Decolonizing Indigenous Youth Studies:
Photography and Hip Hop as Sites of Resilience

by

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the role an arts-based educational program played in unleashing youth’s creativity as they confront various structures of power that become challenges to social identity, belonging, and self, under different local and national circumstances. My research questions considered how Indigenous youth utilized a photography and hip hop based educational program as a resource to explore social identity and relations, indigeneity, place/space, and the legacy of settler colonialism on education. I also considered how the findings from this study informed and contribute to decolonize Indigenous youth studies and how programs such as mine help Indigenous youth comprehend crisis in the urban environment. This critical ethnography found that in some cases cultural and racial identity existed more internally than externally for youth, with the complexities and contradictions the Indigenous Young Adults (IYAs) face when coming to terms with their social identity. The results showed how much youth grapple with the idea of looking Native and the desire to be more phenotypically Indian as
defined by dominant society. The stories of the IYAs became vital to learning about the challenges they faced and obstacles they have overcome, including fighting for recognition under the Indian Act, border politics within Canada and the US, not knowing one’s traditional land, and barriers to migrating to the city independently of one’s family. Regarding the legacy of settler colonialism on education, of particular interest was how schooling upholds settler colonial ideals and what we can do to dismantle these ideals so that our students are represented in truthful ways. The findings indicated how youth learned about Indigenous cultures in schools and how they were represented in the curriculum. Throughout this project the intent was to propose ways to decolonize education through the arts. It also revealed the positive accomplishments that IYAs worked towards and the ways they show extreme resilience in the light of legacies of settler colonialism on their communities.
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Chapter 1

Introduction and Context of the Study

Elders are keepers of knowledge and wisdom. The more we listen, the more we flourish. During a course I took in the summer of 2013, I was honoured to listen to the wisdom and advice of Elder Eddie Benton-Banai, an Ojibwe elder at Shingwauk Kinoomaage Gaamig, in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario. Elder Eddie began our first class with an affectionate story of one of his brothers, another elder whose spirit was struggling to leave the earth. He spoke of this struggling elder with warmth and compassion, dignity and determination, strength and perseverance, and as one who fought for equality for people, including the Anishinaabe. Elder Eddie solemnly revealed that he was speaking of his brother Nelson Mandela in South Africa. Tears came down hot on my face as I listened and reflected. The camaraderie and the solidarity that Elder Eddie spoke with made me realize that the relationship between Black and Indigenous communities has been an important alliance in the fight against settler colonialism for decades. It made me emotional because this alliance is something I passionately believe in. In conversation with Elder Eddie, I told him I felt validated and assured I was on the right path, as a mixed-race Black woman conducting research on and with Indigenous communities. He gave me his blessing and encouragement to carry on with my project. And somehow, once I had his approval, it validated my belief in my project, and I was encouraged to continue my act of decolonizing education.
Statement of the Research Problem
This thesis was designed to investigate how Indigenous youth utilized a photography and hip hop-based educational program as a resource to explore social identity, place, and legacies of settler colonialism on education. Studies show that narratives and histories of racialized and historically marginalized communities are either absent or poorly represented in school curricula. Specifically, the lack of representation of Black and Indigenous people demonstrates a need for programs outside of school settings. I find this problematic because the knowledge of racialized and historically marginalized communities should not be an extra or an added element, available on specific dates. In my regard, this content should be made available to all learners in all school systems, at all times. My project is one of those programs that take place outside of a formal school setting to discuss settler colonialism, indigeneity, and race, in an act to begin decolonizing education.

I examined how the arts act as an interruption of a master script (Swartz, 1992) in curricula and create a sense of transformation to ignite a critical lens in participants. In education, the master script refers to classroom practices, pedagogy, and instructional materials—as well as to the theoretical paradigms from which these aspects are constructed. These theoretical paradigms are grounded in Eurocentric and white supremacist ideologies (Swartz, 1992, p. 341). My aim was to think through notions of the master script in curricula as I investigated how a hip hop and photography–based education project could interrupt dominant curricular frameworks. Throughout this project I also contemplated linking moments of Black and Indigenous relations, which come out in the photographs, discussions, and inspiration from hip hop culture in my program that happen outside of the formal classroom setting.
To carry out my research project, I used critical ethnography as my methodological approach, and arts-based methods to collect data. Within curriculum studies, my thesis research is situated in critical pedagogy, as well as the scholarly body of literature on youth studies, arts-based research and education, and historical and contemporaneous relationships of Black and Indigenous people on Turtle Island. To bring meaning to my inquiry, I drew on the conceptual frameworks of anti-colonial theory, Indigenous knowledges, decolonizing methods, and cultural studies.

My research questions are:

1. How do Indigenous youth utilize a photography and hip hop–based educational program as a resource to explore social identity and relations, indigeneity, space, and the educational legacies of settler colonialism?
2. How do these findings benefit and inform youth programming and youth studies? How do programs such as mine help Indigenous youth comprehend crisis in the urban environment?

**Terms and Scope of the Project**

As an artist/designer/educator, I am formally trained as a ceramicist and illustrator. I came into teaching during my second year of undergraduate work at OCAD University, seventeen years ago, and have been an educator ever since. I have taught in formal and informal spaces, adults, children and youth, spanning all age groups and environments. For the past fourteen years, my practice as a community arts educator has primarily been with historically marginalized youth in Toronto. However, four years ago I accepted a post-secondary level position at OCAD University, a historically white arts institution. This has presented a new vigour in my vision to decolonize education. This is not to say that I do not enjoy the pedagogy; I most absolutely do, and as OCAD University is my
alma mater, I want to contribute to the school that helped shape who I have become as a scholar. I find that for historically marginalized young people, specifically Black and Indigenous youth, making space for safe inclusion of practices requires an awareness that needs to happen in schools with the curriculum, administrators and teachers. Throughout this project, I use the term belonging to designate, most simply, a place where one feels safety, comfort, a familiarity with others, and a sense of home, physically and mentally. Another means of belonging was to do what McCready defines as “make space” to deal with differential marginalization (McCready, 2004, 2010). Venzant Chambers and McCready (2011) speaks to this notion of “making space” in the context of African American students, the authors also point out that other students also make space in their own ways. I see this notion pertaining to Indigenous youth who are having difficulties in school, and so they create safe spaces within programs that take place outside of school. In this dissertation, I examine how programming that takes place outside of schools becomes important to youth as they narrate a sense of belonging in dominant settler society and find a space of belonging.

For the young adults I worked with, the importance of finding a space with other like-minded individuals and a place that could help get them started when they came from reserve to city (or from city to city, or rural to urban) was integral to their transition. For youth who use the services of the agency and participated in my program, the importance rested in the resources and also the interconnectedness that one feels with others through a commonality of lived experience, which I draw out in the final chapter of this research project. My dissertation studies some of the ways in which Indigenous young adults (IYAs) gathered as an unified group of people who were searching for
modes of belonging and carving out an identity in the urban environment, and how these forms of belonging were articulated through my photography and hip hop–based educational program. My inquiry is also interested in the outcomes of photography when it is mobilized as both documentary and pedagogical practice with Indigenous youth. The participants I worked with used photography to document their entanglements they encounter as Indigenous youth navigating their way through social identity, place and education, which is where I was made acutely aware of their resilience.

This study reflects on how commonalities of lived experiences as expressed by Indigenous hip hop artists and photographs by Indigenous youth become indicators of stories that may be told about the self (and the other). IYAs often find themselves in two contingent spaces: one their traditional land and the second the urban environment. This critical ethnography attempts to shed light on the role hip hop and photography might play in unleashing youth’s creativity as they confront various structures of power that become challenges to social identity, belonging, and self under different local and national circumstances. In considering music by Indigenous hip hop artists, photographs by youth, and exhibitions, my project aims to answer questions about how IYAs are taking up photography and hip hop to discuss issues of social identity and relations, belonging, place, and the legacies of settler colonialism on education.

This project was instrumental in presenting how IYAs used photography as a means to express their lived experiences and also as an interpretive truth for their voice. I chose photography as the art form because of its historical connection with documenting hip hop from photography’s inception in time, and as another layer or extended element
of hip hop. Cree Brother Ernie Paniccioli\(^1\) was a photographer who was instrumental in
telling truths about hip hop artists through his lens, and African American photographer
Jamel Shabazz\(^2\) told the stories of youth in hip hop culture in a time before crack hit the
streets of New York City. I also find that there is a productive connection that youth
make to the instantaneous nature of documentation, whereby using the photographic
process portrays a larger narrative of expression as well as possibilities of active agency.
In this time of rapid technology, photography becomes more accessible and relevant to
art education, as presented in the following sections.

**Critical Pedagogy in Art Education**
In this project, I examined photo-based and oral narratives as a form of critical pedagogy
(Freie, 2000; Macedo, 2000; Janks, 2010), more specifically critical art pedagogy
(Villaverde, 1999; Gil-Glazer, 2014; Davis, McCarther and Shirley, 2015). I probed at
questions of race, indigeneity, and settler colonialism by honouring students’ life
experiences. By this acknowledgment I am attentive to their intelligence, recognizing
their ability to interrogate structures of dominance at play in their lives.
Most often our youth in urban centres are already global citizens who have experienced
injustice firsthand. Many have criss-crossed political borders and negotiated boundaries
of race, class, and gender and are heirs to rich literary and activist legacies (Campano,
2007). As a critical educator, I assisted these youth in providing a forum for their nuanced,
intelligent, and insightful voices to engage with the knowledge production of
decolonizing educative spaces. By developing programs around their own experiences,


\(^2\) [http://www.jamelshabazz.com/](http://www.jamelshabazz.com/)
cultural resources, and interests, educators can mobilize hip hop culture to create spaces for a more culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995) that includes voices of diverse peoples.

Situated my work within critical pedagogy, I expected to create a space for Indigenous youth to draw from their rich cultural legacies and traditions by moving away from the top-down approach to education in order to allow them to tell their own stories through images. While visual images of difficult knowledge might stimulate emotional thought and conflict, they can also serve as a critical educational tool and provide an opportunity to conduct meaningful value–moral discourse (Gil-Glazer, 2014, p. 261), as proven by discussions with the young people in my study. Situating my research within this conceptual framework validates the rich cultural knowledge of the youth participants and acknowledges their lived experiences.

**A Shift in My Project**
When I first conceived of this thesis project, I set out to study how hip hop acted as a means of solidarity between Black and Indigenous communities, and how we could use this as a tool to begin decolonizing education. I worked with my colleague at the Native Youth Drop-In (NYDI) and I recruited youth who were interested in hip hop, photography, and the arts in general. Initially, I had several youth who identified as both Black and Indigenous, along with youth who identified as primarily Indigenous. Over time, for school, work, socio-economic and other reasons, some of the youth were unable to commit to the 12-week program I facilitated. As an artist educator working in community programming, I was familiar with fluctuating attendance and outside factors affecting youth lives, including employment (or lack thereof), family situations, housing issues, and school. By week four of my program, I realized that I had a committed group
of six young people who identified as Indigenous and only one young person who identified as mixed (Black and Indigenous). Reflecting on this, I realized I needed to shift the focus of my study based on my participants. It was a confusing and exciting time for me as a new ethnographer, and once I recognized this, I revised my statement of interest to address the change in participants. I looked more broadly at Indigenous youth and adapted more of a focus on the use of photographs, rather than heavily on hip hop. Retaining the essence of the project, my new problem statement was looking at how Indigenous young adults use photography and hip hop as a means to discuss the legacy of settler colonialism on education, identity and land/place. As the workshop continued, the youth welcomed me into their stories, expanded my breadth of knowledge, and proved their resilient nature as IYAs trying to navigate their way across fluctuating cartographies. Working with the youth on this project provided me with a nuanced vision of what it means to be an Indigenous young adult, through comprehension of their photographs and engagement with hip hop.

Subsequently, the shift in my participant demographic also shifted my focus on solidarity between Black and Indigenous communities. Although I continued to look for moments of solidarity, I viewed it as more of the potential I saw for future research projects. With this recognition, solidarity remained an important aspect of the project for me, but my awareness expanded to look for moments of resilience in the IYAs who participated in my program. Resilience studies stem from the fields of psychiatry and psychology, but have undergone several stages, gradually moving from studies on the social determinants of health to health in general (Fleming and Ledogar, 2008). I use the definition of resilience from Luthar, Cicchetti, and Becker (2000, p. 543) who define the
term resilience as a “dynamic process encompassing positive adaptation within the context of significant adversity” (qtd. in Allen et al., p. 604). The “study of resilience processes in adolescence can also provide keys to understanding broader sociocultural tensions that often come into focus during many of the developmental tasks young people navigate on the pathway to adulthood” (Allen et al., p. 601). Since the pathway to adulthood varies based on socio-cultural, historical, family, economic factors, one critique of resilience studies is that it does not always consider the unique lived experiences of Indigenous communities.

Recent literature has identified two kinds of risk factors that have a significant effect on resilience in Indigenous communities. One is associated with racism and the other risk factor that has an effect on resilience in Indigenous communities involves historical loss or trauma and unresolved historical grief (Tousignant and Sioui, 2005, p. 44). Fleming and Ledogar (2008) propose areas for further research on resilience studies specific to Indigenous youth. Considering their recommendations, my project contributes the move away from a linear notion of resilience. Burack, Blidner, et.al, (2007), have criticized a simplistic linear risk models of a specific predicator to a specific outcome which has proven insufficient for understanding life complexities for Aboriginal youth (qtd. in Fleming and Ledogar, 2008). Within Aboriginal communities, the discourse on resilience has envisioned enculturation or a return to the traditional culture of the past as a fundamental path to healing and this movement contributed to promoting the revival of ancient or borrowed rituals in order to prevent further detriments to the population (Tousignant and Sioui, p. 47, 2005). For my project, I was careful to implement these considerations.
One of the challenges of applying the literature is, “resilience has to be integrated into a holistic world view uniting the mental, the physical and the spiritual, because it would be difficult for a linear epidemiological model based on risk and protection factors to capture this reality” (Burack, Blinder, et. al., 2007, p. 46). Recognizing that the context of resilience theories do not always apply to the specific junctures of Indigenous communities, Native American educators and researchers, Iris Heavy Runner and Kathy Marshall (2003), provide a positive holistic view of resilience that is more aligned with Indigenous knowledge and one which helped me think through, what I came to acknowledge as resilience in the IYAs of my study. Reflecting on this critique I also employed a definition from, Heavy Runner and Marshall (2003) who assert the following:

“We like to think about resilience in a positive, proactive way. Resilience is the natural, human capacity to navigate life well. It is something every human being has -- wisdom, common sense. It means coming to know how you think, who you are spiritually, where you come from, and where you are going. The key is learning how to utilize innate resilience, which is the birthright of every human being. It involves understanding our inner spirit and finding a sense of direction” (p. 14).

During my study, I also considered the role of culture or “cultural resilience” (Fleming and Leodgar, 2008), which I saw as a real factor in the lives of Indigenous youth. Healy (2006) provides a more expanded definition of cultural resilience, who situates cultural resilience as the capacity of a distinct community or cultural system to absorb disturbance and reorganize while undergoing change so as to retain key elements
of structure and identity that preserve its distinctness” (Healy, qtd. in Fleming and Leogar, 2008). In my observation, I found that culture always played a key role in the lives of the youth I worked with, and so I looked for and found cases where the IYAs in my study successfully overcame obstacles they faced based on their culture, within education, place and socio-political encounters. Thus, this act of resilience created stronger pathways for survival to overcome the looming tolls of settler colonialism. As I heard the young people’s stories, I recognized their strength, and knew this was an important factor in my study because often settler colonialism was the instigator of their energy to succeed. And so, throughout my data analysis, I named moments of resilience I saw in each youth participant.

**Why Hip Hop?**
Throughout my twenty-year love affair with hip hop, I have come to view hip hop culture as a critical pedagogical tool for decolonizing work in education because of the attention it pays to historically marginalized voices. During this time I have witnessed the global impact of this music and have listened to how various racialized and marginalized groups utilize this art form as a means to actively declare their unheard voices. Rose (1994) and others after her (Ibrahim, 1998; Morrell & Duncan-Andrade, 2002; Imani, 2004; Chang, 2005; Alim, 2007; Asante, 2008) define hip hop culture as a composition of four creative elements: MCing and rapping (writing and singing), graffiti art (visual art), breakdancing (movement and dancing), and DJing (the beats and music that accompany the rapping). There is also a fifth element, which is knowledge of self.

The element of hip hop that I am most drawn to is the creative writing by an MC as they resonate their life story, share their knowledge and narrate their life and
knowledge for all to hear. Most often MCs are writing about issues that have affected them and delivering these rhymes through the ancient art of oral storytelling. These issues showcase the ingenious, intelligent ways the story is written in 16 bars, with the crafty use of metaphors, cadence, rhyme, confident delivery, determination, and creativity. Consequently strong MCs write about lived experiences, and because of this, they are made vulnerable through their rhymes. At the root of a strong MC is his or her heart and soul, which is often left on stage for the world to see. Although hip hop was started by Black youth in the South Bronx, in its travels across the globe, hip hop music has become a musical form of resistance for many racialized and Indigenous youth. Woven throughout their music are narratives of nationhood, resurgence, and calls for Indigenous sovereignty.

**Why Photography?**
The medium of photography does not exist without being problematized. For decades, the Black image (and I include here the image of Indigenous peoples) has been misrepresented and distorted because of what hooks (in Willis, 2000) attributes to the connections between the social construction of Black identity and the impact of race and class governing our relationship to images. To counter this, W.E.B. DuBois displayed his collection of over 300 images of middle-class African Americans for an international audience to view and to expose Black visual representation in the most positive of ways (Smith, 2004). It may be said that photography found prominence in the Black community with DuBois’s collection of portraits displayed in the Exhibit of American Negroes at the 1900 Paris Exposition (Smith, 2004).
To use photographs pedagogically, Simon (2006) suggests that we consider visual public history as it provides more than a version of the past. These documents provide a particular historical truth, as images act as witnesses to certain events. In examining the pedagogical force of photography, I articulate some meanings that may be revealed in nostalgic spaces, terminal places, and confident gazes captured in a snapshot of an instant past. An example of this is the now significant photographic work of Edward S. Curtis, a photographer in the 20th century who created a comprehensive and permanent record of numerous Native American tribes in the United States, Alaska, and parts of Canada.³

Although the art form offers versatility and power in authorship of the photographer, photography does not come without problematic discourse. In her seminal writing on photography, Susan Sontag (1977) acknowledged, “To photograph is to appropriate the thing photographed. It means putting oneself into a certain relation to the world that feels like knowledge—and, therefore, like power” (p. 4). Historically, and into the present, Black and Indigenous communities have been ill represented, and so utilizing photography with the young people in my study was a means of opening up their powerful, knowledgeable voices for others to hear. These youth were the visionaries behind their chosen stories. Putting them behind the lens offered the audience a narrative glimpse inside their lives, their concerns, their passions, and their culture.

Initially, I propositioned hip hop and photography as separate elements of this project. Subsequently I began to recognize that they were not separate, but extensions of each other. Therefore, in the workshops I conducted with the youth participants, I began to view photography as another element of hip hop, an extension, a new aesthetic realm

and an additional space of specialization within the larger art form. The work of pioneering hip hop photographer, Ernie Panicolli, who captured the complex narrative of hip hop in photographs provided the audience/viewer a glimpse into the real lives of prominent rappers, graffiti artists, b-boys and girls, and DJs, in their element, staged, confident and animate. The photographs of Chi Modu⁴ graced the covers of The Source magazine where he “not only chronicled and defined the most important phase of the hip hop movement, now a global force, he also was able to define the artists and show them as real people, rather than one-dimensional celebrities⁵”. Filled with sonically vibrant urban environments, these photographs show us something intimate that we would not have otherwise been privy to. For the past twenty years, Jonathan Mannion⁶ has championed as the new hip hop-photographer, showcasing artists in their glory, creating dynamic images of the new hip hop generation. These photographers contribute to what I have come to view as an added layer of hip hop, another means of expressing the art form. Within the scope of my project, I also added indigeneity and pedagogy as supplementary layers of photography. Within my arts based educational program, my goal was to think about hip hop-photography not only as documentary, but also as a dynamic space for pedagogical considerations and lexicons of Indigenous identity.

**Settler Colonialism**

Recognizing the effect of settler colonialism on education and communities is a step toward decolonizing our minds, because as Veracini (2011) proclaims, “As long as the decolonization of the settler colonial situation remains unresolved, settler colonial present

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⁵ [http://www.chimodu.com/about](http://www.chimodu.com/about)
⁶ [http://jonathanmannion.com](http://jonathanmannion.com)
and settler colonial past inevitably resemble each other” (p. 180). Moreover, “this violence is not temporally contained in the arrival of the settler but is reasserted each day of occupation” (Tuck and Yang, 2012, p.5). Though recognition of settler colonial conditions marks a step, the recognition must move toward action and reparation, however painful the process may be. Education is one step toward action. Once we realize how settler colonialism affects racialized and historically marginalized communities, we can begin the process of moving forward to recognize and validate voices outside of a Eurocentric framework.

For my thesis project I examined the legacy of settler colonialism on the lives, educational and otherwise, of Indigenous young adults in the arts-based program I laid out. Stemming from this, I consider how IYAs exude resilience in light of adversity. Similar to Recollet (2010), I use the term Indigenous to refer to a historical memory and consciousness that is common among African, Caribbean, and Indigenous traditions in the context of music and oral storytelling. Growing up, my household was always filled with animated storytellers, music, and rich cultural traditions from my Jamaican heritage. My identity was being formed by my surroundings, as I came to identify as a mixed-race Black Canadian woman, who has Jamaican, German, African and Arawak ancestry. Acknowledging that we all arrived on Turtle Island in various ways, I employ the term arrivant, based on Caribbean poet and scholar Edward Kamau Braithwaite’s trilogy, to differentiate between the arrival of Black people to the land and the means by which

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7 As a note on terminology, I use the term Indigenous to describe the First Peoples of Canada because it is a non-governmental term, and is inclusive of Metis, Inuit, and First Nations peoples, including status and non-status Indians.
settlers came to call the land their own. As a settler nation, we are on this land by treaty, whereby Canada’s borders extend to absorb Aboriginal people without regard for their sovereignty (Sehdev, p. 265). “Treaties are/were sacred relationships between settlers and Aboriginal people . . . The government violated deeply the spirit and intent of the most important (to the Indians) promise with residential schools” (Sehdev, p. 270). In terms of education, settler colonialism and Indigenous knowledges need to be incorporated into the curriculum in an honest and valued way. Ultimately, I believe we also need to educate learners about the dirty hidden legacy of residential schools in Canada.

Two primary intentions of the residential school system were to remove and isolate children from the influence of their homes, families, traditions, and cultures, and to assimilate them into the dominant culture, which was European. These objectives were based on the assumption that Aboriginal cultures and spiritual beliefs were inferior and unequal. The system forcibly separated children from their families for extended periods of time and forbade them from acknowledging their Aboriginal heritage and culture or speaking their own languages. Nagy and Sehdev (2012) state,

Sexual, emotional, and physical abuse was pervasive, and it was consistent policy to deny children their languages, their cultures, their families, and even their given names. While some children may have had positive experiences, many former students have found themselves caught between two worlds: Deprived of their languages and traditions, they were left on their own to handle the trauma of their

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8 This term was discussed in a course with Professor Martin Cannon entitled Indigenous and Settler Relations. It came up when we were discussing how different bodies came to the land, with reference from Jody Bird, and I have been utilizing the term since then.
10 ibid.
school experience and to try to readapt to the traditional way of life that they had been conditioned to reject. (p. 67)

Though the Christian clergy who ran most of these schools were a large part of the system to transform Aboriginal boys and girls into useful citizens, “the school system was founded and operated, through a church-state partnership, a partnership in which the government was the senior partner. It was the government who provided the core funding, set the standards of care, was to supervise the administration of the schools, and controlled the children who were ‘wards of this Department’” (Milloy, p. xiv). Milloy states, “Before the end of the Second World War, residential education was at the centre of the federal Indian policy of assimilation” and then from 1879–1923 fostered the physical creation and maintenance of the school system. While I do not go into a full-length history of residential schools, I offer a brief summary of events that took place to reveal the violent realities that are attached to colonialism in Canada. A shift or change is required in Indigenous and non-Indigenous people’s understanding of the influence of Canada’s history of colonization on education; my project aims to be part of this shift.

Recognizing the effects of colonization on Indigenous communities, I aim to portray the resilience shown by IYAs when faced with adversity, as well as the goodness (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1983) of youth in creative and gripping ways that showcases their intellectual voices as young people. As social scientists qua portraitist researchers, Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) begin by asking, “What is happening here, what is working, and why?” (p. 141), and they proceed to define the ethnographic methodology of portraiture as a quest for goodness. I adapt this methodology here as a means to
articulate the resilience of young adults. Below is an outline of the chapters of my dissertation that further explain how I was able to name the goodness in my participants.

**Chapter Outlines**
In the Introduction, above, I framed the central concerns of the project, including key terms and concepts I used throughout the paper. I began the chapter with an excerpt from a moving experience I had with an elder. In this chapter I made a case for the power of hip hop and the functionality of the photographic process to not only capture memories, but to create keepsake documents of critical pedagogical events that happen outside of the formal classroom. Drawing on the work of Sehdev, I conclude the introduction with a discussion of settler colonialism, residential schools, education, and the lasting impact of these on Canada’s First Peoples.

In Chapter 2 I offer a literature review of historical relations between Black and Indigenous communities on Turtle Island and a section on global Indigenous hip hop artists who are regenerating activism, education, and identity making in Australia, Bolivia, Cuba, Mexico, and Canada. I then conclude this chapter with a brief history of photography and how it has been taken up in educational research. In Chapter 3 I conceptualize my project using an anti-colonial framework, Indigenous knowledges, decolonizing methods, and cultural studies to consider how the arts can and perhaps do act as an interruption to a colonized framework for schooling.

Chapter 4 outlines my methodology. For this dissertation I utilized critical ethnography to conduct my study, while paying attention to power and positionality. The data for my analysis was collected using arts-based methods, namely photography and hip hop. My data set for this project includes journal entries, one-on-one interviews,
discussions from focus groups, five photographs, and features the work of four
Indigenous hip hop artists. Within each findings and analysis chapter, I focus on one to
two photographs from the youth I worked with, plus interviews, discussions, and music.
In the coding process I closely examined the major themes that were recurrent and then
continued to select key photographs that spoke to my three themes. These themes are
social identity, place and the legacies of settler colonialism on education.

The first engagement with my data is in Chapter 5, which focuses on place and
what that means for IYAs who consistently navigate their sense of belonging to both their
traditional land and the urban environment. The data for this chapter consists of two
photographs coupled with group interviews to create a narrative that explores the
importance of geographical space and belonging. While I was engaged with the youth,
they called on me to investigate my own connection to the land as an *arrivant* on Turtle
Island. Social identity is the topic of Chapter 6. In this findings chapter the data for my
analysis is in the form of several interviews, one photograph, and four tracks by Black
and Indigenous hip hop artists. Throughout this chapter, the IYAs question what it means
to look Native and what that identity might mean to their social makeup. I concluded this
chapter with the youth’s feelings of inequities around the act of listening to hip hop music
and stigmas about the hip hop persona.

In my final findings chapter, Chapter 7 discusses the effects of settler colonialism
on education. In it, I provide a gripping look at how the IYAs in my study learned about
Native culture in school. I ask a specific question and based the chapter on the outcome
of this question. The data for this chapter was essential in unpacking the legacies of
settler colonialism on education and schooling for young people in Canada. My data
included interviews, focus groups, and two photographs from a youth who enrolled in an extra-curricular learning experience at Shingwauk Kinoomaage Gamig, also known as Shingwauk/Algoma University. I conclude this chapter with a decolonized vision for art education.

Stemming from the examination of the evidence presented in Chapters 5, 6, and 7, Chapter 8 concludes the project with a reflective analysis of the findings from this study. Also included in my final chapter is a summary of my contribution to critical ethnography, arts-based research methods, youth studies, and critical pedagogy. Finally, I propose future projects aimed at decolonizing education.
Chapter 2

Literature Review

Introduction
This thesis research investigates how Indigenous youth make use of photography and hip hop to critically think about the legacies of settler colonialism on space and place, social identity, and education, in an art-based educational program. It is from this investigation that I propose that we use the arts as a means to begin decolonizing education. This project is situated in scholarly literature on critical pedagogy, Indigenous youth studies, arts education, and cultural studies. In the following chapter, I offer a literature review that includes Black and Indigenous relationships and how hip hop has been taken up globally to speak about identity, activism, and education, and then I move on to discuss photography in educational research.

Historical Relationships
To make the connection between Black and Indigenous groups, I begin with the history of each, centred on Indigenous relationships with the land. Hill (2009) chronicles a few of the many encounters that occurred between these two communities, including how African Americans (arrivants) came to live in solidarity with the Mohawks on reserves during the time of slavery. Wrought with antagonisms that shaped both groups, the
alliance was in the necessitated friendship that promised freedom. Consequently, we must acknowledge that, like any relationship, this one had advantages and disadvantages. In the 18th century it was not only the Europeans who valued and benefitted from slavery; the Mohawk Chief Thayendanegea (also known by his English name, Joseph Brant\(^1\)) owned slaves in a part of Canada now known as Brantford, Ontario. The historical relationship between Black and Indigenous communities was not always commendable, but there was an exchange of knowledge and a solidarity that was formed. In my research, I will question how the two groups inspired each other culturally and what transpired when key issues for each group converged.

Miles and Holland (2006) chronicle a brief history of Africans on Native lands from the early 19th century into the 20th century, including Indian Territory as a refuge from slavery. The Blacks that sought refuge in this territory made it a fertile ground for the exchange of knowledges between the two groups. Miles and Holland recount the Indian influence on the Blacks, as documentation shows that Black communities practiced various culturally specific Cherokee rituals (e.g. burial rituals and ceremonies), which they learned from living among the Cherokee at the time of integration (p. 9). Along with cultural exchange, there were also Black and Indigenous intermarriages and/or sexual relationships, resulting in biracial descendants.

An example of this intercultural lineage is the Black Ute Clan of the Southern Ute Tribe, begun when a Black Civil War veteran married a Navajo woman (Brooks, intro, p. 2-3, 2002). This union produced several children who also went on to have their own offspring, creating a small community of Black Indians on the reservation in the

\(^{11}\) Sources: http://www.archives.gov.on.ca/en/explore/online/slavery/sophia_pooley.aspx
http://www.josephbrant.com/
Southwest. There is a history of mixed descent in Black and Indigenous American cultures, including We Sorts in Maryland, Cros in North Carolina, Mustees in South Carolina, and Redbones in Louisiana (Brooks, p. 5). Equally in Canada, there is a history of mixed descendants, including writer and scholar George Elliot Clarke, who uses the term *Africadian*\(^{12}\) to describe his Black and Indigenous heritage in Nova Scotia (Mi’kmaq territory), making the point that Black Mi’kmaq are in fact different because of their relationship with the land. In the 18th century, Chief Joseph Brant brought slaves to Ontario,\(^{13}\) resulting in mixed descendants in Brantford who are a fusion of the Black *arrivants* and the Indigenous population on the Six Nations reserve.

In “Indigenous Peoples and Black People in Canada: Settlers or Allies?” Zainab Amadahy and Bonita Lawrence (2009) investigate the ongoing dialogue and questioning that takes place between Black and Indigenous communities and query the politics behind the relationship. Amadahy and Lawrence state that the struggle for federal recognition is a key factor for both groups, claiming that “the lines of tension are situated primarily within the context of their tribal interrelations and/or intermarriage – the existence of Black Indians and/or Black tribal citizens, frequently ignored by Black people, and fraught with tensions for Native people” (p. 112). This illustrates an aspect of settler colonialism, which sets people apart with the goal of erasure, because it is the colonial powers that have created restrictions and tensions around the land and instilled anti-Blackness in both communities.

\(^{12}\) [http://speakingmytruth.ca/?page_id=664z0](http://speakingmytruth.ca/?page_id=664z0)

\(^{13}\) [http://www.brantfordexpositor.ca/2011/02/05/local-black-history-began-with-brants-slaves](http://www.brantfordexpositor.ca/2011/02/05/local-black-history-began-with-brants-slaves)
Historically, land rights have been taken from both Black and Indigenous people. Klopotek (2007, p. 85) states that Black and Indian communities have failed to recognize the unique but common impact that white supremacy has had on each community and have undermined each other’s interests. Distinctions in strategies utilized by the state include emphasizing boundaries on authentic Indian-ness, in stark contrast to the one-drop rule required to constitute membership in the Black community (Klopotek, p. 86-87). African ancestry then becomes a barrier to recognition by the federal government’s standards under the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Regulation of racial categories was part of the larger Eurocentric political project, thus further dismissing Black bodies as being the lowest racial category and less of a citizen. The governmental attempt to keep this relationship segregated was an intelligent tool of the colonial project. If the two groups banded together, there would be great potential for uproar and outrage against the governing bodies. Anti-Blackness became a colonial construct, where families were in denial about any mixed blood and histories were tainted with modern day racism (Hill, 2009). The government knew that pitting each group against the other was a strategic move to discourage the relationship that was sprouting between the two groups of people.

Lawrence and Dua (2005) provide various examples of how Indigenous people were (and arguably still are) overlooked and denied land claims. Of particular significance to my work are the cases of Black settlement in Nova Scotia. The fact that Black Loyalists fought, and were given land that belonged to, the Mi’kmaw is one issue, but “to speak of the loss of Black land rights without referencing those being exterminated to ‘free up’ the land for settlement is to be complicit in erasing genocide” (Lawrence & Dua, p. 134). The brevity in this statement tugs at my heart because one
group being pitted against the other in a fight for modest land that European settlers no longer desired. The fight was for survival, and so I consider the cultural impact of this negation for these groups, and how we can use these narratives pedagogically. For my project, I am interested in how these relationships can be nurtured through the arts to promote resilience in each community. The first art form where I see this relationship merging on a global scale is in the art of hip hop.

**Hip Hop**
Born in the post–civil rights movement (Kitwana, 2002), the sophisticated language of hip hop takes a lyrical rhyme and turns it into a method of meaning making and knowledge construction. It was Trisha Rose who began to write about hip hop culture in 1994, and from this inception, the scholarship has grown immensely and reached all parts of the world. It is used to convey political voices, social commentary, historical memory, and to have a good time. In many cases youth are challenging the system and resisting the structures of schooling and systems of education. Andreana Clay (2006) makes a case for youth resistance struggles and argues that hip hop is a means of organizing for social and political change. Youth in Dar es Saalam, Tanzania, and Accra, Ghana are using hip hop’s ferocity as social commentary (Clark, 2012). Hip hop is evidently common within communities where its citizens are not treated equally due to power imbalances; structural, social, economic, or racial inequalities; and governmental unease. This was part of the reason that hip hop’s predecessor, reggae, developed in Jamaica: Its citizens were unhappy with being treated as second-class citizens, and music became the channel for their voices.
Derek Pardue (2011), the renowned scholar on the Brazilian hip hop movement, states, “For the most part, Brazilian Hip-Hop showed narratives and poetics are extremely local and specific to violence, injustice, and urban histories. For this reason, the ‘real’ Brazilian hip-hop ‘head’ [fan, performer] tunes into his or her neighbouring community radio station, and those of more means log into their favourite local hip-hop websites” (p. 105). In Sao Paulo, Brazil, taking up space on community radio was the way hip hoppers made their sounds heard to the masses; it was their way to engage in the ethos of “public culture” and “information exchange” (p. 103). As hip hoppers trafficked “information,” they accrued social value and developed a sense of identity (p. 108). The information exchange between hip hoppers consisted of historical ancestries manifested in sound samples, lyrics, images, and gestural references, all in attempts to connect with their audience and spread the messages of local inequities and power imbalances in the country. This notion of taking up space on the airwaves is, to me, a means of decolonization across the radio airwaves.

Indigenous artists from around the globe have remixed hip hop with their indigeneity to produce a creative identification within a shared, yet different, history of oppression with African Americans, who started the movement. Utilizing the language and narrative aspects of hip hop culture, they are writing fiercely emotional rhymes that speak about the effects of colonization, personal struggles, education, and life. The language shape-shifts due to their creative use of linguistics, much like what Alim (2011) terms ill-literacy. Ill-literacy is defined by Alim as the presence of skilled literacies, and not the lack of literacy. The ill in ill-literacy stands for intimate, lived and liberatory, all of which are relevant to my study discussing social identity, notions of power, and settler
colonialism. The socio-economic and political inequities imbued by settler colonialism silenced voices of young Black youth, which led these young people to create a form of rap that garnered more attention than could be imagined: This form of rap was titled gangsta rap.

**Spread the Word: Gangsta Rap and NWA**

Two major components of hip hop are repping who you are and where you are from, and authenticity. I begin with gangsta rap as a way to unpack the travels of rap music and how and why it became so popular with Indigenous youth (and other historically marginalized groups). One of the most prominent groups in the category of gangsta rap is NWA. When NWA (Niggas With Attitudes) dropped *Straight Outta Compton* in 1988, they brought it hard and kept it real. They rep’d their ’hood, however rough and challenging it was. The misogyny is disgusting, the brazen language is guttural, and the diversified, derogatory names they have for women would seem that none of them had moms, daughters, aunties, or grandmas. They drop the N-word like it’s a daily breath repeatedly throughout their album and in the name of their group, glorifying thug life for all to see. Like many, I take issue with most of the messages translated into gangsta rap, but I admire the tenacity of NWA telling their story in twelve tracks, and we cannot discount that this was their lived experience due to the systemic inequities that keep the oppressed, oppressed.

When *Straight Outta Compton* was released, the white power in the music industry guzzled on the exploitation of Black lives in the American ghetto and made millions in the process. Unmistakably, this was the album that, welcomed or not, slithered its way into the bedrooms, living rooms, garages, alleys, and basements of young, largely white, audiences all over the world. This is how rap got its notoriously badass rap. West
coast rap and NWA’s *Straight Outta Compton* had a profound effect on Aboriginal youth in Australia and elsewhere because they could relate to Easy E, Ice Cube, and Dr. Dre’s messages. Gangsta rap “provided an account of urban racism, police persecution and the sense of living in a ghetto. It revealed that black men elsewhere had a similar experience with state authority and fought against it” (Morgan & Warren, p.934). Moreover, “the appeal was particularly strong for young Aboriginal men who were at the sharp end of zero tolerance policing and for whom the bonds of citizenship had little appeal” (p. 934). Thus, regardless of the music’s oppressive messages against women, there was something Indigenous youth could relate to in the hard-hitting lyrics. Feminist scholars (Joan Morgan, 1999; Rose, 2008; Pough, Richardson, et. al., 2007; Clay, A., 2012; Nikki Lane, 2011; Fischer, 2012; Bettina Love 2012) have written back to these anthems and this bravado in many different spheres, advocating for women to be respected as more than just “big booty hoes” in hip hop.¹⁴ This form of rap should not go without criticism. To clarify, I began with gangsta rap not to glorify its nasty vocabulary or its violent attitudes toward women, but to recognize the lived experience of others, and because of how far it pushed hip hop into the world: a reach it still has today. If not for gangsta rap, I think hip hop’s tentacles would be far shorter.

**Global Indigeneity, Identity, and Regenerating Education**
Storytelling is at the heart of Indigenous cultures around the world. It was the way to pass on knowledge, share news, contemplate natural phenomena, explain world views, reason

¹⁴ I borrow this name from a panel I observed at Hip Hop Week Montreal. I found this to be such a creatively catchy title that is both telling and cheeky. I was not on this panel, but I was an invited speaker to the panel on hip hop activism to discuss my research (http://www.hiphopweekmtl.com/home/#home-1).
with elders, and give thanks to a higher being; yet as Stavrias (2005) states, “Hip Hop as a medium for identity negotiation is not limited by its attachment to traditional cultural forms” (p. 52). I see this in how Indigenous youth and artists are finding connections with struggles represented in the music and as they create rhymes that are making transformative strides in paying homage to histories of Indigenous resistance and traditional culture. Amsterdam (2013) claims that Indigenous hip hop artists are “refusing to be restricted by geographies of dislocation . . . , mapping cartographies of continuity over stolen lands and constricted latitudes of existence, and using beats and break-dancing to navigate new places, sacred places, and dismantled places” (p. 54).

The artists are spreading the word about their lived experiences using nuanced methods of literacy. As Jocson (2012, p. 302) puts it, the media artefacts that youths produce enter the public realm through platforms of distribution (e.g. the Internet, YouTube, newsletters, and Facebook) and ultimately have the potential to disrupt normative discourses in the media, and beyond. The advent of convergence culture and globalization has meant that the majority of hip hop artists in all parts of the world can nurture and initiate collaborations using social media, without stepping foot in the same geographic location. This means that artists are kept abreast of what is being produced across borders, within nations and states, and below and above the equator, with the click of a mouse. This holds true with the statement made by Mitchell (2001): “The resultant rap can no longer be viewed simply as an expression of African American culture; it has become a vehicle for global youth affiliations and a tool for reworking local identity all over the world” (p. 1).
Hip hop has made its way onto reserves and into the urban lives of many Indigenous artists who have taken up this art form to make it their own. The oral storytelling traditions alive in Black and Indigenous communities are well suited to the lives of youth. While it is impossible to trace the full scope of global Indigenous hip hop, I will share some sites that are of particular relevance to my study. However, I do acknowledge that there are a growing number of Indigenous artists in the United States, Africa, the Middle East, Asia, and Europe.

In the context of my study, I will begin with one of the largest scenes for Indigenous hip hop: Australia, where the Aboriginal artists and youth have devoured the culture and made it their own. I will then move to Cuba, two Latin American countries, Bolivia, and Mexico, then navigate to Canada. My decision to highlight Bolivia, Mexico, and Cuba is twofold: Firstly, Latino(a) youth were extremely instrumental in the inception of hip hop’s beginnings; secondly, Latin America is home to burgeoning Black, Indigenous, and Spanish-speaking populations that have taken up hip hop, and thus provides a wide lens of social identities that contribute to issues with diversity. The link between these regions and my project is that all of the countries I make mention of have a history of using hip hop as a means to discuss, unpack, and reclaim one’s social identity.

**Australia**
In Australia, hip hop was a way for youth to begin to galvanize their Aboriginality and investigate their cultural background, before writing raps about experiences of cultural history, racial prejudice, and the formation of social bonds with other young Aboriginal men (Morgan and Warren, p. 935-6). It also became a platform for the youth to better understand Aboriginal culture through the lyrics and forceful beats of well-known
Indigenous musicians. For other youth, hip hop became a site to help negotiate problems faced in school, which were tied to ideas of skin colour and racial purity (p. 936). Thus, when MC Wire (an Aboriginal MC and educator) and Morganics (a settler hip hopper in Australia) come together to educate youth using elements of hip hop, they stress that no matter how much listeners identify with gangsta rap, and that everyone has their individual stories to tell. They often emphasize the importance of rap as a vehicle for Aboriginal youth to share their own local lived experiences and handle the contradictions in their own lives (2011). As a way to work through issues around social identity, MC Wire and Morganics also “nurture the symbolic expression of Indigenous resistance and survival, teach about the history of struggles and encourage stronger identification than the young Aboriginal men might otherwise experience” (p. 934). The messages in the music act as a history lesson and provide a sense of solidarity within not only a shared sense of oppression by the two communities, but lived experiences and realities of trying to determine your sense of self and reviving one’s dignity as a non-white person in a dominantly white world. The next stop on this tour crosses into the western region of South America to Bolivia.

**Bolivia**

In the context of Indigenous language revitalization in Bolivia, hip hop has even become a site for Indigenous language restoration and retention, where Hornberger and Swinehart (2012) remind us that “languages do not exist autonomously outside of the lives of the people who speak them. Indigenous languages have largely shared common histories with Indigenous communities—genocide and displacement” (p. 500). The authors argue, “These sites, ideologies, and language practices constitute productive spaces for Indigenous language speakers to intervene in a historically and enduringly unequal,
globalizing world” (p. 501). And this is where the Indigenous languages that the rappers use find their way into the vernacular of the youth. Recognizing the popularity and far reaching tentacles of hip hop, educators have used it as a revitalization tool to teach the youth language and to ensure that Indigenous culture is not lost to the effects of colonization.

**Cuba**
As does much of the Caribbean, Cuba has a mixed population of inhabitants that call the country home. With its mix of African, Indigenous, European, and Latino communities, Cuba has become a hot spot for hip hop and identity politics. Marginalized youth from poor economic communities now had a voice to take pride in their Blackness and speak out about politics of injustice and Black consciousness (Saunders, p. 56). Saunders (2012) expresses the following on how underground hip hop lyrics helped educate Black Cuban youth on their identity politics: “They [the Black Cuban youth] had begun to realize that they had internalized racism and that they felt disconnected from Cuban society because it discouraged the embrace of African aesthetics and history. The movement had taught them about themselves, and it embraced African aesthetics and proudly displayed them in public space” (p. 54). Going back to their Indigenous roots in Africa was something Black Cuban youth were not encouraged to do, yet when they heard underground hip hop artists such as Junior Clan and Las Krudas, and saw the messages from graffiti artist NoNo, they realized it was healthy, safe, and necessary to learn about their African heritage and, I would add, reclaim their dignity and traditional knowledge. This idea is taken up by Alvarez in Mexico.
Mexico
Alvarez (2007) argues, “Part of what binds Chicanos and other non-white youth in the post-war era is not just their shared experiences of racialization or cultural style, but a more profound connection between their efforts to reclaim dignity amidst difficult life conditions, including internment, discrimination, and poverty” (Alvarez, p. 54). To this list I would add the creepy legacies of colonialism that still infiltrate the daily lives of Black and Indigenous communities. I appreciate how Alvarez offers a nuanced understanding of reclaiming dignity as another way to consider the solidarity among racialized and historically marginalized youth and more in the lives of Black and Indigenous peoples today.

Based on historical accounts of slavery and settler colonialism, the newest versions of these tools of oppression include the prison industrial complex, racial profiling and carding, residential schools, the Black lives matter campaign and the lack of resources put forward to find our missing and murdered Aboriginal women in Canada. To borrow Alvarez’s words, I would say Black and Indigenous dignities are definitely compromised in both Canada and the United States. Hip hop became a voice to reclaim pride, trust, self-identity, history, and life in general. Alvarez discusses the power hip hop holds for youth in this humanely honest passage:

I understand dignity less as a static quality of being worthy, honoured, or esteemed and more as a lived struggle for pride, hope, and humanity against poor life chances. The cultural expressions movement–era artists, and contemporary rappers and musicians simultaneously function as a struggle for dignity and against its denial. These cultural practices are, in part, a politics of refusal: a
refusal to accept humiliation, a refusal to quietly endure dehumanization, and a refusal to conform. (Alvarez, p. 55)

These refusals to endure dehumanization and conform are freshly illustrated by hip hop artist and 13-year-old Indigenous rights activist Xiuhtezcatl Martinez, who performs original works with powerful messages. At this young age, he has already come to recognize the inequities his people faced, and instead of not doing anything, Xiuhtezcatl used his hip hop voice to become an advocate for his beliefs.

Another Aztec project I would like to mention is that of an arts collaboration that took place in 2012, called *Legacy of the Drums: Aztec Dance & Hip Hop Arts*. This is a collaboration between two local San Jose Arts groups, Tezkatlipoka Aztec Dance and Drum and Future Arts Now, to engage youth with the universal theme of drum beats as expressed through both the hip hop and Aztec dance forms. By altering traditional cultural drum beats and melding them with nuanced tempos of hip hop, the artists reinforce the fact that even such a contemporary form of music such as hip hop has strong roots to Indigenous communities of the past and present. In both examples, the Aztec community has recognized the profound power that hip hop possesses and the cultural regeneration that it makes possible. From Mexico, I now come home to Canada to discuss the state of Indigenous hip hop, identity, and education.

**Canada**

There are very few scholars writing about Indigenous hip hop in Canada (Brett Lashua (2006), Bonar Buffam (2010), Karyn Recollet (2010), Charity Marsh (2011), Lauren J. Amsterdam (2013), and Jarette Martineau (2014, 2015), but that’s not to say there isn’t a

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15 [www.x4earth.com](http://www.x4earth.com)
16 [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zZefPnPjHjI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zZefPnPjHjI)
thriving scene for the artists. Slowly hip hop has made its way north of the border and into educative spaces across Canada to do work with Indigenous youth. Within the Canadian context, Lashua (2006) discusses an arts-based methodological approach to working with a population of predominantly Indigenous youth in Edmonton as a way to understand the poetics and politics of young people’s experiences and to further investigate their means of identity making and social relationships.

Stemming from Lashua’s study, Buffam (2010) took up an ethnographic study of Indigenous youth in Edmonton, Alberta. As previously mentioned, gangsta rap for these youth was something they certainly identified with; namely, the aggression of street masculinity, misogyny, alienation, and struggle. Buffam examined the inner city ghettos and geography of race within Edmonton where there is a large population of Indigenous peoples who face racism on a daily basis. The young people in Buffam’s study indicate the ways in which the practice of hip hop allows Indigenous youth to contest and disrupt the racisms that demarcate aboriginality. Buffam uses Foucault’s (2005, 1990, 1988) notion of the “arts of existence”¹⁷ to claim that when hip hop is employed as a technology of self-discovery and cultivation, it functions as a site of transformation through which Indigenous youth subject themselves to the systems of meaning and modes of identification constitutive of this art form (p. 342). The educators in Buffam’s study

¹⁷ Buffam (2010, p. 342) refers to the later work from Foucault (2005, 1990, 1988) who tracks the ascendance of political technologies employed by subject-citizens to modify and transform their selves and ways of being to attain states of desire, wisdom, and happiness. For Foucault (1990), these “arts of existence” are akin to assemblages of intentional and voluntary actions by which men not only set themselves rules of conduct, but also seek to transform themselves, to change themselves in their singular being, and to make their life into an oeuvre that carries certain aesthetic values and meets certain stylistic criteria (pp. 10–11).
strategically employ pedagogies that subvert and transgress through their practice in the various elements of hip hop they are working with, making the work profoundly honest. Environmental education can be easily aligned with Indigenous knowledges, yet our Canadian education system fails to validate traditional methods of working and learning from and with the land. As self-identified white researchers dedicated to social justice and who challenge dominant Eurocentric ideologies, Gorlewski and Porfilio (2012) believe that Indigenous hip hop culture can revolutionize environmental education because of the flexible ways of knowing it presents. This idea is specifically developed through a consideration of what counts as knowledge, schooling, and education, as well as definitions of literacy and how these interrelate with new understandings of environmental education. Their study focuses on six artists of the Beat Nation collective, with questions around what it is like to be an Indigenous hip hop artist in Canada, as well as on the subjects of youth, education, culture, and the consumption and production of hip hop.

I admire the attention given to the Beat Nation collective through critical studies such as this, but there is something about this article that challenges my idea of solidarity or working with Indigenous communities, which is that the authors were “seeking to give back to the Indigenous community by amplifying their voices” (Gorlewski & Porfilio, p.52). In the same sentence the authors state that they are “learning about the Beat Nation artists’ experiences counteracting settler colonialism through artistic endeavours” (p. 52). The statement is troubling to me for three reasons:

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18 http://beatnation.org/index.html
1) As white scholars it is not their duty to amplify historically marginalized voices—
communities can do that on their own, but scholars can contribute to this effort,
recognizing that Indigenous communities do not need pity from those who feel the need
to “fix” the “other.”

2) The act of giving back implies that someone is in need. The authors use the term
giving back which implies they took something that was not rightfully theirs, and perhaps
they are now searching for some sort of acceptance for the wrong they committed. The
authors imply they are doing the work for a reward: the cure for their white guilt.

3) The authors use the term settlement colonialism, but although their intention is positive, I
am not convinced their hearts and minds are aligned to counter colonialism.

To clarify, I am not against non-Indigenous scholars doing this work, but there are certain
parameters (Hudson & Taylor-Henry, 2001) that need to be followed so as not to re-
inscribe structures of power and settlement colonialism.

Working with researchers, professors, students, elders and hip hop artists, Riecken,
Conibear, et al. (2006) chronicle a four-year study that implemented a video-based
participatory action research (PAR) project with urban Indigenous youth in Western
Canada. They used digital videos as an arts-based educational tool with student
filmmakers. The videos that were produced speak to the lived experiences of these youth.
I appreciate, and can implement, some of the strategies of working with an arts-based hip
hop education program that locates hip hop as an act of resistance in the hands of the
youth and positions the participants as the dominant authoritative voices.

Giving props to the talented Indigenous hip hoppers in Canada, Recollet’s (2010)
dissertation, entitled Aural Traditions: Indigenous Youth and the Hip Hop Movement in
Canada, considers movement, space, and the in-between spaces that Indigenous rappers occupy. This has truly helped me think through the identity formation and distinction Indigenous artists negotiate within their innovative artistic expressions. I see Recollet’s concept of this in-between space as a complement to Stavrias’s (2005) definition of occupying space as *bricolage building*. Bricolage involves building something out of fragments by creatively combining bits and pieces to reference, transform, or subvert their original use: This is an apt term to describe the method of sampling (Stavrias, p. 46).

To extend Stavrias’s definition of the term bricolage building, I see this idea as a suitable expression to describe how Indigenous rappers blend a cultural mix of old and new. Moreover, Indigenous artists in Canada such as Hellnback, JB the first lady, Tru Rez Crew, Winnipeg’s Most, Lightning Cloud, and Eekwol are doing just that: re-mixing and shape-shifting to make something their own. A prime example is the Ottawa trio A Tribe Called Red (ATCR), who amalgamate socio-political imagery of Indigenous leaders and music, new and old, into an intensively massive, mangled mash-up of beautiful beats with a very political message about the injustices wrought upon the First Peoples of this land. Their messages are riotously intense that uncover dirty political truths, yet the group always remembers to have a righteous time while performing. The fact that there are such a large number of hip hop movements within Indigenous communities, and that hip hop is being used more and more for education, excites and reinvigorates my hope for a new generation of learners who understand the inequities faced by their people and take pride in all aspects of their social identity by making their voices heard. Meaningfully, photography offers another platform to make voices heard, through the expression of visual narrative.
A Brief Look at Photography
Creativity is intuitive: it is the ground on which we can come together through the telling of stories, visualization of histories and creation of nuanced spaces of belonging.

Traditionally, photography has been utilized as a method of preserving memories; to document, however consciously, visual histories; or to pass on to the next generation visual records of individuals, family members, and significant events in communal life. In its contemporary inception, photography retains these older features in its performance of similar documentary tasks; however, now photography possesses expanded technological effects on both the image and the viewer. Benjamin’s (1936) theories of mechanical reproduction illuminate the woes, but also new potentialities, associated with the exponential development of the photographic art form. For example, technological advances make photography more accessible and easier to replicate, which easily makes everyone a documentarian. Perhaps documentation has become an art of remixed cultural representation or digitized fragments constituted by multiple authorship. Justifiably there is an important creative forum that can be held within the ideals of documentary photography. It is here that it is useful to consider Benjamin’s notion of mechanical reproduction in photography as an art form, and what that might mean for how we understand the capacity of an image to convey a unique or authentic account.

Massive and instant reproductive accessibility has had the effect of generating many authorial roles. The photographer is no longer a single entity, but becomes multiple subjectivities: he or she is simultaneously the artistic director, photographer, sitter-subject, researcher, and production assistant all with the click of a button. The “author” is not solely the creative voice, but a participating actor posing for the photograph. The photographer has the power to craft a narrative with a single frame image and capture a
moment that would otherwise be lost. Each time the photograph is viewed, it gains multiple interpretations; in the end, the final product is a complex collaboration of many authors.

**Photography in Educational Research**
Social scientist and educational researcher Lawrence-Lightfoot (1983) and Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis (1997) created new designs for educational research and writing that she termed *portraiture*. The practice of portraiture was mobilized by Lawrence-Lightfoot to generate a rigorous qualitative approach that enabled new active thoughts about the nature of inquiry. She found that the practice of portraiture was better suited to a creative and impactful approach to educational research: that is, for generating new understandings of schools as “cultural windows” by telling stories of schools, teachers, and students that were likened to a portrait (1983, p. 7). As an artist, I appreciate Lawrence-Lightfoot’s approach which blends research with the arts to help visualize the research findings and analysis. In this project, I use Lawrence-Lightfoot’s concept of cultural windows to help analyze the photographs the IYAs offered for my study to decode the narratives communicated in their photographs.

Scholars have utilized and critically modified Lawrence-Lightfoot’s methodology to analyze different aspects of research within education. Adrienne Dixson (2005) implements Lawrence-Lightfoot’s methodology while employing notions of jazz as a metaphor within the framework of portraiture. Dixson seeks to draw parallels from her work as a jazz musician to a theory-based research methodology, and extends the terminology of Lawrence-Lightfoot’s methodology to a jazz vocabulary. The limitation in
Dixson’s extension is the specialized analogy to music that may have a limited capacity to work dialogically with the portrait itself.

Chapman (2005) implements Lawrence-Lightfoot’s theoretical frameworks to consider the aspect of voice. She examines voice through the lens of critical race theory: specifically, how the intersection of race, class and gender manifests in educational settings. Djanna A. Hill (2005) also engages with portraiture as poetic inquiry as she crafts narrative. She encompasses Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis’s (1997) aspect of voice, context, and subject by disseminating her research findings through poetry. These researchers are remixing portraiture as a contemporary research methodology to cultivate innovative qualitative practice to be used in educational study.

In efforts to increase the power of young people’s voices in research, several investigative studies (Clark & Moss, 2001; Barker & Weller, 2003; Cook & Hess, 2003) have noted that giving young people cameras allows them to take pictures of what they want as they make critical choices and theorize things of importance to them. In my experience with photography as a method of data collection, I am often enlightened by what young people deem important in their lives, the connections they make, and the sheer artistic beauty of their images. They are able to communicate using visual as well as verbal elements, which makes it easier for some youth to express their sentiments. Einarsdóttir (2007) summarizes the impact photographs can have on educational research when she states that the children (or young people) decide through their pictures what will be discussed, and the researcher has no idea what will be revealed in their photographs. This element of unknowing and surprise is something that I cherish as an ethnographer because it allows me to delve deeper into the lives of the culture-sharing
group I am studying and allows for new appreciations of their lived experiences. In the next chapter I will discuss the conceptual frameworks that helped theoretically inform my dissertation. My conceptual frameworks include youth studies, anti-colonial theory, Indigenous knowledges, cultural studies, and decolonizing education.

Chapter 3

Conceptual Frameworks

Introduction
In qualitative research, conceptual frameworks offer a look inside, a way to explain phenomena that was uncovered in the data of a project. In the next chapter I will discuss the conceptual frameworks that helped to inform my dissertation theoretically. This study was informed by youth studies, anti-colonial theory, Indigenous knowledge, decolonizing methods, and cultural studies. Throughout this project, I utilize these five conceptual frameworks as an analytical tool to make conceptual distinctions and organize ideas in order to elaborate on my research problems as related to the findings from my research project. I begin with youth studies, then move to discuss Indigenous youth studies, cultural studies, anti-colonial theory, Indigenous knowledges, and decolonizing methods.

Youth Studies
The boundaries between youth and adulthood are imprecise and transitory, exploratory and confusing, yet exciting, compelling and necessary. This broad trajectory has led to a body of literature that interrogates how disciplines such as developmental psychology and sociology have constructed truths and naturalized ways of thinking about young people
Studies of and about youth have been profiled in a range of research areas such as sociology, politics, criminology, social policy, geography and psychology. Structural factors that affect youth include social class, gender, employment or broadly exploring experiences of identity, leaving school, negotiation of sexual identities, voting behaviour and/or wider questions of social change (Furlong, 2013, p. 4). Research in youth studies has changed the ways researchers address young people’s transitions shaped by structural factors and/or factors underpinning individual agency, such as motivation and resilience (Evans and Furlong, 1997, qtd. in Furlong, 2013, p.7).

To understand the sequence of theoretical debates in youth studies, I provide a summary of the thresholds chronicled over the last century, as laid out by Mørch (2005). The largest timeframe in this chronology is from 1900s to 1960s, which is known as, ‘modern adolescents in turmoil’, with emphasis on nature vs. nurture framework and theories of child/adolescent development are proposed. Researchers term the era from 1950s to 1970s, ‘modern youth in rebellion’, which is explained as a product of new role expectations in modern societies. The 50s to 70s were also when psychologists proposed developmental stages including identity formation, ego, cognitive and moral development, linked to social maladjustment. The period of 1960s to 1990s is coined, ‘youth as active agents’, with resistance as a focal point of study. The most current phase is from the 1980s to the present. This threshold is termed, ‘prolonged youth as a positive identity’. In this exciting time, multiple, eclectic theoretical perspectives emerge in various areas of study, looking for ways to celebrate youth prolongation as a minor ‘identity’ or a new ‘developmental stage’ (Mørch, 2005, qtd., in Cote, 2014, p. 10).
**Indigenous Youth Studies**

My dissertation makes contributions to the current threshold of youth studies, as I search for new ways to celebrate Indigenous youth identity and development in a positive light. However, when I conducted this research with Indigenous youth, I began to see my contribution to the current phase of youth studies unfold, and witnessed a divergence from traditional youth studies that do not place emphasis on sociocultural and history as key factors in shaping youth identities and lives. I found these factors to be prominent in the social identity of young people and so I departed from traditional youth studies and focused on Indigenous youth studies. Moving forward with my research, I contemplated and tried to answer, the following questions: How can we better understand cultures of IYAs in regards to identity, politics and history? How do Indigenous youth build relationships with larger society? In light of historically marginalized populations, how do we counter the stereotypes of certain populations without re-inscribing new ones?

The following literature review emphasizes the positive ways youth are showing engagement with society rather than the numerous problems that are associated with Indigenous youth. I want to show the resilience youth demonstrate in times of adversity when the legacies of settler colonialism deeply affect their lives, their strength is tested, and limits are pushed. Young people represent a substantial number in the Indigenous population; Aboriginal youth aged 15-24 represented 18.2% of the total Aboriginal population, and 5.9% of all youth in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2011). Therefore, IYAs are large contributors to society yet their voices often go unheard and/or are dismissed as valid. This project shows how I aimed to listen to these young people and provide an artistic outlet for them to unpack their views, while paying attention to the innovative

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methods of traversing the urban environment. The ways in which Indigenous youth show their resilient spirit embodies the strength of young people’s need to persevere.

To define the term resilience, I turn to a common definition of the phenomenon, which was established by Luthar, Cicchetti, and Becker (2000, p. 543) as a “dynamic process encompassing positive adaptation within the context of significant adversity” (qtd. in. Allen et al., (2014), p. 604). Despite the mounting disparities facing young people today, they have a wealth of information to disclose; thus, when or if we listen to youth voices, the narratives of youth coming of age hold potential to also tell a still-evolving story of cultural continuity that has been wrested from disruptive colonial legacies (Allen, et al., p. 601). Moreover, the “study of resilience processes in adolescence can also provide keys to understanding broader socio-cultural tensions that often come into focus during many of the developmental tasks young people navigate on the pathway to adulthood” (Allen et al., p. 601), thus creating stronger ways to survive and overcome the looming toll of settler colonialism.

Wexler (2009) combines numerous scholarly voices to explain Indigenous identities through cultural identification, which includes recognizing one’s cultural attributes, beliefs, values, traditions, and heritage:

“These cultural attributes are both internally and externally defined, as they come from personal choices as well as ascriptions of others. As Indigenous young people negotiate these different (sometimes contradicting) notions of selfhood, they are engaged in a creative endeavour.20 They are constrained by ideas of the past and the present—those found in their traditional culture as well as those

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embedded in the dominant society.\textsuperscript{21} The outcomes of these processes—the development of a clear sense of self—can be fundamental in supporting healthy development” (Wexler, p. 269).

This cultural orientation and historical foundation can provide a sense of grounding, self-worth, social connectedness, and purpose to Indigenous young people, while also proving to be contradictory to the roles prescribed by history. As I present my findings and analysis in the remaining chapters, this statement will become clear in the data I collected, especially in chapter five on social identity.

Many studies have shown how Indigenous youth are affected by incarceration and the youth justice system, especially here in Canada, where the number of Aboriginal inmates surpasses that of any other community when population and incarcerated bodies are compared Barson and Satya, (2011); Yoder, Bender, et.al., 2014). There are numerous studies on substance abuse, including drugs, cigarettes, and alcohol (Stockburger, Parsa-Pajouh, et al., 2005; Walls, 2008). I also read about youth and violence (McMurtry, and Curling, 2008). Due to intergenerational trauma, familial breakdowns, and other factors resulting from settler colonialism, Indigenous youth face a high suicide rate. This is highlighted in the literature, but I find the most effective scholarship were those that put forth suggestions on how to curb this high rate of suicide with programs and healing sources for the community (Leenaars, 2006; Luke, Anderson, et al., 2013; Lemstra, Rogers, et al., 2013; Kral, 2012; Walls, Hautala, and Hurley, 2014). Access to nutritional food, food security, and food deserts are all reasons for the high rates of diabetes and

other health issues that are common in Indigenous youth (Dyck, et al., 2008; Pike, McDonald, et al., 2014).

I do not intend to be idealistic, but I believe that two ways of tackling these problems, or talking through these issues with youth, are through the arts and culturally relevant curricula. This is proven by the numerous case studies on arts-based educational research conducted with youth. Cahnmann-Taylor and Chappell (2013) provide various examples of arts-based research projects with minority youth (Damm, 2006; Bond and Etwaroo, 2005; Cahnmann-Taylor and Souto-Manning, 2010). Furthermore, as noted in the literature review in Chapter 2, there are numerous studies (spanning all continents, from coast to coast) that show how Indigenous youth have triumphed over educational failure using hip hop (Lashua, 2006; Morgan and Warren, 2011; Alvarez, 2007; Buffam, 2011; Low, 2012; and Marsh, 2012).

In a study with Indigenous communities across Canada, the researchers/educators/artists/community workers, use the arts to dialogue about HIV prevention, (Flicker, S., Jessica Yee Danforth, J.Y., Wilson, C., Oliver, V., Larkin, J., Restoule, J-P., Mitchell, C., Konsmo, E., Jackson, R., & Prentice, T., 2014). Findings from the project support the notion that arts-based approaches to the development of HIV-prevention knowledge and Indigenous youth leadership are helping to involve a diverse cross-section of youth in a critical dialogue about health (Flicker, et.al., 2014, p. 15). Indigenous communities have long relied on ceremonies and oral traditions to pass knowledge from one generation to the next, using the arts to keep these knowledges alive, where arts such as, drumming, singing, carving, weaving, and beading remain important forms of storytelling (Flicker, et.al., p. 17, 2014). This study was pivotal to showing how
cultural production can be used as a means for decolonizing art education. Cahnmann-Taylor and Chappell (2013, p. 244) draw a relationship across three contexts: arts education, diversity education, and arts-based research. These are aspects that I take up in the findings chapters of my study. The authors move on to state that this relationship creates a dynamic possibility for transformative, humanistic school reform for, with, and about minoritized communities.

My goal was to make choices that portrayed the authenticity or goodness of youth in creative and gripping ways that showcased their intellectual voices as young people. Lawrence-Lightfoot forges the inklings of an ethnographic and aesthetic sensibility toward school research—an artistic stance applied to critical effect in her first “portraits” of the goodness of schools (1983). By creating these portraits she makes school relations visual. As social scientists and portraitist researchers, Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) begin by asking, “What is happening here, what is working, and why?” (p. 141); they proceed to define their methodology as a quest for goodness; they give voice to women and people of colour; and they articulate the less evident, though no less meaningful, contours of students’ lives. Lawrence-Lightfoot defines goodness as a search for truth—or for the complex and competing truths that combine to shape an accurate narrative of the relationships children and adults make in school (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1983). Throughout this dissertation I consider goodness as a starting point when

22 “By minoritized youth, we refer to any and all who identify in contextually situated, non-dominant communities such as race, class, sexual orientation, language, dis/ability, religion, and gender. As we identify such contexts, we are aware that minority/majority status is unstable and contingent. Despite variations and flexibility, we use this term to identify youth who turn to the arts to navigate their status as ‘outside’ the norm in a variety of ways” (Cahnmann-Taylor and Chappell, 2013, p. 248).
interpreting and analyzing my data. Although I do not employ portraiture as methodology, I garner this element from Lawrence-Lightfoot that resonates with me as an artist educator, researcher and ally.

For the purpose of my research, and in my own practice as an artist educator, I see and truly value the impact that culturally responsive curricula can have on youth who are disengaged from education. I have witnessed it in my years working within various educational contexts with Black and Indigenous students who are suddenly engaged in the exchange of knowledge I have provided because the content has become relevant to their lives. I think it is important to discuss culturally responsive schooling, teaching, and pedagogical practices for Indigenous youth, because of the rich heritage that is integral with the culture. Belgarde, Mitchell, and Arquero (2002) define culturally responsive curriculum as that which “generally validates the cultures and languages of students and allows them to become co-constructors of knowledge in the school setting,” explaining that teachers must “infuse the curriculum with rich connections to students’ cultural and linguistic backgrounds within family and community contexts” (p. 43) (qtd. In. Castagno and Brayboy, 2008).

Castagno and Brayboy (p. 946) state that the general message out of this larger body of scholarship on culturally responsive schooling and culturally responsive curriculum is that students of colour and students from low-income backgrounds consistently and persistently perform lower than their peers, according to traditional measures of school achievement, because their home culture is at odds with the culture and expectations of schools. This mismatch of sorts causes achievement gaps among Black, Indigenous, and other historically marginalized youth because we have a system
of schooling that doesn’t speak to the learner’s needs. The literature on culturally responsive schooling is a substantial yet still growing body of scholarship that is not specific to Indigenous youth, but rather argues that this type of schooling can lead to closing the achievement gap among all youth outside of the dominant cultural group.

**Cultural Studies**
The provocative, heartfelt narrative lyrics of rap songs have become a critical form for expressing political and social identity for ethnically marginalized youth in communities where voices are silenced. With the young people in my study I apply a cultural studies framework based on the writings of Henry Giroux (2005), who claims that cultural studies is a form of political and pedagogical engagement that can provide discourses of intervention and possibility (p. 140). Indigenous youth are conceivably making interventions and disruptions with their voices through art, where historically oppressed cultural voices become validated and recognized in education.

To define and articulate a space for youth’s relationship to hip hop culture, I use Stuart Hall’s (1997) concept of representation through signifying practices: “Signs stand for our concepts, ideas and feelings in such a way as to enable others to ‘read’, decode or interpret their meaning in roughly the same way that we do” (Hall, p.5). The signs of hip hop that were created by one group, namely African American youth, have been recognized by other groups as a threshold for entry into the culture. Globally, hip hop is being taken up, reproduced, altered, remixed, and rearticulated by youth who make identifications with the signs and meanings of the culture. Storey (2010) argues, “Culture is . . . the practices and processes of making meanings with and from the ‘texts’ we encounter in our everyday lives . . . .To share a culture, therefore, is to interpret the
Indigenous rappers are one group that have taken up these signifying practices and made hip hop into their own art form by indigenizing as they rhyme.

I see hip hop as a contemporary alliance between Black and Indigenous communities that has been constructed through a series of signifying practices; as Hall states, one group takes up the signifying practice and they are able to communicate because they make sense of the world and interpret it in roughly similar ways. Hip Hop was born in the ghettos of New York based on the lives of African American youth, Indigenous rappers have made a connection to the culture of hip hop because there is a shared meaning and interpretation of the music they participate in. The youth are making social relations to the music in ways that are important to them. Hall claims that language consists of more than just the verbal or written word: it is the fashion, gesture, image, word, or object that functions as a sign that is capable of carrying out and expressing meaning. Hip hop’s infectious nature makes it a prime means of identity and meaning making for Indigenous rappers and youth who see themselves represented in this music that is a platform to voice their disdain but also to trumpet their resilience. And although I am keenly aware that hip hop today has a tarnished reputation and has become something of a pop-culture status symbol, throughout my project I shed light on the conscious elements expressed in the music.

In another form of cultural production, photography was becoming a valiant way for Black communities to narrate issues around representation and socio-historical antagonisms. As the photograph became an artistic form of dialogical invitation, a platform to discuss formerly taboo social relationships, the audience was invited into the world—make it meaningful—in recognizably similar ways” (p. 3).
artistic equation: the photograph became a vehicle for cultivating a relationship with the viewer. In this context, the viewer’s task was intrinsic to how the meaning of the image was made, in the sense that the viewer added to the possible, multi-layered interpretations of the narrative portrait. Black photographers were seizing the opportunity to express their voices by going well beyond the social documentary nature of photography established in the earlier approaches of DuBois and VanDerZee.

Although the art form offers versatility and power in authorship, photography does not go without problematic discourse. In her important writing on photography, critic Susan Sontag (1977) acknowledges, “To photograph is to appropriate the thing photographed. It means putting oneself into a certain relation to the world that feels like knowledge—and, therefore, like power” (p. 4). If we appropriate the subject, how do we emerge from less evident structures of power? Despite mechanical reproduction, as Benjamin (1936) cautions, in photography we can never truly know the authenticated truth in the photograph. This inherent characteristic of photography is part of the process of knowledge production where I see the potential for possibility in the images captured by participants and the pedagogical force of the image.

**Anti-Colonial Theory**

Anti-colonial movements in Africa were growing in the 19th and 20th century with nonviolent resistance to European imperialism. The revolutionary ideas of Frantz Fanon (1952), Gandhi, Mao-Tse-Tung, Albert Memmi (1957), Aime Cesaire, Kwame Nkrumah (1965), and Che Guevara were instrumental in fuelling anti-colonial struggles, which have roots in the decolonizing movements of colonial states that fought for independence from European countries at the end of World War II (Dei, 1999).
Dei and Asgharzadeh (2001, p. 300) claim that an anti-colonial discursive framework allows for the effective theorizing of issues emerging from colonial and colonized relations by using Indigenous knowledges as an important standpoint. Dei (1999) asserts that an anti-colonial approach to education celebrates oral, visual, political, textual, and material resistance of colonized groups and shifts away from a preoccupation with victimization (p. 117). Dei and Asgharzadeh (2001, p. 300) also move on to state that as a theoretical perspective, anti-colonialism interrogates the power configurations embedded in ideas, cultures, and histories of knowledge production, validation, and use. Of particular importance to my project is the emphasis on engaging questions of resistance and recovery (Foreward in Dei and Kempf, Asante, p. ix, 2006). As an artist educator working within a critical pedagogical framework with Black and Indigenous communities, I see an anti-colonial framework that includes Indigenous knowledges as an essential component to consider within each curricular lesson I develop, execute, and research as I begin decolonizing my own practice.

The anti-colonial approach recognizes the importance of locally produced knowledges emanating from cultural history, daily human experiences, and social interactions, with the goal to question, challenge, and interrogate foundations of institutionalized power and privilege (Dei and Asgharzadeh, 2001, p. 300). Dei and Asgharzadeh (2001) argue that “anti-colonial thought is the epistemology of the colonized, anchored in the Indigenous sense of collective and common colonial consciousness,” which to me signals work accomplished by settler colonialism, as it seeps into every aspect of the mind, body and soul, distressing various aspects of collective daily life. Here I see the link to the intergenerational trauma that affects the
lives of both Black and Indigenous people in Canada and abroad. The trauma inflicted by settlers is so ingrained in the psyche that it can become a limitation or an instigator for resistance for Black and Indigenous communities, where inflicted trauma has the potential to both suppress and destroy those in its path.

As an anti-colonial feminist scholar, Wane (2008) believes that Indigenous knowledges and practices are crucial forms of anti-colonial resistance and that education was and is part of a much larger project of colonization. When we consider the human consequences of colonial education and the devastating impact that it can be expected to have on those who do not fit the Eurocentric norm, the urgency to create room for Indigenous ways of knowing and teaching is evident (Wane, p. 193). Wane believes that employing an anti-colonial education could do this work. Working through her own colonial education in Kenya and Canada, Wane interrogates Indigenous knowledges and practices a crucial form of anti-colonial resistance:

Anti-colonial discourse problematizes the marginalization of certain voices and ideas in the educational system, as well as the delegitimization, in the pedagogic and communicative practices of schools, of the knowledge and experiences of subordinate groups. Using the anti-colonial discursive approach means affirming both the pedagogic need to confront the challenge of social diversity as well as the urgency of creating an educational system that is both more inclusive of, and better able to respond to, the varied multiple knowledges that students bring to formal learning spaces (Wane, p. 194-5). Wane attests that the woman’s art of traditional teaching through storytelling, proverbs, riddles, and idiom is an ancient practice of passing on knowledge in African countries. Stressing the importance of oral traditions in anti-colonial resistance, Wane highlights
how women are passing on knowledges of African cultures and ways of knowing to end their silence and speak their truths, regardless of the colonizers’ efforts to disrupt Indigenous practices. Yet colonialism and anti-colonial resistance are two sides of the same coin for Indigenous peoples, who have always resisted oppression through storytelling, spirituality, and keeping traditional ways of life alive by valuing ancestry and the wisdom of elders (p. 184).

As Wane makes evident, treasuring traditional ways of life, which include women’s voices, storytelling, and spirituality, is fundamental to enacting an anti-colonial framework. The discourse on anti-colonialism values locally produced knowledge originating from daily life, social interactions, cultural history, and lived experiences. It opens up a place to reclaim histories and offers up a space for strength, perseverance, and cultural capital and power. This can be seen in the literature by Slyomovics (2014), who refers to the būqālah, which is designated as a material ceramic object as well as the immateriality of a poem that is performed and ritually embedded as the traditional, desired, divinatory pastime of many Algerian women (p. 145). The būqālah is rhymed, polysemic, and transmitted orally by Algerian women in vernacular Algerian Arabic (dārijah) while the clay būqālah pitcher twirls in the woman’s hands. It is a poetic and ritual practice long associated with the female inhabitants of specific cities (p. 146). Slyomovics’s piece in itself reads as a poetic proclamation of women’s voices, heritage, and language claim, recognizing the importance of cultural history, lived experiences, and speaking back in the tradition of your language. There is a long history of anti-colonialism in Algeria:
When the French-created archive of Algerian women’s oral traditions was represented and studied in relation to Algerian nationalist aspirations by Algerians, būqālah poetry came to be understood as an expression of resistance to French colonialism despite its traditional content of verses devoted to love and female sexuality (p. 148).

This resistance is based in the Indigenous knowledges of the Algerian women to the French colonists, whereby women’s oral traditions are accepted as, and feared by, the colonial state as holding some sort of knowledge that speaks back to the state. To further interrogate this phenomenon of the būqālah we could assume a feminist lens, interrogating power and inequality, and placing emphasis on gender and the essential work that women contribute to society through the practice of Indigenous knowledges.

As stated, much of the anti-colonial literature places emphasis on adaptation of Indigenous knowledges in education. Sites of resistance using an integrative, anti-colonial approach are evidenced in the Kaupapa Maori initiatives of Aboriginal scholars in Australia and New Zealand. Smith (1997) outlines the concept of Kaupapa Maori as a term used by the Maori to describe the practice and philosophy of living a Maori culture-informed life. This is a Maori worldview that incorporates thinking and understanding. A key element in the discussion of Kaupapa Maori is the centrality of te reo Maori me ona tikanga (Maori language and customs) (qtd. in Pihama, Cram, and Walker, p. 32).

Initializing and nourishing a Maori education system, which works against a colonized system of schooling, takes dedication and perseverance. This argument from Dei can be linked to the work that Maori scholars are doing by enacting this pillar of the anti-colonial prism:
In many ways the “anti-colonial thought” is the emergence of a new political, cultural and intellectual movement reflecting the values and aspirations of colonized and resisting peoples/subjects. The Western academy cannot continue to deny the intellectual agency of colonized peoples. As resisting subjects we will all have to confront and deal with the historic inferiorization of colonial subjects, and the devaluation of rich histories and cultures. . . . Colonized peoples require an anti-colonial prism that is useful in helping to disabuse our minds of the lies and falsehoods told about our peoples, our pasts and our histories. (Dei, p.4)

Instigated by Linda and Graham Smith, the work of this initiative is rewarded when the young people are immersed in their Maori heritage and are succeeding in school. As the new generation of learners moves forward in their education, Smith (1997) highlights six intervention elements which are an integral part of Kaupapa Maori and that are evident in Kaupapa Maori sites: *Tino Rangatiratanga* (the self-determination principle); *taonga tuku iho* (the cultural aspirations principle); *ako Maori* (the culturally preferred pedagogy principle); *kia piki ake i nga raruraru o te kainga* (the socio-economic meditation principle); *whanau* (the extended family structure principle); and the *kaupapa* (the collective philosophy principle) (p. 24). A return to Indigenous knowledge systems and reclaiming lost language are all a part of strengthening a community that has been deeply affected by colonialism. By installing these initiatives communities empower themselves rather than waiting to be empowered by others. Kaupapa Maori research has shown itself as a radical, emancipatory, empowerment-oriented strategy and collaboration-based process, and when it is used systematically it can produce excellent research which can lead to improved policy, practice, and individual outcomes for Maori people (Walker,
This is a true exemplar of strategic resistance practice that, if adapted to a Canadian education system, could help to revitalize Indigenous communities by instilling a curriculum that speaks to the culture—and perhaps counter the damage done by generations of residential schooling.

There are several aspects of the anti-colonial prism that I admire, but one that truly stands out to me is the return to spirit, which I think is integral to Indigenous communities all over the world. The return to spirit is not often referenced as a site of discourse in theoretical frameworks, yet I see it validated here because anti-colonialism stresses a return to Indigenous knowledges, where spirituality is fundamental. Dei (1999) states:

Spirituality is an understanding of the personhood, a synergy of the body, mind, and soul and an accompanying awareness and respect for the wholeness of being, the interconnectedness of all things and a belief in a Greater Power that is beyond the capacities of the human sense to comprehend. Spirituality is the connection to all that exists. It comes from within the self, and from the world outside the self. By placing spiritual knowings in an anti-colonial discourse and practice, we affirm the symbolic, conscious and unconscious processes that inform our political work to address domination and social oppression as they initially flow from the inner self/environment. This act of listening to self, respect for the creator and the knowledge we are continuously gifted, raise an awareness to the larger holistic nature of who we are, working collectively, and this knowing situates the philosophy of holism as a key idiom of anti-colonial practice.

(Dei, p. 6)
Throughout my project, there are examples of young adults working together, consoling one another, and offering ways to overcome the issue at hand collectively. I also found that there was a return to nature and respectful requests to Mother Earth. I thought this was a beautiful sentiment of Indigenous knowledges and admired the fact that young people today can still be appreciative of the spiritual, environmental side of education.

**Decolonizing Methods**

Colonization was (and arguably is) a long, painful process, and decolonizing is an even longer one (Tuck & Yang, 2012). The history of colonization and settler colonialism in Canada is often silenced and unspoken in curriculum. In order for the process of decolonization to begin, we need to acknowledge the need for Indigenous sovereignty and work together, Indigenous and non-Indigenous alike, to make this a reality. This means educating oneself about the knowledges that are silenced, and bringing them back into educative spaces. Hip hop is a basis for the complex work I aim to do on histories of settler colonialism, race, indigeneity, and sovereignty. I view the arts as a tool to begin decolonizing education because of the attention given to minority voices and to the powers it speaks back to.

In 1999, Dei proposed the use of Indigenous knowledges for the purpose of academic decolonization. He admits that it certainly is a political project, but one that he is indebted to because of his own colonized education in North America and Ghana. In the text *Reclaiming Indigenous Voice and Vision*, Battiste (2000) critiques the education system as being rooted in cognitive imperialism and assimilation and cultural racism, which perpetuates myths about Aboriginal people. Like Dei (1999), Battiste (2000) argues for an integration of Indigenous knowledges in education as essential components
for decolonizing systems of education. Examining the public school education, Battiste begins to deconstruct the major faults brought about by the dominant culture, and moves on to propose ideas on how to liberate the potentiality of Indigenous learners.

Although Battiste (2000) refers to public school education, this argument can also be applied to my research in anomalous spaces of learning, such as community centres, museums and art galleries. This is an indispensable text for non-Indigenous researchers doing work in this area of study. Re-imagining educational practices is an essential step toward reconstructing a system that honours and respects Indigenous cultures and one that acknowledges the importance of advocating for the preservation of Indigenous voices. My aim was to place this study within the realm of cultural studies, to examine the arts in Indigenous teachings and dismantle the stereotypes of the mythic other in arts education.

Looking back to Sontag (1977), when Europeans photographed colonized Black and Indigenous people, the power was in the hands of the ones appropriating the subject. But if we take the power out of the hands of the colonizer to create our own truth-filled images, then this act of resistance is successful. Therefore, if we view photographs as cultural windows (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1997), then we can counter the existing images that were taken by colonial powers. Remixed with the phenomena of hip hop, I believe that the timeless art of photography can be conceived of as a meaningful form of decolonizing education. By telling stories and teaching youth to further investigate colonial histories, we can shed light on issues around land sovereignty, culture, and language revitalization. These issues are referenced in the lyrics of Indigenous rappers who are using their artistic voices as social activism. I see photography enacting a
different yet shared duty, where it is a viable means to re-represent the self and the tarnished images that were, and still are, circulated about Indigenous people.

The history of photographing Black and Indigenous people was not always done with a justice-oriented lens. There are numerous cases of degrading slave photographs, and Indigenous misrepresentation and objectification: Even today, we still see racist colonial images that live as visual documents in our minds. Smith (2012) insists that in order for education to steer away from further indoctrination, Indigenous people need to be a part of formulating the curriculum and pedagogical methods in order for decolonization to begin in a system that raped its people of all culture, heritage, and language during the time of residential schooling. Applying various perspectives to educate pushes the curricular boundaries imposed by a colonial lens and encourages a wider frame of reference. I see the arts as a viable means to do this work.

The discourse of decolonizing methods is not only for Indigenous educators, but non-Indigenous as well. I believe that in order to be complete as a community everyone has a role to play in decolonizing our education system. Weber-Pilwax (2001) aims to articulate the foundations for Indigenous research through the rich cultural tradition of storytelling and listening to elders. The research stems from the author’s anger in seeing her people unfairly represented in history books. As a person of African descent, and with a deep connection to Indigenous peoples, I identify with her frustrations, passion, and desire to take action. I believe that my project will contribute to telling and exploring the stories of the historically marginalized voices that go unheard. If, as Thomas King (2003) states, “The truth about stories is that that’s all we are,” then as a community it is our job to retell and revive stories so they are told with a corrected lens. Hip hop artists are telling
stories, re-stating, re-implementing, reclaiming, remapping, reimagining, rewriting, and reframing their lived experiences so that their stories will be heard. Notably, hooks (2003) claims that one of the ways we become a learning community is by sharing and receiving stories, and this ritual of communication opens our minds and hearts.

One way of doing this is by teaching histories that are hidden or silenced, making considerations for not just one culture but all students and peoples, so that the diversities of cultures and knowledges are universally socialized and acknowledged (Battiste, 2013, p.147). To provide a more grounded and culturally responsive curriculum and disrupt the master script, I aim to dismantle and decolonize my practice by teaching about Black and Indigenous histories that are hidden and silenced. I believe that photography and hip hop should be conceived of as meaningful forms of teaching that can further investigate the narrative colonial histories and shed light on issues around land sovereignty, culture, and power relations.

To enrich my personal act of decolonizing education, I participated in a course entitled “Anishinaabe Peoples and Our Homelands” at Shingwauk Kinoomaage Gamig, also known as Shingwauk/Algoma University. My teacher was Elder Eddie Benton-Banai, author of The Mishomis Book and Grand Chief of the Three Fires Midewiwin Lodge. Elder Eddie began our first class with an affectionate story of one of his brothers, another elder, Nelson Mandela, whose spirit was struggling to leave the earth. The camaraderie and the solidarity that Elder Eddie spoke with made me realize that the relationship between Black and Indigenous communities has been an important alliance in the fight for equality for decades. As mentioned in my introduction, this experience, along with the
literature I am engaged with, informed and validated the vision I have for decolonizing arts education.

**Indigenous Knowledges**
The following literature review contributes to my understanding of knowledge systems outside of the dominant Eurocentric teachings, and allows me to further uncover the narratives of marginalized voices that deserve to be heard. Throughout this section I consider Indigenous knowledges from Canada, Australia, Ghana, and Kenya. Because of the various ways of knowing that take place within each nation, many scholars (Wane 2001, 2008; Battiste, 1999, 2001, 2008; Kovach, 2002; Smith, 2012; Dei, 1999, 2005, 2008) have noted the difficulties in collectively defining Indigenous knowledge. As an African Canadian scholar, I attempt to develop a discursive space that speaks to my position as an artist educator by taking into account the traditional ways of knowing.

Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012), in her highly quoted text *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, professes the following in the first few pages: “The word itself, ‘research’, is probably one of the dirtiest words in the indigenous world’s vocabulary” (Smith, p. xi). Although complex in thought, we must work through it’s complexity, and perhaps it is here that I see the act of working Indigenous knowledges into all aspects of curriculum as a means of resistance for the colonized. This sentence summarizes a people’s history that is wrought with imperialism and rooted in struggles, grief, misrepresentation, boundaries, and colonization. This text aims to contribute to the ways in which the social sciences consciously consider methodologies and approaches to research in Aboriginal communities that have a disdainful mistrust for what has been previously written. Smith insists that in order for education to steer away from further
indoctrination, Indigenous people need to be a part of formulating the curriculum and pedagogical methods. This is necessary for decolonization to begin in a system that raped its people of all culture, heritage, and language during the time of residential schooling.

Smith (2012) argues for a way of knowing rooted in critical theory, where researchers ask themselves critical questions about the subjects they are researching. Throughout the text, Smith offers reflections that outline her cynicism during the research journey but also her hope for research about Indigenous communities as Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars take up this sensitive journey. This sensitive journey that Smith (2012) describes is one that is further explored by Hudson and Taylor-Henry (2001) in the article “Beyond the Rhetoric: Implementing a Culturally Appropriate Research Project in First Nations Communities.” As a non-Indigenous scholar, this is something that I take into consideration as I embark on this sensitive journey with the utmost respect and a willingness to learn. PAR is generally understood as research that gives the subjects some measure of control over all phases of the research process. It is helpful to use this method with First Nations communities, as it helps produce socially legitimate knowledge that can contribute to the community’s autonomy through participation. Hudson and Taylor-Henry’s article chronicles the realities of a research project in an Ojibwe community in southeastern Manitoba and focuses on social service issues.

A useful term from Hudson and Taylor-Henry (2001) is the definition of culturally appropriate research. This type of research recognizes the difficulties that can arise from cultural differences between researchers and their subjects. The partnerships in PAR with First Nations communities aim to empower those communities and respect cultural values. These partnerships also involve a training component and recognize
traditional leaders as sources of expertise. The authors define four principles in conducting research with First Nations communities: elder input, the use of traditional language, a clear demonstration of benefit to the community, and First Nations control.

As I proceeded through the various stages of my research, I took every precaution to implement these four principles into an arts-based curriculum.

In the article “Indigenous Research Methodology: Exploratory Discussion of an Elusive Subject,” Weber-Pilwax (1999) clearly states that the offerings in her work are not meant to speak for the entire Aboriginal community, but as means of better understanding the newness of recognizing Indigenous knowledges. A discourse that includes Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants in Indigenous research methodology might include a consideration of certain principles. These principles might include, but are not limited to: (a) the interconnectedness of all living things, (b) the impact of motives and intentions on person and community, (c) the foundation of the research as lived Indigenous experience, (d) the groundedness of theories in Indigenous epistemology, (e) the transformative nature of research, (f) the sacredness and responsibility of maintaining personal and community integrity, and (g) the recognition of languages and cultures as living processes (Weber-Pilwax, 1999).

Further articulating her position on Indigenous methodologies in research, Weber-Pilwax (2001) identifies the foundations for Indigenous research through the rich cultural tradition of storytelling in this oral conference presentation entitled “What is Indigenous Research?” The research stems from the author’s anger in seeing her people unfairly represented in history books. This lead to her desire to document a research practice rooted in consciousness, which deconstructs and decolonizes existing dominant
discourses. Weber-Pilwax (2001) recognizes the integral importance of elders and community input in receiving knowledge from those who came before her. Hearing the words of other thinkers can contribute to a rich co-creation of knowledge where the intellectual input of participants becomes valorized in culturally relevant texts. This methodology demands a respect for Indigenous peoples, history, self, and knowledge creation in order to produce texts that are socially, culturally, and historically conscious.

To consider historically conscious texts and non-European knowledges, Dei (1999) claims that we must rethink Indigenous knowledges in the academy to honour and preserve the knowledge that is gained from groups outside of the dominant European ways of knowing. The challenge for education is that Indigenous knowledges work outside of the dominant structures of power and thus involve resistance to politically charged curriculum documents and troubling of the colonial project.

In *Reclaiming Indigenous Voice and Vision*, Battiste (2000) critiques the education system as being rooted in cognitive imperialism and assimilation and cultural racism, which perpetuates myths about Aboriginal people. Battiste (2000) argues for an integration of Indigenous knowledges in education as essential components for decolonizing systems of education. Examining the public school education, Battiste begins to deconstruct the major faults brought about by the dominant culture, and moves on to propose ideas on how to liberate the potentiality of Aboriginal learners. Along side the liberation of Indigenous students, I would also include the unlearning that needs to happen by non-Indigenous students, in order to reconstruct curriculum documents.

A very recent example of this in action happened in the past month (December 2015). Recognizing the need for this shift in education, a significant initiative was
launched by the Toronto District School Board, the Aboriginal Education Centre and the Art Gallery of Ontario. They devised a pilot course, which combines techniques of art with First Nations studies and is now mandatory for all grade nine students in forty-five Toronto high schools, which amounts to approximately 2,000 students. As an artist educator, researcher and an Indigenous ally, this initiative excites and reinvigorates my quest to decolonize education through the arts for three main reasons. The first reason stems from my passions and belief in the arts to help us facilitate difficult conversations about Indigenous people of Canada, using a creative making approach. The second reason is that the partnerships that were formed for this project in the name of art and to disseminate Indigenous knowledge. The Aboriginal education centre, The Toronto District school board, the largest school board in the nation, along with the Art Gallery of Ontario, the prominent provincial gallery banded together to form a network dedicated to correcting and teaching the histories of the first peoples of Canada. I also admire this blended partnership that has Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities working together for positive change in education. The third reason is that this is mandatory for all grade nine students in school. This is a well-timed initiative as it responds to the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s report. And I admire that it is mandatory for students as opposed to a program such as mine, which is optional and takes place outside of formal schooling, therefore reaching a smaller number of students. Regardless of my optimism, we still have to be cautious of how the information

is conveyed, who is conveying the information and continue to discuss methods to infuse Indigenous knowledge in all areas of education.

Battiste works with fellow Aboriginal scholar James Youngblood Henderson to examine the trajectory of the curriculum for First Nations communities. Battiste and Henderson (2000) state that ecological stories are carried through oral traditions in ceremonies and art; we write these mysteries in the structure of our language and our ways of knowing. There are multiple levels of communication with the land that are essential to acknowledge. Although Indigenous communities have experienced the colonization of their ecologies, creations, minds, and spirits, they have endured and are making attempts to heal wounds from the past.

In order for other voices to be heard, Afrocentric scholars (Asante, 2000, 2003; Dei, 1999, 2002; Wa Ngugi, 1986; and Wane, 2001, 2008) have advocated for the integration of African Indigenous knowledges into curricular documents to begin the process of decolonization. Wane (2008) points to Indigenous knowledges and practices as a form of anti-colonial resistance and urges recognition of Indigenous knowledges as living experience informed by ancestral voices (p. 184). In her articulation of her own colonial education, Wane uses Said (1994) to theorize the process of maintaining and enforcing imperialism through education as a form of colonization. Wane’s key questions for her study are (a) how did colonial systems of education disrupt the spiritual and cultural beliefs and traditional ways of life of African peoples? (b) how have colonized peoples, especially African women, resisted, and how do they continue to resist, colonial education? and (c) how can the engagement of Indigenous knowledges transform pedagogical approaches, curriculum, and learning in the academy? (Wane, 2008, p. 183).
Scholars such as Maurial (1999), Wangoola (2000), and Castellano (2000), among others, state that Indigenous knowledges are outcomes of interactions that occur among families and communities. Indigenous knowledges are holistic, and there is no division between different forms of knowledge, teaching, or learning because all the learning and teachings are intertwined within the context of everyday interactions (Wane, 2008, p. 191). Within this framework of indigeneity, Wane (2008) offers a discursive space to engage with Indigenous knowledges from Kenya. She works within a feminist theoretical perspective that places women in the centre and allows the researcher to begin a systematic inquiry. In doing this, Wane probes at questions that interrogate the self in order to begin the process of decolonization and recognizes education as a colonial project that she is a part of. This resonated with me because of how the author utilized a Black feminist perspective to provide an honest and reflective knowledge of herself.

Battiste and Henderson (2000) believe that in order to restore the things that were lost in the colonial project, a renaissance and empowerment of intercultural diplomacy is needed. The authors advocate for a melding of knowledges that include wider perspectives rather than merely a Eurocentric lens. I see my work here as an intercultural exchange of music and art between Black and Indigenous populations, whereby the act of decolonization is alive in the rich exchange of, or focus on, Indigenous knowledges and the traditional teachings of both groups at work. The act of using these different perspectives to educate pushes against the curricular boundaries imposed by a colonial lens and encourages a wider frame of reference.

25 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rfHhN4ncC14
Chapter 4

Methodology

Introduction
Photography and hip hop are the lenses I use to study the problem of master scripting, and my approach to this research is through critical ethnography. By utilizing critical ethnography, I will be able to question power structures and inequities and provide potential ways to move forward. The goal of my project was to investigate how IYAs utilize photography and hip hop in an arts-based educational program as a resource to discuss social identity, space as related to territorial land, and the legacies of settler colonialism on education. My data set includes photography, creative writing, hip hop, interviews, and journal entries, which aim to answer my research questions.

Research Questions
1. How do Indigenous youth utilize a photography and hip hop–based educational program as a resource to explore social identity, space, and the legacies of settler colonialism on education?
2. How do these findings benefit and inform youth programming and youth studies? How do programs such as mine help Indigenous youth flesh out complexities in the urban environment?

**Critical Ethnography**

In order to understand the tenets of critical ethnography, it is best to first understand its emergence from ethnography. Ethnography is a qualitative research-design approach that is based on the study of the everyday life of a culture-sharing group. The researcher is immersed in the day-to-day lives of participants as they study and document the group, typically through participant observation, and on-on-one interviews with group members. Ethnographic researchers describe and interpret the shared, learned patterns of values, beliefs, behaviours, and language of a culture-sharing group (Harris, 1968, qtd. in Creswell, p. 90). Ethnography emerged in cultural anthropology in the early 20th century with anthropologists such as Radcliffe-Brown, Boas, Malinowski, and Mead (Creswell, p. 91).

For my research project, I employed the methodology of critical ethnography. I adhere to and break from traditional notions of ethnography based in anthropology, where my focus was on vignettes and cultural production rather than solely thick descriptions of the culture sharing group. I was immersed with the culture sharing group of IYAs at the Native Youth Drop In for a period of six months, half the time I volunteered and the other half I conducted my arts based educational program. I looked for meanings of social interaction that told the narrative of young peoples social lives at the drop-in. I found this new way of doing ethnography opened up platforms for the IYAs to critically examine the effects of settler colonialism on their education, social identity and land/place. Critical
ethnography provided me with the framework to theorize the data I collected, through a lens that questions power structures and positionality, of how IYAs utilize services at the NYDI\textsuperscript{26} in Toronto.

Critical ethnographers seek research accounts sensitive to the dialectical relationship between the social structural constraints on human actors and the relative autonomy of human agency. The overriding goal of critical ethnography is to free individuals from sources of domination and repression (Anderson, p. 249). The trajectory from anthropology to critical ethnography and education are best summarized by Anderson (1998), who states that the ethnographic movement began in the field of education during the late 1960s and early 1970s. The works of Cusick (1973), Henry (1963), Jackson (1968), Ogbu (1974), Rist (1973), Smith and Geoffrey (1968), Wolcott (1973), and others provided examples of the genre that later educational ethnographers would emulate (Anderson, p. 250).

Ethnographies in art education are numerous: performance ethnography (Denzin, 2003); performed ethnographies (Goldstein, 2001; Gallagher, 2011); ethnography and decolonization (Reyes, 2008); hip hop and ethnography (Lashua, 2007; Fox & Lashua, 2007); media studies (Kral, 2011); and drama (Linds, and Ritenburg, et al., 2013). As well, the edited text by Postma and Crawford (2006), Reflecting Visual Ethnography, is a collection of papers on using the camera and photographs in research. However, there are few critical ethnographic studies focusing on Indigenous youth, and this is where I see my contribution to the field. As Kral (2011) states, “Relatively little ethnographic information is available on how Indigenous youth are shaping the creative, cultural and

\textsuperscript{26} The name of the centre has been changed for the purpose of this study.
communicative uses of new media, and how and why these practices are taking place in remote contexts.” To this I add that there is little written on critical ethnographic studies with Indigenous youth in the arts.

Recently, numerous critiques of, and guidelines for, new ethnographers doing work in unlikely and sensitive settings have emerged. Critical ethnography developed out of these guidelines as a politically oriented approach to ethnography, where “a critical ethnographer will study issues of power, empowerment, inequality, inequity, dominance, repression, hegemony, and victimization” (Thomas, 1993, p. 94). Simon and Dippo (1986) describe one’s interest in critical ethnography as both pedagogical and political and state, “It is linked to our assessment of our own society as inequitably structured and dominated by a hegemonic culture that suppresses a consideration and understanding of why things are the way they are and what must be done for things to be otherwise” (Simon & Dippo, p. 196). This notion of critical ethnography as both political and pedagogical is essential to my research. To further examine why and how Indigenous youth feel that art provides them with a voice to speak out to these matters, I analyze the issues of power that arise in connection with Indigenous youth and society around issues of inequity and hegemony as linked to social identity, space and place, education, and legacies of settler colonialism.

Ethnographic studies on and with Indigenous youth include McCarty’s numerous ethnographies on Native language loss and revitalization (2011, 2014); a study by Linds, Ritenburg, et al., (2013), who use drama as a way to discuss Aboriginal health issues; Alwyn’s (2004) dissertation, which is a critical ethnography that traces Mi’kmaq historical roots in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia and provides a history of more than a
century of life from the perspectives of the people; and a critical dialogue on film, visual sovereignty and ethnography by Michelle Raheja (2007).

Much of the literature includes projects that have multiple authors listed with multiple levels of involvement. These authors include community members, elders, youth, and the researchers as co-collaborators in the process of study. This collaboration between multiple authors is something I would like to implement in my next research project. The community-based ethnographic research project by Linds, Ritenberg, et al., (2013) in southern Saskatchewan was conducted by a group of academic researchers, health practitioners, and theatre artists who have been working with the File Hills Qu’Appelle Tribal Council Health Services (p. 37). The research team strives to deconstruct colonial relationships through their institutional, community, and school-based collaboration. The project’s primary goal is to engage Indigenous youth through theatre to explore health issues that affect their lives and communities due to the effects of settler colonialism (p. 38).

As the researcher, I was immersed in my educational ethnography for a period of six months. Initially, I volunteered at the NYDI for three months to get to know the youth and the community that was served by the centre. Their strong narratives of their lived experiences are what created this dissertation. I am grateful to have had the initial time with the group, which is how I built relationships that would carry me into the arts-based educational workshop portion of my time at the centre. I was at the centre for a total of six months, but my workshop took place during the last three months. I visited the drop-in for three hours once each week to facilitate my arts-based workshop.
**Positionality**
The supplementary questions and considerations that I address in my study derive from Soyani Madison (2005) and focus on the researcher’s positionality. Madison emphasizes the vital nature of being aware of one’s positionality because it forces us to acknowledge our own power, privilege, and biases as we are denouncing the power structures that surround our subjects (p.7). For my project, I believe it is especially important to consider my positionality as a treaty person and as an outsider to the Indigenous culture I am conducting research on. This concern for positionality is evident in the critical ethnographies by Ibrahim’s (1999) study on hip hop and the politics of ESL learning, as well as Alwyn’s thesis study (2004), which examines how traditional language and hunting have been taken from the Mi’kmaq people of Newfoundland. An essential reason for choosing critical ethnography as my approach is that it stresses the reflexivity of the researcher and probes at not only the subjects, but also the self, and makes us more accountable, which I feel is key to this research project I am undertaking.

As expressed by Kovach, “As a reflexivity method of research, situating the self authorizes expression of the relevant narrative from personal experiences, those reminiscences of life rooted in our earliest experience that shape our understanding of the world” (p. 110). This statement by Kovach (2009) has truly helped me realize my hopes, reflections and struggles as a non-Indigenous, non-white person conducting research on/with Indigenous communities. This critical acknowledgement is what Madison understands as reflexive ethnography: it is a “turning back” on ourselves (Davis, 1999, qtd. in Madison, 2005), and when we turn back we are responsible and accountable for our own research paradigms and our own positions of authority (Madison, p. 7). Being reflexive in research takes a clear conscience, personal introspection, and respect for your
participants and the work you are doing. Perhaps one of the biggest limitations of this methodology is that, through the reflexive process, the research could potentially become too personal and hinder a true examination of the data. Being reflexive is a clear awareness of one’s positionality and authority, of power structures, and offers an honest reflection on why this research is being conducted, whom it benefits, and the cultural and political structures at stake.

I view the significance of the relationship between Black and Indigenous communities and the connections these communities seek through the resistance of hip hop music. As it focuses on two groups of people who have been historically marginalized by the state, my research begs for a different type of question in regard to my positionality as a mixed-race Black woman who is conducting research on and with Indigenous groups. Madison (2005) pointedly articulates a question I have been grappling with for some time: “What difference does it make when the ethnographer himself comes from a history of colonization and disenfranchisement?” (p. 7). As a person who is from a history of colonization and disenfranchisement, I have been working through this question on a personal level since I first conceived of this research problem. I will probe at this question throughout my investigation. This form of ethnography provides the critical lens for my project to truly question ideas of power and inequity in connection with participants’ relationships with race, indigeneity, and settler colonialism. The following sections will outline my project by providing details on how I entered the field, staging and participants, research design, data collection, analysis, and ethical considerations.
**Entering the Field**
As previously stated, I completed a course outside of my degree in order to better understand the research I was undertaking and as a means to decolonize my own education. I did not want to just speak about decolonizing education: I wanted to put my theory into practice. The course was entitled “Anishinaabe Peoples and Our Homelands” at Shingwauk/Algoma University in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, near Garden River First Nation. I considered this course as recognition and valorization of the work I was doing. This is when I first talked to Elder Eddie Benton-Banai about my work and learned about my Jamaican heritage as connected to the Anishinaabe. Although this was not necessarily my entry to the field, it marked a seminal point in my research. This is also where I met Deanna, now a friend, who invited me into her workplace, the NYDI, to do a workshop when she learned about my research. I began by volunteering at the centre during her programming hours. I volunteered at the NYDI two hours per week over the course of three months to immerse myself in the field and become familiar with the young people at the drop-in.

From my previous experience as an artist educator, in order for pedagogical goals to be successful, it is best to earn the trust of the youth that the project will be working with. There was some trepidation from the youth at first, but I got to know some of them and was able to establish relationships. One thing I learned during my volunteer time was the significance of feasting. The centre offers two hot meals per day. I was usually there in the evenings; therefore, I caught much of the dinner service and was able to participate in the sharing of food. A staff member and a couple of youths prepared the meals. The meals were self-service and everyone cleaned up after him or herself by putting dishes in the dishwasher and garbage in the bins. I helped wash the big serving dishes as a way to
show my appreciation and get involved in the group. While volunteering I noticed the dynamics of cliques of young people and documented this in my journals. This volunteer experience helped me to design and implement my program. I began to understand the need for such a centre and the various programs it offered the youth who used the services, and who were often in a transitional state in regards to housing, school, relationships, anger issues, family, or migration.

As a mature student entering my PhD, I had the desire to start a family with my partner during the tenure of this degree. Both of us wanted to have children and realized timing would be essential. In recognition of this, I worked diligently to get to a place in my research where I would feel comfortable taking some time off for a pregnancy and not have any regrets in doing so. Admittedly, I was unsure of when that time was going to be. There is a surplus of research available on the best time to get pregnant while doing a doctorate, and I confess I read a few articles, but essentially it was up to me, or rather, up to us.

I completed my course work during my first year, then worked meticulously to complete my comprehensive exams, proposal, and fieldwork in the second year of my program. Fascinatingly, once I finished my fieldwork, I felt ready, mentally, physically, and academically to be pregnant. And then it happened. I gave birth my precious little daughter, Knowledge Nour Hudson, in the fall term of my third year. I could not have asked for more support from my committee and the other professors in my program. It was truly a gift to have this support in such a tumultuous time. For this I am grateful as I acknowledge that this is not always the case at all universities and in all programs.
There are several criteria for a good ethnography as situated by many ethnographic researchers, one of them being self-disclosure. I write about my pregnancy not only because it transformed my life, but also because it had an impact on my positionality as a researcher and the need to be reflexive in critical ethnography. In *Dancing on Our Turtle’s Back*, Anishinaabe scholar Leanne Betasamosake Simpson (2011) discusses bringing forth a new life and reflects on creation stories and the beginning of time. She has this story to tell,

> This story is important for young women to know because they re-create this story in pregnancy. When we create new life, it is an extension of ourselves, just as Original Man was an extension of Gzhwe Mnidoo. In the same way, our thoughts, our breath, and our heartbeat pulses in the new life we carry in our sacred waters” (p. 39).

Reading this passage from Simpson truly gave me the confidence to write my story into this dissertation, disclosing a very personal aspect of my life into my research, and recognizing just how much joy this new little life would bring.

One criterion of particular interest to me in critical ethnography is “a self-disclosure and reflexivity by the researcher about her or his position in the research; another one is an explanation overall of how the culture-sharing group works; identification of issues that arose ‘in the field’ that reflect on the relationship between the researcher and the participants, the interpretive nature of reporting, and sensitivity and reciprocity in the co-creating of the account” (Creswell, p. 263). During my pregnancy I felt a heightened sense of the research being co-created with my participants, with their time with me in the field taking on a more nuanced meaning.
At the end of my research residency I was seven months pregnant, and so I noted this change in my positionality. I became a woman who was obviously with child. I was one of those women who had a wonderful pregnancy, free of illness and filled with glow. As my belly got bigger, I felt more vulnerable, revealed, and almost delicate, yet strong and empowered at the same time, because I was fostering a new life inside of me. My youth participants became more nurturing and showed a great deal of empathy for my growing state. It was a gentle feeling of closeness that stemmed from the nurture they were projecting. I feel like this event brought us closer together because my pregnancy allowed the participants to learn personal aspects of my life that I perhaps, would not have had the chance to share. I started out as the researcher: the one who gets close to her participants through her own power, sets a pace, and makes decisions; yet as my pregnant belly grew larger, so too did the roles of researcher and researched. As much as these youth were letting me into their lives, they were coming into my life through the intimacy of my pregnancy. My positionality as the researcher shifted. I was in the position of being researched by my participants, with warm stories being shared, emotions revealed and futures planned. I documented this in my field notes because I vividly remember the shift in my positionality and the fact that I was able to offer some of my personal story, while they also offered theirs.

Participants and Staging
The participants I recruited are youth who use the various services at the NYDI in Toronto, which is part of a larger organization. The agency serves Native families and children in the Toronto area, including First Nations, Metis, and Inuit: all those with Indigenous heritage who choose to be served by the agency. The mission includes creating a services model that is culture-based and respecting the values of Native
peoples, the extended family, and the right to self-determination. The NYDI is open six days per week, offers programming for youth, and provides individual counselling, support, and advocacy in the areas of housing, welfare, employment, and legal help. Youth are encouraged to spend time with staff and other youth at the centre during drop-in hours.

**Recruitment**
As an outsider to the NYDI, I gained access through my colleague, Deanna, who is a Youth Justice Worker at the centre. My project was mounted under her regular guest programming for youth, and she is a consultant. The youth in my study were between the ages of 18 and 25. The sample size was between five and nine participants on a given day, but I have chosen to focus on the voices of the youth who were most committed to the program for various reasons. Although the focus is on a selection of youth, I have showcased a spattering of their voices throughout the paper.

To recruit participants, I created a poster with a set of questions meant to garner the youth’s attention. The questions on the poster were: (a) Do you love or like hip hop or photography and why? (b) Has hip hop or photography influenced your life? (c) Who are your role models? and (d) Do you want to learn about Black and Indigenous histories? Deanna distributed the posters around the centre and collected the names of interested youth. Initially I was unsure of how many participants would be interested in my workshop and was slightly unprepared for the inconsistent participation. I understand that youth have priorities and doing an art workshop is not always at the top of the list: housing, work, family obligations, and transportation were all factors affecting attendance. My colleague identified that one of the downfalls in running programming that is not mandatory, consequential, or tied to school is that there is generally low attendance
because the youth have no obligation or incentive to complete the program. She named this as the number one issue for low attendance because although the youth are very interested, other responsibilities trump their interest in art making and cultural production.

The four youth that I focus on for this study attended at least eight out of the 12 workshops.

**Compensation**
I did not receive any external funding for my doctoral work, so the funds that I paid my participants were out of pocket. I made sure to thank them for their time, but I also acknowledged that finances are often precarious, and so my intent was to provide as much as I could manage financially. The youth in the study all received two tokens per session, plus dinner and snacks. Throughout the 12-week session, there were four to six dedicated youth who consistently contributed to the workshops. I compensated them with a $20 gift card for Tim Hortons and a $75 honorarium, for a total of $95 for each young person. Throughout our time together, we bought many coffees from Tim Hortons, so I knew they would make use of this gift card. They were absolutely not expecting this, but they were grateful for the extra help. For the educators I interviewed, I also gave a small honorarium of $50 each. I wish I could have given more, but as a graduate student my funds are limited. Outside of monetary gifts, each time I met with an elder, I offered tobacco as a customary gesture of appreciation.

**Sites and Significance**
Situated in critical pedagogical studies, the design of this project sheds a new light on how the arts can assist IYAs express issues that are affecting their lives and how the arts can help decolonize education. While the majority of time was spent at the NYDI, we
were also off site on field trips to enhance the learning experience of the participants. My rationale behind taking the youth outside of the centre was to expand their field of knowledge in the visual arts and expose them to various institutional sites of post-secondary education and cultural production. The field trips included a photo shoot in Kensington market, a guided tour of an exhibition by an education officer at the Ryerson Image Centre (RIC), a workshop by the chair of the Indigenous Visual Culture program at OCAD University.

**Ryerson Image Centre**
Situated on the grounds of Ryerson University in Toronto, I opted to take the youth in my program to the Ryerson Image Centre because I thought it would enrich the participants’ knowledge of Canadian photography. I also wanted to expose them to potential future study at a post-secondary institution. I thought it would provide the participants with a starting point to discuss and critique images, but it actually did more than that: it became personal. It instigated a conversation of Indigenous representation in photographs and unintentionally opened up conversations about the state of reserves in Ontario. The education officer was excited to host our group and was most hospitable in her tour, fielding any questions the youth had. She also provided dinner and TTC tokens, all free of charge. By doing this, she instilled confidence in my perception of how this institution understands youth and their needs.

**OCAD University**
Another space I chose to take my participants was OCAD University, my alma mater and the institution where I now teach. I had a chance meeting with the chair of the Indigenous Visual Culture program and told him about the work I was doing with the youth at NYDI as part of my study. We started talking about the Eurocentric spaces of artistic production
and he was intrigued by my research around Indigenous youth and the arts. He invited me to bring my group to do a workshop with him, and of course I said yes. Not only did we do a workshop with the chair but my goal was to forge relationships between the youth and a post-secondary institution by exposing them to the various avenues they could take in the future and showing them that there were Indigenous spaces that could make them feel connected to the school and that education could take on new meanings for Indigenous people.

**Kensington Market**
When planning the curriculum of this workshop, I thought Kensington would be a fruitful place to begin taking pictures. In retrospect I did not consider for whom it would be fruitful and why. I thought of myself, as I have a strong connection to the space, but did not think of my participants, who had little or no connection to Kensington. Upon reflection, I should have chosen a different place. Many of the youth had never even been to the market, and I was bringing them to this space so they could capture images to represent their identity. Kensington Market has special place-based memories for me, and so I thought it would be a good visual backdrop for our study. In retrospect, I should have given more consideration to the youth’s lived experience and consulted them on the location, instead of deciding where and of what they would take pictures. This was a true learning experience for me. However, the youth were great and made the most of the experience.

**Research Design**
The course of action I followed for this study is as follows:
1. I designed and implemented an arts-based education program to explore the legacy of settler colonialism on social identity, relations, space and place, and education. I was approved to conduct a digital storytelling workshop (although this evolved into something new) at the NYDI. I guided participants through the sessions from start to finish. The program ran for 12 weeks, for a total of 24 hours, with 5 to 14 youth participants on a given day. I also conducted interviews with youth participants, artist educators, and elders.

2. I conducted research using arts-based methods to collect data, in order to analyze some effects of settler colonialism on identity, space and place, and education.

3. Once the program was complete I transcribed the interviews, conversations, and journal entries to combine these into one cohesive document.

4. I analyzed the data, looked for reoccurring themes, and coded the findings accordingly.

**Data Collection and Arts-Based Methods**

To collect my data I used a combination of arts-based methods and interviews to conduct my research. In the early 20th century, Dewey argues, “The impulse toward learning begins with an experience” (Dewey in Barone, 2012, p. 41). Dewey’s concept of the human capacity to assemble sensory experiences is exemplified in my project. Eisner (2002) advocates curriculum and teaching strategies that foster the development of students’ cognitive processes, thus providing them with the opportunities to use and strengthen the vast amount of their intellectual facilities. As an artist, I am drawn to arts-based methods because they allow for creative cognitive expression in the way data is collected, received, and analyzed.
For my project, I used arts-based methods to collect my data, namely photography, creative writing, and music. Here, I refer to the following characteristics of arts-based educational research as suggested by Cahnmann-Taylor and Siegesmund (p. 2),

Arts based methods of research refer to researchers using the arts with participants in a study; an innovative way to deploy a range of literary, visual, and performing arts through all stages of research and a means to collect data and display findings, challenging us to think creatively about what constitutes research (2008).

The photographs captured by the youth are a testament to the rich narrative work that the image does.

Writing on the value of arts-based inquiry, Bochner and Ellis (2003) suggest, “The product of research, whether an article, a graph, a poem, a story, a play, a dance, or a painting [or a song], is not something to be received, but something to be used; not a conclusion but a turn in a conversation; not a closed statement but an open question; not a way of declaring ‘this is how it is’ but a means of inviting others to consider what it (or they) could become” (p. 507, p. 88 qtd. in Lashua thesis).

Using hip hop and photography as a platform to discuss settler colonialism, solidarity, indigeneity, and social relations, I aimed to teach the youth participants about histories that are not heard, and to question the absence of these histories. Through the use of writing about lived experiences and telling their stories, learners were encouraged to celebrate their rich cultural heritage using arts-based methods of practice. As I worked with the group, I recorded conversations, jotted down notes, and allowed time for my own reflexive debrief after each session. I wrote detailed journal notes and photographs
to document my time with the group. To use photographs pedagogically, Simon (2006) suggests that we consider visual public history, as it provides more than a version of the past: These documents provide a particular historical truth and images as witnesses of certain events. In examining the pedagogical force of photography and hip hop, I articulate some meanings revealed in the discussions and in my analysis that may disclose nostalgia, injustices, cultural significance, confidence, and shared struggles enacted by settler colonialism. As Simon (2006) notes, it is imperative to use the visual image as a tool to learn about the pleasant and unpleasant visual representations from our past and in order to comprehend the complex historical and cultural narratives of communities.

Perhaps it is here that cultural encounters are archived by photographs to commemorate the beautifully peaceful times as well as the rocky, horrifying, or tumultuous moments that give shape to our lives.

The series of arts-based workshops I devised probed at questions around race, indigeneity, cultural heritage, social identity, and education. Using a critical ethnographic approach, I was reflexive as I documented my observations through personal journal entries, and recorded observations of the participants during sessions and in their everyday setting. Methods of data collection used throughout the workshop included participant observations documented in field notes; interviews; journaling; discussions with participants; and the collection of artwork produced during the residency.

**Meaningful Action**

As I documented my fieldwork, I devised a system of note taking and colour coding, using various coloured inks, in my journals. As a visual learner these coloured inks helped me to organize thoughts in my head for later consideration. Also stemming from
my visual arts background is my desire to document my processes using text and, sometimes, image. During the sessions I was able to take some notes, but most of the time I chose to be in the experience with the participants, rather than have my head in a book, scrambling to jot down notes: I desired to be present and attentive. So after each session I set aside an hour of writing and journaling time and used a free-writing method to document my thoughts. My free-writing process is scattered and messy, yet detailed and methodical, and helped me to debrief by making sure I documented what stood out for me during the workshop. During interviews I was able to be a little more attentive to taking field notes, and asked the participants’ permission before I brought out my journal. Because I recorded the interviews, I didn’t need to take many notes, but sometimes follow-up questions would arise which I would pose at a later time. This was my organizational system for journaling and note taking in the field.

Part of this organizational system was implementing meaningful action, which has three core concepts: analysis, meaningful field, culture and social systems (Carspaken, p. 10). Meaningful action is based on body language, emotions, and other nuances that are not provided in the text: “This just means that the researcher attempts to understand the meaning of typical acts in much the same way that the actors themselves do but to reconstruct or make explicit the cultural themes drawn upon in the construction of routines” (Carspaken, p. 10). In my data-collection process I used meaningful fields to document and express my feelings and interpretations of what was happening. I diligently kept notes in my journals after every session, and I allotted an hour of additional time post-session to sit and reflect on the emotions, nuances, and themes that surfaced. From
the meaningful field, I was able to gather and see various themes, some of which were unintended, about my culture-sharing group.

**Interviews**
Throughout the data collection process, I conducted several interviews. For this project, I chose to showcase a selection of youth voices from my full set. The selection that I chose is significant because these youth consistently participated in the workshops. Some youth could only commit to two or three sessions because of other commitments, such as work, school, relocating, and family. My data set includes interviews with three artist educators, all of whom are practicing the arts and educating on Indigenous histories. I knew all of the educators so I was able to begin with a conversational introduction that set a relaxed mood for the duration of the interviews, which were 45 to 60 minutes in length. Each educator answered a set of questions, and the conversation was also organic with some ad lib elements included. Although I did not use the interviews from the artist educators, they helped me think through and better understand the roots of the issues the youth faced. I also conducted another set of interviews with youth participants. These interviews were shorter than those with the educators, mainly because I focused on different themes for each, and also because I spent much more time with the youth participants during the residency of my workshop. Each interview was approximately 20 to 30 minutes, which I recorded and later transcribed. For the purpose of this project I focused on a mix of the individual youth interviews for my findings and analysis chapter. Once I completed all the interviews, I transcribed them using Microsoft Word.
**Listening to Elders**
As part of my own process of decolonizing education, I aim to follow the path of honouring Indigenous knowledges. For me this means regarding research techniques outside the canon of Eurocentricity, including the voices of Indigenous people, and listening to Elders. Honouring Indigenous knowledges is also a part of the ethical considerations I have taken in my research. For my project, I met with several elders to discuss my project and the questions I am grappling with as a mixed-race Black woman with unknown Indigenous ancestry. I first spoke with Elder Eddie Benton-Banai, resident elder at Shingwauk University, and I then met with Elder Andrew Wesley at the First Nations House at University of Toronto. The elders offered advice and answered the questions I posed regarding my research. Their input is woven throughout this dissertation, but the majority is included in the implications chapter of my project.

**Gaining Access as an Outsider–Insider**
My positionality is one of an outsider who gained access through an insider. I came to this site through my colleague Deanna who works as a Youth Justice Worker at the NYDI. She is Ojibwe and Metis. We met at the course I took at Shingwauk/Algoma University with Elder Eddie Benton-Banai. Elder Eddie, or Bawdwaywidun, is a full blood Ojibwe-Anishinaabe of the Fish Clan from the *Odawazawguh i gunning*, or Lac Courte Oreilles, Reservation in northern Wisconsin. Elder Eddie is a strong advocate for culture-based education and relearning the sacred Anishinabemowin language. He is the presiding Grand Chief of the Three Fires Midewiwin Lodge.  

Deanna was one of 34 students in that course and the one I connected with most. Over the duration of the ten-day intensive course, we discussed many topics and eventually realized that we were neighbours in

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27 http://www.shingwauku.ca/about-us/staff-faculty/benton-banai
Toronto. However, it was this course that brought us together. Our discussions in the course connected with our work and the issues we were both passionate about. I told her about my doctoral work and she said if I ever needed a site, or wanted to do some art with youth, she would welcome the prospect. When I was considering sites for my fieldwork, I approached Deanna to discuss the NYDI as a potential site for my research. After a couple of meetings about the curriculum, youth, and facilities, she welcomed my program. In the scope of my project, Deanna was positioned in two roles. The first was as a youth justice worker: She mounted my workshop under her guest programming for youth. The second was as a youth participant in my workshops. This is how I came to be an outsider–insider in the field of qualitative academic research.

**Analysis**

During the transcription process, I was already looking for themes and reoccurring thoughts to which I would return later on. I determined themes and subthemes; decided which themes became important to my project; built hierarchies of themes or codes; and linked themes to conceptual models in my project (Ryan & Bernard, p. 85). Following this process, I organized and prepared; read through the data; and began a detailed analysis using a coding process. I advanced how the themes would be represented, and finally, arrived at an interpretation or meaning of the data (Creswell, 2003, p. 191-195). Potential themes included: settler colonialism, social identity, indigeneity, solidarity, and social relations. The themes that came out of the work were identity, schooling, and the reserve.

Throughout my research study, I employed three key elements from the tenets of critical ethnography. According to Carspecken (1996), critical ethnography must be
reconstructive in order to “determine interaction patterns, meanings, power relations, roles, interaction sequences, evidence of embodied meaning, inter-subjective structures, and other issues” (p. 10). Thus, I was reconstructive in my research to determine the reoccurring themes that surfaced during my fieldwork. I paid close attention to interaction sequences that made up the social identities of the youth, the inter-subjective structures as defined by the reserve, and power relations in schooling or education. This criterion from Carspecken helped me narrow my major themes and recognize the importance of what I had observed.

In addition to the textual data, I also collected arts-based data from my youth participants. I followed a similar process with the cultural production that I followed with the text-based material. To organize the material, I collected photographs, music, and creative writing into one file to be easily accessed. Once I had all of the means of cultural production in one file, I began the coding process, looking for themes or provocative images that could speak to the themes I had gleaned from my texts. My bank of photographs was large, with images of the youth in various settings. They displayed landscapes, close ups, architecture, the reserve, nature, and various other interests that embody youthful minds. Looking through the photographs was overwhelming, as I realized that I could not use all the data I had collected. In conversation with my supervisor and committee members, we devised criteria for editing and analysis, the strongest guideline being that I should choose the pieces of cultural production that helped move along the conversations I wanted to have in my dissertation. The remaining pieces could be banked for future use. Admittedly, this conversation calmed my anxiety. It really put my mind at ease to know that I could not and did not need to use all of the
data I had collected in my fieldwork. In the end I decided on six photographs, two pieces of creative writing and four songs. Each piece complements my textual data and speaks to my major themes of social identity, schooling, and the reserve within the context of settler colonialism, solidarity, race, indigeneity, and decolonization. Finally, I interpreted the results of my full data set with the goal of answering my research questions.

During my data analysis I looked for patterns—similarities, disparities, trends, and other relationships—and thought about what these patterns might mean. From my data, I looked for moments of solidarity that happened within the hip hop educational project, as well as in the external interviews I conducted with participants. I found that the project became more than just something that was centred on hip hop, and it became much bigger than simply an art form: it became a deeply engaging project while hanging out with youth. To elaborate, I investigated patterns I saw, what this data was telling me, how I could use this data to advance this field of education, the stories behind outliers, relationships between and among data sets, and the external factors that may have affected the data. After these considerations, I edited the data for accuracy, repetition, consistency, and completeness. Once that step was finished and I had a concise data set, I provided a descriptive analysis to classify the observations according to key factors such as settler colonialism, solidarity, indigeneity, and education.

**Data Set**

My data set for this project consists of the following:

1. My field notes, which will include documentation of each session, my debriefing after each session, and reflexive thoughts on how to move forward. I have a total of five journals filled with notes, observations, and reflections.
2. Arts-based documents including photographs, creative writing, and sketches.
3. A transcript of relevant formal and informal conversations that I recorded during my study, along with observations about the workshops.

**Transcribing**
Once I gathered my full data set, which included interviews, journals, recorded discussions, photographs, and creative writing, the first step I took was to transcribe the journals and interviews, in order to have a collected whole of all of the textual data. I transcribed, coded, and analyzed my data set over an eight-month period. I transcribed all the interviews, the discussions that I recorded during sessions, and the notes I made in my journals. In total I transcribed eight interviews that were 45 to 65 minutes in length, six discussions ranging in length from 25 to 60 minutes, and seven journals (6 x 9 inches, with 50 pages each). The next step I took was to code the data. Coding involved looking for themes, colour-coding the dominant themes, then grouping all the data under each theme.

**Ethical Considerations**
Ethical considerations for this project include a sensitivity to the community I am serving. Historically, Indigenous people have been subject to unjust and unethical research studies by non-Indigenous researchers. Entering into a discourse that includes Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants, with an academic focus on Indigenous research methodology, might include a consideration of certain principles. These principles might include, but are not limited to: (a) the interconnectedness of all living things, (b) the impact of motives and intentions on person and community, (c) the foundation of research as lived Indigenous experience, (d) the groundedness of theories in Indigenous epistemology, (e) the transformative nature of research, (f) the sacredness and
responsibility of maintaining personal and community integrity, and (g) the recognition of languages and cultures as living processes (Weber-Pilwax, 1999). In each interview, discussion, and workshop I conducted, I was sure to be very clear that this would be a voluntary agreement, and that in no way did the youth have to give consent to their information if they did not want to. They were allowed to participate even if they did not want to give up all of their work. This was a part of my ethical research practice.

As noted in my literature review, a useful term from Hudson and Taylor-Henry (2001) is the definition of culturally appropriate research. This type of research recognizes the difficulties that can arise from cultural differences between researchers and their subjects. The partnerships in PAR with First Nations communities aims to empower communities, respect cultural values, and it also involves a training component and recognizes traditional leaders as sources of expertise. The authors define four principles in conducting research with First Nations communities: elder input, use of traditional language, a clear demonstration of benefit to the community, and First Nations control. As I carried out various stages of my research, I took every precaution to implement these key considerations into my arts based curriculum.

Additionally, I also referenced the Government of Canada’s document on research ethics, the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans. Chapter Nine, entitled, Research Involving First Nations, Inuit and Metis People of Canada was particularly relevant. In addition to the principles detailed below, I also recognized and held high the key considerations in research involving Aboriginal peoples, which include respect for human dignity, Aboriginal diversity, Indigenous knowledge systems, and cultural heritage. In Cultural Missteps and Ethical
guiding principles around ethical considerations for researchers doing work with
Indigenous and other marginalized communities. The principles they offer stem from the
four core principles within the Canadian Psychological Association’s (2000) Code of
Ethics,28 which the authors adapted for researchers. When considering conducting
research involving marginalized groups, researchers should promote a sense of self-
determination among research participants and develop safeguards to help promote and
acknowledge participants’ rights, needs, and perspectives (p. 240).

Principle I is “respect for the dignity of persons”: for researchers working with
consistently marginalized groups, one must acknowledge that the perspectives and rights
of these groups have been ignored; therefore, researchers should develop safeguards to
help promote and acknowledge their rights, needs and perspectives to help protect them
and increase their autonomy. Principle II is “responsible caring,” which explains that self-
reflection is key to a truthful project. During the development and implementation of my
research project, I was self-reflective of my positionality, personal values, experiences,
and social context, to help understand the actions I performed for the duration of my
project. Principle III, “integrity in relationships,” promotes the use of the highest integrity
in the work of the researcher. Integrity is defined as accuracy, straightforwardness,
openness, and honesty, where heightened self-knowledge makes it possible for
researchers to more accurately represent themselves to the marginalized group. This
principle promotes an open and honest dialogue of trust and respect. Throughout my data
collection stage and during my programming, I found this principle to be the most

28 http://www.cpa.ca/aboutcpa/committees/ethics/codeofethics
important to me because I was the one asking for something from my participants: I was gathering information on the IYAs, asking them to share their opinions and thoughts for the purpose of research. As well, I also personally wanted to get to know them.

And finally, Principle IV is “responsibility to society,” which encourages researchers to work toward the benefit and greater good of society. In research involving marginalized groups, one must be open and willing to form partnerships with community members, develop self-knowledge, and be open to suggested change. Each of these actions aims to better understand and be sensitive to the issues and problems encountered within the community that the researcher is working in. When I initially started to conceive of this project, I consulted elders in order to talk through my thoughts and receive their blessing to move forward. At different phases of my project, I met with Elder Andrew at First Nations House-University of Toronto who provided insight and support. In terms of partnerships, I developed a relationship with the NYDI and with Deanna. Also, at various stages of my project, I met with community members, fellow artist educators, and my committee to make sure I was walking a good walk and upholding cultural safety.

**Conclusion**
With this research I conducted, I aimed to contribute to different bodies of literature including Indigenous youth studies, efforts to decolonize education through the arts, and critical pedagogy. The potential benefits to the scholarly community or to society will be a new way of understanding arts-based educational programs as a means of decolonizing teaching and recognize the rich cultural narratives of Indigenous youth. My project activated a critical conscience and imaginative modes of engagement to reveal and
generate a discourse around the transformative, aesthetic methods of working with photography and hip hop as non-traditional educative texts. This will be evident in the proceeding chapters on the analysis of my data.

Chapter 5: Findings and Analysis

Social Identity

Introduction to Findings Chapters
The purpose of this study is to identify the ways IYAs are using photography and hip hop to discuss social identity, space, and the legacies of settler colonialism on education. I adopted the conceptual frameworks of anti-colonialism, Indigenous knowledges, decolonizing methods, youth studies, and cultural studies. Integrating these frameworks and theories of settler colonialism into the process of data analysis in critical ethnography enabled me to explore the resilience of IYAs in an arts-based educational program. Throughout the findings section I highlight the resilience of the young people in my study and the ways that artist educators can contribute to decolonizing education. The next three chapters will in effect answer the main questions of my study using the data I collected during my field work an the NYDI, where I facilitated arts based workshops for the young people, and recorded their stories. Although the events I recorded are not presented in chronological order, I aimed to highlight some of the most telling events and conversations that took place.

These three findings sections are divided into three chapters: Chapter 5: Social Identity; Chapter 6: The Reserve or Place; and Chapter 7: Education. These three chapters take into account the legacies of settler colonialism and explicate the resilient
paths IYAs have chosen on their life journey. Before moving on to these three chapters, I will begin with an introduction to the six youth participants who graced me with their time and input during the residency of my twelve-week program.

**Introduction to Youth Participants**

**Mya** is a mixed race female who has both Black and Indigenous heritage. Her mother is Jamaican and her father is a Lakota Indian from Pine Ridge Reservation.

**Blair** is a full-blooded Ojibwe male. He is 23 years old. Blair grew up on Beausoliel First Nation, or Chimnissing reserve. After moving from his reserve a few years ago, he now makes his home in the urban environment of Toronto, Ontario.

**Deanna** identifies as a proud Anishnaabekwe. She is Metis and Ojibwe from Garden River First Nation Reserve in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario.

**Rachel** is a Cree youth from Edmonton. She grew up on-reserve, but went off-reserve for high school. She is 22 years old. Rachel is in the second year of a college program focused on digital arts.

**Bella** identifies as a full-blooded Ojibwe. Her paternal grandparents are from Cote First Nation Reserve in Saskatchewan. Her family moved to Toronto when her mother was just a young girl. Bella was born in Scarborough but was placed in foster care by Children’s Aid Society. She now lives in the urban environment of downtown Toronto.

**Ryan** is a 24-year-old Ojibwe youth who grew up on a reserve in Ontario. He recently migrated to Toronto and found the NYDI as a place to help him navigate and get settled in the city. Ryan was in the process of applying to colleges for fine arts.
**Introduction**

In this chapter I consider how social identity was constructed for the IYAs in my study, specifically tied to phenotypically “looking” a certain way, and how these young people are navigating these systems to forge a place of belonging by defining and clarifying their identification. I consider the complexities and contradictions the IYAs face when coming to terms with their social identity and how they are using my program as a place for discussion about common feelings of disassociation from their identity: either not looking Native enough or looking too Native. In some cases, cultural and racial identity existed as more internal than external for these youth, and so I examine how the youth participants utilized my arts-based educational program to discuss social identity and how they recognized and reorganized their notions of self.

Tajfel (1979) proposes that the groups (i.e. social class, family, culture, or various teams) that people belong to are an important source of pride and self-esteem. Groups give us a sense of social identity: a sense of belonging to the social world. And so I appreciate Alfred and Corntassle (2005, p. 598), who name the era of contemporary colonialism and enlist a cerebral, intellectual, psychic, and cultural sense on claims to identity within the dominant settler society. Regardless of this psychic tie to biology, I found that some of the youth really needed to be recognized racially as Indigenous, for a sense of pride, belonging, and historical grounding.

Social identity was not simply about categorizations for these young people; it was truly emotional feelings of intellectual identity making, tied to history and cultural practices. The incorporation of one’s cultural background or heritage, ethnicity, or race is an important component of identity development for minority youth (Phinney, 1992); at the same time, these young people must adjust to the demands of the dominant society (p.
Social identity is a person’s sense of who they are based on their group membership(s). However, as one youth participant, Blair, highlighted, “I think the problem is that they don’t know about Native people or we’ve been wiped out of their imagination. And that’s a big problem, but that’s what happens with colonization and they need to know we’re still here.” When I asked who needed to know, Blair said with a laugh, “White people need to know!” In Blair’s view, which was echoed by other youth, if Indigenous people were not visible to the dominant settler society, Indigenous people would cease to exist psychologically, and would eventually be deleted or forgotten all together. From being in this group program, the youth concurred that much of society was unaware of Indigenous people; it was sad for us to acknowledge that settler colonialism had mindfully wiped the First Peoples of this land from the psyche of society. The youth in my study also learned that they were not alone in their experiences and that there were commonalities they all faced in not being recognized as Native. In being submerged in this culture-sharing group of IYAs, I learned more about the complexities they faced concerning visibility and belonging to a distinct group, and how important it was to their sense of self to be recognized as Indigenous. I also discovered that their need to be racially identified was sometimes more emotional than physical, which I will discuss further along in this chapter.

In some cases, cultural and racial identities were visibly identifiable and in other cases racial identities were more ambiguous for the youth, and so I examine how the youth participants utilized my arts-based educational program to discuss social identity and to recognize or reorganize their notions of self. To better understand the complexities of race within my group of young people, I take up Garroutte’s (2003) definition of self-
identification, which minimizes claims about biological ancestry or legal status because often biology may not be documented and legal definitions sometimes go unrecognized federally. Definitions of self-identified peoples include those who do not satisfy the requirements of the legal definition of Indian: This allows room for the possibility that the individual still grounds his or her identity within definitions of biology or culture (Garrouette, p. 83). To facilitate this discussion, I conducted a focus group on the concept of looking Native. This focus group was followed by a photo- and music-based session using the music of Indigenous hip hop artists to open up discussion on the idea of social identity being tied to settler colonialism. To close this chapter, I end with an excerpt from a one-on-one interview I conducted with Bella, whose identity was and is shaped by hip hop.

**Self-Identification**

I found it curious that the youth all had an idea of what made someone look like an Indian but didn’t necessarily name why these were key factors. Having been personally immersed in the youth population at the drop-in and beyond, I perceived that the diversity of who makes up the urban Indigenous population is as tonally diverse as the city of Toronto. Filled with a multiplicity of shades, mixed bloodlines, and cultures, this also holds true for Black communities whose shades, tints, and tones are a testament to the history of people.

I used the first session of my program as an introduction and to get to know the young people I would be working with, some I met through my volunteering time, others who had just joined me. Twelve young people and myself, clambered up the stairs to the second floor resource room. Upon entry, it seemed as though they were very familiar
with programming in the room, as they moved automatically to unfold chairs, spacing them equally around the tables. The youth made their way around the tables, chatting and pulling out chairs as they decided where to sit. The room was a good size, walls were painted a dark burnt orange, fluorescent lighting hung over our heads, and two large dream catchers were hung on the walls opposite of each other. After everyone was seated and attentive, Deanna opened our session with a smudge to purify the space with healing energy. As she went around the room, offering the burning sage to each person, I witnessed the sensitivity that each young person took with the ritual, which was surprising and heart warming for me to be a part of.

There was a reflective silence once we finished the smudge. Since my project was contained under Deanna’s youth justice programming, she briefly introduced me, then I introduced myself through music and photographs, giving the youth insight into my artistic and personal background. Then, I asked each person to give a brief introduction to tell me about his or her identity and to include the reasons they wanted to be part of my program. Each young person started with their name, most of them identified their nation, and moved to tell us about their artistic interest. I took detailed notes so I would remember each person.

In this section, I will highlight two of the introductions to begin to understand the intricacies of identity for Indigenous youth. Ryan, was one of the younger youth who was present at the first few session but could not make it to all the workshops because of work commitments, identified simply as Ojibwe in our round of introductions. He appeared to be phenotypically white, but he stated he was Native: “I may not look Native, but my mom says that it’s not all about ‘looking’ Native: It’s about what’s in your heart that
makes you who you are.” Several of the other youth in the room nodded in agreement. It was touching to hear such a beautiful sentiment from a young person who may not appear racially as Native to dominant settler society. This young person was Native: his heart told him so. From what I observed, this claim to self-identification provided an important source of personal attachment to his culture, satisfaction, and sentiment for his sense of self. In this same round of introductions, another young person, James who racially appeared Black, identified only as Sioux, from the Great Sioux Reservation, near South Dakota. Admittedly, I was waiting for him to acknowledge his Black heritage, but this was only an assumption I had made from looking at this young person. Throughout my project, I found that many Indigenous youth were claiming their heritage, status, and relational ties through self-identification.

Garroutte (2003) describes her personal usage of self-identification as one that describes a system of rules that systematically direct attention away from questions of law, blood, or culture. They concentrate, instead, upon the individual’s understanding of herself as she expresses it in a personal profession of identity. Under this definition, Indians are simply those who say that they are Indian (p. 83), which holds true for Ryan and James who, although others may not be able to immediately visually identify these young people as Native, they proudly claimed the Indian identity in a very personal way. Thomas King beautifully harmonizes this notion of looking Native in the sentiment, “I’m not the Indian you had in mind,” which aptly summarizes the stereotypes people have about how a native person should look. This sentiment holds true for Ryan and James in the above paragraph, where they do not convey the stereotypical Indian that society is familiar with, and admittedly myself included.
Looking Native
In addition to being at the NYDI, I planned two field trips for the participants. One was to venture out to Kensington Market to take photographs, and for the second field trip I planned to take the youth to a photography exhibition at Ryerson Image Works. During week three of my programming, we went off site to Kensington. My intent was to get them to document themselves in the very local, urban environment. Through the use of photography, I wanted the youth to locate their sense of self, using the lens of the camera. The following week, I brought in the cameras so the youth could begin editing the photographs they snapped on our field trip. This week we were back at the NYDI in a resource room on the first floor. The room was painted a dark grape with a large mural of an eagle with spread wings. We set up two tables and ten chairs, in the centre of the room. Blair, Rachel, and Ryan were seated at one table, and Mya and Bella were at another table sifting through images when Bella held up her digital camera and exclaimed, “Look how Native I look!” The other youth looked over, laughed, and agreed:

Blair: At least you look Native! You’re lucky! I wish I looked like a real Indian.
Audrey: Oh . . . a real Indian. . . . What does that mean?
Ryan: Yeah, for instance, my grandfather looks like a “real” Indian. He has high cheekbones, dark skin, long hair, and all that.
Blair: That’s cool. The long hair is important! It shows character and strength. Like a warrior. [Blair looked down, paused to compose his thoughts, and continued.] I think we’ve changed throughout the years . . . been more mixed and colonized, like in the residential schools. They even cut our hair to try to make us less Native and less strong.
Audrey: You mean like “taking the Indian out of the child?”
Blair: Yup. We don’t look or act the way we used to. We’re too light skinned now.

Ryan: We’re all mixed now, with white or Black.

Blair: Yeah, that’s true. That’s mixing in another way—that could make us darker, which is cool. Ha ha. Native people love Jamaicans!

Blair really had a way with words. We all laughed, and he continued.

Blair: Yeah, we are more mixed now than we used to be. People always think I’m Chinese or mixed with white and Asian. I want to get a tattoo on my forehead that says Anishinaabe!

[Ryan interjected mid-sentence, as though this mix-up of racial identification or mischaracterization of racial origin was a regular occurrence.]

Ryan: Yeah! Me too!

Blair: I think I look Native but people are constantly asking me what I am and it’s pretty damn annoying. When I tell people I’m Native they don’t even know what that is. . . .

Mya: Yeah, I know. People always think I’m just Black, but never say native.

When I tell them they don’t know what native is.

Audrey: They don’t know what Native means? How do you explain?

Blair: I usually say Indian or First Peoples, then they kinda get it and say something like “Oh, I thought you guys were from the past. . . .” And I’m like, no, here we are, and I wave or something. I think the problem is that they don’t know about Native people or we’ve been wiped out of their imagination. This is what happens with colonization. [Blair’s heritage is purely Indigenous, but he is often mistaken as belonging to other cultures.]
Ryan: Yeah, I get that too. They have no idea.

These statements made by these IYAs revealed and evaded the frustrations around not being immediately recognized racially as an Indigenous person, and the ways that race has impacted these youth. Both Blair and Ryan wished they looked more Native so as not to be mistaken for another racial category. Blair shared that all his siblings are darker than him and when he was growing up, they’d always make fun of him for being the lightest; he indicated his desire to be darker or more racially distinguishable as an Indian.

For these young people, looking like their racial phenotype was important to them, and hair was a source of their pride as survivors, warriors, and healers. In the past, you could say someone was Native and have a very good idea of what this person would look like. In this widespread poem and play, entitled “I’m Not the Indian You Had In Mind,” challenges the stereotypical portrayal of First Nations peoples in the media is meant to offer insight as to how First Nations people today are changing old ideas and empowering themselves in the greater community. Paula Lightening Woman Johnstone scribed an entry about hair for The White Wolf Pack website, where she declares, “Hair is the physical manifestation of our thoughts and an extension of ourselves.” It symbolizes power, knowledge, wisdom, elders, and nature, but also a message for and a revolt against systems by oppressed people. To grow one’s hair longer than was the norm, as set by European standards, was viewed as being unruly and barbaric.

To the Rastafarians in Jamaica,

“his hair [is] a sacred and inalienable part of his identity. It defines his status. The longer his locks the greater his standing as a professor of the faith. Rastas

29 http://www.nsi-canada.ca/2012/03/im-not-the-indian-you-had-in-mind/
affectionately call their hair/locks, their crown, comparing it to the real crown of his king, Selassie, and sometimes the mane of the lion, a symbol of male strength” (Chevannes, p. 145).

The Rastafari believe that growing their hair was a threat and a resistance to the state of Babylon. The similarity between the two communities is indelible. And in the case of the Black Power movement of the 1960s, the Afro was a show of strength, pride, and authority. Indigenous ancestors saw their hair as part of their identity, an embodiment of how they lived and gave respect to everything that surrounded them. Much like the neatly picked Afro, Indigenous men and women took pride in their hair, as it was of great spiritual importance to them, and had many natural hair care products and practices that kept their hair thick, shiny, and long.31 Similarly, in all parts of Africa and the Caribbean, Black hair is woven, plaited, twisted, and picked in astonishing mathematical equations of beauty and spirituality. Between these two communities, hair plays an integral role in one’s intellectual social identity, but also acts as a visual cultural statement.

Mya
As a visual artist, Mya was one of the youth that used her cultural production as a means to speak about lived experiences and trauma. I met Mya in a design course I teach at OCAD University. She self-identified as a mixed-race, Indigenous person and after getting to know her I asked her if she wanted to partake in my research. As a practicing artist at a leading art and design institution, Mya was drawn to my creative programming and wanted to contribute to learn more about her heritage. We became quite close and she disclosed to me that I was one of the only Black professors she had had in her time at the

31 http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2014/06/19/anicent-indigenous-hair-remedies-5-reasons-natives-have-healthy-lustrous-locks-155379
university. In her words: “When I walked into the classroom and saw you, I was like, damn! That’s dope.” The dope part was that I am a youngish, Black, female instructor at a historically white institution. Later, in conversation, she stated that she felt a connection to me because of the camaraderie that comes with seeing yourself represented in positions of power. As a student I remember feeling the same when I had my first Black professor at OCAD University, and my first Indigenous female professor at Ryerson University.

I interviewed Mya in segments. She very much wanted to be a part of this project, and I wanted her to be as well. On one occasion, I took the youth to OCAD University for a visit to the Indigenous Visual Culture (INVC) program to do a workshop with a colleague. Once the group session concluded, I met with Mya to conduct a brief follow-up interview to since she arrived late to the session. To follow the group session, Mya and I talked about looking native. We stayed in the INVC office, which was full of artefacts of the past, posters advertising lectures and film screenings, and a wall lined with hard and soft cover books. We sat at the small round table and made ourselves some jasmine tea in two small porcelain cups, as we engaged in conversation about social identity. I wanted to investigate how this young artist used her art to understand the complexities of her mixed Black and Indigenous identity. To begin the interview, I asked Mya about her thoughts on relationships between Black and Indigenous communities. Her answer to the question stuck in my mind because of the astute relational identifications she made between Black and Indigenous communities:

Being both, I’ve never seen two cultures so passionate about wanting a great, bright future for our youth. I think that’s something we all want for our people, which builds a stronger community for both of us. And you know, some of our
cooking is the same too! And some of our art is similar. And our spirituality, we have a very strong spirit. And also I think our perception of beauty. Like in both the Native community and Black community, our hair is our crown. And that’s something you see in both of us and I can relate to that. Even the act of braiding hair, and being a family thing, sitting down and doing it together—you know.

(Mya, interview)

As Mya composed this last sentence, she actively braided hair in the air with her hands, one hand following the other in a layered fashion, moving from far to near. While she was braiding, I got shivers and submitted to my fond memories of childhood with my mom, sister, and grandma doing my hair.

Mya opened up on her feelings about what it meant to be a mixed Indigenous person growing up in two distinct communities. Miles and Holland (2006) recount the Indian influence on the Blacks, as documentation shows that Black communities practiced various culturally specific Cherokee rituals (i.e.: burial rituals and ceremonies), which they learned from living among the Cherokee at that time of integration (p.9). This cultural exchange and solidarity fostered an interchange, but also Black and Indigenous unions, resulting in biracial descendants. While I acknowledge that Mya is not Cherokee, these interchanges speak to the general mixing that happened within Black and Indigenous communities and narrate a sense of relationship-building between the two groups.

Mya: I actually like telling people that I have mixed heritage just because I think there’s a better understanding of how they think about me. You know when I’m around Black people, sometimes I feel like they shun me, or they think I’m better
than them because I am mixed and that’s not the case. [She showed disdain on her face. This was a subject that obviously troubled Mya. We had a brief discussion on casting racial types: for example, what does looking mean?].

Audrey: What does it mean to look Native?

Mya: Yeah, what does looking Native mean? Ha ha. I don’t know if I look Native really, but I think I look more Black, but people can usually see that I’m mixed with something. Lighter you know, other than Black. If you think about what it means to look Native, there’s not a real answer if we look at Aboriginals in Australia and they’re really Black, or sometimes you get Native people that are really white, and in Papua New Guinea, sometimes Indigenous people have blonde hair with black skin and stuff. I don’t know if I look Native or Jamaican, or Latin, but I identify as mixed.

I had made considerations about rituals and ceremonies shared between Black and Indigenous communities, but until this moment with Mya, I did not think of similarities tied to hair for the two groups. I had considered rituals and acts of storytelling but not the historical significance, and beauty of hair as integral to each group. When she brought it up I knew I had to give this attention because of the emotion it evoked in both of us and because it is an important aspect of social identity. The perspective of this young person is truly beautiful, and shaped by several factors of her lived experiences, but I can’t help but think that her appreciation is linked to her strong, peaceful identification with both her Black and Indigenous heritage. Another similarity referenced in our conversation was hip hop.
During this one-on-one interview with Mya, we talked about how hip hop helped form her identity when she was growing up in Barrie, Ontario, what it means to her, and how she uses it as a form of education in knowing about her heritage, specifically in reference to Indigenous hip hop artists. This notion of “looking hip hop” came up with Mya.

Mya: I love hip hop, but I don’t find myself fitting into that stigma of who listens to it. Like I live in a building with a police officer, and I catch myself turning it down sometimes! And it’s like, I don’t want to, but then I remember that I’m living with him. . . .

Audrey: So do you think he’ll think differently of you if he knows that you listen to hip hop or do you think he’ll perceive you in a different way? [This was very intriguing for me to hear.]

Mya: Yeah, and it’s something like—I’ve even talked to my mom about it. It’s weird and kinda bad that I care, but I do. You know, my gramma says, the food tastes better when you’re in a good mood and so I play music. Like I’ll be playing Biggie or something and I hear him come home, and I’ll change the music. Ha ha. I don’t know . . . [she trailed off and looked to the side with brows furrowed in contemplation].

Audrey: Do you feel defensive, shameful—how would you describe the feeling?

Mya: I think I just like to remain cautious. I think both Black and Indigenous people understand what being cautious means. Especially to the outside world. . . . It’s unfortunate because we can be ourselves behind closed doors, but not even sometimes. . . . And he [her neighbour] is a person of the law, and so it’s
something I’m constantly thinking about. And he’s white. And sometimes I want to play this song by Nicki Minaj, and I don’t because it sounds like I’m a stripper in a club. And I don’t want to be perceived as that.

Audrey: What is the type that listens to hip hop?

Mya: I guess . . . I don’t know. That’s true.

Audrey: Yeah. What is the type? Ha ha [we chuckled and shook our heads in question].

We ended the conversation with Mya’s question and I proceeded to think about what it means to be cautious and walking lightly, as in Fanon’s Black Skins, White Masks, and about feelings of dependency and inadequacy as a Black person in settler society—feelings that can be applied to Indigenous communities too. Walking lightly so as not to draw attention to your self as a Black and/or Indigenous person and staying away from police and authoritative structures are all included in Mya’s inference about being cautious. I too have experienced these impulses. Mya has had to shift her group identification in order to attain a sense of belonging in her own apartment because of her musical interests. I attribute this to media constructions of hip hop culture and the popularity of gangsta rap (as discussed in my literature review), and also partially to the young Black, Indigenous and minority voices that are dominant in hip hop.

**Hip Hop, Indigeneity, and Identity**

Indigenous hip hop artists are making waves with their music globally. As stated in my literature review, I see the connection between social identity and education in the music of Australia, Bolivia, Cuba, and Mexico and how educators are using hip hop with youth in these contexts. In this section I considered cultural studies and move on to present the
role hip hop artists played in shaping the social identity of the IYAs. To open dialogue about this issue, I presented a few Indigenous rappers who were making statements with their lyrics and music. With my laptop perched on my lap, I scrolled down for my first song choice, “Heroes” by Wab Kinew featuring K’naan, because this song provided a glimpse of a collaborative effort between Black and Indigenous rappers with a strong history lesson. My playlist also included “BTBB” by HellnBack featuring Lightning Cloud, “Electric Pow Wow Drum” by A Tribe Called Red (ATCR), and “Get Ready Get Steady” by JB the First Lady. I chose these artists because my goal was to facilitate a conversation about social identity: specifically, how the youth participants viewed themselves in relation to society more broadly. When we got into the room, instead of setting up tables as usual, I asked if we could just sit in a circle, everyone agreed so we unfolded a handful of black chairs and arranged them in a small circle. I asked everyone to grab a seat. Keeping their bags and coats close by, I realized this the first time we sat without the barrier of the table and so I could see more of their body language, how many times they checked their phones, their fidgeting habits and immediate reactions to our topics. The one song that garnered the largest response was “Electric Pow Wow” by ATCR. Below are the responses on why the IYAs in my study appreciated the work being done by Indigenous hip hop artists in Canada:

Audrey: What are ATCR and the others doing with their art?

Blair: They’re showing that Native people can be successful and artistic and they’re talking about today’s problems. . . .

Audrey: Whose problems?
Blair: Natives versus society—their music shows how the Canadian government whitewashed history. Natives are still around!

Mya: Yeah, I think they’re [ATCR] helping us. Indigenous hip hop is giving Native youth more things to think about. And doing more things for their community. And I think they’re showing how to make positive change through their music and encouraging people to find their passion and make change.

Rachel: Yeah, that’s true. And a lot of non-Native people like their music, but they’re accessible to many people, so lots of people hear their messages. They’re all over! Winning awards and everything.

Bella: They do some really cool things that are not necessarily thought of as “Native.” They rep who they are and make us look cool! I’d love to rap with them one day.

Me: Are these important facts? Looking cool? Wide audience base? Why?

Bella: Yeah, for sure. Their music talks about identity as a Native person in a different way than in the media. As I said, these guys make us look cool. Not like all sad and poor.

Rachel: Yes, because it brings us into the mainstream. Shows us as being creative and not being poor alcoholics and shit. It’s good.

Blair: And I like that it shows that not all Natives are protesters! Seems like Natives are always protesting something?! . . . Like when I was doing the water walk, people always asked, “What are you protesting?” We said, “Nothing. . . . We’re just raising awareness about water.”
Analysis
From this session with my youth I could see the frustrations of what I name settler-colonialist fractions of constructed identities and perceptions by others. Often dismissed as protesters or alcoholics, the IYAs wanted to dismantle the idea of this being their sole identity because they knew their community had so much more to offer. As well, the protesting Indian is often protesting some unjust act proposed or implemented by governmental bodies (i.e. sovereignty, pipelines, land rights, and oil sands). If not for these colonial structures of power, then there would be no need for Indigenous communities to consistently protest the unjust acts imposed on their lives. The IYAs in my study wanted to change or shift the perceptions people had of them and they saw Indigenous hip hop artists as people who were using their talents to create a platform to dismantle stereotypes about Native people.

This conversation around Indigenous hip hop revealed that it was important for the IYAs to have associations with contemporary and traditional forms of culture, and from the discussion about the artistic efforts of ATCR, in Bella’s words, “these guys make us look cool.” ATCR is accessible to a variety of people, thus are able to circulate their messages that will hopefully dismantle stereotypes about Native people and counter narratives of Indigenous people as simply protestors or alcoholics. Another example where Indigenous artists are combating stereotypes is in Beat Nation: Art, Hip Hop and Aboriginal Culture[^32], an exhibition aimed to counter narratives. Beat Nation stands as one of my favourite exhibitions because of its rich contributions to cultural studies. The artists are telling their own stories from their cultural backgrounds, using multimedia

techniques to express the re-mix of cultural forms, while combating existing images to create new ones mixed with hip hop. The artists juxtaposed primitivism and urbanity to engage conversation about identity as a Native person, thus challenging the ‘othering’ that takes place in visual cultural narratives between white and Native relationships (Leuthold, 2011, p. 37). At the same time the artists put forth a view based in their perspectives and reclaimed their indigeneity. I see this exhibition as an anti-colonial act because it is one based in recovery from not being seen as ‘other’ in visual cultural history and as a resistance to the historically Eurocentric institution of the museum. This exhibition showcased Native culture as alive and current, presented contemporary socio-political issues, and posed questions about race, power, and colonized bodies.

**Bella**

Bella participated in most of the group sessions, but I also conducted a one-on-one interview with her on a few focused questions. She arrived at the NYDI early one day before the start of our program, so I asked if I could conduct an interview with her, she eagerly agreed. Our room was not ready, so we found a somewhat quiet spot in the lobby and we plopped down on two comfortable burgundy red armchairs. I chose to share this first excerpt because of how much it says about Bella’s social identity and how much hip hop contributed to her transformation:

Audrey: Are we good to start? Let’s first start with your name. Would you like to start with your name? Or how would you like to introduce yourself? Go ahead.

Bella: My name is Bella, I’m 20 years old. Wait—are you sure you’re taping us? [I check my iPad and nod yes]. I reside in Toronto. I am from Toronto. Do you want to video tape this? You can record my face... I have no problems with that. It’d be fun actually. I think you can do it on there... [she leaned over to the
device to find the video record button. I giggled at her tenacity and willingness to be recorded, very much evidence of the “2.0” generation. Bella always wanted to be filmed! She is the social media generation].

Audrey: No, for the purpose of my study I simply need your voice recording. Not the video portion or your face, but thank you for the offer [I couldn’t even say this with a straight face because of how much I loved this aspect of Bella].

Bella: Well, I’m gonna be a billionaire one day, so you might want to tape this ’cause it could be worth a lot some day.

Audrey: OK, I’ll reconsider for next time [I giggled and nodded yes].

I share this conversation because it shows a confidence in Bella that she could not express before finding her voice in hip hop. Below I captured more of how Bella came into her own social identity and the positive associations she made with hip hop culture:

Bella: When I say I’m a rapper or a rap artist people don’t really expect it.

Audrey: Where do you think the surprise comes from? Why are they surprised?

Because you’re female? Or . . . why?

Bella. Um, not really. Probably because I don’t, like, dress like a gangster or anything like that. Like most people, when I meet them, I’m really nice. I’m not all about the gangs and thug life. I’m just a really nice person, you know, I’m super friendly. I’m cool. I’m good-looking, you know. . . . Ha ha ha. I have really nice teeth, my hair is kinda plain. I’m in school. I’m in college. And they just don’t expect that.

Audrey: Why do you think so many Indigenous artists have taken up this art form?
Bella: There’s definitely freedom. It’s like inner freedom and lets you escape the inner realities of your life. And like a lot of the times for Black and Indigenous people they are dealing with lots of problems. . . . The reality for both of them is really harsh. You know, . . . because you’re living in the ghetto, or on the reserve, below the poverty line or on the poverty line. . . . Like a lot of the time, it’s an escape. I know a lot of my friends feel that way.

**Figure 1: Billionaire Thoughts**

Because I did not videotape Bella’s interview, she animatedly stated that she would like me to use a photograph that depicted who she was. There were two photographs she
presented for me to choose from, but I told her it should be her choice. She chose this one, entitled “Billionaire Thoughts” because, as the title indicates, Bella is moving up, growing, and sprouting wings to propel her confident hip hop identity forward. She sees no limits and is putting all her efforts into making her life a success. This photograph speaks to how the once shy Bella found hip hop as her muse and came out of her introverted self. It exudes a newfound confidence and resilience that allowed her to overcome adversity in the urban landscape.

I speak more about Bella’s history in Chapter 7, but when Bella was transitioning from foster care, then coming to Toronto, hip hop was her way of communicating and coming out of her shell. She says she was really shy, but this is hard to believe if you know Bella now! When she would meet people, she would rhyme for them, and she notes, “This was easier than straight up talking.” Now she can hold lengthy conversations, she is so confident in her gift of rhyming linguistically. It was touching to have her share this with me as proof of the positive results hip hop can have on a young person’s sense of self.

The interview below reveals how hip hop was instrumental in forming Bella’s sense of identity:

Audrey: What do you like or love about hip hop?
Bella: Well, when I first started rapping, it made me come out of my shell a lot more; it let me get in touch with my creative side. It let me express myself. Yeah.
Audrey: Why was it this art form? What was special about hip hop?
Bella: I dunno, . . . it’s weird. I don’t know if I can explain it. I tried soccer when I was a kid. I got my face smashed in by the ball . . . and that just wasn’t my thing. Hip hop clicked with me.

In our discussion about social identity and belonging, Bella indicated the following:

Well, I know a lot of people expect me to rap about Native issues . . . because I’m Native . . . but what people don’t understand is that I was raised by a white family. So I grew up in a different way from a lot of people at the drop-in were raised. So to be quite honest, I rap about myself, my communities, I rap about what it was like to be an 18-year-old, in the city. And now I’m 20. So now I rap about being a 20-year-old in the city, which is my new life, which is awesome. I love my new life. I hated foster care. Hated it. Toronto was a fresh start for me. It was really rough at first, ’cause I was having such a hard time here in the city. And then hip hop helped me escape and find myself: it gave me confidence. If you knew me when I first came to Toronto, you wouldn’t even know me. I wouldn’t even have made eye contact with you. (Bella interview, 2013)

In working through her own social identity, Bella was able to find herself through hip hop. She names hip hop as the reason for her social adaptations. If you knew Bella, you would not believe that she was introverted at all. She is outgoing, brave, confident, smart, and hilarious. Bella’s reflection describes what it means to be an MC. Her determination speaks to how much she has recovered from being in foster care and how hip hop helped her through that recovery of self. For me, Bella is a modern, urban, Indigenous young adult who has overcome hardship in her life and is going to make waves with her talent as she continues to come into her own self-identification and identify with others.
Conclusion
Based on the discussions, photographs and music I encountered with the IYAs in this section, there were a few things that became evident to the discourse on social identity. The youth viewed hip hop as an important way to propel Indigenous cultures into the contemporary urban environment, providing a nuanced means of appreciating the complexities of defining one’s social identity. One thing I discovered is that the IYAs felt rejuvenated by music groups like ATCR because of how they were are restructuring, reshaping, and rerouting dominant societal perceptions of Indigenous people. For the IYAs, the Indigenous hip hop artists that we encountered are dispelling notions of the protesting Indian or stoic longhaired grandfather without a voice, and fashioning Native culture into mainstream society. The data revealed that, despite the social inequities faced by Indigenous communities, these IYAs sincerely wanted to make identifications with their biological ties, as it was important for them to be recognized racially as native in society. Their notion of looking Native was often through images of long-haired Indians with high cheek bones and dark skin. As Mya eloquently stated, “Our hair is our crown, in both Black and Indigenous communities.” Hair, skin colour, and bone structure were three factors the youth brought up as ways they could look more Native, but I also found identity to be more emotional than physical because of the sense of belonging one has when identified with a certain group. Upon reflection, I can conclude that the young people in my study will continue to make identifications with their traditional heritage and take pride in their social identity in spiritual, intellectual, and physical ways by nurturing their means of creatively belonging.
Chapter 6

Findings and Analysis:

Space and Place

Introduction

*Land* is a salient term and concept that weaves people together around common understandings and experiences. *Land* within indigenous studies carries currency beyond a mere reflection of physical landscape or specific location, commonly referred to as the “geographers” concept of space, or the normative maps that perpetuate colonial claiming and targeting. Rather, indigenous scholars often invoke land as place. (Goeman, 2015, p. 71)

The hostile effects of settler colonialism have attempted to suppress the cultural and political voices of Indigenous people. Contrary to the state and the nation’s desire to annihilate them, Indigenous people resisted. Fires were ignited in hearts and spirits where the fight for survival and the strength of resurgence instigated the need for action.

Although adults are often at the forefront of this battle, there are also young people who have taken up the call to fight for sovereignty and resurgence. IYAs pose a different set of challenges to policy makers because they are a new generation of voices that are anxious to be heard, yet are trying to distinguish themselves generationally and culturally from their forefathers and foremothers (Kelley, 2014, p. 85).

An example of the new generation of young people taking up the call to action is demonstrated in the resilience of the heroic young adults who took part in the Journey of
Nishiyuu\textsuperscript{33} (from the Cree community of Whapmagoostui, Quebec). In an attempt to have their young voices heard, these six young men used social media to broadcast their mission, which was a trek on foot from Quebec to Ottawa to tell the government they were not going to be idle about Indigenous sovereignty, living conditions, and education, and that they deserve just and equal rights. Along with the youth from the Journey of Nishiyuu, the experiences of the IYAs in my study are evidence-supported paradigms of young people who have grown up within systemic oppressions that severely affected their families, and now that the healing has begun, these IYAs are looking to reclaim their voices. In order to engage the next generation’s development, growth, and spirit, educators should be required to understand the lived experiences of IYAs, critically analyze oppressive factors, and be aware of these social, historical, and material conditions that have an effect on learning and schooling for these youth.

**Statement of the Problem**

The purpose of this section is to investigate relationships to land and migration in the lives of IYAs currently living in the urban centre of Toronto. In this chapter I will investigate how IYAs utilize an arts–based program as a resource for resilient lifelong learning. In the epigraph, Mishuana Goeman (2015) provides a theorization of land that I employ throughout my paper. Ties to land and place came to mean something different for me from when I first started this journey to where I am now. After listening to the IYAs in my study narrate their stories, I began to understand the complexities these young people face in the sense of belonging to both the urban and to their ancestral land. This dual belonging accents the spiritual and emotive connection to land, rather than

\textsuperscript{33} http://nishiyuujourney.ca/
simply understanding it as geographic terrain. Seemingly, the tie to traditional land became sentimentally deepened by narrative. To further understand the relationship to place, my act of listening to the young people’s stories came in the form of interviews, dialogue, and photographs. The stories of the IYAs became vital to learning about the challenges they faced and obstacles they have overcome.

**Reserves**

Throughout my six-month residency with the youth participants, there were several themes that transpired; yet one of them took me by surprise. This theme was the reserve, or affectionately, the rez. It filtered into almost all of my data collection, which includes conversations, interviews, photographs, and writings. These conversations and pieces of cultural production shed light on what it meant to be an urban Indigenous youth living in the city of Toronto, who is away or distanced from the reserve and traditional ties to the land. In this paper, I aim to uncover and unpack why this emergent theme was and is of such significance to my participants and myself as an outsider–insider (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009) using the findings from my data collection.

According to the Indian Act (1876/1985), “reserves are to be held for the use and benefit of Indians.” In Section 18 (1), the Indian Act defines the use of the word *reserve*:

Subject to this Act, reserves are held by Her Majesty for the use and benefit of the respective bands for which they were set apart, and subject to this Act and to the terms of any treaty or surrender, the Governor in Council may determine whether any purpose for which lands in a reserve are used or are to be used is for the use and benefit of the band.  

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Once the reserve is established or assigned, “The Minister may issue to an Indian who is lawfully in possession of land in a reserve a certificate, to be called a Certificate of Possession, as evidence of his right to possession of the land described therein.”\textsuperscript{35} This is the only means by which Indigenous persons are able to possess government-sanctioned land in Canada. Status Indians established land with the Crown, and have made a home on these lands where their families have historically lived. These plots of land are termed reserves because these were the lands reserved for status Indians by the government. Throughout this project, I use these terms as set out by the Indian Act, last revised in 1985, to investigate the meaning of the reserve for the IYAs I worked with.

\textbf{“Hey Look—It’s the Reserve!”}

As part of my workshop programming, the second planned field trip was to the Ryerson Image Centre, which focuses on Canadian photography. I chose to take the youth to this gallery to discuss issues of representation and broaden their interpretation of the photographic image, which was central to my data-collection process. I anticipated this trip would provide the participants with a starting point to discuss images and critique creative, political, social, and historical documentation, but it actually did more than that: It became personal.

As we strolled through the small gallery space, there was one photograph that initiated its own conversation:

“Hey look, it’s the reserve!” Blair blurted out, finger pointed at the photograph on the white wall.

“Ha ha. Oh, my gosh. Yeah, that’s so true!” stated Rachel.

\textsuperscript{35} ibid.
The gallery we entered was filled with a dozen or so photographs, neatly framed in 18 x 24 inch dimensions. The youth made their way over to one of photographs, which depicted an abandoned truck, a soiled mattress, and tin-roof housing situated on a dirt road that was littered with garbage. It is here where initial conversations or realizations about the reserve were instigated. The youth were laughing and nodding as they came into contact with the piece. It was a brief encounter for the youth as they moved onto the next pieces, yet they all agreed that this image had a glaring similarity to reserves. This reaction indicated that most of them had some kind of relationship with a reserve, but I was surprised by the fact that the topic came up in such a blunt manner.

The youth moved on, but I remained stunned in front of the piece that had initiated such an animated response from my participants, unsure of my own mixed emotions. I made a note in the meaningful field in my journal, which I kept as part of this critical ethnography, that I felt saddened by the association and glad for the discussion around the photograph, yet conflicted by the meaning of traditional land and what the government has done to our First Peoples. As a mixed-race Black woman with African, Indigenous, and European heritage, my ancestry is tied to the island of Jamaica, yet I was born and raised in Canada. It seemed as if the notion of belonging was constantly on the minds of these young adults, even though they called the city home. This event initiated conversations about Indigenous representation in photographs and, unintentionally, the state of reserves in Ontario. Based on the vigorous response from the youth, I delved deeper into issues of visual representation of Indigenous people and, later, the relationship to place. The complexities of belonging were further deepened during our discussion below.
Once the youth and I had finished up at the exhibition, the gallery educator guided us to what seemed like a neglected meeting room. It had a few tables and chairs, and some antiquated classroom equipment that looked like it had not been used in many years. The drapes were a heavy patterned-polyester material, dusty by look and musty by smell. The room looked like a scene from a movie. This was RIC’s meeting space and our place to have dinner, which would be provided by the gallery. I took this moment as an opportunity for discussion. I opened with a few specific questions to see what the youth had observed or taken in. This became a discussion about representation, issues of cultural production, and place:

Audrey: How were Native people depicted in Canada at the time of the photographs? Especially the video piece we watched in the front entrance.
Rachel: Stoic Indian.
Blair: Always looks like the white man saved us.
Alyssa: Artifacts for a museum, exotic beings, old. Kind of foreign on our own land, which is weird. Like from that photograph in front of the helicopter it looks like we just landed or that someone brought us somewhere and they’re just smiling because some white photographer made them smile. I didn’t like that.
Audrey: So you think this was a forced pose? Like someone made them smile?
Blair: We always had lots of kids [laughter].
Audrey: Do you think this was unfair? Or a realistic depiction?
Mya: Well, we’re always old and poor.
Rachel: Very unfair. But this was the white man’s view of us, and that’s what we see everywhere. That’s why people think about the stereotypes of us and I hate it.
[She trailed off and paused.] But then again, some of the stereotypes are true . . . and that sucks.

Quiet contemplation breathed into the room. In my observation, the contemplation was mixed with realities and injustices of the stereotypes that were perpetuated in the media. Once the youth began chatting again, I assessed enough time had lapsed and so I facilitated the group for more general comments and sharing. Our conversation veered to stereotypes associated with Native people brought on by colonialism. The youth had very strong opinions about this. I opened the floor to comments and the conversation just flowed. It was somewhat disjointed but the thoughts about the effects of settler colonialism were raw, honest, and poignant. The conversation began with Rachel’s very honest admission. In retrospect, I feel that this conversation could have continued further; there were many more opinions that didn’t get to surface, but as a true ethnographer, I was attentive to my participants’ emotions and felt that the topic needed space.

Rachel: The drunken Indian stereotype is sometimes true. . . . My dad’s an alcoholic, my mom is an alcoholic, my two brothers are and my sister is an alcoholic. [Pause.] But it doesn’t make me one. But I don’t know why we keep making that stereotype true. I can drink and get crazy, but I don’t do it all the time. [Silence took over the room.]

Audrey: But you choose to stop, right?

Rachel: Yeah. I have to go to school and get up and have my life [she said this passionately and matter-of-factly, then paused with a huff].

Blair: Well, this shows your strong character.
Rachel: I guess, . . . but they don’t have to do that and then blame society and the rez. They’re always blaming society. Get help then!

Audrey: But it was the European settlers that gave them this substance as a way to silence their voices . . . and the effects are still there today.

Blair: Historical, remembered trauma . . . [pause]. Residential schools, abuse, alcohol. We are survivors. [Pause.] Look at our reserves. Look at what happened at residential schools, look at all the abuse that happened there. It’s still in our blood even though it was from the past, from our parents or grandparents, it’s kind of like the alcohol. . . . And it still hurts, you know. . . .

The conversation dwindled off at that point, and it seemed that the topic needed some rest. During the program, Rachel was not always the most talkative person in the group, but she was not shy. Her need to express herself today had a real impact on me and on the group, since we had not heard much of her voice prior to this. The topic of this conversation showed her emotional side and revealed the internal struggles she confronted on a daily basis as an Indigenous youth plagued by stereotypes. Because Rachel was so emotional during our session, I went up to her afterward to make sure she was ok. My initial impulse was to hug her, but I kept my distance, gave her a little half-hug and pat on the back, and said thanks for sharing. She seemed to appreciate the touch. In retrospect, that was one of the most intimate moments I had with participants during my fieldwork, and I was grateful for the time, space, honesty, and trust this young person gifted to me.
Residential Schools and Intergenerational Trauma

Blair’s input to that conversation in regards to historical trauma provided rich considerations. The intensity of how Blair spoke was chilling. His comments stopped us all to think about the inequities that were or are rampant for even the youngest Indigenous person, who did not attend residential school. The residential school system continues to affect First Nations, Inuit, and Metis families in Canada. The Indian residential school system was implemented in Canada by the government and the Church:

For over a century, beginning in the mid1800s and continuing into the late 1990s, Aboriginal children in Canada were taken from their homes and communities, and were placed in institutions called residential schools. These schools were run by religious orders in collaboration with the federal government and were attended by children as young as four years of age. Separated from their families and prohibited from speaking their native languages and practicing their culture the vast majority of the 150,000 children who attended these schools experienced neglect and suffering. The impacts of sexual, mental, and physical abuse, shame, and deprivation endured at Indian Residential Schools continue to affect generations of Survivors, their families, and communities today. It is estimated that 80,000 survivors of the residential schools are alive today. Remarkably, in the face of this tremendous adversity, many Survivors and their descendants have retained their language and their culture and continue to work toward healing and reconciliation.36

To further explain Blair’s reference to historical trauma in regards to residential schools, I look to the travelling visual exhibition entitled Where are the Children? Healing the

36 http://www.legacyofhope.ca/about-residential-schools
Legacy of the Residential Schools, which was curated by Iroquois artist Jeff Thomas.\textsuperscript{37} The exhibition travelled across the nation from 2002 to 2013 to promote understanding and knowledge about the history of the Church and government–sanctioned residential schools. In the research statement of intent, \textit{intergenerational impacts} refers to “the effects of physical and sexual abuse that were passed on to the children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren of Aboriginal people who attended the residential school system”\textsuperscript{38} where it was not only trauma but emotional relations that were inflicted. Many important studies have focused on intergenerational trauma in First Nations communities Ing, 1991; Nuu-Chah-Nulth Tribal Council, 1996; Waldram, 1997; Tjepkema, 2002; Whitbeck, Adams, et al., 2004; Bombay, Matheson, and Anisman, 2009 & 2014), but I have chosen to highlight \textit{Where are the Children?} because it is the first travelling art exhibition to visually document the legacies of residential schools in an attempt to open up understanding about the trauma that took place. The exhibition was developed in 2001 and consists of 118 framed archival photographs, maps, original school books, text panels, and historical government papers that depict the history and legacy of Canadian residential schools.\textsuperscript{39}

\textbf{Healing with Art}

If trauma is intergenerational and remembered, how do we ever fully heal so that the next generation is better prepared, and how do we stop the impact? What steps do we need to take as a community in order to heal? How can we use the arts as a critical step to assist in the healing process? As proven by the art exhibition, \textit{Where are the Children?}, I believe that cultural production has a determinate role to play in healing people’s lives.

\textsuperscript{37} http://www.scoutingforindians.com/index.html
\textsuperscript{38} http://wherearethechildren.ca/exhibition/
\textsuperscript{39} http://wherearethechildren.ca/en/about/
Cultural production becomes not only a means to heal, but to see social relations, complexities, and contradictions more clearly. These are the impacts of particular kinds of state interventions.

Perhaps we can borrow some thoughts on ethics and reflection from Maxine Greene (2005) to help appreciate the creative ingenuity the arts can unlock. When it comes to decisions of what we ought to do, there is always a space between the “is” and the “should.” There is “a space of hesitancy, perhaps, of imagining what might follow after, a space of reflection, of consideration . . . there is bound to be a kind of breathlessness, a straining to reach across a space in order to transcend” (Greene, p. 79).

As an artist educator, I know that the act of creating art can be powerful if and when one submits to the spark, to working in that space of hesitancy, and to transcending to another space. I think the same can be done for those with trauma who are in need of healing and of self-expression: perhaps as a means to express using more than just words. Using the arts to recover from trauma can enable us to “teach toward a dialogue that may lead to understanding and perhaps to resolution. We may have to break through spaces of silence in order to communicate, to come authentically ‘face to face’” (Greene, p. 79).

With the lived realities of residential schools, there is often a silence enshrouding the experience that was put upon Indigenous children by the settler nation. To break through these spaces of silence that Greene (2005) expresses could possibly enable survivors to have the honest, hurtful, healing revelations that need to be discussed and acknowledged. Studies have shown that the arts are more than simply aesthetic and that there are in fact therapeutic benefits associated with them. Battiste and Henderson (2000) explain that ecological stories are carried through oral traditions in ceremonies and in art;
we write these mysteries in the structure of our language and our ways of knowing. There are multiple levels of communication with the land that are essential to the life of Indigenous communities and although Aboriginal communities have experienced the colonization of their environments, psyches and spirits, they have endured and are making attempts to recover from the past. The realities of residential schooling is that there are many survivors who still have to repair, however, those who did not survive, leave behind a legacy that is not to be forgotten in the history of Canada. This is where I see the power of the arts to help the healing process and nurture discussions about relevant issues, and where the IYAs presented in this study use their creativity as a means to examine issues related to place.

Mya
Of all the youth I listened to, Mya had one of the most emotional attachments to land, although she had never been to her reserve. I can now theorize this attachment using the words of Goeman (2015), as noted in the epigraph: Mya’s attachment to land is much more than simply an attachment to geography. It is to the emotional and spiritual relationships associated with the place. With mixed Black and Indigenous heritage, she truly had a particular connection to her indigeneity:

Audrey: Can you describe your relationship to your paternal land, or reserve?
Mya: My relationship with my father’s reserve is distant. However, I have spent time in Rama and was partly raised there, and I would go to Wiky, or Wikwemikong, First Nation, near Manitoulin Island. My father is from Pine Ridge reservation in South Dakota, United States. Mya’s paternal lineage is on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, which is an Oglala Lakota Native American reservation located in the U.S. state of South Dakota. Originally
included within the territory of the Great Sioux Reservation, Pine Ridge was established in 1889 in the southwest corner of South Dakota on the Nebraska border.\textsuperscript{40} It is an important reserve in the history of Native American history as it is the site of the Wounded Knee Massacre on December 29, 1890.\textsuperscript{41}

After some discussion about her traditional land, I asked Mya a few questions to further grasp her paternal connection to Pine Ridge Reservation.

Audrey: Have you visited your paternal reserve? If so, what was your experience and is this important to you?

Mya: I speak to family through Skype and over the phone but have not visited in person. I would really love to though! My people are a lot different from the Anishinaabe people in Toronto. Our traditions are different, our food, even techniques for clothing and crafts. It is important for me to continue to be in touch with my Lakota traditions, and I would love to learn to speak the language.

Mya has never been to her father’s Native reserve in South Dakota but continues to maintain whatever relationship she can with her biological family. This revealed that even though she does not have much contact with her father, staying connected with her Indigenous paternal ancestry is very important for her. Reserves provide friends, extended family support, and culturally appropriate activities and services that may not be available off reserve (Norris & Clatworthy, p. 67), and this is where Mya feels connected to place and heritage.

In conversation with Mya, it was apparent that this connection to geographic space provided grounding for her tumultuous life as a young person trying to navigate her

\textsuperscript{40} https://vimeo.com/47043218
\textsuperscript{41} http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pine_Ridge_Indian_Reservation
way independently. Her family (her mother and three siblings) live in Barrie. She moved away from her family in Barrie to Scarborough a few years ago to attend university in Toronto. In comparing her experience in the two cities, she uttered, “It’s very different here [Toronto] from where I lived in Barrie. Here, it’s harder to find community, whereas in Barrie, there are Native people all over.” She chuckled. “It’s also smaller, and there are more resources to help you feel connected. It’s kind of lonely here sometimes.”

This is where I see the importance of centres and gathering places for Indigenous youth who take the migratory path from reserve to urban, or from city to city, often independently of their families. Mya discovered her community of belonging at OCAD University in the Indigenous Visual Culture Program where she participates in the weekly events and dialogue with students and instructors who identify as Indigenous and/or who have an interest in learning more about the vast heritage of Indigenous peoples. This in-between state, for Mya and others, illustrates Brand’s (2001) notions of belonging within and across borders. Mya feels at home when she is in the Indigenous Visual Culture space, which has become a place of belonging for her, and which allows her to overcome the obstacles she faces in her life. And although I do not teach in that program, she named me as one of the faculty that made her feel like indigeneity exists on many different comforting levels.

Mya has relations with other reserves where she has aunties and uncles (not biological). Although Mya has never been to her Native reserve and does not have much contact with her father, she still feels a connection to that specific Lakota land as somewhere she needs to visit in order to be complete and truly know her roots. Mya’s father has been in Canada for 22 years and has been an alcoholic for as long as she can
remember. She knows he has a status card because she remembers him using it when she was little, but she’s not sure if it’s for Canada or the United States. Mya feels it is her right as an Indigenous person to have a status card, which would provide her with certain governmental benefits that are geared toward Aboriginal people in Canada. She has been denied a status card twice but is going to apply again. However, she faces some problems because her dad is Native American, and so she has learned that she may not be able to claim status in Canada. Determined to win this fight, Mya’s case is especially complex because it involves two federal jurisdictions; these are the obstacles she encounters for navigating federal policies on status.

In order to claim status, a person must be defined as Indian by the Indian Act. Being Indian:

Referred to whether or not a person reported being a Registered or Treaty Indian.

Registered Indian refers to persons who are registered under the Indian Act of Canada. Treaty Indians are persons who belong to a First Nation or Indian band that signed a treaty with the Crown. Registered or Treaty Indians are sometimes also called Status Indians.

Therefore, in order for Mya to obtain a status card and apply for an education grant from her reserve, she will need to prove her father’s status first, then follow the steps as outlined in foreign legislation. She is uncertain of how she will go about proving this. The complex social formations that IYAs must navigate with regards to status land and education are examples of the constant obstacles put in place by the nation to maintain power.

42 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pine_Ridge_Indian_Reservation
43 http://www.statcan.gc.ca/eng/concepts/definitions/aboriginal
**Recognition**

Being recognized racially and having Indian status were very important social identity markers to Mya and other IYAs. Out of five IYAs in my study, three of them were status Indians. Mya was not one of them, but she was navigating the system to see if she could be recognized so that she could get government support, specifically for education. I recognize that the Indian Act is a significant historical document, and so, as a non-Indigenous person doing work with Indigenous communities, I have been making an attempt to better understand the Act and its complex impact on First Nations people. Bonita Lawrence explains:

> It is not that Native Peoples have blindly internalized colonial frameworks so that they no longer are resisted as colonial. It is more than identity legislation has established the field in which Native peoples must situate themselves and the terms under which they must struggle to resist that legislation. The colonial discourse embedded in identity legislation—for example, when the band governments create by the Indian Act, in order to bypass nation- or confederacy-level government, in all earnestness don the label of ‘First Nations’ in order to talk a form of self government that has nothing to do with the traditional sovereignty of Indigenous nations” (Lawrence, 2004, Real Indians and Others, page 42).

Seemingly the Indian Act ties Native people to the crown, but relegates their independence and sovereignty, thus making it challenging to divorce oneself from the embrace of the colonial document. To situate self in accordance with the Indian Act provides agency to the government, but in a way also lends some support as a means of reparation for the wrongs inflicted by the colonizer. In order to begin decolonization,
there needs to be an Indigenous lead. I think Taiaiake Alfred (2011) is helpful to take up Lawrence’s push to traditional sovereignty, where he states, “This is the basic vocabulary of aboriginalism as a political ideology: recovery, reconciliation, and resolution. To this I may also add resistance, because, even though it is outwardly hostile to the ‘enemy’, constructing one’s identity and life strictly in opposition to the colonizer is another form of white-man worship. All of these are false representations of the Onkwehonwe heritage of struggle. All of them, …demand on the part of Onkwehonwe an abandonment of our rooted identities and the adoption of one that is consistent with a submissive culture or a foreign culture” (p. 7). Both Alfred and Lawrence state that there is a need to begin within Indigenous communities, rather than looking outwards for a European model rooted in colonizing doctrines. For the young people in my study, status under the Indian Act remains a true testament to making up their social identity as Indigenous people, and from what I observed, this recognition offers them a sense of belonging to a specific cultural-sharing group.

**Bella**

Like Mya, Bella also used cultural production to express herself as a young person growing up in the city. When Bella talked about identity and her relationship to her land-based heritage, she was adamant that she did not need to identify as Native all the time, and that she simply wanted to be a hip hop artist. She did not see the meaning behind this identification and felt that she just wanted to be a 20-year-old living in Toronto, making beats and creating rhymes. If others wanted to rap about their Native roots, that was up to them, but that was not for Bella, at least not at this point in her life. As part of the larger interview, in discussion about connections to the reserve, Bella had this to say:
Well, I know a lot of people expect me to rap about Native issues, like the reserve or something like that . . . because I’m Native . . . but what people don’t understand is that I was raised by a white family (in a small town in Ontario). So I grew up in a different way from a lot of people at the drop-in were raised.

Bella stated that she did not have a tie to a reserve or any land and had never been to a reserve. This caused confusion and disbelief. Other participants could not fathom the lack of relationship to land and blurted out questions and statements, such as, “You’re full Native and you’ve never been to a reserve? Seriously?” “Are you sure you’re really Native?” “You mean you don’t know ‘rez life’?” “What do you mean? Where’s your family from?” These questions were often asked with quiet giggles and perplexed looks on the IYAs’ faces.

Bella’s claim was a big deal and quite unimaginable for some of the youth who had grown up on the reserve and had ties to their familial land-based heritage as Indigenous people. Bella’s response to the group was as follows:

Dude, I was born in North York, grew up in a small town in Northern Ontario with a white family, and then I moved to Scarborough. My family moved off the rez a long time ago and never really went back. I have no connection to the rez.

Why is that so hard to believe?!

Based on several conversations I had with youth at the drop-in centre, the majority of IYAs had some sort of explicit tie to land when it came to their land-based heritage. They had either grown up on reserve, had visited it, or had extensive friends and family who were still there. By way of disassociation, Bella has tried to become independent of expectations, but is also plagued by associations of indigeneity with ties to traditional
land. Her father was from Cote First Nation in Saskatchewan, she had never visited and had no real connection to her paternal family.

Bella’s response was what I think is a reality for many Indigenous youth, and now adults, who were surrendered by, or taken from, their biological family by the Children’s Aid Society. She was raised in foster care with a white family, so she did not have access to her Indigenous heritage. Bella’s response was slightly defensive, disconnected, and somewhat annoyed. It was something she had to constantly state when talks about the reserve surfaced in conversations. She said it was always assumed that because she was Native, she either grew up on a reserve or that she had visited one. Bella’s family had migrated to the city when her uncle was sick and needed the care of hospitals in Toronto. Her grandma and grandpa brought the family down to the city, and this is where Bella was born, then put into foster care by the CAS. I am not sure about the accuracy of this, but this was what Bella offered to tell me. And now, as a budding hip hop artist, Bella has found a way to write about and work through her heritage.

In Cannon and Sunseri (2011), adoptee and foster-care survivor Shandra Spears shares her journey about being surrendered into adoption by her biological family and then finding the strength to heal through art, ceremony, and authenticity (p. 127-133):

We are not all one type of ‘Indian’. Each of us has a different history, bringing different strengths to this cultural and political battlefield. In the polite Canadian culture war that seeks to break apart our strong families, we have an opportunity to discover our greatest strengths. The colonizer can try to hurt us, but can only succeed if we change who we are. (Spears, p. 133)
Spears’s sentiments ring true with the effects of settler colonialism on Indigenous people in Canada and worldwide. This especially reminds me of Bella and her journey through the fifth element of hip hop, which is knowledge of self: Bella, like Spears, has found acceptance and confidence through her artistic practices. Spears found acting, and Bella found hip hop. Both were reunited with their biological families and have finally come to know their Indigenous culture as a result. Andreana Clay (2006) makes a case for youth resistance struggles and moves on to argue that hip hop is a means of organizing for social and political change. This is evident in how Bella found her voice, made connections with struggles in the music, and now creates rhymes that pay homage to histories of Indigenous resistance, reclaiming her traditional culture.

**Blair**
Blair grew up on Beausoliel First Nation, outside of Toronto, with his nuclear and extended family. He has a robust connection to the land where he was born and his ancestral beginnings are. One of our initial conversations in Kensington Market was about Blair’s migration. At the time I was not able to name it as migration, or even as a theme that would occur throughout the project, but it has, and I wrote in my journal about the conversation. It was the first close conversation we had between just the two of us:

Blair: I would take pictures with my phone but this is a cheap phone. [He took out his phone to show me.] My brother messed up my credit.

Audrey: That’s fine. You can use the camera.

Blair: It’s so much easier to use the phone, because then you have it with you all the time. You should see some of the photos I’ve taken with my other phone. My idiot brother ran up my phone bill and I couldn’t pay it and neither can he ’cause he’s in jail. [He chuckles.] He’s always ending up in jail.
Audrey: That sucks.

Blair: Yeah. He drinks too much. . . He’s an alcoholic. . . Unfortunately not the only one in the family you know. . . Yeah.

Audrey: Hmph. [From the field notes in my journal: I was caught off guard, at a loss for words. I didn’t know we would get so heavy so fast. He seemed to be ok with my answer, or lack of an answer.]

After this pensive conversation with Blair, and the one with Rachel documented earlier in the paper, I wrote in my journal about the use of alcohol in Native communities and how devastating this brilliant plan implemented by the Europeans to actively wipe out the First Peoples of Turtle Island had been. Pinning alcoholism on the community and never taking blame for the violent act they instilled upon the people epitomizes the legacy left by settler colonialism. I want to avoid rearticulating stories of Indigenous people that have been made rampant by colonialism and thus I implement rituals of pause and reflection when analyzing data (Tuck et al.), especially concerning stereotypes.

From Rez to City, City to Rez, and Back Again
Blair continued to disclose his story to me at a leisurely pace, very conversationally and easily:

That’s why I needed to leave the rez and come to the city. The first time I moved to Toronto was hard. It was winter and it was really freaking cold. I slept outside a couple nights with some people I met and then tried to get settled you know. But it was cold and really hard. [He paused to reflect.] So I decided to go back home. I panned on the street to get some cash. That took a couple days and finally I had
enough [laughs]. I was so glad to be going home to my bed, ha ha. That was the first time. I finally stayed the third time I tried. Now I only go back to visit.

What Blair described was his first attempt at migration from the reserve to the city. He attempted the move again, to no avail, and then the third time he was successful. Blair had really made up his mind to live in the city. As a result of lack of jobs and access to education, many Indigenous people leave the reserve to come to the city with hopes of more opportunities.

This is not to say that Indigenous people do not belong or are not native to cities, no, not at all, my study is meant to show how IYAs perceive and make sense of different spaces one calls home. After all, urban territory was once and is still occupied by Indigenous populations. Conversely, Economist Robert Meek (1976) (qtd. in Peters and Andersen, 2013), stated that it was the Europeans who viewed towns as replacing one way of life (characterized by savagery and the wilderness) with another way of life (characterized by progress and civilization). Meek (1976) argues that in the 1750s, during the Enlightenment period of social thought, European thinkers accepted the idea that all human societies naturally progressed through four stages, each associated with a distinct mode of sustenance (hunting, pasturage, agriculture, and commerce) and with particular values, behaviours, laws, government, and conceptions of property (qtd. in Peters and Andersen, 2013, p. 3). With these factors in mind, Indigenous populations were removed from their original land because they were not perceived to have progressed past the first stage. This is such a detriment and diminutive way of thinking, and the centre of settler colonial ideals. With my findings, my aim was to encourage a new way of thinking about Indigenous communities in urban environments, and rather than reinforce or reinscribe
the notion of non-belonging, or non-conformity, we should think about all land as native land and therefore all Indigenous persons are on their own land. Little is known about Indigenous urbanization patterns and experiences instead, scholarship tends to focus on Indigenous life ways in rural/remote locations (ibid, p. 2). And so my project is intended to contribute to the research that, positions urban areas as spaces of Indigenous resilience and cultural innovation (ibid, p. 3), and to raise questions on how we can use this repositioning to decolonize education with new set of artistic practices.

Often the youth who made the migration to the city were the only ones here from their reserve, or they had heard that someone they knew had made his or her way in the city. Blair made the move from his reserve a few times over the past three years. In his first attempt to make his life in the city, it was difficult for him to find work and housing, and so he returned to his reserve. The second time did not work out either, he ended up on the streets without much money in the middle of winter, and so he went back to his reserve. The third time, as in as many years, Blair made up his mind to come back to Toronto and really try to make it work this time. Blair made the connection with the resources at NYDI who supported his search to find housing, jobs, engage in cultural ceremonies and connections with other youth. Howard (qtd. in Howard and Prolux, 2004, p. 225) has documented how Aboriginal community-based programs aimed at historicizing the city from Aboriginal perspectives represent urban landscapes as transformed but no less connected to Aboriginal identity (Howard, 2004, p. 229–42). Therefore, centres like the NYDI play an important role in helping IYAs make the transition from reserve to urban environment, as they help the youth to navigate the
various systems they need to thrive with different available resources, thus “in these ways the land is re-territorialized within the city” (Wilson and Peters, 2005, p. 405).

The study entitled *Not Strangers in These Parts: Urban Aboriginal Peoples* presents an analysis of push and pull factors that explain the migration of Indigenous people in Canada. One section analyzes the elements of migration from the reserve to the city, which theorizes Blair’s and other youth’s reasons behind his migration:

The various ‘push’ factors from reserves include . . . lack of employment opportunities and resulting difficult social conditions (Trovato et al., 1994, p.15), . . . quality of life, lack of housing, health facilities, educational opportunities, institutional completeness (Trovato et al., 1994).

In contrast to the pushes from the reserve are the “pulls” to the city that attract migrants, as evidenced in Blair’s photographs and statements, which include “the ‘bright lights’ of the city in the case of young adults (Krotz, 1990) or better access to housing” (Norris and Clatworthy, p. 66). Following is my analysis of the photographs Blair shared for this project. I listened for the complexities and contradictions of navigating the state through resistance to find out what these (more subtle) acts of resistance are telling us, as Kelley (2014, p. 87) puts forth for consideration.

**Blair’s Photographic Vision of Place**
As part of my data-collection method, I used photography to comprehend how the youth in my study were interacting with cultural production to discuss place. To speak about Blair and his relationship with the land, I will use his photographs, which are offered below. The two photographs grapple with the interplay of longing for home while also attempting to make a better life, regardless of the obstacles, in the new place that this
young adult inhabits. Figures 2 and 3 are a testament to the narrative he wishes to convey about his reserve and the new place he calls home. They speak to his relationship with both the philosophical and aesthetic beauty of his reserve, juxtaposed with the metropolitan nature of his new life in the bright, flashy lights of the city.

*Figure 2: Ice on the Rez by Blair*

When I asked Blair about this photograph, he told me a story about him walking one morning with the sun setting over the water, and that he wanted to capture the peace he felt when he was home. He also stated that this was taken after the second time he migrated to Toronto and then returned home. When he returned home, he was able to see even more of its beauty. I asked Blair why he wanted to share this photograph and he stated:

This is not the usual image you get of the reserve, you know. Ha ha. And I get it. But people should also know the nice parts, not just the poverty, and some parts of reserves are really beautiful. You know, I go on water walks and go hunting as
part of learning my culture, but I know a lot of young people don’t. So, yeah. I
wanted to show something different.

In so many ways, this is such a beautiful depiction of Blair’s reserve. In contrast to the
images that we see in the media, this is how one youth views his home. The peace and
serenity are unmistakable, the puzzle pieces of ice draw your attention to the lower
register of the photo, yet your eyes are directed upward to the sunrise once you’ve come
to the ice. The movement in this piece mimics the stillness of the melting ice—quiet and
intentional, stoic and mesmerizing: much like Blair’s personality. The image is close,
intimate, and jarring. We can hear the stillness in the footsteps that lead up to the place
where he has positioned himself, and we are there with him, on the ice: However
precarious the position may be, we are there with him. We know that at any time we
could collapse through the ice, based on the pieces that are slowly melting away, as we
hear the ice patches rubbing together, flip-flopping up and down.

In taking this stance and creating this view of the landscape, Blair intentionally
staged a sensation for us to experience alongside him. This image is special in that it is
the youth’s perspective of his home land and he has presented it to us in a way that is not
usually depicted when people talk about the reserve: the beauty and serenity of this
terrain when you listen and submit to being with Mother Earth. The meditative chimes of
the wind and the distance clashes of the lake come so close that these sounds turn into
droplets of water dancing at your feet. If we listen close enough to what Blair is saying in
this act of resistance, this photograph is a window into Blair’s life and demonstrates how
he opposes the tarnished images of reserves that are perpetuated in the media. By
bringing us a glimpse of the beauty that functions in a complex terrain, Blair has offered up a fresh perspective through the eyes of an Indigenous young adult.

*Figure 3: Yonge and Square by Blair*

This image shows the city life that Blair adopted once he moved from the reserve to the city. The lights and energy exude a sonic element of whizzing traffic, clunky streetcars, shuffling people, and honking horns. This evening depiction of excitement and exuberance is the big city: the lights, the concrete, the streets, the bling, the colours, the nameless faces, the billboards, and the crowds. This photograph brings to mind an electronic sound, with a pulsating, intense, repetitive beat, that intensifies as you move into closer proximity with the street. Listening to the photograph reminds us of the experience of newness for someone who has just moved to the city.
In this photograph, Blair has presented it so he is perched high up in a building that overlooks one of the busiest intersections in the city of Toronto. It is a distant, bird’s-eye view: Blair is settled as an outsider looking into, or onto, a geography that is vast, busy, moving, and loud. The photographer’s perspective is obviously no accident. From the angle of the photograph, the viewer is made to feel distant, removed from the humanness of city life, and detached from the personal aspect of living in such close quarters. Considering this detachment, there is still an element of closeness in what Blair is saying. This photograph shows the anonymity of his identity as the artist and the anonymity that is felt in the urban environment.

Reflection
Blair was very intentional when he offered these two photographs. At the time, we were sifting through the many images he had taken throughout the program, he wanted to give me the photo entitled “Yonge & Dundas Square” because that is a symbol of his new life away from his traditional land. As he looked at the flashy photograph, he was pensive for a few minutes and asked if he could include one of his rez. I was flattered by his desire to share and I replied with a quick yes, because of how different it was from other depictions and how much I had already begun to analyze and read into the images. The two photographs, “The Rez” and “Yonge & Dundas Square” illustrate how Blair has learned about and has chosen to depict the state systems of violence that affect Indigenous people. His distant lens, image of alienation, and feelings of loneliness and serenity accentuate his acute awareness of the oppressive powers that plague his people and represent Blair’s lifelong process of learning and discovery regarding place. Coupled beside each other, the images demonstrate resilience to the effects of settler colonialism:
the beauty lies in their quietly simple yet complex layers of resistance, indicating Blair’s coming of age as a young adult. These poetic reflections tell his story as a young person making his home in both the urban environment and his reserve.

**Conclusion**
The findings in this chapter reveal how Indigenous youth are making complex spiritual connections with their traditional land in some way. My aim was to offer a more “layered” approach to Indigenous relations to urban space rather than perpetuating the dichotomy of saying indigenous people are alien to the city, especially since borders were and are imposed by European standards. In the first conversation we heard the conflicting issues that Rachel brought up regarding stereotypes of Native people and how she makes an effort to depart from the patterns in her family and live her life as an Indigenous youth in the city. As for Mya, she has a tie to place through her Lakota lineage in the United States, and is currently learning about status regulations as she navigates through university as a mixed-race young woman with Black and Indigenous heritage. However disconnected Bella was or is from place, her family’s migration from the reserve and her placement with the Children’s Aid Society provided a distant relationship to her Native heritage as she discovered a sense of belonging and meaning through hip hop. Out of all the youth, Blair’s relationship with his ancestral land was the most clear, as it follows the migration patterns of many Indigenous people in Canada. We see his journey of learning about himself depicted in his photographs.

The effects of genocide, patriarchy, cultural loss, and severed familial ties have affected the IYAs’ interpretations and relationships with their land-based heritage. As these strong young people continue to navigate complex state contradictions in regards to
land, education, and status, the means of artistic production will have a lasting effect on their lifelong learning. The ability to express oneself through photography, hip hop, or any other creative outlet provides a way to continuously tell their stories so their voices are heard.

As presented in the IYAs I worked with, at the heart of their political activity is the fight for sovereignty, identification, and equality. The young adults in my study were all working to tell us something through their words and art. Although they have proven they can do this by themselves, it is our jobs as historians, social interpreters, scholars, and educators, as Kelley (2014, in Tuck and Yang, p. 87) offers, to listen to what these acts are telling us. Because by listening to these acts we can better understand what young people desire, the causes of pain, and how everyday acts of resistance are revelatory, revealing things about social relations and power (Kelley, 2014). This dissertation is a glimpse of how I listened to the social and material conditions that IYAs face coming of age under the vestige of residential schools, the fight for sovereignty, ties to traditional land, and the heaviness of settler colonialism. It is my hope that by engaging in this act of listening, and now dissemination, I can assist others to listen and act in conjunction with the brilliant manoeuvrings of these IYAs.
Chapter 7: Findings and Analysis

Education and Schooling

Introduction
In this chapter I present the findings I collected on education and schooling to analyze the legacy of settler colonialism on education. I do so by looking at Swartz’s (1992) concept of the master script “as a way of silencing multiple voices and perspectives, primarily legitimizing dominant, white, upper-class male voices as the standard knowledge students need to know” (p. 341). To investigate the concept of the master script, I applied a different approach in comparison to my two other findings and analysis chapters. For this chapter, I held a focus group with IYAs and asked one very specific question about a schooling experience. Of particular interest was how my youth participants learned about Indigenous cultures in school. I was able to investigate power structures and inequities due to legacies of colonialism and apply an anti-colonial analysis, which emphasizes Indigenous knowledges. By following a critical ethnographic approach, my aim is to investigate the lived experiences of Indigenous youth in the school system, visible or invisible, and the power structures within these systems, to uncover if and how Indigenous people are portrayed in school curriculums. Wane (2008) bluntly concedes that, “doing something” about Indigenous people ranges from genocide and rewriting history to denying their existence, devaluing their knowledges, and debasing their cultural beliefs and practices. This has been done through, among other mechanisms, western systems of education, texts, and literature, thereby making the business of education and knowledge production contested terrains (Wane, p. 184).
In the first segment of this chapter I present my findings from a small focus group of four IYAs (Bella, Rachel, Ryan, and Mya) and we will hear how these youth learned about Indigenous cultures in school. The focus group was thirty minutes and took place at the NYDI while we were waiting in the lobby to get into the resource room I had booked for the day’s session. Following this section, I present and analyze photographs from Deanna’s experience within a post-secondary, extra-curricular course to uncover how she learned about her heritage as a personal effort to reclaim her culture. To begin, I make the distinction between schooling and education.

**Schooling and Education**

The terms *schooling* and *education* are often used interchangeably, although there are many distinctions between the two words. For this project, I consider schooling to be structured and formal, teacher-directed, content- and skill-oriented, and contained by time; whereas education can be defined as open-ended, all-encompassing, growth oriented, self-directed, and a lifelong process. To further conceptualize the difference, I turn to Edmund Gordon (2011), Director of the Institute for Urban and Minority Education at Teachers College, Columbia University:

> Schooling is focused on some very specific outcomes that have to do with rarefied notions. Education is concerned more than with the formal instrumentalities of problem solving. Education has to do with the discovery and the learning of the culture with the meanings assigned the rarefied techniques that have come from peoples lived experiences. They seem to be just as important for human adaptation as those, which we have singled out in school to teach.

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44 www.youtube.com/watch?v=jyKZAe87s58
The foundation of my study is aptly supported by Gordon’s view, where education emphasizes the values of the students’, or learners’, lived experiences to better understand the ways people interact with culture and learning. The data that I collected for this chapter indicates how youth learned about Indigenous cultures in schools and how they themselves were represented in the curriculum. For this project, I am interested in how schooling upholds settler colonial ideals and what we can do to dismantle these ideals so that our students are represented in truthful ways.

It is important to remember that schooling was, and arguably still is, based on the ideologies of the industrial age, and that curricula were developed to categorize or streamline certain individuals into specific occupations based on their mental capacities (Gordon, 2011). In reference to learning in schools, rap duo Dead Prez drop this rhyme: “The same people who control the school system/ control the prison system. . . ./They seem to only glorify the Europeans,/ claiming Africans were only three fifths of a human being,” going so far as to title this song “‘They’ Schools,“ making it glaringly obvious that schools were (and are) created by and for Europeans. While I agree with this statement by Dead Prez, I also see the power Black and Indigenous communities can gain from schooling if these paths are navigated in a safe manner. After all, the school system is the basis of why I and others are engaged in this critical work of taking strides to create safe pedagogical spaces for our youth.

The Native Youth Drop-In
In the last couple weeks of my fieldwork, I arrived at the NYDI almost an hour earlier than my scheduled time. Generally I arrived ten minutes before start time, but I planned

45 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BpipOqP_1C0
to use the wireless Internet at the centre, and I had been warned that it was not always reliable. Thus I came early to cue up my playlist from YouTube and download a few images from the Internet. Whenever I walked into the centre, I always felt welcomed, even when I had first started my residency. The space has a positive vibe, which I attribute to the combination of warm greetings from the receptionist, walls brightly coloured with complex graffiti murals, the scent of dinner being cooked, and the chitter-chatter of the people scurrying around in the lobby. I could see why youth would feel comfortable in this space. I looked around at the four black leather couches that were creased with age, and tinged with the scent of sweet grass. I acknowledged the two youth that were on the love seat by the graffiti wall and sat down on the couch diagonal from them, next to a side table so I would have somewhere to rest my coffee.

For today’s session, I planned to do some creative writing using the narratives from Indigenous hip hop artists. I was cueing up the songs “Heroes” by Wab Kinew featuring K’naan and “BTBB” by Hellenback. We were also going to watch a stunning animated video from Kinnie Starr featuring Jase Elnino, entitled Haida Raid 3: Save Our Waters,46 which is an anti-pipeline and anti-tanker protest piece. My lesson was going to be focused on learning about Indigenous cultures through hip hop, which would open conversations on school, society, and representation. For this session I was going to start with a free write, where you write down your stream of consciousness as a warm up for 10 minutes. Once completed, I was going to have the participants choose a word or a phrase from the lyrics that stood out to them. Then I was going to ask them to write a verse based on that word or phrase. It did not need to rhyme, or be very long and they

46 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UsDC5cNR9kc
could work with a partner if they chose. In the end I planned to ask if they would like to share. Prior to this part of the workshop, I held an impromptu focus group.

Rachel and Bella waved hello from across the room, walked over, and plopped down on the couch next to me. At this point, I was quite immersed in my fieldwork, and so the youth were comfortable with my presence. This culture-sharing group had become acclimatized to my being in their space. I had been with this group of young people for six months, some I saw weekly, and others I met every month, as I participated in the daily routines of the centre, including dinners, dishes, dancing, ceremonies, art making and laughter. I spent a fair bit of time in the lobby and made the observation that, whoever designed the environment for the drop in, really listened to and catered around young people’s interests and needs. There were televisions playing music videos with the remote nearby, open for channel surfing, there were two visible phones I could see, one under the wall mounted television and the other was situated on the kitchen island, which seemed to be always in use. Today, James, who I had met during the first week of my fieldwork, was on the phone, standing at the island with his baggy pants slouching down near his ankles and his headphones over one ear, phone in the other, listening and nodding to the person on the other end.

As we sat in the lobby of the drop-in, I looked at the time and noticed it was ten minutes past our scheduled time slot; however, the group using the resource room showed no signs of wrapping up. I had worked in several community settings, so I was used to scheduling calamities, which were not uncommon. At this point, three youth participants were in the lounge area with me. The lounge area was usually populated by groups of young people bustling and chatting, with the TV blaring, phones ringing, and
workers buzzing around, but today it was more quiet than usual. As I assessed the surroundings, I decided it would be a good opportunity to hold an informal discussion as a precursor to our session, so I asked Rachel, Bella, and Ryan if it was cool if we had a discussion while we waited for our room to be vacated. They agreed. I asked if I could record and they approved. Below is the dialogue we had in regard to how they had learned about Indigenous cultures in school:

Audrey: So I’m going to pose a question and anyone can answer—there’s no special order or anything, simply a discussion. You can also let me know if you do not wish to answer, and that’s fine. Are we good to go? [The youth nodded in agreement.]

Audrey: How did you learn about Native cultures in school?

Rachel: Hmph, that’s an interesting question. Not much, but my dad always made sure he taught us about our Cree ancestry—but I didn’t learn the language or anything. [Rachel looked around and shrugged.] But school was a racist place to be. . . . There were only a few Native kids in the school and lots of racism. It was rough. [She nodded her head as she reflected, and paused.]

Bella: Yeah, mine too. No diversity at all!

Rachel: You know, it was weird—I actually had Native friends that said they were Spanish instead of Native so that they wouldn’t get made fun of. That’s how bad it was. In the class the teachers were racist too. Except for this one teacher, Ms. Penny, she always stood up for the Native kids. But she was the only one who had our backs. [Rachel trailed off and Ryan interjected.]
Ryan: Yeah, we had a teacher like that too! Mrs. Davis, rumour had it she was married to a Native guy.

Audrey: Did you have a lot of Native kids or teachers in your school?

Ryan: Nope. Nope. Not at all. . . . [He laughed, paused, then shared.] Come to think of it, we only spent a few days out of the whole term on Native stuff. It was like, here—make an old mask. Ha ha. The teacher was like, this is what they used to wear when they were alive, hunting and shit. I was like, I didn’t know we were extinct?! I’m right here! [Ryan pointed to himself, gesturing with two hands.]

We’re still alive, yo—you didn’t kill us all! Ha ha!

Rachel: Yeah, they made us extinct too! Ha ha. We also learned about Native people in Grade 6 when they made igloos out of sugar cubes, and that was it. The teacher told the class that the poor Indians had to sleep up north in the really cold weather and these were the only houses they could afford to make. She made it sound like we were sad and miserable. Didn’t talk about the hunting, crafts, or any of that. Even though I’m not Inuit, I was offended, ’cause you know . . . it’s still my people.

Audrey: Yeah. For sure. . . . And in fact the Inuit are able to survive in really cold temperatures because of the igloo is actually a real work of mathematic calculations and architectural genius. Too bad she didn’t have that in her lesson!

Ryan: Yeah. That would have been better.

Audrey: For real, thanks for sharing.

We concluded the conversation and took a breath, seated comfortably on the couches with our bags, headphones, and coats strewn all around us. In that moment, I was touched
by the essence of community programming and reflected on why I love the work I do. I am not a formal school teacher, and therefore do not have my own classroom where I am the director of the class on a daily basis. The type of education that I subscribe to is more self-directed and open-ended, with respect for the lived experiences of youth. For the majority of the educational projects and programs that I have been privileged to take part in, I have recognized that I am in environments that are more familiar to my participants and learners than they are to me, and thus the power is with the participants since I am in their space. I have worked in various galleries, community centres, studios, camps, and cultural centres; therefore, when I come into these spaces, I am usually the outsider who must gain access, and it is the youth who have the power. Generally, once I acclimatize and share my knowledge, I am welcomed into their space. It is then that I feel that reciprocated moment of connection with the young people I am working with. As an ethnographer working with my youth participants at the NYDI, I felt that although I was an outsider, I became an insider by winning the youths’ approval. This made our conversations comfortable, open, and honest. At that moment, sitting in the lobby of the NYDI, I felt that connection with my youth participants.

As Bella, Ryan, Rachel, and I continued our discussion in the lobby of the drop-in, Mya joined us and offered her schooling experience in Toronto and Barrie. I posed the same question and the four of us leaned in to hear her soft-spoken answers:

Mya: I went to a couple different schools. I went to a predominantly Black school in Toronto and a very white school in Barrie. In Toronto I found that the Black kids, we were more interested in learning about Indigenous cultures, and you know, we were tired of seeing people we couldn’t relate to in our textbooks [she
giggled]. And so we always did really well on that unit! It was the shortest unit but we all did well! And we made the best crafts too!

Audrey: So because the unit was interesting and based on something other than European whiteness, you were all excited?

Rachel: Yeah, that’s cool. I would have been with you guys too!

Mya: Yeah, for real. It was great. We really loved it. But in Barrie it was very different. The unit was longer, but it was different. . . . Lots of white students and there were so many racial slurs, . . . some I’ve never even heard about! I was just exposed to them in Grade 7. And I was like—what does that even mean?! You know, we had those spoiled kids who didn’t care about anyone except themselves. And they’d make comments like, why are we learning about them, they never did anything for us or for history.

Audrey: Wow. Ok. Total disregard of whose land we are on. That’s hard to handle.

Ryan: Yeah. But no surprise. Asses!

Audrey: Uneducated or ignorant are other words we could use, but asses is a good one too! [We all laughed.]

As I sat there with the young people, I couldn’t help but shake my head in disbelief at our school system. The youth showed such strength in how they handled the information that circulated about their culture. Despite the complexities of Indigenous representation in schools, the youth were able to take the material, knowing that the unjust information in the curriculum was an effect of colonization on our school system.

At that point the supervisor nodded across the room to let me know our room was available, but there was such a flow to the dialogue, I wanted to finish the conversation in
the lobby before moving so as not to disrupt thoughts. Up until now, Bella was the only one who had not shared, and I was unsure if she wanted to. She had been quiet about her experience, but was engaged through her body language. It turned out that she had been contemplating and really did want to contribute:

Audrey: Bella, would you like to share how you learned about Native culture in school?

Bella: Oh yeah, I had to really think about this, but when I was in high school, I remember in Grade 11, like in World History or something, that’s what the textbook was called or something like that. I remember there was like three pages on Native Americans, out of a book that was about 300 pages!

Audrey: Wow. That’s sad.

Bella: Oh, and all I remember is that it said we ate dogs!

Ryan: Ew! Did our ancestors really eat dogs?!! [He let out a heavy laugh.]

Audrey: Oh. And that’s how you saw yourself represented then. . . . Where did you go to school again?

Bella: Cannington, Ontario. Small, small town. But, yeah. We ate dogs. And they were kind of talking like we were extinct! Like, “The Native, or Indigenous peoples would use blubber as margarine” and “This is what they used to live in,” and then show random little tents and wigwams and loincloths and shit. And say, “People would sleep in here.” Yeah. And I was like . . . this is really awkward. And I just want to go back to my house, and my hot tub, and my flat screen. Ha ha. And my dog. Ha ha. It was kind of awkward. You know, we actually don’t just wear pieces of leather on our crotch. We wear jeans and hoodies like everyone
else. We live in houses, use computers, and watch TV and shit. You know . . . like everyone else.

Audrey: Damn! That’s rough! So, based on what all of you learned in school, for the most part, all Native people are dead?!

Ryan: Yup. For real!

Laughter erupted from the group and we ended the discussion on a light note and we made our way up the stairs, to the second floor studio.

Analysis
Based on the above conversation with Rachel, Mya, Bella, and Ryan, the teachers, history books, and curricular documents represented Indigenous communities as no longer living, wiped out by the effects of colonization, and as a historical memory we no longer need to learn about. The bias was glaringly obvious, not only in the content but in how teachers conducted the lessons. What I shared is a small sample, but by the sounds of it, this is not an anomaly. This section from my youth participants revealed two major social inequities, or struggles, that I will bring forward:

1. The ways in which settler colonialism is upheld in schooling via the master script.
2. The role that my program played in getting the youth to discuss their schooling experience.

My conversation with the four young people proved that master scripting is upheld today by teaching solely from a white Eurocentric perspective while denouncing any and all Black and Indigenous voices, and other voices of colour, in order to maintain certain heteronormative Eurocentric ideals. Battiste (1998) uncovers this systemic control, with specificity to representation of Indigenous voices in curriculum documents: “In
almost all of these provinces, these curricula are developed away from Aboriginal communities, without Aboriginal input, and written in English.” In effect, as with Ryan’s experience of extinction and how Bella learned about Natives being a thing of the past, eating dogs, wearing loincloths, and only living in the forest, “the curricula serve as another colonial instrument to deprive Aboriginal communities of their knowledge, languages, and cultures” (Battiste, p. 16). Granted, this may be part of the history, but the delivery and facilitation of the lesson uphold the power structure of Eurocentric ideologies.

The educational legacy of settler colonialism represented by the master script in my data is not only astounding, but also upsetting. It was present in every experience the IYAs shared and revealed the urgency for better training for teachers and the need for Indigenous input in the curriculum to confront the consciousness of Canadians who may no longer see Indigenous people as living in the present:

The colonizer did not only seize land, but also minds. If colonialism’s influence had been merely the control of land that would have required only one form of resistance, but when information is also colonized, it is essential that the resistance must interrogate issues related to education, information and intellectual transformations. (Forward by Molefi Kete Asante, p. xi, in Dei and Kempf)

By suppressing Indigenous input and voices in the curriculum, those in power are successfully safeguarding the master script, where white, Eurocentric views continue to be upheld as supreme knowledge. As stated by Asante, resistance to these powers through education is the most influential means of transformation. This is where I see the
integration of the arts as a way to open up discourse about Indigenous cultures in formal or informal educational settings and begin to decolonize young minds. To live together in a good way with the academy’s project of cultivating knowledge, and to make it a safe place for Indigenous knowledges, requires an intellectual perspective dramatically different from what already exists (Garroutte, 2003).

Bella stated in her response, “We wear jeans and hoodies like everyone else. We live in houses, use computers and watch TV and shit. You know . . . like everyone else.” It was important to this young person to be recognized as simply a person, not as someone who existed only in the past, which is how textbooks consistently portray Indigenous people. Such textbooks make it obvious who created the curriculum.

The program I facilitated offered the IYAs a comfortable, safe space to discuss images of self that they learned about in their own schooling experience. In regards to Garroutte’s (2003) notion of creating different spaces, the space I created was different from what the youth had experienced in school and was one where they felt safe to share with others in the culture-sharing group. The schooling experience by my youth showed that Native people were portrayed as being extinct, erased from one’s social imaginary, and as subjects of a particular narrative of colonial history, which is premeditated in school. By being a participant in my project, the IYAs were prompted to become mindful of how they learned about their own culture in school, and how other people perceived them. My program was the first time many of the IYAs in my study had given critical thought to how they learned about their culture in school, recognizing that it was not always a positive experience. This applies specifically to the case of Mya, who had to bear witness to racial slurs, derogatory talk of Native people, and total disrespect from
her classmates and teacher for whose land we are all on. My program offered a safe space and collectively the youth were able to learn about each other’s lived experience, positive or negative, and were often able to find similarities in how narratives of Native people are constructed in curriculum documents. As a lasting legacy of settler colonialism, my program helped the IYAs critically acknowledge how their schooling was instrumental in upholding Eurocentric ideals of education, and recognize their strength in confronting these issues. And unfortunately these institutional inequities and untruthful representations continue to exist in curricula.

Deanna
To examine how one youth recovered her education, I analyzed the experience of Deanna, a Metis and Ojibwe youth who did not learn very much about her heritage at home or in school. Consequently, she had to look outside of her own schooling. Deanna searched out ways to enhance her cultural understanding, so she enrolled in an extra-curricular course at Shingwauk University to learn about her heritage. To clarify, Deanna occupies two overlapping roles in this project. I met her at the week-long intensive course at Shingwauk and connected with her through the work we were both doing. She is also a youth justice worker at the NYDI, and was my connection to the centre where I volunteered and then carried out my fieldwork. Deanna attended all the sessions as part of her job but was also a youth participant, as she is still considered a youth. First, I share her learning experience in school, and then I analyze two photographs from her cultural-based learning experience at Shingwauk:

Audrey: How did you learn about Indigenous cultures in school?
Deanna: That’s a good question. I didn’t learn much and that’s why I wanted to take that course at Shingwauk. I wanted to learn more about how my people
thought about education and how it was envisioned for us. You know, teaching off the land and in nature. I wanted to learn more about me and my family history so I can pass it on to the younger generations, so that we can be proud. When I was growing up my nana never talked about our Native heritage because she was so ashamed. It was ingrained in her that she should never talk about being an Indian. And I don’t want to live like that—I’m a proud Aboriginal woman!

Based on this conversation with Deanna, it was obvious that the efforts of colonization had affected her family so effectively that Deanna did not know about her family heritage. Like many other Indigenous people, Deanna’s grandmother was made to believe that being Native was a horrible thing, and her language, culture, and knowledges were shamefully debauched. The Canadian government tried endlessly to assimilate the First Peoples, which they did in heinous, inhumane means, yet the powerful resilience of Indigenous people wrestled with the multifaceted grip of colonization to survive. The strength of youth voices, impassioned visions for reconciliation, and truth telling and healing are evidence of the reclaiming efforts of the newer generation, Deanna included.

The following photographs are only two of the larger bank of images that Deanna collected during her time at Shingwauk, which was housed in an old residential school. These two are special to her because they intensely sparked deep learning about her heritage. But first, I offer a brief history of Chief Shingwauk and his goals.

**A Brief History of Shingwauk’s Vision**

Located in what is largely known as Ojibwe territory, Sault Ste. Marie is home to Garden River First Nation, also known as Ketegaunseebee in Anishinaabe.47 The Garden River First Nation Reserve was created in 1850 with the signing of the Robinson Treaty and

was home to Chief Shingwaukonse. Shingwauk was the first chief of Garden River and was a true visionary of his time:

> Although the residential school had in the nineteenth century begun life as the product of both Indian initiative and European cultural aggression, it had gradually become the vehicle of the newcomers’ attempts to refashion and culturally eliminate the first inhabitants’ way of life and identity. Shingwauk had wanted a ‘teaching wigwam’ so that his people could learn to adjust to new ways, especially economic ways, but in operation the mission and school at Sault Ste. Marie had oppressed and attempted to assimilate them. The results of the emergence of the residential school as an instrument of attempted cultural genocide, a development that had caused the first principal of Shingwauk’s ‘teaching wigwam’ to give up in disillusionment had been numerous and mainly negative. (Shingwauk’s vision, p. 9-10)

And so, in attempts to bring Shingwauk’s vision to life, Chief Darrel Boissoneau of the Garden River First Nation launched a claim that would ask the government to rename the institution of Algoma to Shingwauk College to actualize Chief Shingwauk’s vision. Chief Boissoneau and his supporters envisioned an institution that would promote an enhancement of Native culture, providing education for both Native and non-Native people. He wanted to fulfill the dream of Chief Shingwauk, which was the vision of the teaching wigwam that Shingwauk first proposed to the Canadian government in 1832 (p. 3). The residential school system disrupted Native families, severed individual identity, raped people of their culture, and stole children through Christian attempts to make Indigenous people into “better citizens” for a European society. The teaching wigwam
was a way to reclaim the knowledge that was lost and would also act as a crucible for cross-cultural understanding and synthesis of traditional Anishinabek and modern European knowledge and learning systems. These efforts by Chief Shingwauk epitomize the anti-colonial prism, whereby European imperialism is met with nonviolent resistance and Indigenous knowledges are placed at the forefront of pedagogical objectives.

The pedagogical goals at Shingwauk and the Teaching Wigwam prompted me to think about the Aboriginal language and culture teaching nests that were developed in New South Wales in Australia, and taken up in a Canadian context in the film *Pelq’ilec (Coming Home)* by Celia and Helen Haig-Brown. This film focuses on the place of education in renewing Indigenous culture and tradition. The curriculum at Shingwauk Kinoomaage Gamig offers culture-based education. The Teaching Wigwam Lodge was part of the vision of Chief Shingwauk, who saw an education centred on Mother Earth and Turtle Island, with a focus on the high values of the seven grandfather teachings: respect, honour, bravery, humility, love, truth, and wisdom. Qualities of teamwork and culture-based pedagogy were integral to the building of this teaching wigwam. Each elder helped us all appreciate the land and community we had been given, invigorating our appreciation for the culture we were learning about. The two photographs below, “A Sapping Ceremony” and “The Pint-Sized Door,” are presented to show how this IYA, Deanna, has reclaimed pride and gained awareness through a culture-based learning

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48 http://archives.algomau.ca/main/shingwauk_project
49 http://nmai.si.edu/nafvf/TitleDetails.aspx?Title=93
50 http://www.shingwauku.ca/about-us
course, and also how my project helps accelerate her quest to disseminate knowledge on, and educate others about, the effects of settler colonialism on her people.

**Culturally Relevant Pedagogy**
The sixth session of my workshops was based on photographic narrative and collaboration. My goal was to have participants begin to analyze their photographs and the work of others. In this session, I asked them to pair up and exchange photos with their partner, where each pair was to discuss their partner’s photo. I asked them to draw out what could be learned from the photos. For the final stage of this activity I asked participants to cut, paste and collage an image using both photographs to tell one narrative based on education. For the purpose of this project, I only shared the original photographs of individual youth because they speak to each young person’s personal reflection of education.

This is the first of two photographs that Deanna wanted to include in this dissertation. It is a document of a ceremony we participated in in the Teaching Lodge at Shingwauk, and so I speak to it as a participant and now researcher. We learned about the ceremonial aspects of the sapping ceremony, which are linked with intense care and gratitude for the process. When I asked Deanna why she wanted to share this photograph, she had this to say:

I want to show others what we’re about. I think it is important to go back to nature and honour Mother Earth. I love that my culture recognizes these steps. I love that I got to share this with others and I feel so special as an Aboriginal woman to know that this is where I came from. And I wish this could be taught to all students in all classes and grades across our country. I think that would be a really
positive thing for students to go through and learn about, ’cause I didn’t get that chance.

As Deanna constructed her thoughts for this statement, there was a sense of loss that she felt at having not learned about this in school, but the knowledge she gained from this course was invaluable to her sense of self. Clearly in learning about her cultural heritage, she thought it was important to share this experience with others. She thought this project would be a good start, and I agreed. Below I provide a narrative analysis of the photographs, which capture scenes in which I was also a participant, and offer suggestions on how we can use these photographs pedagogically.

Figure 4: A Sapping Ceremony, by Deanna
We entered the lodge, following the four directions clockwise, to show our respect. As a

group, we gathered to give thanks to the land we walked on, sang a loud “Aho!” to

acknowledge our presence in nature, and turned our hearts to honour and respectfully

cherish Mother Earth. The scent of the spruce tree bristles being warmed over the fire,

mingled with the essence of sweet grass smudges and tinges of maple, regenerated my

sense of nature. The sound of the embers pinging out of the rusty metal fire pit blended

with the background noises. The focal point became the contents of the large metal

cauldron.

Gathered in the teaching wigwam, we participated in the full-day transformation

of the sap, which was sapped from maple trees, cooked down to maple syrup, poured

onto ice, moulded into maple candy, and cooked down some more until all the water had

evaporated and it had formed into brown sugar tickled with the scent of maple and pine

needles. This syrupy pureness was used to sweeten food, but also had medicinal purposes

for old and young. Today we made brown sugar in the large metal cauldron. Dangling

above the cauldron worn proudly around the elder’s neck was the Anishinabek emblem of

the eagle, the ruler of the sky and the one who teaches us to use our energy wisely.

Squawks of the eagle’s rejoicing for the teachings of the maple sap ceremony could be

heard throughout the teaching wigwam. For this we gave thanks.

Within frame of the photograph, on the right, we see the hand of Elder Eddie, who

held a large spoon and a bowl-like object in his hands, both crafted from what looks like

maple and a dark wood. The intricacy of the handle and the smooth sleekness of the bowl

reveal the expertise of the carver who created the objects. The tools on the wood used to

craft such objects whittled and squeaked, tweaked and screeched, as the carver subtracted
chunks of grainy wood gifted from Mother Earth to unveil his or her creations. The sharp metal blades of the carver’s tools left no evidence on the smooth varnished pieces, now fit for a maple syrup ceremony. As the elder gracefully grasps the bowl and the spoon, his seasoned hands articulating lessons to the two younger learners by his side. His hands speak of the knowledge of his years as he passes on the teachings he learned from his elders, and his elders’ elders. All the teachings culminated in the transference of Anishinaabe ways of knowing.

In the early morning June sun, prior to beginning the ceremony, Elder Eddie taught us that burning the tobacco was calling on the Creator to keep the people safe while they gathered the sap in the woods. He emphasized that an integral part of working with the land is always remembering to give thanks and being sure to only take what is needed. The trees were sapped at the beginning of April and saved for our course so we could learn by participating in the ceremony with the elders throughout the day. Before we arrived for the course, the keepers used tobacco to give thanks, and when the keepers finished sapping the trees they gave a tobacco burning to honour the maple tree. On the day of the ceremony, we also burned tobacco throughout the process of transforming the sap to sugar. Then, once the transformation was completed, the three sisters (corn, beans, and squash) arrived, and we gave thanks for the feast, family, and community—and we feasted.

**Analysis**
Based on Deanna’s photograph of the maple-sapping ceremony, Indigenous ways of knowing through culture-based learning are epitomized in the daily pedagogical goals at Shingwauk. Implementing Indigenous ways of knowing moves away from Eurocentric
ideals, as illustrated in Deanna’s photograph of the sapping ceremony. To consider historically conscious texts outside of European knowledges, Dei (1999) claims that we must rethink the place of Indigenous knowledges in the academy, and honour and preserve the knowledge that is gained from groups outside of the dominant European ways of knowing. Learning from the land is seminal to Indigenous knowledges, and this was truly significant for Deanna in acquiring more about her cultural heritage. In my former chapter on the reserve, I discussed the significance of land, and in this chapter I reveal the importance of learning from the land.

The challenge for education is that Indigenous knowledges work outside of the dominant structures of power, and thus involves a colonial resistance to the politically charged curriculum documents and trouble the colonial project. Once there is resistance to the master script, there is pushback from those who instigate and uphold the master script, which the colonizers have put in place to keep the colonized, colonized. Therefore, if we can take something away from the colonizer, some piece of their plan, then we are fighting back with anti-colonial resistance and knowledge. First I offer a brief history of Indian residential schools in Canada and then discuss Deanna’s photograph, which stands as a visual resistance to constrictive schooling ideals.

**Indian Residential Schools**

Deanna’s photograph entitled “The Pint-Sized Door” (figure 5) stands as a visual document for us to discuss the history of schooling in Canada. It is a testament to remnants of our past and the forces behind the dire need for assimilation of Indigenous children in Canada. To bring this vision to fruition, the government and the Church ran
residential schools for Indian children from 1870 to 1996. By 1920, it was mandatory for children to attend and punishable by law if one did not comply.

The mission to complete this assimilation project was a violent one, but “in the church’s estimation, their residential school mission, which purportedly transformed Aboriginal boys and girls into useful Christian Canadian men and women, was a most sublime Christian act” (Milloy, p.xii, introduction). They truly believed that it was God’s will to “kill the Indian in the child” and make these children so-called respected citizens of our country. In the current climate in Canada, Deanna’s photograph at Shingwauk contributes to the discourse about acknowledgment of the realities that took place at Indian residential schools and the brutalities that ensued there for over a hundred years. This school system was one that would instil generational effects on its students.

On June 3, 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada released a groundbreaking document as part of the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement. It included a mandate of directives needed in order to reconcile with the affected families of the residential school era:

Its mandate is to inform all Canadians about what happened in Indian Residential Schools (IRS). The Commission will document the truth of survivors, families, communities and anyone personally affected by the IRS experience. This includes First Nations, Inuit and Métis former Indian Residential School students, their families, communities, the Churches, former school employees, Government and other Canadians.  

52 ibid.
The promises that come with such a document are immense, and can be daunting to
tackle, but it is the hope that the Canadian government will uphold its part of the mandate.
As Justice Murray Sinclair stated, “Reconciliation is about forging and maintaining
respectful relationships. There are no shortcuts.”

To heal and commemorate the survivors and the lost ones, an art installation
entitled “The Witness Blanket” was created as a documentation of the history of
residential schools. In my chapter on the reserve I discussed the arts as a channel to
express and narrate trauma and experiences of resilience as a means to heal. This large-
scale installation is inspired by the comforts of a woven blanket. It is made out of
hundreds of items reclaimed from residential schools, government buildings, churches,
and traditional and cultural structures including universities, band offices, and friendship
centres across Canada. This piece by master carver Carey Newman (Ha-yalth-kingeme)
illustrates the power of visual arts to lift and empower generations of survivors of the
residential schools. The artist created “The Witness Blanket” as a national monument to
recognize the atrocities of the Indian residential school era, honour the children, and
symbolize ongoing reconciliation. The photograph from Deanna symbolizes not only the
past, but the effects of the past on future generations. I discuss this intergenerational
trauma in Chapter 5.

53 ibid
54 http://witnessblanket.ca
Figure 5: The Pint-Sized Door, by Deanna.

This is Deanna’s photograph, entitled “The Pint Sized Door.” At the start of the course, the instructors told us that there were still remnants of the Indian residential school around the building that was now home to Algoma University. In fact, the auditorium where our class gathered was the actual auditorium for students of the residential school. One day on our break, Deanna and I made our way to the basement washroom because the ones on the first floor were occupied. We meandered down the staircase, but nothing could have prepared anyone for this pint-sized door. Tucked away under the stairs that led to the basement and ground floor offices was a small door that resembled a swing or latch door for a dog. It would have been easy to miss if Deanna hadn’t pointed it out. We did not know what it was, but later we were told that it was not for a dog, but in fact for children. It was for Native children who “misbehaved.” At any point there could be up to ten children confined to this tiny, dark space, left there to suffer for hours at a time, soaked in tears, urine, and feces, and distressed with terror, anxiety, and heartache. We returned to the door and stopped to reflect on its usage. We paused and breathed, paused and breathed.
The pint-sized door stood 14 inches high and 16 inches wide. I imagined yearnings for the comforting smells of home and the warm, secure embrace of a mother’s arm; these children were tortured based on their heritage. This photograph is extremely loud, one of the loudest photographs I have heard. The screams, the cries, the yelps, the howls, the weeping, the scratching, the pleading, the wretched sounds of vomiting . . . the photograph was filled with visions of young Indigenous children in their school uniforms, hair cut or shaved, being punished for speaking their mother tongue. Or not being able to pronounce a newly acquired English name, communicating with siblings or putting up a fight when being abused: the powers at the residential schools would term all of these actions misbehaving.

This photograph, presented by Deanna, offers us a document from Canada’s past. Simon (2006) suggests that we consider visual public history as it provides more than a version of the past: that these documents provide a particular historical truth and images as witnesses to certain events. In examining the pedagogical force of this photograph, I see a space for teaching about our nation’s history and the potential for difficult conversations that need to happen in order for students to understand the effects of settler colonialism. Understanding that this is not to be taken lightly, the pedagogical content around the photograph must be taken with grave respect, so as not to reinstate colonial underpinnings, but move toward decolonization. Smith (2012) insists that in order for education to steer away from further indoctrination, Indigenous people need to be a part of formulating the curriculum and pedagogical methods in order for decolonization to begin in a system that raped its people of all culture, heritage, and language during the
time of residential schooling. I believe the power of photographs can help ease us into these difficult conversations and truths about our history.

Back at the NYDI, when I opened up the discussion about learning about Native cultures in schools, Deanna asked if she could include this photo as evidence. I answered yes, and asked why she thought it was important to include in my project. She explained:

I know so many, or too many, people that were affected by the residential school system. . . . My friends, family, co-workers, it’s too much! And then white people wonder why Natives find it hard to cope in school?! It’s obviously because of our history with schools. Duh. And I don’t think we should be blamed, but I think we need to heal and get help so that we can move on. More people need to know about the shit that happened to us! That’s why it should be in your research. I’m trying hard, you know. . . . I went to college and I hope to make a difference in the Aboriginal youth I work with. That’s my hope at least! Ha ha.

She trailed off with a chuckle filled with optimism, and then continued, “And I hope that by having it in academic stuff like what you’re doing will help people get a better understanding of Aboriginal culture.” Deanna was animated about getting people to learn about her culture, and I assured her that I would fulfill my role as an ally. By completing such a project as this (researching, writing, and being involved with the youth and community), I have become a stronger ally than I was when I first started, because now I am equipped with a more intimate knowledge of lived experiences. My goal is to continue to disseminate truthful information about Indigenous communities via publications, my teaching practice, and conferences, using these photographs as a point of discussion.
Conclusion
For the data in this chapter, I inquired how my youth participants learned about
Indigenous cultures in school. Often I acquired stories from their elementary or secondary
schooling because teaching about Indigenous cultures is mandatory in school and is
written into the curriculum. The culture-based education that Deanna participated in was
the only narrative about post-secondary learning, and this was not part of her program,
but an extra-curricular course she took out of interest (the same can be said for me). In
the case of Ryan, Bella, and Rachel, these IYAs learned about their culture in a less-than-
positive light, which begs for inquiry into what is portrayed as truth for our students in
curricula. My program offered a space for these young people to share and critically
analyze the content of their schooling and recognize the legacy that settler colonialism
has on education, but to also acknowledge their resilience in matters of schooling. Dei
(1999) claims that an anti-colonial approach to education celebrates oral, visual, political,
and textual material and the resistance of colonized groups, and shifts away from a
preoccupation with victimization (p. 117). This is what I witnessed happening with the
IYAs over the course of my fieldwork. By being able to communicate through their
artwork, the youth shifted away from thinking of themselves as victims, and exuded a
sense of power and futurity. This strength indicates that the oppressive colonial power
was slightly lightened, and the IYAs were empowered by being able to share their
photographs and dialogue about issues that affect them.
Chapter 8

Implications and Conclusion

Introduction
When I conceived this project, my goal was to enhance relationships between Black and Indigenous communities and decolonize education through the arts. In retrospect, I did that and more. Throughout this project, it was important for me to illuminate the voices of these two communities because of the oppressive nature of colonization in Canada. Also integral to my work was to utilize the arts as a platform to critically analyze and discuss settler colonialism with young people. Historically informed and socio-culturally produced, I constructed and facilitated an arts-based educational program that did, in effect, realize my initial goals. My arts-based program aimed to initiate critical and thought-provoking discussions about the legacies of settler colonialism on social identity, space, and education with IYAs. Once I developed the photography and hip hop program, I considered how best to go about implementing the project I had in mind, and where it would work best, keeping in mind I wanted to work with a specific population. Thus, I created a space for me to do what I am passionate about, which is to thoughtfully engage historically marginalized young people about education, life, and the arts. While I imagined a slightly different project, as an ethnographer I listened to the needs of my participants and was able to better appreciate the lived experiences of the youth in my program who welcomed me into their space and enhanced my learning about their culture. During the time I was immersed with this culture-sharing group, my appreciation for the
youth and their obstacles was amplified. Gaining this understanding of IYAs will prove pivotal in my advocacy and curriculum development and my aims to decolonize education and continue to be an ally with Indigenous communities to correct the damage inflicted by colonization.

Once again, my research questions are:

1. How do Indigenous youth utilize a photography and hip hop based educational program as a resource to explore social identity and relations, indigeneity, space, and the educational legacies of settler colonialism?

2. How do these findings benefit and inform youth programming and youth studies? How do programs such as mine help Indigenous youth perceive crisis in the urban environment?

This qualitative study employed an anti-colonial framework to express the social, historical, and political implications of settler colonialism, as specifically tied to social identity, place, and education, on the lives of IYAs. In this concluding chapter of my dissertation, I will discuss the contributions of this research in three areas: (a) contributions to substantive areas (social identity, land, and education); (b) methodological contributions (critical ethnography and arts-based methods); and (c) theoretical contributions (youth studies and decolonizing education). Following this I present the limitations of my project, possibilities for future studies, and final thoughts.

**Chapter Summaries**

In efforts to address youth as resilient members of the community and contributors to decolonizing contemporary culture, we must provide them with materials that generate culturally and socially aware citizens. To begin this process of decolonization, as my
project suggests, we can use photography and hip hop as the foundation to better understand the realities faced by IYAs. In this section I will discuss how the findings in this study make contributions to substantive areas, including: (a) social identity and relations; (b) space as related to territorial land and the urban environment; and (c) the effects of settler colonialism on education.

In Chapter 5, I focused on social identity. Throughout this chapter I considered the complexities and contradictions the IYAs face when coming to terms with their social identity. The results showed how much youth grapple with the idea of looking Native and the desire to be more phenotypically Indian as defined by dominant society. The results also showed that IYAs yearned for visibility. They did not want the effects of colonization to delete their racial visibility and wanted others to recognize their existence in the present. They feared that if they were no longer visible, who would know they exist?

The purpose of Chapter 6 was to investigate the relationships to land/place and migration in the lives of IYAs currently living in the urban centre of Toronto. In this chapter I investigated how IYAs utilize a visual arts–based program as a resource for discussion around their ties, or lack of ties, to their ancestral reserves. After listening to the IYAs in my study narrate their stories, I began to understand the complexities these young people face in the sense of belonging to both the urban and their ancestral place. These ties accent the spiritual and emotive connection, rather than simply understand land as geographic terrain. Seemingly, the tie to traditional land became sentimentally deepened by narrative, but also complicated and layered by the understanding that Indigenous communities are and always have been, urban. To further understand the
relationship to place, my acts of listening to the young people’s stories came in the form of interviews, dialogue, and photographs. The stories of the IYAs became vital to learning about the challenges they faced and obstacles they have overcome, including fighting for recognition under the Indian Act, border politics within Canada and the US, not knowing one’s traditional land, and barriers to migrating to the city independently of one’s family.

In Chapter 7, I focused on the legacies of settler colonialism on education. The data that I collected for this chapter indicated how youth learned about Indigenous cultures in schools and how they were represented in the curriculum. In carrying out this study, I was interested in how schooling upholds settler colonial ideals and what we can do to dismantle these ideals so that our students are represented in truthful ways. In this chapter I presented the findings I collected on education and schooling to analyze the legacy of settler colonialism on education. To do so, I looked at Swartz’s (1992) concept of the master script “as a way of silencing multiple voices and perspectives, primarily legitimizing dominant, white, upper-class male voices as the standard knowledge students need to know” (p. 341).

In the first segment of this chapter I presented my findings from a small focus group with four IYAs: Bella, Rachel, Ryan, and Mya. These findings revealed the silencing of Indigenous voices in curricular design, and also in curricular content via misrepresentations and untruths. Following this section, I presented and analyzed two photographs from Deanna’s experience within a post-secondary, extra-curricular course which showed how she learned about her heritage in a personal effort to reclaim her culture, and what my arts based program offered her. In this chapter, I was particularly
interested in how my youth participants learned about Indigenous cultures through their schooling experience. My aim was to investigate power structures and inequities based on the legacies of colonialism using an anti-colonial framework, with emphasis on Indigenous knowledges, resistance and recovery. By following a critical ethnographic approach, I was able to investigate lived experiences of Indigenous youth in the school system (seen or not seen) and the power structures within these systems, to uncover if and how Indigenous people are portrayed in school curricula.

**Contribution to Critical Ethnography**

As previously noted, I identify as a mixed-race Black female. I restate my positionality here because I find myself to be constantly omitted or left out of existing literature on or with Indigenous populations. I seldom read about researchers like myself who occupy a space outside dominant settler status, doing work with Indigenous communities. Instead, when the existing literature makes any reference to non-Indigenous populations, it was typically named as a reference to the dominant settler status of whiteness and Europeans. I found this reference to be oppositional of a decolonization framework, which emphasizes moving away from inserting Eurocentric ideals as the centre or starting point of reference. This was consistent in the numerous studies I read and felt particularly left out from the discourse as a non-white person who is engaged in Indigenous studies. And so, I see my study as a starting point to fill that gap in the research, to re-centre the centre.

In her foundational text on critical ethnography, Madison (2005) pointedly articulates a question I considered in my analysis: “What difference does it make when the ethnographer himself comes from a history of colonization and disenfranchisement?” (p. 7). When I was conducting my fieldwork, I often wondered if my relationship with the
IYAs in my study would have been so comfortable, trusting, and caring, or if they would have opened up to me in the ways they did, if I was not Black. I believe that our similar but different oppressions helped me cultivate the rich relationships that I did. At this point, I cannot confirm this was a factor, but perhaps it is worth considering as a question in my future studies. I also believe that as a person who is from a history of colonization and disenfranchisement, I brought an emotive relational lens to the project as someone who has experienced similar but different forms of marginalization due to the effect of colonization.

The number of collaborations and or sole research projects by Black researchers on or with Indigenous people is scarce. Aside from the collaborative work done on the Black Land Project by Eve Tuck et al. (2014), I did not come across other collaborations or sole research projects by Black researchers on or with Indigenous people. However, I see a gap in this literature, and this is where my critical ethnography fills the gap. My project is situated in the category of Black researchers and educators conducting studies on or with Indigenous communities and especially those working with the arts. It is here that I see the implications of and potential for building solidarity. Acknowledging that the roots of solidarity are theological, with historical ties to the Church, and often “solidarity hinges on similarities in characteristics, political interests, social needs, or moral obligations” (Gaztambide-Fernandez, 2012, p. 46), I view solidarity as a support system, a fellowship based on commonalities, and a union based on common interests. To discuss solidarity, I also use the definition of solidarity as theorized by Bayertz, who claims, “One is ‘solidarity’ with those to whom one is close due to some common ground: shared history, shared feelings, convictions or interests. In this sense, a particularistic—maybe
even exclusive—dimension is inherent in the general use of the term solidarity” (Bayertz, 1999, p. 8). During my conversation with Elder Andrew Wesley at First Nations House at the University of Toronto, one of the main things he emphasized was that Black and Aboriginal people understand white privilege, and the main thing for both of these groups (Black and Indigenous) is perseverance, because both groups persevered above colonization, slavery, and residential schools. Recognizing that each group endured such horrendous acts, the fight was for survival, and betterment for generations to come. In future endeavours with Indigenous researchers, educators, community members, and artists, I believe that solidarity can be further investigated as a means to cultivate relationships that affect change by using the arts as an outlet.

**Contribution to Youth Studies**
A considerable amount of the current literature on Indigenous youth studies focuses on the detrimental effects of colonization via alcohol, suicide, mental health, incarceration, homelessness, family and child welfare failures, and health issues. I found discussions to be focused on the negative in the lives of young Indigenous people, but not much on the positive, uplifting focal points these young people exude. For this study I intended to shed light on the positive accomplishments that young people have worked toward and the ways in which they show extreme resilience in the light of legacies of settler colonialism in their communities. My contribution to youth studies follows what Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot (1983) calls goodness, whereby a researcher begins by looking at what is working, rather than what is not working. By taking this approach, I was able to listen to the issues that plague the IYAs, but search for, focus on, and highlight or reveal their strengths. My goal was to make choices that portrayed the authenticity, or goodness
(Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1983), of youth in creative and gripping ways that showcased their intellectual voices as young people. As I listened for moments of perseverance by the IYAs in this research project, I began by asking, “What is happening here, what is working, and why?” (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 141).

Of particular importance to me was to reveal the resilient nature of IYAs in my dissertation and share the growth I saw in each of them during our limited time together. In each findings chapter, I highlighted the strength and audacity of the young people in my study and how they utilized my program as a means of discussing issues they had not previously considered. In the following section I offer a brief summary of the benefit of my program and how each individual youth transformed during their participation in my project. In this section I highlight the humble resilience of the IYAs (Rachel, Blair, Mya, Deanna, and Bella), proving how important it is for us to recognize the obstacles young people face in order to better contribute to their further successes.

In Chapter 5, we saw the pain ignited in Rachel when she spoke about the effects of alcoholism on her family. She stated that she refused to give in to that urge and always made a conscious effort to stop drinking before it got out of control. Rachel made this conscious decision because she did not want alcohol to stop her from going to school or keeping a job, both of which she has been able to do in the city. Her emotional response was a testament to the difficulty of upholding this task, and the willpower this requires, yet she has succeeded thus far. For Bella, the data revealed how essential hip hop is in informing her sense of self and finding self-assurance and confidence in the urban environment. She was able to find her voice in hip hop, which proves the power of this form of expression for youth. The music and her rapping and writing helped her develop
as a young person who was getting to know herself in the process. As an Indigenous young woman coming from foster care, and not really having a claim to land, Bella’s resilience is exhibited in her newfound confidence via hip hop as she continues to persevere.

In spite of the complexity of her identity as a mixed-race Black and Indigenous young person with American Indian heritage, Mya continued to find ways to navigate through state regulations. She has not given up hope of obtaining her Indian status and is trying to make a better life for herself in university as she uses her art to dismantle stereotypes and celebrate her cultural heritages. Throughout this project, Blair proved to be a wise young person with insight into various issues that affected Indigenous communities. His observations throughout the project show his strength and knowledge, but I want to highlight his powerful creative vision in the two photographs he allowed me to include, “Ice on the Rez” and “Yonge & Dundas Square.” These two photographs depict the dichotomies lived by Blair, as is the case for many young Indigenous people who migrate from their reserve to the urban environment, often for promise of better employment, schooling, and opportunity. Blair made the trek to the city and is determined to navigate through the complex routes of the urban. Deanna’s resilience is best viewed through her fortitude to re-educate herself on the Indigenous heritage that was previously silenced in her family. Her sentiments and two photographs prove how much she wants others to learn about their heritage, that she has the strength to teach the difficult histories of residential schools, and the potentiality of implementing culturally relevant pedagogy for young people.
Contributions to Decolonizing Education

The history of colonization and settler colonialism in Canada is often silenced and unspoken in curricula (Battiste & Henderson, 2000; Hudson & Taylor, Sehdev, 2011; Smith, 2012; and Battiste, 2013). Based on the evidence from my data, stereotypes and inaccuracies about Indigenous people continue to be perpetuated in school curricula across Canada. While I recognize that this constant, inaccurate representation will take numerous years to be undone, as critical citizens there is an urgency to correct these misrepresentations, take pride in identity, and relearn about Indigenous cultures. As such, I view the arts as a tool to interrupt the master script and begin the politics of decolonizing education. These actions speak back to Eurocentric powers and raise issues of settler colonialism, socio-politics, and narratives of young Black and Indigenous voices. For me, decolonizing is not exerting all its energies on speaking back to the colonizer; it means taking a stance, moving away from the colonizers’ tools, and interrupting the script with Black and Indigenous voices. The anti-colonial prism provided a foundation for my thoughts.

In reference to Leanne (Bestamanokwe) Simpson (2011), decolonization means dismantling colonization with our young people and begin reclaiming parenting techniques outside of Eurocentrism. Decolonizing is also the use of critical land pedagogies, where we return to the land and begin to centre education from the most intimate ground we could ever imagine, to honour, the land as both context and process (Simpson, 2014, p. 7). This is evident throughout my work with participants, specifically in chapter six with the focus on land and in chapter seven where I discussed Indigenous knowledges and culturally relevant pedagogies. When I was designing this project, I considered the importance of land pedagogies based on my participants (and my own
experiences), accordingly the intent was to contribute to critical land pedagogies through work on and with the land, where the youth become innovative artistic cartographers using their photographs and discussions of hip hop to guide their new pedagogical encounters with the environment.

My decolonized vision means taking up space and providing a platform to correct narratives and histories that were and are tarnished because of colonial rule. Education is the starting point to do this critically tenacious work. Thinking about how others (Smith, Dei, Wane, Battiste and Henderson, Tuck, Yang, et al.) have articulated and defined decolonization, I have taken up these frameworks and constructed my own. In order to illustrate how I make considerations for decolonizing in theory and practice, I crafted a vision that details some of my ideas about using the arts in education to move away from master scripting (Swartz, 1999), starting with the voices of Black and Indigenous peoples, and other people of colour, in an effort to recentre the centre.

My quest to decolonize education through the arts includes: inserting, recovering, and honouring Black and Indigenous voices that have been oppressed by Eurocentric powers in the arts, appreciating creativity as a means of expression, and creating healing and discursive spaces for difficult conversations. My vision states that we cannot do this work alone, and that it includes the efforts of all pedagogues who work within the system. Yet I cannot overlook those who, like me, work in the community, on the ground: the practitioners, artists, designers, and facilitators who are not just theorizing, but putting these theories into action. My vision focuses on where educators are taught about Indigenous knowledges, culturally relevant pedagogies, sensitive journeys of teaching, ethical conduct, the value of lived experiences, and respect for the knowledge possessed
by youth. And create spaces where the arts are a catalyst for change. But first, we must acknowledge that we are still colonized in order to begin the decolonizing process.

Limitations of the Study
Throughout my fieldwork there were four main limitations I found as I collected my data. These limitations were the messiness of community programming, lack of funds to increase honoraria for participants, inconsistent participation, and the length of the program. As an experienced educator in alternative spaces of learning, I am accustomed to the complexities of working within spaces that have limited resources. The NYDI is a phenomenal space that assists youth in various aspects of their lives, but there is limited space for all the programming that takes place at the centre. Many times my program was cut short because of limitations on space. Therefore we found alternative places to meet, which in the end proved to be beneficial to exposing the youth to different educational opportunities, cultural centres, and resources to enhance their progress in the urban environment.

Another limitation I found was with participant commitment. The program I mounted was not mandated by school or tied to any substantial funds: It was a voluntary arts-based program mounted under the youth justice programming at the NYDI. Many of the youth at the drop-in who wanted to participate told me that they had other commitments, such as work, searches for housing, care-taking duties, or obligations for school. And so they could not commit to the 12-week program I facilitated. Upon reflection, perhaps I could have conducted three or four shorter programs on varying days of the week to accommodate schedules and time constraints. Understandably, my program was not a priority for the youth, but more a leisurely, creative thing to do during
spare time. I find this is the case with many arts-based community programs for historically marginalized youth who have socio-economic and other obstacles to deal with in their lives. Although I was able to offer honoraria to the IYAs who participated, in retrospect, I would have liked to offer more. Perhaps a future project can be tied to obligations to school or an existing community program.

**Future Projections**

Overall, this project was highly instrumental in broadening my knowledge of how IYAs navigate the complexities of belonging, often in two different spaces: the traditional land of the reserve and the urban environment. My approach to facilitating knowledge of issues of social identity, space, and education in Indigenous communities provided the vocabulary to address the politics of inequities with young people, recognizing the legacy settler colonialism left behind. While carrying out this critical ethnographic study, as an ally to Indigenous communities, I was mindful to fulfill the ethical considerations I presented in my methodology section. In future research projects, I would like to work more closely with Black and Indigenous community members on collaborations to ensure the success of the next generation of leaders, utilizing creative methods as generative texts.

Throughout this project I examined ways that the arts contribute to one’s sense of belonging. Building upon knowledge gained in this study using photography and hip hop, future investigations will focus specifically on combinations of image, text, and sound to create digital stories or videos to further investigate youth’s identity-formation processes. My work will continue to be informed by Indigenous knowledges, cultural studies, and youth studies, and guided by an anti-colonial prism. In particular I will contribute to
decolonizing curriculum design to develop honest insight into learning about Indigenous cultures, grounding my practice as an artist educator in community-based events and in post-secondary institutions.

The arts-based approach taken in this dissertation has created a strong cultural window for considering complex questions of belonging for historically marginalized populations, and has lead to a more nuanced awareness of youth’s cultural capacity. Ultimately, I can see implications for solidarity between Black and Indigenous communities in efforts to reclaim educational spaces and decolonize young minds. In completing this project I am more committed to collaboratively working with the partnerships I established at the NYDI to comprehend what goes on in students’ lives outside of the formal classroom. In schools, arts organizations, and community-based learning environments, it will be increasingly important to creatively integrate new cultural-based experiences to generate pedagogy relevant to youth in urban environments. This thesis project serves as a platform for my ongoing contributions to this endeavour.

Final Thoughts
As IYAs work toward carving out nuanced spaces of belonging, they must consider how they are represented in dominant society, which they can do by retelling their narratives, to recreate the image of Indigenous communities in education and beyond. Therefore, if we consider photography as the pedagogical force that Simon (2006) speaks of, we can utilize these photographs as a moment to retell the authentic history of previously demeaning representations of Indigenous peoples. As presented in the photographs by Blair, Deanna, and Bella, photographs can work to retell stories of goodness, and therefore it is in our best interest to acknowledge this method as a viable means to
educate youth. Based on my assessment of these photographs, I learned that youth are considering dialogical inquiries into power and voice while making critical statements about environment, education, self, and society. By asserting voice in the photos, it is evident that young people are educating themselves about world issues, and are taking steps to contribute to social and cultural networks of discourse as they make connections with others.

The results of this photography and hip hop–based, educational thesis prove that arts-based projects are critical assets as young people make meaning through the creative process. Grounded in resilience, decolonization, and education, this project succeeded in assisting youth to make decisions; stimulated their analysis of visual culture; and, among other things, nurtured their sense of confidence by making meaning of the cultural narratives in their lives. Included in my project as part of my findings were five photographs from the Indigenous youth participants, which proved to be powerful tools to complement their words. I believe that to use these photographs educationally stimulates a transfer of knowledge to take place between learners as they collaborate and discuss their lived experience, thus creating a culture of community around the arts. Another arts-based method I used in my project was hip hop, which assisted discussions around social identity, belonging, and learning in alternative spaces. Education can and should be reflective of the communities it serves; therefore, by using photographs from youth, we are able to bring diverse principles into formal and non-formal educative spaces to discuss pertinent inquiries around the resilience of Indigenous youth in North America.
References


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Routledge Falmer.


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Appendices

Appendix A: Weekly Outline of Arts Based Program

Facilitator: Audrey Hudson
Location: Native Youth Drop In
Duration: 12 Weeks

Week 1
• Introductions
• Synopsis of the workshops
• Introduction to hip-hop and photography

Week 2
• Sharing of stories
• Traditional storytelling from North America and Africa
• History of hip-hop music

Week 3
• Field trip to Kensington market to take photographs

Week 4
• I brought in the cameras so the youth could begin editing the photographs they snapped on our field trip.
• Writing workshop to begin document stories using text and image; themes include identity, education and colonization

Week 5
• Field trip to Ryerson Image Centre

Week 6
• OCAD University, Indigenous Visual Culture Program
• Photographic narratives and collaboration

Week 7
• Sharing of stories
• Photography workshop with INVC
• Field trip outdoors to take photos

Week 8
• Sharing of stories
• Creative writing workshop—sound bites and images hurt [my own creation]

**Week 9 & 10**
• Specialized workshop at Sketch with Micheal
• Sketch workshop with digital technologies
• Start digital story using photographs from previous sessions

**Week 11**
• Open session to complete projects
• Guest speaker-TBC

**Week 12**
• Closing circle
• Sharing stories
• Wrap up
Appendix B: Interview Questions

1. Please introduce yourself with a little bit of cultural background.
2. What do you like/love about hip-hop and photography?
3. What role do the arts play in your life?
4. How are you involved in hh culture? Are you a writer, an MC, DJ, a fan, etc.,? When did you get started?
5. Do you think there is a relationship between Black and Indigenous communities in hh? Why or why not? Describe.
6. What are some similarities between the 2 groups? Differences?
7. Why were you attracted to hh? And what benefit does it provide?
8. Do you think hh can be used in education? Why or Why not? How?
9. Why do you think or why are youth interested in this music that was born in the ghetto by Black youth?
10. How can education be more telling of other peoples stories?
11. What was your experience in school? Who were your teachers? Did you see yourself represented in the curriculum?
12. What does a hip-hop education provide to learners?
13. Is there a forum in hip-hop to explore identity? ie. race, gender, sexuality, colonialism and indigeneity?
14. Are there specific teachings or messages you identify with in the music?
15. What can we learn from hh culture? Music? Graffiti? Dancing?
16. How do or are Indigenous artists making hh their own? And is this important?
17. What do you rhyme about? And why do you feel it’s important to discuss this in your music?
18. How do you deal with the negative aspects in hh? And what are the positive ones?
19. Who are you favorites and who are you listening to right now?