanding and implementing the following principles into their teaching and learning program:

• relationships of care and connectedness are fundamental (whanaungatanga)

• power is shared and learners have the right to equity and self-determination (mahi tahi, kotahitanga)

• culture counts, learners' understandings form the basis of their identity and learning (whakapapa)

- sense-making is dialogic, interactive and ongoing (ako)

- decision-making and practice is responsive to relevant evidence (wānanga)

- our common vision and interdependent roles and responsibilities focus on the potential of learners - Māori students achieving and enjoying educational success as Māori - (kaupapa)

While teachers in this program might be adding culturally appropriate concepts and materials in to their pedagogy as well, it is clear from viewing the videos on the Kia Eke Panuku website and reading the voices of these Māori students that they are also doing more than this.

1.8 Relevant provincial disaggregated data – community school data

The continual underachievement of First Nations and Métis students in Saskatchewan has been a political football for many years and there have been many recommendations and policies established and implemented that were intended to affect improved change. As mentioned above, community schools became an official policy response in 1996 through the *Best Practices for Meeting the Learning Needs of At-Risk and Indian and Métis Students* policy document. Community school designation was determined by few factors, one of which was the percentage of First Nations and Métis students in the school. Therefore, First Nations and Métis students made up the majority population in most community schools. The community school designation that emerged, provided an increased budget for schools to offer cultural additive programming and fix-up support services such as nutrition programs, wrap around supports and community partnerships intended to raise academic achievement of First Nations and Métis

students. Services such as these may instead build relationships of dependency with both children and their families.

Although community schools were able to offer more compensatory programs, graduation rates for First Nations and Métis students did not increase. Figure 1.1 below (Provincial Auditor Saskatchewan, 2012) shows graduation rates for First Nations and Métis students since 1996, when the community education policy was implemented and it also shows little discernable change for self-identified Aboriginal students or for students in the far North.   Furthermore, the gaps between these students and all other student groups shows minimal shifts, rather it has remained throughout.

Figure 1.1 – Long-term Trends in Grade 12 Graduation

Figure 1—Long-term Trends in Grade 12 Graduation Within Three Years After Entering Grade 10 - Saskatchewan Students 1996 to 2009
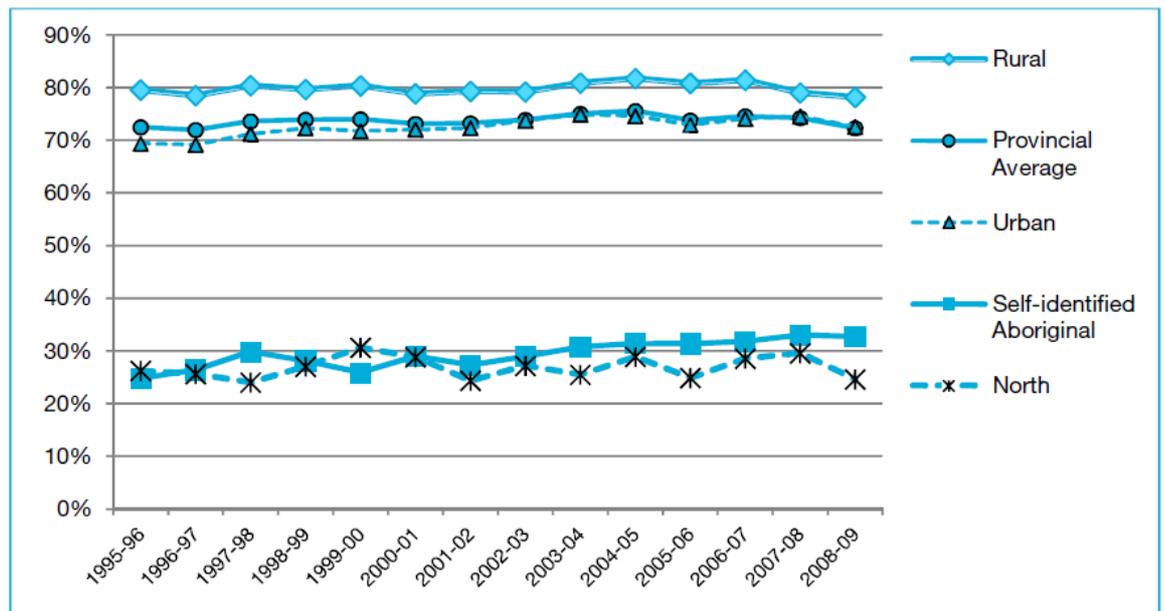
Source: Ministry of Education Student Data System 2011.

The evidence in this graph is a damning indictment of the ongoing failure of the education system to respond more effectively for First Nations and Métis students

and their families. It is a system that has continued to perpetuate the ongoing

social inequities discussed earlier.

1.9 Conclusion

In this chapter I have outlined relevant literature and data that align to this study.

This evidence shows quite clearly that what we are doing in Saskatchewan is not

having the impact that we (First Nations and Métis people) would like to see.

Therefore, developing a deeper understanding about the experiences of First

Nations and Métis people could identify a more successful and emancipatory path

forward.

CHAPTER 2

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will discuss the methodology and methods used in this research. I will position myself within the research and introduce the four research participants with whom I worked. Finally, I will outline the procedure by which the research was undertaken.

In this chapter I will consider how "[r]esearch methods aim to provide systemic procedures for doing research" (Berryman et al., 2013, p. 3), and how both the systemic procedures and the theoretical perspective are important for the researcher to consider alongside how their own identity shapes their research methodology and thus their research.

2.2 Methodology

2.2.1 Indigenous Theories/Methodologies

Although Indigenous theories and methodologies are ancient they are not as well recognized as western methodologies. In truth, western methodologies have been viewed as legitimate and accurate and in effect this has marginalized and disparaged other ways of viewing the world and in turn other methodologies. As identified by Smith (2012), "[r]esearch is implicated in the production of Western knowledge, in the nature of academic work, in the production of theories that have dehumanized…and continued to privilege Western ways of knowing…" (p. 185). As such, Indigenous people have not had good experiences with research because research has predominantly been done on Indigenous people rather than with Indigenous people (Bishop & Glynn, 1999). Linda Smith further (1999) states, "the word itself 'research', is probably one of the dirtiest words in the Indigenous

world's vocabulary" (p.1). This type of traditional Western research solely benefits and benefitted the researcher and not the researched. Often times research done on Indigenous peoples serves the purpose of perpetuating and reinforcing negative or inappropriate stereotypes and therefore keeping Indigenous people in a state of deficit or inferiority (Shields, Bishop & Mazawi, 2005). As Bishop and Glynn (1999), Indigenous and non-Indigenous research collaborators from New Zealand contend, research that focuses on deficiencies will continue to keep Indigenous people on the fringes of society. Given these common experiences of research across the world it is important that Indigenous people attempt to reclaim their own theories and methodologies. For Indigenous people, reclaiming their own theories and methodologies is about pushing back and validating their own knowledge. Marie Battiste (2002) states:

> Aboriginal epistemology is found in theories, philosophies, histories, ceremonies, and stories as ways of knowing. Aboriginal pedagogy is found in talking or sharing circles, dialogues, participant observations, experiential learning, modeling, meditation, prayer, ceremonies or storytelling as ways of knowing and learning (p. 18).

Scheurich and Young (1997) have argued that "our epistemologies – not our use of them, but the epistemologies themselves – are racially biased ways of knowing, implicitly proposing, thus, a new category of racism that could be labeled *epistemological racism*" (p. 29). "Epistemological racism means that our current range of research epistemologies – positivism to postmodernisms/poststructuralisms – arise out of the social history of the dominant race" (Scheurich & Young, 1997, p. 33).

Kaupapa Māori was partly a response to the epistemological racism (Scheurich & Young, 1997) that excluded Māori ways of knowing from traditional research in New Zealand. Kaupapa Māori therefore arose from Māori people's conscientization of the dominant Western system and their resistance to it. With epistemological racism being so deeply rooted, Kaupapa Māori has a much needed place within educational research. And, as Linda Smith (May, 2011) said in her keynote address to the New Zealand Council of Educational Research Kei Tua o Te Pae hui, Kaupapa Māori research "is more than a theory and less than a theory; it is more than a paradigm and less than a paradigm; it is more than a methodology and less than a methodology". Because the epistemologies that underpin Western educational theory and research are those of the dominant culture it only makes sense that these epistemologies are racially biased.

2.2.2 *Kaupapa Māori Theory/Methodology*

Kaupapa Māori emerged as a movement of revitalization and self-determination that was "by Māori, for Māori". Within the original intent are the self-determining qualities of an Indigenous group choosing the right to determine what research is relevant to their lives rather than what non-Māori researchers deem to be relevant to their lives. This intent has not changed over time. Māori people want to exercise their right to determine the relevance of research into their own lives. Graham Smith (1992) defines Kaupapa Māori as the "philosophy and practice of "being Māori" (p. 1). Smith (1992) states that "fundamental to Kaupapa Māori revitalization…[is] a shift from the marginal position of the constructed 'other' to a more central position of 'inclusion'" (p. 2) using Māori epistemology as a framework (as discussed in chapter 1).

Kaupapa Māori emerged in the 1970s and 1980s concurrently with Kōhanga reo Māori, a whānau developed Māori language revitalization program aimed at preschoolers and their families. Like other Indigenous languages around the world, by the 1970s the Māori language had suffered decades of suppression and oppression through the education system. By the 1970s the Māori people were determined to take action and developed their own language and cultural revitalization movement.

Although, Kaupapa Māori emerged as "by Māori, for Māori" a significant change has occurred over time in that now, non-Māori can participate in Kaupapa Māori activities if they are invited by Māori to do so. This change in research occurred in 2003 at a "joint conference of the New Zealand Association for Research in Education and the Australian Association for Research in Education" (Bishop, 2005, p. 113). At the conference there was an "understanding of where non-Indigenous peoples should be positioned by stating that Māori must be in control of the research agenda and must be the ones who set the parameters; however, others can participate at the invitation of Indigenous people" (Bishop, 2005, p.113).

 From Kaupapa Māori, Bishop and Glynn (1999) articulate a "model [that] can be used in other contexts as an evaluation tool to aid planning and to monitor progress towards power sharing goals" (p. 54). The model is framed within five areas: "initiation, benefits, representation, legitimation and accountability". The model asks that we (as researchers) ask ourselves critical questions if we intend to address power relations and take a participatory researcher approach rather than take an overpowering and dominant researcher position. The five questions Bishop and Glynn (1999) pose are:

1. Initiation – Who defines what constitutes appropriate knowledges and pedagogies?

2. Benefits – Who will directly benefit from the education system/institution?

3. Representation – Whose reality is depicted by the education system/institution and its constituent processes?

4. Legitimation – Whose realities, and experiences are legitimate in the education system?

5. Accountability – Who are educationalists accountable to? (p. 55).

Although Kaupapa Māori theory is "by Māori, for Māori" it has also made some links to Paulo Freire's notion of critical theories.

2.2.3 Critical Theories

As stated earlier, Freire (2012) maintains that the solutions need to come from the oppressed people not from the oppressor. When seeking to affect change for Indigenous children in education, solutions need to be sought from Indigenous peoples themselves. Critical theory challenges the inequity and social injustice created and maintained by the location of authority and power in the hands of a privileged few.

As mentioned in chapter 1, Indigenous scholar Sandy Grande maintains that currently critical theory "remains deeply informed by Western theory" (Grande, 2004, p. 66). Grande supports Freire's notion that the solutions need to come from the oppressed peoples themselves and that they should be located within their own metaphors. It is for this reason that Grande criticizes critical theorists who may "not consider the effect of revolutionary pedagogies on traditional

knowledge…[or may be]…too dismissive of the cultural codes embedded in social transformation" (Grande, 2004, p. 84). Grande (2004) states:

> Rather than asking why all aspects of culture shouldn't be problematized, we, as critical educators, should ask how the process of problematizing itself may serve as a homogenizing force, muting and domesticating the distinctiveness of traditional [Indigenous] ways of knowing (p. 84).

To reiterate, Grande is critical of the ways in which critical theory can have a tendency to absorb Indigenous thought and theory and thus remove the distinctiveness of Indigenous theory. However, she also states, "if critical pedagogy is able to sustain the same kind of penetrating analysis it unleashes on capitalism, it may evolve into a valuable tool for Indigenous peoples" (Grande, 2004, p. 88).

As introduced previously, amongst a plethora of theorizing and principles Freire's notion of critical theory supports three positions of criticality where power needs to be interrogated and properly understood. Within the first area Freire (2012) speaks about critically understanding yourself and your own position stating that this does not happen "until they [the oppressed] concretely "discover" their oppressor and in turn their own consciousness" (p. 61). Second, Freire discusses resistance. What do we need to resist and stop doing that is leading to oppression? And how can we enact more liberatory discourses? Finally, he defines praxis as being both reflection and action, "there is no transformation without action" (p. 87). Thus we must be able to understand our own condition, then both theorize and practice new ways of freeing ourselves, and those who we may have also oppressed. Critical theory envisions that just as conditions of inequality and

injustice have been socially and politically constructed, so too can these conditions be deconstructed, and their hegemonic impacts overcome. In this way the oppressor - oppressed relationships between the dominant privileged and the less privileged and marginalized individuals and groups may be transformed (Freire, 2012).

While Freire's notion of critical theory names three distinct parts: conscientization, resistance and transformative praxis, it is not linear, but rather there is an inter-relationship between and amongst all three parts. Just like Indigenous theorizing and kaupapa Māori theorizing, relationships with self and with others are fundamental to understanding the Freirean notion of critical theory. For the purposes of this research, I have used critical theory and these three distinct parts, as defined by Freire, to understand and retheorize the experiences of two First Nations and two Métis educators. As described earlier, I have also used Bishop and Glynn's (1999) model for evaluating power sharing relationships throughout the research to critically question myself about whether I am maintaining a participatory researcher position with these participants. I have attempted to do this using culturally responsive methodology (Berryman et al, 2013), a methodology that brings together and incorporates praxis from both critical and kaupapa Māori theories.

2.2.4 Culturally Responsive Methodology

Traditional western research methodologies come from a position of researcher as "expert" thus the researched were seen as objects to be studied and not necessarily seen as having expertise. Culturally responsive methodology seeks to resist this stance (Berryman et al, 2013). Culturally responsive methodology aims to "encourage a research stance where establishing respectful relationships with

participants is central. This position requires researchers to develop relationships that will enable them to intimately come to know the "other" with whom they seek to study" (Berryman et al, 2013, p.1). These writers contend that "[t]he dimensions of culturally responsive methodology include cultural and epistemological pluralism, deconstruction of Western colonial traditions of research and primacy of relationships within a culturally responsive dialogic encounter" (Berryman et al., 2013, p. 15). Furthermore, these writers highlight the importance of cultural contexts in which to develop relationships by first listening respectfully and then being responsive to those with whom one seeks to engage (Berryman et al, 2013). Berryman et al (2013) described this "responsive dialogic space" through the figure below.

Figure 2.1 – The responsive dialogic space

Just like Ermine's (2007) notion of ethical space, located within the "responsive dialogic space" is a place for listening, learning and understanding one another.

Culturally responsive methodology seeks to bring relationships to the fore and interconnect the lived experience of the researcher to the researched. Culturally

responsive methodologies "encourage…a research stance where establishing respectful relationships is central to both human dignity and the research" (Berryman et al., 2013, p. 1). In culturally responsive methodologies the cultural lives of the researched are as important as the research. Undertaking research in culturally responsive ways is therefore about researching with people rather than undertaking research on people (Berryman et al, 2013).

2.2.5 Insider/Outsider

As a Métis woman educator now in a position of educational leadership I offer an insider position from which to undertake this research with these people. This position and my professional relationship with my participants allowed me to quickly develop a dialogic space from which to start and from which to share our understandings as a means to construct new knowledge. However, being an insider within a variety of different roles is not an easy undertaking. As Linda Smith (1999) states:

> Sometimes, when in the community ('in the field') or when sitting in on research meetings, it can feel like inside-out/outside-in research. More often, however, I think that Indigenous research is not quite as simple as it looks, nor quite as complex as it feels! (p. 5)

In this research being an insider means being respectful, providing food and drink, and trying to ensure that I do not impose my own discourse or experiences onto my participants.

2.3 My Position in this Research

I am part of a proud lineage of Métis people. I was not formally or accurately taught about my Métis culture in school however, I was raised learning about

being Métis and to be proud of who I am as a Métis daughter, granddaughter, sister and auntie. I have a large extended family. My father had 14 siblings and my mother had 12. Growing up my brother and I were immersed within a large Métis familial community that helped us to come to understand our Métis-ness.

Both of my parents are Métis and both are from Green Lake, Saskatchewan, Canada. Green Lake is a Métis settlement in northwestern Saskatchewan that was set up as a trading post in the 1800s and became a Métis settlement in the 1900s (Barron, 1997, p. 25). My parents are both fluent Michif (a language original to and spoken by many Métis people) speakers, although neither my brother nor I are fluent. My parents made a deliberate yet painful decision not to teach us our language. They speak to each other in Michif in the home daily and in the community when they are able to. This is most likely to happen when they see other Michif speakers they know and when they are within cultural settings where they feel safe and the language is respected. My father's first language is Michif and therefore he struggled in the dominant English-language schooling that he had to partake in. He did not want his children to struggle in the same way that he had, nor to experience the racism that he had in his schooling experiences. My parents wanted their children to succeed in school and they understood this meant succeeding in English. Therefore, for me, succeeding in school in English meant having to forego relationships of cultural connectedness with my grandmother and grandfather as they were both first language Michif speakers and had very limited English. I could not communicate with them without one of my parents present to translate. Although I do not speak Michif this does not mean that I am any less Métis than my parents are.

As a Métis child growing up in an urban setting I had a distinctly different experience in education than did my mother and father. My father attended day schools run by the Catholic Church in northern Saskatchewan until leaving school at an early age to work. My mother attended provincial schools in rural and urban parts of Saskatchewan until also leaving school early. Although both of my parents left school early they also both returned to school as adults to receive post-secondary education. I attended predominantly urban lower and middle socioeconomic status schools. In the 1980s and 1990s the schools that I attended had low percentages of Métis and First Nations students. In my elementary schooling I was, at times, the only Métis person in my class. The majority culture in my schooling was non-Indigenous.

As a daughter to Métis parents, I have always known my Métis-ness. However, I cannot recall when I realized that I was different to the majority culture. For me, looking into the mirror today is a daily reminder that I am not white. I graduated from high school in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada in 1996. In school, the only place and space in which I learnt anything about Métis or First Nations people was in my high school Native Studies classes. In these classes I was taught about the "dead Indian" (King, 2012, p. 53) therefore, I learned that Métis and First Nations people were people of the past and not relevant in today's world. Informally, through social interactions and the media, I learned that Métis and First Nations people were doomed for lives of addictions and to be a lower class because of the lower qualification rates and therefore fewer choices of employment and earning. Howe (2011) for example reported: "Métis and North American Indians have a higher financial rate of return to education. Without an education, they earn far less than non-Aboriginal people. However, the difference

in earnings largely goes away with higher levels of education for North American Indians" (p. 8).

My family would be considered to be middle class as my mother is a teacher. I always expected, and it was the expectation of my family, that I would attend university. I attended university in the same city where I went to high school and graduated with my teaching degree in 2003. For me, university was an experience where again I felt marginalized. Of the friends I had graduated high school with I was one of three and the only Indigenous one to attend university. In 2007, I began working within the same school division that I had graduated high school. For the past eight years I have been working in a leadership position in First Nations and Métis education. As an educator, I have now worked in the same system that continues to perpetuate the marginalization and failure of Métis and First Nations people, as represented by Figure 1.1 in chapter 1. As a Métis woman educator through the "learning, un-learning and re-learning" (Wink, 2005) within my own positioning I continue on a journey of repositioning, critically reflecting and asking if I am now part of the problem or the solution. While I am very much a part of the context and the people of this research, from my position as a researcher, I understand that I also occupy an outsider position.

2.4 Methods

This thesis uses narrative inquiry and storytelling to make connections between the participants' experiences of growing up, of their own experiences in education, their experiences as educators and their experiences in leadership. As our experiences shape our realities, the participants reflect upon their own experiences in education and as educators in order to help shape a new path forward. The narrative inquiry has emerged from a series of semi-structured

interviews as conversations. My research findings were understood against a background of related literature that was read and synthesized for the key messages. Next I will explain these methods in greater detail.

2.4.1 Semi-structured interviews as Conversations

Bishop (1997) suggests that "[s]emi-structured, in-depth interviews promote free interaction and opportunities for clarification and discussion between research participants…as a result, conversation is best seen as metaphor for this type of interview" (p. 33). This method allowed for minimal researcher imposition and maximized the participants' sense making through the semi-structured approach to the questioning. The conversational approach within the group-focused setting allowed for theorizing and sense making amongst the group. The semi-structured nature of the research questions also allowed the conversation to be taken in different directions as these sense-making conversations spiraled in the direction that the participants wanted to take them.

2.4.2 Narrative Inquiry

Traditionally, in positivist research "the researcher had been the story teller, the narrator, and the person who decides what constitutes the narrative" (Bishop, 1997, p. 28). As mentioned above, practices such as these have resulted in many Indigenous people (Brayboy & Deyhle 2000; Rains, Archibald & Deyhle, 2000), including Māori, expressing concerns over issues related to power and control within the research agenda (Bishop, 1995, 1996; Bishop & Glynn, 1999; Smith, 1999).

Clandinin and Connelly (1994) suggest that there must be a relationship between the experiences of the researcher and the participant. As with Indigenous talking

circles, methods such as these cannot exist without first building relationships of trust between researchers and participants.

Narrative inquiry can also be seen as a culturally appropriate means of giving voice to Indigenous research participants, thus maintaining the integrity of their own stories. Participants in this thesis collaboratively provided advice and feedback on their own narratives of experience. Narrative inquiry therefore, was the procedure used to gather the experiences and theorizing of these participants.

2.4.3 Collaborative storying

Bishop (1997) states that collaborative storying offers a "position where the stories of the research participants merge with that of the researcher in order to create new stories" (p. 41). Theorizing and re-theorizing takes place as stories emerge and the new story becomes the story of the collective.

Storying is a traditional cultural practice preferred by many First Nations and Métis people. Kovach (2009) for example contends that "[s]tory and Indigenous inquiry are grounded within a relationship based approach to research" (p. 98). However, participants must be able to feel a connection and be able to trust the researcher so they feel safe to share their story. There has to be a relationship of respect in order to establish trust between the participants and the researcher.

Collaborative storying was the method used to bring the individual narratives together and to include my own voice in a collective and collaborative story that would answer the research question.

2.4.4 Literature review and archival information

The two other methods that were used to answer my research question were a review of relevant literature and a search of the relevant Ministry archival records to tell the story through the Ministry's own evidence of policy direction and achievement outcome. While some selected pieces appear in chapter 1, in total the literature and archival information provided me with the context from which to ask critical questions of myself and seek to better understand my personal role as a researcher and as an educator.

2.5 Participants

This thesis engaged a group of two First Nations and two Métis educators in Saskatchewan. Thus participants reflect a mix of Métis and First Nations and male and female. All participants were graduates of either the Saskatchewan Urban Native Teacher Education Program (SUNTEP) or the Indian Teacher Education Program (ITEP). All had classroom teaching experience and experiences within educational leadership. All the participants have been given pseudonyms to protect their anonymity.

Mark is a First Nations man and had been an educator for over 25 years. He taught for one year at a residential school in northwestern Saskatchewan then began working for a large urban Catholic school division in Saskatchewan where he served as a teacher, Vice Principal, Coordinator and now as a Superintendent. Mark has been working in an educational leadership position for the last 19 years. His father was First Nations and his mother was of Euro-Canadian ethnicity. His mother was a teacher in the First Nations community where his dad was from and that is where they lived as a family for the first part of Mark's life. He was a graduate of the Indian Teacher Education Program for his Bachelor of Education

degree. He received a Master's degree in Educational Foundations and recently completed a Doctorate degree in education. At the time of the research Mark was serving as a Superintendent.

Christine is a First Nations woman. Her father is First Nations and her mother is Métis. She grew up in a small town in Northern Manitoba as a child. Christine was a graduate of the Indian Teacher Education Program for her Bachelor of Education degree. She also has a Master's degree in Educational Administration. Christine has been an educator for 18 years and held a variety of positions throughout her career. She was an elementary classroom teacher, a Consultant, a researcher and held positions within educational leadership positions for First Nations organizations provincially and nationally. Christine has four children and currently three of them are now teachers.

Mary is a Métis woman. She grew up in a small town in Southern Saskatchewan and did her Kindergarten to grade 12 schooling there. Mary had a large extended family that lived in the town as well. Mary was a graduate of the Saskatchewan Urban Native Teacher Education Program for her Bachelor of Education degree and also has a Master's of Education degree. Mary has been a teacher for 21 years and in that time she has been in a position of leadership as a school Principal for the past five years.

Tony is a Métis man. He is from a small town in Southern Saskatchewan and did his Kindergarten to grade 12 schooling in an urban context. Tony had a large extended family as well that lived in the same town. Tony was a graduate of the Saskatchewan Urban Native Teacher Education Program for his Bachelor of Education degree and he also has a Masters of Education degree. Tony was a

teacher for six years and for the past 10 years he has been a faculty member with the Saskatchewan Urban Native Teacher Education Program.

2.6 Research Procedure

2.6.1 Review of the relevant literature

I began by reviewing relevant historical and contemporary literature on Indigenous people's experiences in education while I was undertaking my directed study in early 2015 and then continued reviewing literature throughout this thesis. I also had the opportunity to work as a research assistant in a study entitled *Seeking Their Voices* (University of Regina, 2014). This research sought to hear the voices of First Nations and Métis students in Saskatchewan. The Seeking Their Voices research was modeled on the Te Kotahitanga research and professional development program in New Zealand (Bishop & Berryman, 2006; Bishop, Berryman & Wearmouth, 2014). Seeking their Voices followed a trip to New Zealand to speak with members of the New Zealand Ministry of Education, the Te Kotahitanga team including elders and school principals, teachers and Māori students, all participating in the final phase of Te Kotahitanga. The Ministry of Education in Saskatchewan led this trip, accompanied by a delegate of educators from Saskatchewan, including myself. In New Zealand we saw at first hand the reform work that was going on in the schools to change the discursive positioning of teachers from deficit to agentic, in terms of their working with Māori students. According to Alton Lee (2015) Phase 5 Te Kotahitanga proved to be the most successful phase of this research in schools. The Ministry of Education in Saskatchewan then followed Te Kotahitanga in to the new reform initiative Building on Success: Kia Eke Panuku (Ministry of Education, 2013a). In the Kia Eke Panuku initiative the Māori education strategy Ka Hikitia became a

powerful component of this reform that aimed to raise the achievement of Māori students as Māori. Berryman et al (2016) contend that this can happen when educators have the policy mandate, the personal will and the professional skill to change what they are already doing in order to work more critically towards social justice. Similarly, Santamaria and Santamaria (2015) describe this type of leadership as applied critical leadership. From Kia Eke Panuku a number of tools and resources were acquired to trial in the Saskatchewan education setting as part of a roll out of the Saskatchewan student and school community research. All participants were aware of this visit and how the work was being understood, adapted and applied in their own territories.

2.6.2 Preparing ethics requirements

In August and September 2015 I worked with my thesis supervisor to refine my ethics application. I submitted my ethics application in October 2015.

2.6.3 Identifying the participants and seeking their participation

I had an existing relationship with each of the participants prior to this study. I had worked alongside the participants either in my role as Coordinator for First Nations and Métis education or in my role as a fledgling researcher. As such, I approached each of them informally to seek their initial consent to participate in the research. After that I made personal contact with each of them sending the formal email communication including information sheets, interview questions and consent forms. I then met with each of them again to clarify any questions they had and to ask what their interview preference was; an individual interview or a group interview. Three of the four chose a group interview and one chose an individual interview. The interviews took place in November of 2015.

2.6.4 Semi-structured interview as conversations (group and individual)

The participants determined locations for the interviews that they were comfortable with. As I had an already established relationship with the participants, the process began with visiting and re-establishing our connections. In some cases, we shared food and drinks. The interviews began informally through conversation then progressed into the semi-structured interview. The interview questions guided our conversations and often the conversations spiraled in such a way that multiple new questions were often posed and also addressed.

2.6.5 Transcription and return back to participants

Transcription took place in December 2015 and they were returned back to the participants in January 2016. Participants had two weeks to review, verify, clarify and or delete anything from the transcripts that they wished. They were also able to annotate and add new ideas or build on things that they had remembered or had thought more deeply about.

2.6.6 On-going sense-making with participants

From January 2016 onwards I re-engaged in multiple informal conversations with the participants to check that my own sense making was on track with what they had said. This was a natural progression through our existing relationship. Upon completion of relevant sections, they were returned to the participants for their feedback. The thesis will be provided to the participants on completion.

2.7 Conclusion

In this chapter I have discussed the methodology and methods I have undertaken for this study. I have introduced the research participants and I have discussed the research procedure.

CHAPTER 3

3.1 Introduction

This chapter tells the collaborative story of two Métis and two First Nations educators as they share their early childhood stories with family, then as students within Saskatchewan and Manitoba and then as educators within the Saskatchewan education system. In this chapter I use their narratives of experience to answer my research question:

What can we learn from the experiences of two First Nations and two Métis educators in Saskatchewan when we consider their experiences of education through Paulo Freire's cycle of conscientization, resistance and transformative praxis?

During the semi structured interviews as conversations the following sub-questions were posed in order to answer this overall research question:

1. As a First Nation/ Métis educator, describe your experiences in education. What was/were the moment(s) that you started to reconcile your Indigenous pedagogy to the way you were taught in school?

2. As a western trained Indigenous educator, how have you come to understand what you had to stop doing that may have been perpetuating the status quo? What have you had to start doing?

3. How and when did you start theorizing and transforming this practice?

This chapter begins by reflecting upon the upbringing of this group, their educational experiences from Kindergarten to grade 12, their experiences in post-secondary education, as well as their experiences as educators. These experiences

led to their growing conscientization about who they were as Métis and First Nations people growing up in Saskatchewan and Manitoba. It also helped them to understand how the wider context of society was preparing them through education to be either assimilated in to the majority culture or marginalized to the edges of society. The chapter continues with their narratives of experience, understood alongside a framework of Freire's notions of conscientization, resistance and transformative praxis. I conclude with a table to consider the interconnected nature of these experiences within this framework.

3.2 Conscientization, Resistance and Transformative Praxis

Building upon what I have stated in my literature review and methodology, I understand Paulo Freire's notion of critical theories to include a cycle of conscientization, resistance and transformative praxis. For the purpose of my thesis, I understand conscientization, resistance and transformative praxis to mean the following. Conscientization is about the process of becoming more consciously aware of how power plays out in society and your own role in this (Freire, 2012). How, for example, power may be used to overpower and dominate some groups in society thus creating social inequities and injustices. Conscientization occurs through a process of on-going reflection on action. Resistance is about understanding why we need to stop doing those activities that perpetuate the inappropriate use of power and domination. When we do this we can then make room for more transformative practices. Transformative Praxis is the new practice that has resulted together with new understandings (Freire, 2012) of working in ways that are more socially just. While has often been shown as a cycle I see it as also spiraling and interconnected.

In this chapter I use this framework of conscientization, resistance and transformative praxis across four phases of the collaborative story. I recognize that for First Nations or Métis people, separating one's identity into separate phases can be problematic, however, I have done so to help contextualize the participants' experiences from their early years, through their youth to adulthood and maturity. Their experiences of growing up and being educated tell a cyclical and spiraling story of positioning and repositioning through their ongoing conscientization, resistance and transformative praxis. In this story Mark, Mary, Tony and Christine share their story and their points of repositioning within a collaborative story of spiraling dialogue.

3.3 Phase One

3.3.1 Conscientization – Pre-Formal Education – Strong Cultural identity

Each participant maintained that they had a strong sense of cultural identity affirmed in the home prior to starting school and they were consciously aware of how normal they felt within their home environments.

> Tony: Growing up in the place I did and in a small little town that had lots of Métis people getting some of those cultural values instilled in me from an early age just from family members.

> Mark: You have to remember that I am a mixed blood person. I am not visibly First Nations, I would suggest. And, so, always longing for identity and place and having had a very short but intense period of exposure to Indigenous community where I felt totally at home there, albeit I was young.

For Tony and Mark, being surrounded by their families' cultures from an early age supported their cultural identities as being "normal". The two women talked about how their cultural identity soon began to interface with the cultural identity of schooling:

> *Mary: Probably one of my earliest experiences that I can recall is when I was in about grade 1 or grade 2. We were doing a family unit and the teacher asked all of us to go home that night and ask our family members what we were or what's your heritage. I remember going home, not thinking anything of it, but I went and asked my dad about our family and where we came from and what we were. Were we like French or Scottish? 'Cause the teacher kind of prompted us to go home and ask what was meant by that? Didn't send a note home, it was just us communicating with our parents. And I just remember my dad, very strong and very affirmative saying "you're Mé-tis." But when he told me that, I just knew it was good and I always knew it was good.*

> *Christine: I knew I was an Indian. I guess where we got that cultural side was because my mom was working at the Friendship Centre and then she eventually became the Executive Director. So being involved in all those events like there were community events such as sled dog, so we were all there volunteering. So that just became part of my life but that was separate from school. It had nothing to do with education.*

Within this phase there was no evidence of resistance or transformative praxis. They had learned who they were from growing up and being nurtured within their

families and all were secure in their cultural identities. However, as Christine voiced, this was a life separate from school.

3.4 Phase Two

3.4.1 Conscientization - Formal Education - To be brown was bad

The participant's formal education experiences were the first time that they started to feel that their cultural identity was not valued. They believed that this was closely linked to the color of their skin. Participants were conscious now that their culture was no longer supported as normal and most often it was not acceptable.

> *Tony: I was a Métis person, and I still am a Métis person, who can pass as white. As a young student I saw really quickly how my sister was treated at school, and my sister is much darker than I am.*

Tony saw on a daily basis how his darker skinned sister was bullied because of the color of her skin.

> *Tony: We went to three different schools in Glenberry and at every school we went to she was brought to tears on a weekly basis because of the color of her skin and being one of very few Indigenous people [in the school]. That taught me a lesson from an early age, which was I didn't want that. And I think when we moved to the city we lost a little bit of that ability to hang onto that [Métis] pride.*

As discussed previously, not having a community of Métis people around him meant that his own culture began to be put down, belittled and was being constantly "eroded away".

> *Tony: Because [my culture] was continually eroded away at school. We didn't have an environment or a mechanism to instill pride in us. So the only message I was getting at school was being brown was bad because that's how my sister was treated. So I didn't go around identifying as an Indigenous person and there weren't a whole lot of opportunities that allowed me to do that.*

Discourses that I myself often encounter in my work today is that "Métis and First Nations do not know who they are" or that "they are not proud to be who they are". In both cases such discourses suggest that any problems lie within the culture of the students and their families. For Tony, it was not that he was not proud to be Métis, as he was proud, or that he did not know he was Métis, as he did know. Rather it was his schooling environment that did not allow his culture, whatever these experiences were, to flourish within the walls of the school. Worse still, and as we hear from Tony, he did not feel safe to identify as an Indigenous person. As educators we have been slow to recognize this message of the lack of cultural safety for Indigenous students. Instead the most common solution prescribed by the mainstream to the discourse of "they don't know their culture" is to teach First Nations and Métis children about themselves by making the curriculum culturally appropriate. In Saskatchewan this has been a policy response for over 35 years. From my experience making the curriculum culturally appropriate has resulted in teaching students about "bannock, beads and buckskin", about the "historical Indian" therefore a perception of people from the past who may hold little relevance to the contemporary world of today. How this plays out in schools is through the use of historical cultural iconography.

Mary: One of my memories of being taught anything First Nations or Métis was in grade 8 for Home Economics. We had made gauntlets so we had to bead them.

Although progress has been made in Saskatchewan in making the curricula more culturally appropriate, we should not only look at adding culturally appropriate activities in to the curriculum. The participants believed that in order for them to succeed at school, they needed to learn to play the game by the rules set by the mainstream education system and for those that could, that game was easier when you could pass as white. For the participants, passing as white or not identifying as an Indigenous person was about resisting the attempts of assimilation and maintaining their own cultural safety and security by leaving their own identity separate and away from the school environment.

Although this was a decision that the participants made for themselves, it seems not to be a decision made by the majority of First Nations and Métis people in Saskatchewan. As figure one in chapter one demonstrated, Saskatchewan has had a 30% graduation rate for Métis and First Nations students for the past 20 years. This data suggests that 30% have been willing to play the game and do what it takes to succeed at school and 70% have not.

Mary: Getting through doesn't mean I had a fairy tale type experience in education, my K-12 experience. I think a couple things that always continued to reaffirm me and that was being around my family every weekend and spending a lot of time on the land and in the valley. Especially in the summer time, sometimes in the winter time but I was really, really blessed to have that family time, having that abundance of

Metis-ness around me 24/7. I went to school with my cousins, I played with my cousins so, you know, I guess I didn't really have a lack of identity. If anything it [being around Metis-ness] just made me proud. The education system didn't really provide a lot cultural teachings, I would say.

Mary articulates that she was strongly located within her culture and did not need her schooling to teach it to her. Although her culture was eroded within the school setting, it remained strong when it was left outside of school and at home, where it was safe.

3.4.2 Resistance – Passing as White

Like Tony, passing as white was an option for Mark as well. Both Tony and Mark are mixed blood people and thus both are "able to pass as white". Therefore, they both experienced having to suppress their Indigenous identity in order to better manage their cultural safety in the school.

Mark: Another early memory is that all the kids talked about grandparents at the farm, everybody had grandparents on the farm, so that's what they did every holiday; they went to visit their grandparents on the farm. I think I only ever said once that I went to visit my grandparents on the reserve, and got so derided by that from my peers that I learnt to have grandparents on the farm. And I knew even as a young child that every time that I had said that, that it was a lie. I knew that wasn't true, they didn't have a farm. So, my whole school was about me feeling that I was in an institution that devalued me and my family, and my community. And that was just not in hindsight, I felt that at the time. It's not just now being

an educator and saying well that's what I should have felt, I actually did feel it at the time.

Mark also felt that his Indigenous identity was not valued within the school.

Mark: My earliest memory of being scolded in school was when we were asked in math class to draw, and it was probably in grade one or two honestly, and I still remember, we were asked to draw a house. And why we were asked to draw house, I learnt after was to draw basic shapes. They wanted us to draw a square and a triangle, the square being the house and the triangle being the roof structure. And what I drew was a house with little juts all over the sides of it, as if it was a log house, because that's what we grew up in and what we were familiar with. And I got soundly scolded for not knowing what a house looked like, so, you know, it was not endorsing.

For Mark, not only was his culture not valued but it was wrong and he was even punished for not having the "right" cultural knowledge. Tony and Mark's experiences of not identifying as Indigenous and passing as white was about them protecting their identities and thus resisting the environments they were in which made them feel that to be brown was bad.

Like Tony's sister, passing as white was not an option for Christine.

Christine: I don't think I thought of myself as an Indian until about grade 3, I was eight. I was at school and these kids, all of a sudden called me a squaw. I was like what? I was like what is that? What? I knew what it was, but I didn't see myself like that.

While passing as white was a form of resistance so was silencing oneself. Tony acknowledged silencing himself as a student in school.

> *Tony: It's like what me and that girl used to do in that [secondary school] program we were in, which was we would play the game. We would be ourselves when we were together and having our conversations, but when we had to do other group work it was like okay take off the brown uniform and put on the white uniform and play the game. And that's what our kids were doing, by silencing themselves they were playing the game because they knew if they talked not only were they going to, sort of, show where they were coming from, in terms of a value system but you know they often talked with accents and often talked with a dialect and it was like right away they knew that that would sort of create an impression [negative] from teachers and from other peers.*

For Tony silencing himself was about playing the game of school in order to succeed as well as maintaining his cultural security and prevent ongoing deficit theorizing. Deficit theorizing and racism resulting from his accent was my own father's schooling experience. As previously discussed, my father is a first language Michif speaker. In the dialect of his language there is no 'th' sounds and as such he still has difficulty pronouncing that sound properly in English. For my father's generation silencing himself in school was a result of not being allowed to speak their Indigenous languages in school or risk being punished for doing so.

Unlike their experiences in the home prior to entering formal education, the participant's formal education experiences were about being surrounded by new

and unfamiliar cultures and them feeling little sense of safety or belonging within that school setting.

3.5 Phase Three

3.5.1 Conscientization – University Education

All participants shared similar experiences going through either the Saskatchewan Urban Native Teacher Education Program (SUNTEP) or the Indian Teacher Education Program (ITEP) and acknowledged that those experiences were the first time they felt that their culture was affirmed within a formal educational setting.

Christine also felt that ITEP had higher expectations of her and she had enjoyed being pushed and challenged.

> *Christine: When I was in the mainstream classes you are one person out of 60 or those super large auditoriums where you're just a number. I didn't find it as challenging.*

> *When I was in ITEP not only did you have to understand this curriculum if it was a curriculum class, but we were pushed to integrate First Nations and Métis content in there. So when I went into these mainstream classes they never pushed us to do this. They never asked us to do that. You could do this assignment and if you never mentioned First Nations or Métis people they didn't care. There wasn't that extra expectation on top of. Like what you were expected to do in ITEP.*

ITEP and SUNTEP operate on a cohort model of learning. For all four years of the undergraduate degrees the cohort is together in most of their classes. ITEP targets First Nations students and SUNTEP targets Métis students. Thus in these

61

programs students are surrounded by people and experiences from their own culture for four years. For the participants this was somewhat akin to their pre-formal education experiences as it offered a familial type of learning environment where it was again safe to be themselves.

> *Tony: At any given moment in SUNTEP you would see babies crawling down the hallway and old people walking around and I just remember thinking oh so this is how education is supposed to be. It's supposed to feel like home. Even though I was smart in school, I never really had a strong desire to go to school until I was in SUNTEP because it was like waking up and going home every day. At SUNTEP I was surrounded by laughter, by old people and by teachers that cared about me, not just my academics.*

While Tony excelled academically in primary and secondary school, it was not until he felt his identity was normalized in the education setting, that he began to enjoy his schooling experience again.

> *Tony: When I came to SUNTEP, I was immersed in Métis culture and values and also immersed within a Métis community because everybody that went here was Métis and most of the instructors were Métis. It was like those ice cream cones you dip in chocolate. I was dipped in that from an early age, then I went a long time without that dipping and SUNTEP dipped me right back in it. SUNTEP introduced to me the concept of being able to succeed as a Métis person and being able to succeed academically as a professional. And I had never had that in my 12 years of schooling before post-secondary.*

Mark's elementary and secondary school experiences were compromised by ongoing feelings of marginalization. Those experiences changed in post-secondary.

> *Mark: My first class was a native studies class and I learned Indigenous history in Canada. It was all positive and First Nations people were positive and successful and problem solvers and adaptable. And so, my whole experience changed, I felt very endorsed. I think of it kind of like a sponge. When I was in [Elementary and Secondary] school the context, the thought and the ideas and what were valued and important weren't familiar. Then when I went to ITEP it was so different, everything was about First Nations experience. I just opened up as a sponge and I just sucked it all in and you are with First Nations people, all day every day.*

Being within their cohorts in ITEP and SUNTEP made these participants feel their culture was normalized and safe once again. Christine very much enjoyed ITEP and was comfortable there, although she was well aware of the stereotypes surrounding the programs.

> *Christine: I loved it. I loved all the classes. I took classes, the ITEP classes and I took mainstream stream classes as well. I had a combination of classes that I had taken because I was trying to get through and get done. So you hear these comments "oh it's an Indian teacher education program, it's easier, it's dummied down", "these people aren't the best teachers". You hear all of that.*

3.5.2 Resistance – Unlearning and Relearning

Today, all participants have Masters degrees. Their Master's degree programs offered them opportunities to begin to theorize about making a difference for other Métis and First Nations learners. Tony believed that his experience in SUNTEP provided him with a stronger basis to undertake his Master's program and he succeeded in those classes.

> *Tony: Then you leave SUNTEP and you go onto other experiences, and for myself that was grad studies, and again you're in that un-dipped period, right? You're back to being the one of only two people in a class that are brown and that understand brown values but what the difference was that SUNTEP had given me confidence in both being able to be a cultural person and a professional person. Then I was able to assert myself in grad studies and able to assert a* Métis *opinion into a lot of those discussions. And although it was still a lonely place and at times an argumentative place because people don't want to hear those values, I was definitely more ready to be that sole Indigenous person because of the background I had got at SUNTEP.*

In his Master's program, although back into a mainstream environment, Tony felt stronger in being able to argue and justify who he was and therefore safe in expressing his opinions. He did not have to pretend that he was someone else.

For Mark, his Master's program experience allowed him the opportunity to reflect upon his practices as a teacher.

> *Mark: When I did my Masters I started to learn about Indigenous epistemology and Indigenous ways of knowing. We throw that term around*

so easily now but in those days it was more of a new paradigm. A lot of work was coming out of the United Nations and early Indigenous theorists. Then I started to learn, well wait a minute, you can infuse your teaching with [First Nations and Métis] content but you are still recycling the majority perspective if you only ever have an empirical goal and learning and you are basing it on Western knowledge.

So then I started my Masters work in Indian and Northern education, educational foundations, to learn that the way we teach as well as the way we acquire knowledge. This is also characterized by who we are as Indigenous people, or who people are as non-Indigenous people. Western society, characterizes the way they teach and what they value as knowledge. So then I started to challenge that and was more interested, not only in the content, but structuring a learning experience that considered other options.

Mark's Master's degree offered him an opportunity to begin to theorize his own role within transformative praxis.

3.5.3 Transformative Praxis

For the participants, their undergraduate degrees provided safe cultural spaces, and for the first time within their educational experiences, that felt like home to them. Their Masters degrees (and for Mark his PhD work) allowed for new understandings and opportunities to decolonize the education he had received, revitalize his own epistemologies and knowledge base and begin to be more transformative.

Mark: During my Masters I started to think about things differently and acquire new knowledge and perspectives. I remember reading, a whole body of work around gender theory and queer theory and then feminist theory, and I was so taken by this theory of otherness that I thought wow, I had almost reached a plateau, in terms of how I could challenge the system and redesign myself or my practice through a theoretical lens of Indigenous theory. Because I kind of thought of it as two camps, there was the status quo and then there was this Indigenous theory, trying to disrupt that. And then reading and immersing myself in these other theories, like feminist theory.

Theories and experiences from other marginalized groups had helped Mark to appreciate the insidious nature of power structures that served to marginalize some groups in society over others. Mark also reflected on how once he had an appreciation of oppression, how easily he himself might become a part of this problem.

Mark: I learned that power structures are much more insidious and they can recycle and just when you think, kind of in a postmodern way you've kind of addressed one limitation then another one pops up. Then when you think you are conscientized and you have realized a certain liberty then you are perpetuating oppression all over again.

Mark learned to critically examine his role in maintaining the status quo.

Mark: It was in reading these theories of otherness that really caused me to be more strategic around how to create change and realize just how insidious oppression was.

Mark started extending his learning and seeing connections between and amongst them.

> *Mark: Even the people that owned the system, how they were so limited by a system that was so narrow with this narrow sense of beliefs of what's important, what's valued, this is our history, these are the rules of the game. Those don't even really serve the needs of the status quo well but we are all so stuck in a self-perpetuating body of knowledge, history and theory.*

Mark began to question whether the system was serving the needs of all.

> *Mark: In my Masters I kind of learned to dig a little deeper, ask better questions and to use allies, not only Indigenous minorities, but other minorities.*

After Mark had learned more about oppression and the layers of it, he began to seek out and work alongside allies. He understood this context was being driven in society at a very political level.

> *Mark: It even trickles into our political participation in society. It's not really about which party makes the best promises each campaign, it's about whether the central tenets of a certain political stripe are about perpetuating a limiting status quo because it offers them power and authority or is it about people coming together because they want to disrupt the system and expose that unilateral approach to power, resources and leadership.*

While Mark found these new theories of power to be enlightening, he also found that his practices in the teaching profession and the resources that he was drawing upon had also begun to change.

> *Mark: It [his Master's degree] was enlightening and I think it has changed my practice in the profession; certainly it has changed the resources that I draw on, either as a theorist or as a professional. I would have been more apt to try to gather known theory and make an argument out of it rather than gather disruptive theory and make an argument out of it.*

A part of transformative praxis for Mark was taking his Master's degree. Having a better understanding of how his people had been oppressed over time and through the various systems that they had to engage with, Mark now believed he was in a position of deeper cultural awareness and responsibility to "dismantle them."

> *Mark: So it's like, I was recollecting the other day when I was on this panel for a conference. The first part of my career was characterized by fitting in. I can be a good teacher just like anybody else. Then the middle part was in service, like I am going to do everything in my power now that I have a position to serve Indigenous students, families and communities. And then it's only in the latter part where I've really been in an era, for myself, of redesign. Using what I have learnt to redesign, so there is a progression there and certainly it would've been during my graduate work my first go around that I would've got a better sense of what makes society tick and what are the grand narratives, how feeble they are and how you need to know them to participate and to dismantle them.*

The three phases of Mark's career that he reflects upon align with a cycle of conscientization, resistance and transformative praxis. His conscientization was about being a good Indigenous teacher. His resistance was focusing on serving the needs of Indigenous youth, not all youth. Lastly his transformative praxis was about decolonizing the system and redesigning it.

While these experiences of transformative praxis in this story are located within what I am calling phase three, there is overlap with phase four. All the participants began their careers as teachers upon completing their undergraduate degrees and then returned to finish their Masters degrees while they were working as teachers. Thus phases three and four were permeable, they began to merge and became strongly inter-related.

3.6 Phase Four

3.6.1 Conscientization – Bringing Back First Nations/Métis Identity to Education

When the participants became educators they wanted to bring back a part that they had been missing for them, this was the respectful relevance and accuracy of contemporary First Nations and Métis content and perspectives into the colonial curriculum. How to do this in ways that would honor the truth of how the First Nations and Métis story could fit in more respectfully to "the larger story" was the collective challenge. As a result of going through either SUNTEP or ITEP each participant felt that they had been well prepared to do this upon entering the teaching profession.

> Tony: it's like that quote that says, "I've always understood my half breed-ness but I didn't always understand my Métis-ness". Because we grow up with the context, but I think what SUNTEP and ITEP gave us the

language, the history, the names, the years, the dates, and all of those

things. You know, I think, for me anyways, I grew up knowing I was a half-

breed or Métis. And then you get University where there is a whole

narrative behind the way I grew up. I get where my context fits into the

larger story. I think that's an experience that we all shared going to TEPs.

Importantly for Tony, rather than just the "majority" view and often tokenistic "bannock, beads and buckskin," the SUNTEP program gave him the more accurate view of history and content to integrate into his own teaching. In his own experience of being a student at school this is what had been lacking.

Mark: I got that what was valued, what was taught in schools, was what

was valued by the majority. I got that right away, because I was groomed

in that in ITEP. So, when I started teaching, right away I started bringing

in Indigenous content and I wasn't teaching Aboriginal kids, my first four

years of teaching.

In Saskatchewan teachers have been mandated to integrate Métis and First Nations content for over 30 years. While SUNTEP and ITEP do great work in preparing their Indigenous teacher candidates to do this work the mainstream college system still has work to do if more than 30% of our students are to succeed to graduation.

As early professionals the participants consciously worked at becoming good teachers for all students. They all strived to do well within the teaching profession.

Mark: Early in my career I joined provincial committees and committees

for the Saskatchewan Teachers Federation and did a ton of work

provincially with, at the time, the Indian and Métis Education Advisory

Committee and lots of that stuff early in my career.

As mentioned earlier, the participants felt well prepared to enter the teaching profession and prepared to take on roles where they may have been the only Indigenous voice. Like Mark, early on in my career as a teacher I also joined various committees and Boards where I was the only Indigenous voice. Albeit this was often a lonely space to be in, I found it was also a powerful space to begin to work for change.

For the participants, striving to do well within the teaching profession meant utilizing a wide variety of teaching strategies. For Mark, being a good teacher for all students also meant working to conscientize non-Indigenous students to an Indigenous way of being. In the beginning of his teaching career he taught at a predominantly white middle class school.

Mark: I guess my mission was to help non-Indigenous kids to see the other

side. And understand who controls history and who controls the social

milieu, who controls what's taught in schools. It is not inclusive. And,

there was a real respect for that and I helped the kids to be real critical

thinkers, I was not a textbook teacher.

Mark challenged his students to think and act critically, to not take for granted what they were told but rather to challenge themselves to ask critical questions. Mark's own experiences in education were characterized by transmission teaching thus he consciously did the opposite when he began teaching as he knew that transmission teaching had not worked well for him.

The participants also acknowledged that their Indigeneity influenced their pedagogical approaches to teaching. Mary talks about not only learning about culture but learning through culture.

> *Mary: I did a lot of discursive strategies, before they were a popular thing to do. A big piece of that was talking circles. If the students were saying something, and we were starting any type of unit I was always going back to [what the students said].*

The participants consciously chose teaching strategies that had worked for them as students. Although Mark did not experience much place-based learning within his own schooling experiences, it is an Indigenous pedagogical approach he chose to incorporate into his teaching practice.

> *Mark: My style of teaching was very labor-intensive because everything was invented all the time. We would do problem-based learning before it was in vogue, we would do studies along the riverbank, we would pick up garbage and categorize it and write letters to the companies that we found their garbage and challenge them as to how they were going to protect the environment. And that was 25 years ago. And kids loved it. I still run into students that feel that they were really conscientized during that experience in grade 7 or 8. We did lots of field trips and lots of learning in the environment, lots of thematic approaches where subjects were blended and so, I really enjoyed teaching like that. My Indigenous self-influenced that because I had lived the experience of exclusion and inclusion and wanted to create a learning space that was inclusive. And that students, whether they were Catholic or non-Catholic, aboriginal or non-*

aboriginal, or whatever, that they always felt that they had a place to belong. And that their experiences were as rich and valid as anybody else's. That's what characterized my teaching.

Mark stated earlier that he worked at making the curriculum more culturally appropriate but from what he has said he did much more than that in an attempt to create pedagogy where his students "felt they had a place to belong." Above Mark describes his pedagogy as a teacher. Mark describes a teaching style that would represent many of the principles of culturally responsive pedagogy as presented in chapter 1 from the Kia Eke Panuku project. That being he listened to students, he shared power with his students, he did not just transmit stuff out of books, but he let them identify and solve their own real authentic problems and he let them do this in dialogue with others rather than in splendid isolation. Mark's pedagogy was culturally responsive in that his students and their own prior knowledge and experiences drove the learning, rather than the cultural knowledge that had been deemed to be appropriate, and had been reified in text books and resources and was expected to be taught by teachers to all students.

As professional teachers, the participants utilized teaching strategies that had worked for them as students and in many cases their Indigeneity also influenced their teaching. The participants not only worked on bringing in culturally authentic knowledge but they also worked on doing so in culturally authentic ways. They also practiced culturally responsive pedagogies in their teaching allowing their students to construct the context for teaching and learning in their classrooms.

As early professionals the participants worked within mainstream education for years before taking on leadership roles. The leadership paths the participants chose varied depending on their experiences. Two, as well as myself, chose to stay working to affect change from within the mainstream system. The other two chose to take on leadership roles from outside the Kindergarten to grade 12 education system. One through university education, Tony now trains pre-service teachers working from within the same Teacher Education Program that had made a difference for him. The other chose to affect change by working for First Nations' educational organizations.

For all participants choosing their path forward was about making an explicit decision about where they would have the agency to make change, therefore where they could begin to resist the status quo most effectively. It was either choosing to stay within the system and resist in order to effect change from within or it was choosing to leave, to create the change from the outside.

3.6.2 Resistance – Silencing Oneself

For myself succeeding as a student and a professional has often meant remaining silent. This practice of silencing myself worked in my favor during my schooling experiences as I did well in school. It also worked for me as a professional. I would often times not speak up during meetings and therefore seemingly not challenge the status quo of the environment in which I worked. Silencing oneself in some cases is less about agreement and more about disagreement. Silencing is also a First Nations and Métis culturally appropriate thing to do. Humility is a teaching that is informally and formally taught by Elders and knowledgeable others. As such, it is disrespectful to voice disagreement. Therefore, participants

acknowledged that they often silenced themselves for their own cultural safety and as a sign of respect.

> *Tony: In grad studies it was a constant debate of, am I going to speak up or is this going to be another "there's the angry half breed talking so let's just close our ears." So that's always on our mind too, right? You almost have to pick and choose because, we've been silenced in a lot of ways but in a lot of ways to we have been labeled as troublemakers and "you whine over everything." So it is important to identify those moments where you think you have an audience, an audience where there're a few listeners. But a lot of times for our own safety, you don't say anything.*

Mary and Christine were also very conscious of how their silence could be interpreted by their non-Indigenous colleagues.

> *Mary: [Sometimes in meetings] you look like you have nothing to say or that you're disengaged. And that's what I told Tony, as an Aboriginal rookie Principal or as a Vice Principal I felt like [saying], "please do not interpret my silence as disengagement or that I have nothing intelligent to say."*

> *Christine: Or that I am agreeing to what you are saying.*

Participants also acknowledged how the practice of silencing oneself begins early and is pervasive in schooling.

> *Tony: [Some of] our students are quiet [in school]. And then you talk to their parents and it's actually like, well, they never shut up at home, and then you realize, oh it's the environment that is silencing them.*

As the participants' careers progressed and they became conscious that they were silencing themselves their voices began to emerge but only when they felt safe to do so.

> *Mary: I know there are times that I will sit silent and then the last [minute I will voice] my opinion and some [other Principals] are like [wow]. The one Vice Principal was proud of me, he was like, "I can't believe you said all of that."*

For myself, speaking up within meeting contexts has taken effort. I silenced myself throughout my whole schooling experience and did so as a professional because it helped me be more successful. Maybe because I have practiced this for so many years that it still does take a conscious effort for me to unlearn this behavior, to stop doing it and to start speaking up for myself and others like me.

Resistance came about as somewhat of a phase within the participants' journeys as educators. In retrospect it was after the participants were conscious of their roles within the status quo (or what mainstream environments value most highly and expect to be perpetuated) of the settings in which they worked that they began to resist aspects of it. When they were in positions where they felt safe, in all cases this was only when they were finally in positions of leadership, they started to resist aspects of the status quo within the schools in which they worked. For the participants, resistance was about beginning to push back against the expectations set of them and students or teachers like them. This is largely by those that hold the power and who continue to perpetuate the status quo of inequity in education.

As a Métis woman Principal, Mary felt a sense of responsibility to affect change for the First Nations and Métis students and community she served. This often began by using the evidence and asking critical questions.

> *Mary: How do I disrupt that status quo so we can actually start having a movement with increased graduation rates for First Nations, Métis and Inuit students? How, we can start with the attendance and the retention and then also the post-secondary movement, right? So that 25% that actually do go and there is I think 0.15% First Nations, Métis and Inuit that go. How do we swing that pendulum?*

Although, as an educator, Mary feels that responsibility and undeniable pressure to affect change she also often feels not listened to and at times powerless to promote the change that she wants to see. Albeit, Mary did see some some change come about within critical conversations or the "ethical space of engagement" (Ermine, 2007) when in conversations with others.

> *Mary: I think a lot of it is by using our voice and having those critical conversations on different platforms and different forums. But also I think about how sometimes it just falls on deaf ears when you talk. Sometimes it sounds like you're complaining. Sometimes I sit there in my principal's meetings, I've said some things that I know wouldn't win me any friends. I wasn't getting any favors from any of the non-Aboriginal principals that day.*

Mary was the only Métis woman high school Principal within the school division she worked for. For Mary, being vocal within this context was about resisting norms and offering voice to those First Nations and Métis students that she

served. Within her meeting contexts Mary was not only marginalized being the only Indigenous person but also being a woman. The majority of people within leadership positions in her school division were non-Indigenous men, as they are within my own school division. In my role as Coordinator I am also the only Métis woman.

3.6.3 Transformative Praxis

As educators, the participants were or are working within large Western systems that were created partly to assimilate and homogenize First Nations and Métis people. The participants felt that in order to bring about coherent change within the system, there had to be a push both from inside the system as well as from outside the system.

Earlier in this chapter, Mark acknowledged that he was a mixed blood person and thus able to pass as white. Here Mark acknowledges the role that plays out within his own role as an insider working to affect change.

> *Mark: It was always a progression, doing more of, more differently, disrupt the system more, and of course, I was allowed to disrupt the system because I fit the part, you know? I fit very easily into the status quo, because I grew up in both worlds. And so my ability to challenge the system was kind of like a Trojan horse, like you go in quietly looking like everybody else and then at night you would come out and disrupt the system before people even knew it. And then I think they just didn't know how to resist you because if I was a bit more visible or spoke a different language or whatever else, I think it would've been easier for the status quo to say, the system to say, "he's not professional" or "he is not as*

literate it as we are." If there could've been an excuse, I probably would've been fired somewhere along the line. The system would've pushed me out, they would've bumped me out. But because I looked and talked and acted like them I was able to capitalize on that to make some changes from within. With either, without the system really realizing it first of all, or else just powerless to react, you know, and just let me do my thing as an insider. And I know my change was as an insider.

Mark discusses the perplexity associated with the change required when one is working from an insider position.

Mark: I can't claim that I was not always influenced by the status quo either, because I walk in two worlds and I wear two hats. So as part of that you look at the fact that my profession has grown up within the context of a Catholic board so that's one thing I would have rarely ever challenged that catholicity and the role of the church and the aspect of colonization and marginalization that the church had inflicted on Indigenous people in Canada and elsewhere.

The two worlds Mark walks in are Indigenous and non-Indigenous. He is a mixed blood person. In my own experience in a Catholic Board, non-Indigenous or Indigenous groups alike rarely challenge the culture of Catholicism.

Mark: So if there's anything that I had to stop doing I guess it would be always playing the double agent. Disrupting but then also participating as an insider. I may see myself as a change agent but I am also part of perpetuating the status quo and part of that is leadership. You don't get to

be a leader, in your position or in mine, completely on rebellion. Right?

Systems don't allow it. So you know, you make a trade-off.

For Mark, the trade-off has been, being able to lead respectfully yet also able to influence change from within the system.

Mark: You want to be a leader and influence things at the highest level within an organization you also have to play the game of the organization. And so that's kind of a conundrum that you find yourself stuck in. And I still do. I know that I perpetuate a predominantly white, middle class, Christian system. I promote that every day in the work that I do. And with that the tradeoff for me is that I get to be an insider and effect change at a high level.

Although Mark works within a white, middle class, Christian system, he does so to affect change for First Nations and Métis students and families who are also within the classrooms and schools within this same system.

Mark: But there are those that affect change and won't succumb to the standards of a middle class, white, Christian institution. They also don't have to yield to that status quo. So maybe that speaks a little bit to having to stop doing things. I am still learning to perpetuate the status quo less and try to disrupt more.

Mark had chosen to affect change by pushing from the inside. Another participant, Christine, chose to resist the dominant culture by stepping outside of it. The majority of Christine's career thus far has been working for First Nations organizations.

Either from within the dominant culture or outside of it, both Mark and Christine recognized that the dominant group had the power to define how far Indigenous people's power would extend. Both refer to this as a ceiling that is difficult to extend beyond, rather it has served to hold them in "their place".

> *Christine: I have worked in organizations where there was a definite ceiling for Indigenous people and that ceiling is lower than the ceiling for non-Indigenous people. I have worked in environments like that and they're not fun, they do not challenge me intellectually and do not stimulate any growth in my work or myself. That is just not where I want to be.*

> *Mark: I think there is a glass ceiling for Indigenous people in mainstream organizations, maybe all organizations even Aboriginal organizations, that is kind of where the barometer of society is ready to allow Indigenous participation. Like we can rebel all we want, but at the end of the day we still live under auspices of westernized society and governance structure and such.*

All participants understood that they were working to affect change either as an insider of the mainstream system or as an outsider. They affected change through transformative practices. Within either role as insider or outsider, participants' understood government politics and viewed policy change as an important step towards promoting change.

> *Christine: The other piece that was transformative for me was going and working in the area of policy and starting to examine how policy is written. How government materials are developed, the things that are*

written about Aboriginal people. What was empowering was being able to develop our own materials and start writing them because a lot of people live and die on policy. And they don't want to give an inch and people interpret it in many different ways. So when you go to write a policy you have to make sure that it's reflecting your worldview.

Christine, as an insider, used her knowledge of policies to help the school and its community that she worked with to move forward. She was constantly looking for the "cracks" in policies that provided the opportunities to do "good for kids".

Christine: I know the policies and procedures, Tony and I talked about this, I know the policies and procedures pretty right on and if there's a crack I am going for it. That is how I manipulate, I guess I am over resourceful with doing what I need to do for the students and doing what I think is right as an Indigenous woman and as an Indigenous educator and administrator, by looking at those cracks and putting gold in there and if it's good for kids how can you argue?

Tony acknowledged that it was often policies that stood in the way of more transformative practices as well.

Tony: I think that it's hard, particularly as an Indigenous educator it is hard. You're up against so many things, you're up against policies that don't exactly honor the way that we want to teach, you're up against poverty, you're up against racism, you're up against parents who may or may not be involved in the school, you're up against all those things. But, ultimately, if you choose to be a teacher that can disrupt the status quo you can be. And I think, Mary, you kind of touched on this, I think what we

become really good at as Indigenous educators is finding the weak spots,

finding the cracks that allows us to slip in and do things the way we want

to do them, you know without necessarily flouting a policy or doing

anything against the law, but we find those ways to get things done.

For all participant's transformative praxis began to come about when they were in

leadership positions and felt safe to voice their opinions and challenge others.

3.7 Themes Emerging From the Findings

From this collaborative story a number of common themes have emerged which I

have presented in Table 3.1 below. Conscientization resistance and transformative

praxis run in an interrelated cycle across all themes while the phases are listed in

the column to the left. The themes in this table and their implications to my

research question will be discussed in chapter 4.

Table 3.1: Themes Emerging from the Findings

	Conscientization	Resistance	Transformative Praxis
Phase 1 – prior to formal education Positioning: Identity as First Nations / Métis secure	- Surrounded by and learning from family - First Nations/ Métis culture secure - Identity normalized	None related or needing to occur	None related or needing to occur
Phase 2 – formal education Positioning: Assimilation redefining my First Nations / Métis identity	- Exposed to wider groups of people - Surrounded by new and unfamiliar cultures - Conscious that here my First Nations/ Métis culture was more often not acceptable or normal	- Pass as white if able to do so - Silence oneself - Compromise my cultural identity - Play the game in order to achieve - Culture left at home	Powerless to be transformative, either in theory or in practice
Phase 3 – Tertiary / university education Positioning: Reclamation of First Nations / Métis Identity	- Being with familiar cultures, experiences and languages (TEP programs) - Identity beginning to be normalized again	Masters programs: - unlearning and relearning - theory to make a difference for FNM Beginning to theorize and transform praxis	Understanding the need to: - decolonize - revitalize - transformatize For self and others like me
Phase 4 – being educators Positioning: Supporting the First Nations / Métis identity of others	- Being good teachers for all students - Being the "Indian expert" on staff to support culturally appropriate pedagogies - Integrating FNM content and culture in order for FNM to feel a sense of belonging and include non-FNM in these understandings - Understanding culturally responsive pedagogies	- Working from within the mainstream. - Leaving the mainstream - Insisting on cultural guidance from Elders and speakers of the languages - Silencing oneself when we do not agree - Speaking out when it is safe.	- Working as education leaders - Feel safe to affect changes - Working with likeminded people - Working with cultural leaders - Working to change policies - Engaging in tertiary studies

3.8 Conclusion

Conscientization, Resistance and Transformative Praxis came together in an ongoing dialogic and theoretical cycle for the participants with each stage building on prior experiences and intertwined with the other. Throughout this cycle they have positioned and repositioned themselves within their personal and professional identities numerous times. From within the participants' positions of leadership they learned that in order to bring about the change that they wanted to see, reform was needed at the level of "politics, policies and pedagogies" and that this required them to work strategically with other non-First Nations and non-Métis. Change would not happen without the political power to change the education policies that were continuing to maintain and support the status quo of social inequity. However, change was also needed in the classrooms with what was being taught and how it was being taught. Classroom practices were also maintaining a status quo of extremely poor levels of retention together with unacceptable ongoing graduation rates for significant numbers of First Nations and Métis students. This is a problem that requires everyone's contribution.

CHAPTER 4 DISCUSSION

4.1   Introduction

In this chapter I will seek to discuss the answers to my research question:

What can we learn from the experiences of two First Nations and two Métis educators in Saskatchewan when we consider their experiences of education through Paulo Freire's cycle of conscientization, resistance and transformative praxis?

In chapter three, I presented a table that outlined the themes that emerged from the collaborative story. In this chapter I will discuss these themes and explain the implications of this to my research question. I begin by describing each phase in the first column to the left and then discuss the connections of each phase to critical theories.

4.2   Phase One

Phase One encompasses the participant's pre-formal education, before they entered school. The participants positioned themselves as secure in their First Nations or Métis identity. They grew up in homes in which their cultural identity was supported as positive and normal as they learned in the contexts of families, homes and communities. Although the participants were young in this phase of their lives, they do remember how they felt during this time.

4.2.1 Conscientization

During this phase the participants were consciously aware of their surroundings, they recalled being conscious of their environment and how that environment made them feel happy and normal. The participants in this research fondly recalled their pre-formal educational experiences as times where they felt

86

accepted by the people around them. Their cultural identities were supported in the home. Within their families, participants recalled doing things that were common to other First Nations or Métis families. Because it was normalized within their family they did not think it was any different to what other families did. I had the same experience. I have a large extended Métis family that supported my own cultural identity and sense of where I belonged within my family and the home community.

4.3 Phase Two

This phase is related to the participant's formal education, Kindergarten to grade 12. Prior to this time, the participants knew who they were as Métis and First Nations people and they felt strongly connected to their culture and their community. Repositioning occurred as a result of being immersed in an unfamiliar culture. Participants found themselves in what in reality was an assimilative environment. Here they soon learned that it was best to suppress their cultural identity as it began to come under scrutiny and into question by their educators and peers. They were no longer located as a part of the majority cultural context and thus, within the schooling context, they were a minority culture and they were made to feel marginalized. This meant they were different and their cultural knowledge and their experiences were no longer valued or even accepted as worthwhile to their schooling or normal.

Discourses found within this phase included "to be brown was bad therefore it was best to pass as white, if you can" because it was not safe to identify as an Indigenous person. Schooling, as an unsafe cultural environment, was the experience of the participants. They acknowledged that the classes they attended were lacking in First Nations and Métis content and that when there was any

content in the curriculum it was irrelevant to their lives (it was historical) or that it was condescending or demeaning. The First Nations and Métis cultural content knowledge they believed was not authentic and/or relevant to their own lived experiences. Therefore, the environment that they were in made them feel "othered," "marginalized" and "bad to be brown".

4.3.1 Conscientization

The participant's formal education was represented by their Kindergarten to grade 12 years. Over the 13 years spent in formal schooling the participants learned survival tactics to achieve educational success. One participant referred to this as "playing the game". They were consciously aware that they and other students like them were being treated differently and they believed this was not right. They also believed that at the time, there was little they could do about it.

4.3.2 Resistance

For these participants, playing the game included leaving their culture at home in order to succeed. Although like me, each participant achieved academic success, they felt that they each had to compromise their own cultural identities in order to do so. This compromise played out in a couple different ways. For those who could, one way, was to pass as white. Passing as white meant not openly identifying as an Indigenous person for fear of being belittled, bullied or not accepted. If they could get through school by passing as white it meant not having to deal with such ridicule and racism. Tony witnessed his darker skinned sister having to deal with ridicule and racism on a regular basis. Passing as white was not about conforming to the environment and trying to be like everyone else, rather it was about resisting their school environment so that they were safe and their culture was maintained.

Another way in which the participants resisted the dominant culture was to silence themselves. As mentioned earlier, the act of silencing was about resisting the dominant culture, about disagreement. It was also a cultural value, as it is disrespectful to openly disagree with others and therefore some of the participants learned that you can remain silent so as to not offend.

First Nations and Métis people have a long history of being intentionally silenced in education. The first experiences were when First Nations and Métis languages were forbidden in residential schools. In residential schools First Nations and Métis children were physically punished for speaking their languages. After residential schools closed and First Nations and Métis children were no longer being physically punished for speaking their languages the punishment continued in the form of racism and lower expectations. First Nations and Métis children experienced ridicule due to their accents as well as lower expectations often due to being unable to speak English properly or fluently. Passing as white and silencing oneself were both done for cultural safety.

One implication of playing the game is the belief that you have to leave your culture at the door and the pathologizing that occurs as a result. Pathologizing about the cultural experiences of children begins early with the prevalent discourse of, "First Nations and Métis children do not know who they are". This is a discourse that is heard among both First Nations and Métis and non-First Nations and non- Métis educators. Hegemony has gone full circle when the oppressed people themselves take on the discourses of the oppressor. Discourses such as these may be linked to the fact that for over 30 years in Saskatchewan educators have been working to make the curriculum more culturally appropriate. As a result, First Nations and Métis children are no longer viewed as the culturally

located beings that they feel they are, but rather, they are viewed as cultureless beings needing to be filled with their own culture, often times by non-First Nations and non-Métis educators. Or perhaps we have been told this for such a long time that we have begun to believe it ourselves.

Another discourse heard is that "First Nations and Métis children are not proud to be who they are". I hear this discourse often from school leaders who fix the perceived problem by adding bannock, beads and buckskin into their school curriculum and environment while failing to ask themselves if in fact the school itself is preventing this cultural identity and pride from happening for their students. The participants in this study were proud to be First Nations or Métis and they knew who they were, but to protect their cultural safety they had chosen not to explicitly identify as First Nations or Métis in order to succeed at school.

4.4 Phase Three

This phase represented the participants' time in university education. The repositioning that occurred here was that the participants feeling normalized within their culture again and thus explicitly reclaim their cultural identities. All the participants attended either the ITEP or SUNTEP, as I did. SUNTEP and ITEP incorporate Métis and First Nations ways of being and doing into their program and they teach a more authentic and respectful view of Indigenous history and epistemology. The majority of the students that attend are either Métis or First Nations. Therefore, just like pre-formal education the participants were once again located within environments in which their culture felt normal again. This experience within a formal educational context had not occurred until the participants entered university.

The participants state that their experiences in SUNTEP and ITEP were times when they felt that their culture and identity were secure. They also mention that the programs were holistic, that their professors and the staff cared for them and their academic performance. The participants felt nurtured and safe within this environment. For most their experiences in ITEP and SUNTEP were also their first formal experiences of learning a more authentic view of First Nations and Métis people's history in Canada. This was not a history of a savage people or doom and gloom that they did not want to be a part of but rather a history of a resilient and strong people that they were proud to be a part of.

Being surrounded by their own authentic and familiar culture and learning more about who they were as Indigenous people allowed them to start wanting to be a part of education. As Tony had stated earlier, he always did well and achieved in school but never enjoyed education until he was in SUNTEP.

This phase also encompassed the participants' Masters degrees. Although their Masters' programs were back in a mainstream setting, the participants felt confident and safer to express themselves. Tony attributed his increased confidence as a learner to his experiences in SUNTEP.

4.4.1 Conscientization

The participant's experiences in ITEP or SUNTEP were joyful and restorative. ITEP and SUNTEP are four-year Bachelor of Education programs. The classes required for completion are as rigorous as those required in the mainstream colleges. However, the cohort model of learning is quite different at SUNTEP and ITEP than the model of learning used at the mainstream college. Being with the same cohort for four years allowed for a familial environment that was

comfortable for the participants and where they were able and responsible for providing each other with cultural support. The participants were consciously aware of how they thrived as learners within these contexts and this environment. They were also conscious of how different this experience was when compared to the Kindergarten to Grade 12 education that they had experienced before entering university.

4.4.2 Resistance

As teachers, the participants utilized discursive teaching strategies, some of which were taught to them in ITEP or SUNTEP. Although the participants stated that it was not until undertaking their Masters degrees that they really started to theorize about and focus on achievement for other First Nations and Métis students. This stage was about shifting their focus as educators on outcomes for all students to outcomes for First Nations and Métis students and beginning to theorize about transformative praxis. This stage also represented a shift from focusing on what they were teaching to also how they were teaching. It was both a cultural and a pedagogical shift. Through their own formal education experiences they were aware of how school and classroom environments felt when they lacked First Nations and Métis voices. Therefore, the participants knew the importance of incorporating First Nations and Métis experience and voice into their classrooms and curriculums. In their Master's programs they learned more about the importance of their teaching practice or the pedagogy teachers used in making more of a difference for First Nations and Métis learners.

This focus on making a difference for First Nations and Métis learners came about around the same time the participants had shifts in their experiences as educators. For some this was teaching at schools with predominantly First Nations and Métis

students in attendance and for others this was a change of role into a leadership position.

Participants viewed their Master's programs as enlightening. The new learning that occurred within this stage was also a shift in their focus from all students to prioritizing Métis and First Nations students as the beginning of their transformative praxis.

4.4.3 Transformative Praxis

Transformative Praxis emerged as participants began to understand the need to decolonize their western beliefs and practices that were not engaging or working for First Nations and Métis students. This required them to also revitalize traditional cultural understandings and metaphors within the classroom and thus transform their pedagogical path forward. It was here they began to put into action their new learning. Their Master's programs and professional roles allowed them to start acting upon their new learning. They recognized the Western system they were working within needed support if it was to start transforming through decolonization and greater power sharing.

4.5 Phase Four

This phase represented the participants' time as educators and educational leaders during which repositioning was related to supporting the First Nations and Métis identity of others. As educators the participants worked hard to ensure that their classroom environments were welcoming spaces for First Nations and Métis students and they integrated First Nations and Métis content to make the curriculum more culturally accurate. Because, as students themselves the participants had not experienced a culturally safe space within their schools it was

important for them to ensure cultural safety for other First Nations and Métis students. This phase also represented the participants moving into leadership positions, and thus into positions where they had more power to affect the change they had been trying to achieve. In many cases this required them to begin to influence their colleagues to understand the need to work differently and in the same way as they were working.

Working with non-First Nations and non-Métis allies requires recognition of the "ethical space" between each other. Although this space cannot be seen it can be felt by one another (Ermine, 2007). Like the dialogic space (Berryman et al, 2013) this is the space where trust is built and allies are made. Recognition and working dialogically within the "ethical space of engagement" was important for the participants.

Although they now had a supportive network of Elders, cultural leaders, ITEP and SUNTEP alumni, as educational leaders these participants found themselves in spaces where they once again could be marginalized. Just like their formal education experiences, the participants knew that they had to play the game to succeed as leaders.

4.5.1 Conscientization

As mentioned above each of the participants graduated from SUNTEP or ITEP feeling fully prepared to integrate First Nations and Métis content into the curriculum and as beginning teachers they felt as though they had done a good job of this. All teachers in Saskatchewan have been asked to integrate First Nations and Métis content since 1980 therefore, the participants felt prepared to do that work and they did it well.

As early professionals the participants worked hard to be good teachers for all students and were beginning to understand more culturally responsive pedagogies. The participants practiced culturally responsive pedagogies although they might not have had the language to describe it at the time. They utilized Indigenous pedagogies and discursive strategies. As early teachers the participants had taught in a range of teaching positions, from working in schools that were 100% First Nations to working in mainstream schools where they were one of a few First Nations or Métis teachers and where they had only a few First Nations and Métis students.

Within the context where they were one of a few First Nations and Métis educators they realized they became known quickly on their staff as the "Indian expert", ready to solve the "Indian problems" although this expertise also came along with little power to affect real sustainable and widespread change.

4.5.2 Resistance

Resistance began to occur once participants were in positions where they felt safe to begin to work for change; most often this was in a position of leadership. For the participants feeling safe included speaking out to their colleagues but also silencing themselves when they did not agree. For one participant resistance involved leaving the mainstream system all together. This participant chose to work for First Nations organizations as a position from which to create change. Whether they chose to work from within or from outside the mainstream the participants were finally in leadership positions where they felt safe and began to work towards creating the change they wanted to see for their own people.

Working to create change from within the system had its challenges. As First Nations and Métis people the participants were often the only Indigenous people amongst their peers. This was what they had experienced in formal schooling although now the participants felt safer to work for change and began to experience the support of allies. A difference from their formal schooling experiences may have been age, experience and/or higher levels or education. Although just as they did in formal schooling, the participants used silence to resist being made to agree to things that they believed lacked cultural and professional integrity.

Within this phase the participants were conscious that their non-First Nations and non-Métis peers sometimes perceived their silence as agreement when it was actually disagreement. Thus, the conundrum was located within the cultural value of humility. Do we speak up in disagreement even though it is not within our cultural values to do so? Or, do we abide by the Western values of the system and speak up in disagreement? As a cultural value, not speaking up was and is more prevalent among women, as men had roles for leading negotiations. The men always sought advice and approval from women and all understood their roles were to lead according to gender in certain areas. Currently an implication for this may be the fact that there is a tendency to have more women teachers and more men in educational leadership positions. Although this is not the case solely for First Nations and Métis people, it is likely the case within the mainstream as well.

Participants were also conscious that their non-First Nations and non-Métis peers could interpret their remaining silence as disengagement or not having anything to add to the conversation when this again was inaccurate. For the participants, and for myself, speaking up has taken a conscious effort and although it is not in line

with our cultural values, having the support of Elders and cultural leaders has been instrumental in providing the cultural strength to speak up with greater confidence and clarity.

4.5.3 Transformative Praxis

Transformative praxis began to emerge as the participants took on positions of leadership. The participants were intentional in their decisions to take on leadership positions as they strove to create change for First Nations and Métis students and saw leadership positions as a way to affect the change they wanted to see. As the participants progressed in their careers they ensured that they were working alongside people who supported them in their work including, Elders, cultural leaders and likeminded people, including their ITEP or SUNTEP alumni. This support system was important to them. Although the participants saw the importance of this work, working towards affecting change was often a lonely position to be in and required a strong professional and home support system.

Having a support system and working with Elders and cultural leaders in their work provided safety, validation, direction and reassurance. Having Elders and cultural leaders to work with and alongside is important and necessary for First Nations and Métis people if they are going to be able to harness the cultural strength and integrity to bring about the massive reforms that are required. Without this we are unlikely to see greater evidence of First Nations and Métis students achieving education success without having to compromise their cultural identity. Participants ensured they engaged the Elders and leaders in the work they did, either in schools or in their leadership positions.

In chapter one I introduced the late Elder Simon Kytwayhat and his late wife Alma Kytwayhat. As mentioned previously Simon worked at Oskayak high school for many years. Although he had passed years ago his teachings are still a part of Oskayak high school. Oskayak high school is an urban First Nations high school that originally opened in 1980 as part of a national conscientization of First Nations people in Canada seeking education that could be more self-determining. In Saskatoon, it was a group of parents that approached the school division to partner with them to open the school. Since their doors opened Oskayak has always had a focus on Cree culture and ceremony. Having Elders within the school setting has always been a part of the school since they opened. Ongoing evidence overtime suggests that something amazing has happened at this school. According to school records, in 2010, three First Nations and/or Métis students achieved graduation. In 2015 after year on year improvement in both retention and graduation, 73 students graduated.

As previously stated, I also had the opportunity to work alongside Alma for a few years. Alma provided me with cultural direction on the work I was doing. The participants, and myself, are not first language speakers therefore working alongside Elders and cultural leaders is also about supporting us to incorporate First Nations or Métis language, meaning and metaphors into our work. First Nations and Métis epistemology is deeply embedded in our languages and Elders and cultural leaders help us to revitalize and understand that. Validation, support and direction from Elders and cultural leaders is important when working towards affecting change for First Nations and Métis children. Thus although the participants were working alone within their leadership position they ensured they had the support of their own cultural communities.

The participants support networks were important as they entered leadership positions. Once in leadership positions they became more aware of the importance of policies to promoting change. Participants viewed systemic policies as either a hindrance, something that could be deconstructed and challenged as well as something that could be reconstructed and changed. The participants' work in policy included finding the "loop holes" within the policies to ensure their work was better supported at the policy level. The participants felt that sometimes policies were roadblocks. Although the policies were seen as getting in the way they were also viewed as something that could be changed when the participants were in leadership positions and they were able to do so. Most exciting for some participants was working towards changing the policies or rewriting them so they were more responsive to the needs and potential of First Nations and Métis students and communities.

4.6 Conclusion

The participants in this study had positioned and repositioned themselves numerous times throughout these phases of their lives. Conscientization represented the participants' positioning within that particular phase. Where resistance and transformative praxis were located within a phase it often represented participants' theorizing and their repositioning as a result.

When we consider the experiences in education of the two First Nations and two Métis educators represented in this study, through Paulo Freire's cycle of conscientization, resistance and transformative praxis, what can we learn? Regardless of the participants' ages, experiences or positioning, conscientization or theorizing their own condition and the social condition of their own people for more equitable and socially just outcomes occurred within each phase of their

journey. The participants maintained that the conscientization that occurred was not done in retrospect, rather it was intent on their moral purpose or cultural responsibility to understand their past but work for improvements to future life chances. Resistance and transformative praxis occurred in phases when the participants believed that they had the agency, allies and/or the power to bring about change. This did not happen until they were able to learn more about their authentic selves and theorize with likeminded people about this meant.

Participants entered school as culturally located beings. They knew who they were as First Nations or Métis and were proud of their heritage. It was in their formal education that they started to feel culturally unsafe. Their undergraduate and graduate degrees were liberating and offered the theorizing for them to begin to consider or effect the change they wanted. As educational leaders and experienced teachers the participants learned that for First Nations and Métis students how you taught and what you taught were both essential.

5.   CONCLUSION

5.1   Introduction

This thesis represents the voices of two Métis and two First Nations educators in Saskatchewan as they repositioned themselves through their own experiences in education to reveal a more transformative path forward. Their journeys as educators and leaders took them from incorporating "bannock, beads and buckskin", or cultural iconography into their schools, training centers and classrooms, to their beginnings of engaging more trans-formatively with the discourses of "politics, policies and pedagogies". Interwoven throughout their story is a critical story of social justice and its importance if we are to ensure that more Métis and First Nations children can achieve at school and take their rightful place as citizens of their own country and the wider world.

In this chapter I extend my discussion of the findings from chapter 4 into the area of indigenous knowledge. I also consider the implications of this research for others, discuss its limitations and identify other possible areas of research.

5.2 Indigenous Theory and Critical Theory

When seeking to answer my research question it was important to consider the theories of the participants themselves and the First Nations and Métis epistemological and ontological understandings from which the participants position themselves and in turn speak.

To help understand Paulo Freire's cycle of conscientization, resistance and transformative praxis within a First Nations, specifically Cree context I now turn to Elder Simon Kytwayhat's teachings of *nahtōhta* (listen), *kiskēyita* (learn) and *nistōhta* (understand) as discussed in chapter 1. I do this because as Freire

maintains, the answers for oppressed groups are located within the oppressed people's own metaphors (Freire, 2012). While I used Freire's notion of critical theory to provide the framework to answer the research question, I did not wish to undermine the First Nations and Métis theoretical underpinnings from which the participants' spoke but rather to critically connect to it.

From undertaking this study I now believe *nahtōhta* relates to Freire's notion of conscientization as *nahtōhta* is related to listening to yourself as well as others in order to raise your own consciousness and consider the implications of these theories on self and others. Thus, conscientization requires listening and hearing what has been said. *Kiskēyita* is related to the act of learning. Learning often requires us to unlearn and relearn (Wink, 2005) as we search for new answers and new solutions. Therefore, through the act of learning we can come to understand how some actions or previous learnings, especially those that have perpetuated injustices may need to be resisted. In so doing this can make room for more participatory actions and learning. *Nistōhta* is associated with the internalization of new learning in order to promote deeper understandings. When we understand, transformative praxis can emerge.

In the table below, I outline how *nahtōhta* (listen), *kiskēyita* (learn) and *nistōhta* (understand) have played out within each of the phases presented in chapter three.

Table 5.1: Sense-making through an Indigenous lens

	nahtōhta (listen),	*kiskēyita* (learn)	*nistōhta* (understand)
Phase 1 – prior to formal education	I am a child descended from a strong culture and with potential.	I am important valued and loved.	One day I will contribute back to my family.
Phase 2 – formal education	I am brown and "less than" other children.	This new way of learning and being is compromising.	Once I understand the rules of the game I can play.
Phase 3 – Tertiary / university education	I am a learner and there is much I have not yet learned.	My strength comes from being with others like me.	I have a wider family and we have suffered. I must be part of the solution.
Phase 4 – Educators and Educational Leaders	I am a teacher there is much to learn if we can listen and learn from each other.	My strength comes from seeking allies and helping others to understand past learnings and injustices.	Change requires moral courage, new cultural understandings and strong convictions for social justice.

The table above is written in the first person intentionally, if the participants were back within that phase of their life it is what they might have told you. Just as table two (conscientization, resistance and transformative praxis) was not intended to be linear, but rather interconnected so is this table. *Nahtōhta* (listen), *kiskēyita* (learn) and *nistōhta* (understand) are interwoven and interrelated concepts. The late Elder Simon Kytwayhat described *nahtōhta* (listen), *kiskēyita* (learn) and *nistōhta* (understand) as being both the roles of teachers and students (D. Kanewiyakiho, personal communication, July 14, 2016). *Nahtōhta* also implies paying attention to what Ermine (2007) describes as "ethical space". Although "ethical space" cannot be heard it can be felt by one another, thus as educators and

students, that is part of what we need to do, to listen to our intuition and our emotions. The participants knew and described what it felt like for them to leave their cultures at home and they know that this is not what is needed for system reform.

The table above represents what the participants had learned within their roles as students and as teachers. While the table is not also intended to sequence *nahtōhta* (listen), *kiskēyita* (learn) and *nistōhta* (understand), rather it is understood that sometimes they do precede one another in their progression. For the participants, this continuous cycle and progression may lead them to the possibility of a transformative path forward.

5.3 The Current Reality of First Nations and Métis People

As Freire (2012) maintains, the answers are located within the knowledges of the oppressed peoples themselves. Our history has proven that although First Nations and Métis people may well have some answers within their own epistemologies they seldom have had the power to affect change at a high level, therefore they cannot affect wide reaching change. First Nations and Métis people in Saskatchewan have suffered decades of our languages and ceremonies being forbidden and by all accounts, intended to be forgotten, but they were not. Today we have Elders and cultural leaders who are working to sustain and revitalize our languages and ceremonies. The participants learned that it was imperative they work alongside Elders and cultural leaders in order to access the cultural strength they need to move forward.

Decades of colonization have had and continue to have a debilitating effect on First Nations and Métis people today. As I have stated earlier, for years First

Nations and Métis people in Saskatchewan have been underserved in education and disproportionately represented in areas of society that may well be said to represent an underclass. According to the Government of Canada website:

> While Aboriginal people make up about 4% of the Canadian population, as of February 2013, 23.2% of the federal inmate population is Aboriginal (First Nation, Métis or Inuit). There are approximately 3,400 Aboriginal offenders in federal penitentiaries, approximately 71% are First Nation, 24% Métis and 5% Inuit…Since 2005-06, there has been a 43.5% increase in the federal Aboriginal inmate population, compared to a 9.6% increase in non-Aboriginal inmates (Retrieved from http://www.oci-bec.gc.ca/cnt/rpt/oth-aut/oth-aut20121022info-eng.aspx)

Most recently in Saskatchewan, suicide among young First Nations and Métis people made headlines. In October 2016, in the northern community of Stanley Mission, Saskatchewan, three girls, none older than 14 years old, all committed suicide within the same week. My mother's first year of teaching was in Stanley Mission so we lived there for a year. I attended grade three year there. These girls did not make it to complete their schooling, and this is representative of our current situation in Saskatchewan. Disproportionate numbers of First Nations and Métis students continue to leave school without having graduated.

The education system in Saskatchewan has failed to adequately respond to the issue of academic underachievement. In chapter one, Figure 1.1 showed graduation rates for First Nations and Métis students in Saskatchewan had averaged only 30% for the past 20 years. Within the other 70% of First Nations and Métis students who have not completed school successfully, some will

continue to make up negative statistics such as this while a few will have been successful in their careers.

For the past 20 years our outcomes have remained the same. During these same times policy implications included the incorporation of "bannock, beads and buckskin" which have seemingly had little impact on graduation rates. The participants learned that system redesign needs to come from changing our "politics, policies and pedagogies" and that First Nations and Métis people should be doing this work in collaboration with others.

5.4 Implications

While the participants and I succeeded in school by leaving our culture at home where it was safe, this is not what should happen. Our history shows that this has not been working for the majority of First Nations and Métis people and has only worked for 30% of Métis and First Nations people. We must have more First Nations and Métis students succeed. Our education systems need political reforms to develop policies that will require the system to make a difference. Changing pedagogy to those that are more relational, responsive to students' cultural experiences and dialogic, working in tandem with such policy reforms might then stand a chance of making more of a difference. The implication for not working towards such reforms is continuing to maintain the current state, a 30% graduation rate for First Nations and Métis learners. In a report entitled *Bridging the Aboriginal Education Gap* written by Eric Howe in 2011, Howe states that: "bridging the Aboriginal education gap in Saskatchewan would increase the present value of lifetime earnings for our population by $16.2 billion" (https://gdins.org/me/uploads/2013/11/GDI.HoweReport.2011.pdf). Therefore, all people in Saskatchewan should have an interest in system reform of this kind.

If the system continues to only focus on "bannock, beads and buckskin", the culturally appropriate iconography, the implication is education will continue to become more irrelevant to the lived experiences and prior knowledge of First Nations and Métis students in our schools today. We need both culturally appropriate contexts maintained by First Nations and Métis voices and culturally responsive contexts together with the political will and policies that can turn the dial.

5.4.1 Implications for Other Indigenous Educators

There were many factors that led the participants to where they were in their careers. Their ability to bring along and make use of non-First Nations and non-Métis allies was important for them in working to bring about change. It is important for non-First Nations and non- Métis people to understand how we got to, and why we are, where we are today. It is within the "responsive dialogic space" (Berryman et al, 2013) of our encounters that we can bring about change together. Educational disparities for First Nations and Métis students are not only the sole responsibility of First Nations and Métis people. We all have a role to play and we need to work together to bring about change. The participants believed that the way to bring about change was at the policy level and in doing so having the support of allies was key. Santamaría and Santamaría (2015) suggest that "there are ways in which Indigenous leaders, leaders of color, and leaders who purposefully 'choose' to align their practices toward cultural responsivity can be recognized as distinctly different, yet working toward the same shared goals based on common challenges" (p. 35).

5.4.2 Implications of "Playing the Game"

First Nations and Métis students who succeed in school and become leaders represent a minority. Thirty percent of First Nations and Métis students have been willing to "play the game" by compromising their cultural identity and 70% have not succeeded. The participants "played the game" to achieve success. This game included leaving their culture at home, passing as white (if they were able) and silencing themselves in order to stay out of trouble in school. As mentioned earlier these compromises meant they avoided ridicule from non-First Nations and non-Métis students. However, ridicule from one's own people is often an implication for those "playing the game." Such ridicule often comes from their own cultural group; often students who refused to play that game and who have failed. One such term often used in Saskatchewan among First Nations and Métis people to ridicule successful First Nations and Métis people is to call them an "apple", that is they are red on the outside and white on the inside. Therefore, although the participants were trying to avoid ridicule, it may not have been totally avoided. As the majority of Métis and First Nations students are not willing to play the game, not willing to leave their culture at home to be successful, it is likely they ridiculed those who did. From my own experience, the ridicule was doubled if you also did not speak your language. You were not considered to be a "real Indian", whatever that meant.

The implications mentioned above are far reaching across the education system, for First Nations and Métis people and for non-First Nations and non-Métis people.

5.5 Limitations of the Study

There are two major limitations to this Master's thesis. Firstly, this study represents only a very small sample of the First Nations and Métis people in Saskatchewan who successfully completed Kindergarten to grade 12 and received undergraduate and graduate degrees. Therefore, they do not represent the voices of the majority of Métis and First Nations people who did succeed. Furthermore, the study does not represent any of the voices of those that did not succeed. Both sets of voices could have added another level of richness to the study.

5.6 Further Research

While this thesis sought to answer a specific questions other potential research questions arose, including:

1. As the participants in this thesis represent a small sample of the 30% that have succeeded, what about the other 70% who did not achieve academic success but are successful in their careers, when and why did they leave school? What has been their life pathway?

5.7 Conclusion

The four participants' voices in this thesis provided theorizing towards revealing a more transformative path forward. Their collective voices have taught us that through a lens of social justice and by listening, learning and understanding one another we have the ability to ensure more First Nations and Métis children achieve educational success. It is the imperative of the 70% of First Nations and Métis children not succeeding that drives this work and as leaders we are aware that we all need to work together to make the difference. Through system reform of "politics, policies and pedagogies" we can achieve greater results.

REFERENCES

Aboriginal Offenders: A Critical Situation, (n.d). Retrieved from http://www.oci-bec.gc.ca/cnt/rpt/oth-aut/oth-aut20121022info-eng.aspx

Alton-Lee, A. (2015). *Ka Hikitia demonstration report: Effectiveness of Te Kotahitanga Phase 5 2010 - 2012*. Wellington, New Zealand: Ministry of Education.

Baron, L. (1997). *Walking in Indian Moccasins: The Native Policies of Tommy Douglas and the CCF*. Vancouver, British Columbia: UBC Press.

Battiste, M. (2002). *Indigenous Knowledge and Pedagogy in First Nations Education: A Literature Review with Recommendations*. Ottawa, Canada: Indian and Northern Affairs Canada.

Berryman, M., Eley, E., Ford, T., & Egan, M. (2016). Going beyond the personal will and professional skills to give life to Ka Hikitia. *Journal of Educational Leadership, Policy and Practice, 30*(2), 56-68.

Berryman, M., Nevin, A., & SooHoo, S. (2013). *Culturally Responsive Methodologies*. Bingley, U.K: Emerald.

Bishop, R. (1996). *Collaborative Research Stories: Whakawhanaungatanga*. Palmerston North: Dunmore Press Ltd.

Bishop, R. (1995). Collaborative research stories: whakawhanaungatanga (Thesis, Doctor of Philosophy). University of Otago. Retrieved from http://hdl.handle.net/10523/531

Bishop, R. (1997). Māori People's concerns about research into their lives. *History of Education Review,* 26(1), 25-41.

Bishop, R. (2005). Freeing ourselves from the neo-colonial domination in research. A kaupapa Māori approach to creating knowledge. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.). *The sage handbook of qualitative research.* (3rd Ed.). (pp. 109-138). London: Sage.

Bishop, R., & Berryman, M. (2006). *Culture Speaks: Cultural Relationships and Classroom Learning.* Wellington, New Zealand: Huia Publishers.

Bishop, R., Berryman, M., & Wearmouth, J., (2014). *Te Kotahitanga: Towards effective education reform for Indigenous and other minoritised students.* New Zealand: NZCER Press.

Bishop, R., & Glynn, T. (1999). *Culture Counts: Changing Power Relations in Education.* Palmerston North, New Zealand: The Dunmore Press Ltd.

Brayboy, B., & Deyhle, D. (2000). Insider-outsider: researchers in American Indian communities. Theory into practice. Vol. 39, No. 3, 164-169.

Burr, V. (2003). *Social Constructionism* (2nd ed.). Hove, East Sussex: Rouledge: Taylor & Francis Group

Burr, V. (2015). *Social Constructionism* (3rd ed.). Hove, East Sussex: Rouledge: Taylor & Francis Group

Castagno, A. E., & Brayboy, B. M. J. (2008). Culturally responsive schooling for Indigenous youth: A review of the literature. *Review of Educational Research, 78,* 941-993.

Clandinin, D. J. & Connelly, F. M. (1994). Personal experience methods. In N. Denzin, & Y. Lincoln, (Eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research,* pp.413-427. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, Inc.

Education Counts, (n.d.). Retrieved from http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/statistics/schooling/student-numbers/6040

Eketone, A. (2008). Theoretical underpinnings of Kaupapa Māori directed practice. *Mai Review.* (1) accessed at www.review.mai.ac.nz April 2008.

Ermine, W. (2007). The Ethical space of engagement. *Indigenous Law Journal* 6(1). 193-203.

Freire, P. (2012). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed.* New York, New York: Bloomsbury Publishing.

Gay, G. (2010). *Culturally responsive teaching: Theory, research and practice (2nd ed.).* New York, New York: Teachers College Press

Goulet, L. & Goulet, K. (2014). *Teaching Each Other: Nehinnuw Concepts & Indigenous Pedagogies.* Vancouver, Canada: University of British Columbia Press.

Grande, S. (2004). *Red Pedagogy: Native American Social and Political Thought.* Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers.

Howe, E., (2011) *Bridging the Aboriginal Education Gap in Saskatchewan.* Saskatoon, Canada: Gabriel Dumont Institute.

Hankes, J.E., & Fast, G.R. (2002). Investigating the Correspondence Between North American Pedagogy and Constructivist-Based Instruction. In W.G. Secada, Hankes, J.E., & Fast, G.R. (Eds.). *Changing the Faces of Mathematics:*

Perspectives on Indigenous People of North America. (pp. 37-47). Reston, VA: The National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, Inc.

Kia Eke Panuku, (n.d.). Retrieved from http://kep.org.nz/dimensions/culturally-responsive-and-relational-pedagogy

King, T. (2012). *The Inconvenient Indian: A Curious Account of Native People in North America.* Canada: Anchor Canada.

Kovach, M. E., (2009). *Indigenous methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts*. Toronto, Canada: University of Toronto Press Incorporated.

Ladson-Billings, G. (2006). *From the Achievement Gap to the Education Debt* (pp. 1-19). Presidential Address to the American Educational Research Association. San Francisco.

Mahuika, R. (2008). Kaupapa Māori is critical and anti-colonial. *Mai Review.* (3) accessed at www.review.mai.ac.nz December 2008.

McLaren, P. (2015). *Life in Schools: An Introduction to Critical Pedagogy in the Foundations of Education*. Boulder, US: Paradigm Publishing.

McLeod, N. (2007). *Cree Narrative Memory: From Treaties to Contemporary Times.* Saskatoon, Canada: Purich Publishing Limited.

Milloy, J. (1999). *A National Crime: The Canadian Government and the Residential School System.* Winnipeg, Canada: University of Manitoba Press.

Ministry of Education. (2013a). Registration of Interest 397-5609, Professional Development to Generate Equity and Accelerate the Achievement of Māori

Learners in Secondary Education (Working title: Building on Success). Wellington, New Zealand: Ministry of Education.

Moll. L., Amanti. C., Neff. D, & Gonzalez. N. (1992) Funds of Knowledge for Teaching: Using a Qualitative Approach to Connect Homes and Classrooms. *Theory into Practice, Qualitative Issues in Educational Research.* 31(2). p. 132-141

National Indian Brotherhood (1972). *Indian Control of Indian Education*. Ottawa, Canada: National Indian Brotherhood.

Pelletier, T., Cottrell, M. & Hardie, R. (2013). *Improving Education and Employment Outcomes for First Nations and Métis People: Written for the Saskatchewan Joint Task Force on Improving Education and Employment Outcomes for First Nations and Métis People.* Saskatoon, Canada: University of Saskatchewan. Retrieved from http://www.jointtaskforce.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/Research-Report-for-the-Task-Force-March-26.pdf

Provincial Auditor Saskatchewan. (2012). *2012 Report: Volume One.* Regina, Saskatchewan: Author. Retrieved from https://auditor.sk.ca/pub/publications/public_reports/2012/Volume_1/2012v1_02_Gr12GradRates.pdf

Rains, F. V., Archibald, J. A., & Deyhle, D. (2000). Introduction: Through our eyes and in our own words. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 13*(4), 337-342.

Residential Schools: The Legacy Continues, (n.d.). Retrieved from https://treaty6education.lskysd.ca/book/export/html/64

Royal, C. (2006, January). The New Wānanga-Scholarship arising from the Creative

    Potential of Mātauranga Māori. A paper delivered to a conference on Rongoa

    Māori, Te Wānanga -o-Raukawa, Ōtaki. Retrieved from www.charles-royal.com.

Santamaría, L.J. & Santamaría, A.P. (2015). Counteracting Educational Injustice With

    Applied Critical Leadership: Culturally Responsive Practices Promoting

    Sustainable Change. *International Journal for Munticultural Education.* 17(1).

    22-41.

Saskatchewan Ministry of Education. (2009). *Inspiring Success: Building Towards*

    Student Achievement, First Nations and Métis Education Policy Framework.

    Regina, Canada: Author.

Scheurich, J., & Young, M. (1997). Coloring Epistemologies: Are our research

    epistemologies racially biased? *Educational Review,* 26(4), 4-16.

Shields, C., Bishop, R. & Mazawi, A. (2005). *Pathologizing Practices: The Impact of*

    Deficit Thinking in Education. New York, New York: Peter Lang Publishing

Sleeter, C., Ed. (2011). *Professional development for culturally responsive and*

    relationship-based pedagogy (1st ed.). New York, New York: Peter Lang

    Publishing.

Smith, G. H. (1992). *Tane-nui-a-rangi"s legacy, propping up the sky: Kaupapa*

    Māori as resistance and intervention. Paper presented at NZARE / AARE Joint

    Conference, Deakin University, Australia

Smith, L. (1999). *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples.* New

    York, New York: Zed Books Ltd.

Smith, L. (2012). *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples.* New York, New York: Zed Books Ltd.

Smith, L. (2011, May). Opening Keynnote: Story-ing the development of kaupapa MA¯ori—a review of sorts. Keynote address to the New Zealand Council of Educational Reaseach Kei Tua o Te Pae hui, Kaupapa Māori research. Retreived from http://www.nzcer.org.nz/system/files/Hui_Procedings__v3_Web_1_2.pdf

University of Regina. (2014). *Seeking Their Voices: Improving Indigenous Student Learning Outcomes.* Regina, Canada: Saskatchewan Instructional Development and Research Unit.

Webber, M. (2009). The multiple selves and realities of a Māori researcher. *Mai Review.* (1) accessed at www.review.mai.ac.nz December 2009.

Wink, J. (2005). *Critical Pedagogy: Notes From the Real World (3rd Ed.).* United States: Pearson, Allyn and Bacon.