UNDERSTANDING YOUR EDUCATION: ONKWEHONWE AND GUESTS RESPONSIBILITIES TO PEACE FRIENDSHIP AND MUTUAL RESPECT

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Doctor of Philosophy 2016 
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Abstract 
This thesis explores how Guest participants have engaged with Onkwehonwe worldviews as they enrol within post-secondary courses about Onkwehonwe topics, taught by Onkwehonwe instructors/professors from Onkwehonwe perspectives. In order to acquire an understanding of what it means to be a Guest, I spoke to nine Elders and Traditional Teachers on expected Guest behaviour and actions. These teachings along with teachings of Wampum Belts were used to understand and analyze the stories of nineteen Guest participants.

Grounded by Onkwehonwe worldviews, the methodology of this research project centered ceremony. The data collection method was storytelling in sharing circles. In hosting three large sharing circles and seven small ones, participants answered open ended questions. These circles were hosted in Toronto, Ontario between September 2014 and April 2015.

The main findings of this thesis are 1) the primary, secondary and post-secondary education systems are not providing students with a historically accurate or relevant current education in relation to Onkwehonwe people, histories and topics; 2) when participants engaged in Onkwehonwe courses and pedagogies they all experienced a paradigm shift that lead to personal and professional growth; 3) this growth fuelled a desire to work in solidarity with Onkwehonwe peoples and a responsibility to share the learnings with other Guest people.
This thesis is novel and contributes to scholarly discourse on Onkwehonwe research as it employs Onkwehonwe methodologies with Guest only participants (other than myself). It also offers the term Guest instead of using words like ‘non-Aboriginal’, or ‘settler’ and provides alternative ways of looking at Onkwehonwe/Guest relationships. In staying true to the data collection method of sharing circles, dissemination of the last question is as a sharing circle chapter. Individuals that are interested in how decolonial methodologies can have practical applications as well as those interested in Onkwehonwe/Guest relationships will find this work of interest.
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Foreword: Relating to the research

It is customary for Haudenosaunee people, like myself, to begin all gatherings and ceremonies by reciting the Ohenten Kariwatekwen¹ or the Thanksgiving address. We thank all of creation; the People, the Earth, the Waters, the Fish, the Plants, the Animals, the Trees, the Birds, the Four Winds, the Thunders, the Sun, the Moon, the Teachers and the Creator. We acknowledge the relationships and bring our minds together as one. We also acknowledge and ask that if we might have forgotten to offer thanks, others offer those for us. We leave a space open for individuals to extend those thanksgivings. In opening this way, we are setting an intentional space for community to sit in relationship with Peace, Friendship and Mutual Respect. In opening my doctoral thesis with a thankful and humble heart, it is my intent to welcome you into ceremony.

In this ceremony, I have explored how the education of Guest² students can create an understanding of the struggles and issues that have historically and currently are being addressed within the lives of Onkwehonwe³ individuals, communities and Nations.

I have dreamed of education being a great method of building solidarity between Onkwehonwe People and Guests for a while; however, when I started my doctoral work, I was convinced that we had to teach 'non-Aboriginal' people that they

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¹ “The Words Before All Else” in Mohawk.
² I will be using the term Guests throughout my work to describe people that are on Turtle Island (North America) that do not identify as Onkwehonwe. When citing others’ work and other terms such as non-Aboriginal, settler etc. are used, I will not alter their term.
³ Onkwehonwe is a Mohawk word that is used to describe all Aboriginal Peoples. It roughly translates to “Original People”. This is the term that I will be using in this paper instead of Aboriginal. I will, however, use proper names for Nations when speaking about a specific teaching/teacher. If an article or teacher uses Aboriginal (or any other word such as Native/Indigenous), I will not alter their words.
were contributing to the continual colonization of ‘Aboriginal Peoples’. I think that my
dream had an edge of shame and a good dosing of blame. I wanted to make people
‘reflect’ on how they perpetuated problematic structures that dominated
Onkwehonwe Peoples. I do not think that I was able to see that there needs to be
healthy and respectful relationships between Onkwehonwe and Guest peoples. My
lens was one of ignorance about Onkwehonwe histories bred intolerance to
Onkwehonwe Peoples. Over the past four years of learning and living I have noticed
a shift in my mentality. I have found that I am open to being gentle and peaceful. I
want to acknowledge that for me, some of this gentleness has come from becoming
an Ista⁴.

I have been asked why this thesis is so gentle; I have been asked that by
both Onkwehonwe people and Guests. As I worked on this thesis, there was a huge
research and truth telling process engaging Onkwehonwe people and Guests across
the country. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission, chaired by Justice Murray
Sinclair, gathered stories and accounts of survivors of the Indian Residential School
system. The report of the Commission tells stories and includes a list of 94 calls to
action that address the historical and current intergenerational impacts of the Indian
Residential School system. In an statement (Kennedy, 2015) that Justice Sinclair
made before the release of the report, the Commission decided that during the
collection, education and reporting process that it would be “gentle” with Canadians
as many were learning the country’s history for the first time. Justice Sinclair said:

⁴ Ista means Mother in Mohawk. The two children that I gave birth to call me this instead of ‘mom’
We needed to be sure that people were brought to the table of knowledge about this in a way that didn’t scare them, didn’t push them away, didn’t make them feel ashamed or guilty or that they were to blame. But they needed to see that they were victims, too, of this history (para. 12-13)

Justice Sinclair’s’ wise words were echoed in a teaching on gentle relationship building that was shared with me by Sakoieta in an email communication. Sakoieta wrote that:

“Like a gentle rain our words need to be diplomatically put forth. If we can settle disagreements with gentleness and determination to do so in a manner where each involved has felt and been respected then why not? I remember one of our Elders sharing that the greatest strength a person could ever possess is the strength and determination in all things to be gentle. Unfortunately some people like to have fireworks, loud noise, etc. when they deal with other people. It takes more time because then peace and harmony needs to be respected before negotiations can begin. It is hard to listen to angry words that burn the ears. It is hard to focus on returning to a peaceful manner, yet it is so necessary for successful relations to continue. We have to work just as hard to practice this self discipline of being peace people.”

(Personal communication, Sakoieta, May 27th, 2015)

The work that I have been exploring and engaging in is the education of Guests and/or those communities that experience settler privileges on Turtle Island. These populations are of great interest to me as I have found that there is a climate

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5 I make the distinction between non-‘Other’ and those that experience settler privilege as a way to acknowledge the multiple struggles that racialization causes.
within a post-secondary classroom of individuals that choose to engage and expand their understanding of Onkwehonwe Peoples and issues through an educational experience. I have watched in awe the courageous acts of self-challenge and relearning that can occur for Guest people.

This thesis will address the experiences of individuals as they unpack the learnings and teachings that they have had in classrooms that are taught by Onkwehonwe educators, on Onkwehonwe topics using Onkwehonwe pedagogy.

**Self-identification and grounding:**

Before I discuss the places that I am intellectually going, let me tell you who I am and where I am from. I have been taught that there is an expectation that I introduce myself in the ways of my ancestors (Absolon and Willett, 2004; Baskin, 2005; Lawrence and Dua, 2005; Wilson, 2008). This introduction is paramount for the reader to understand not only who I am, but also to understand who I am and my subject position.

I do not have a Longhouse name and in my culture we do not have spirit names. I only identify with the name that my parents gave me at birth combined with the last name that my partner and I have both adopted: Ruth Sigird Geehan Koleszar-Green. I am a citizen of the Mohawk Nation with matrilineal ties to Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory. I am a member of the Turtle clan. I am a registered Indian under the *Indian Act* to the Konadaha Seneca Nation on Six Nations of the Grand River First Nation. I am also a Celt on my father’s side. I am from two matrilineal cultures. I am a queer woman with two hidden disabilities. I am partner, a daughter, an auntie, a sister, a niece and an *Ista*. I have the privilege of teaching at a
university. Each of these identities has shaped who I am and how I am to engage with the world. I am also striving to relearn and reclaim a history that has been shrouded by colonization and criminalization. I am proud of my ancestors for keeping many of our traditions alive. It was just a little over fifty years ago that due to the colonial legislation of the geopolitical nation state of Canada that the histories and stories that I am going to share were illegal.

I live and work in Toronto, a space that is currently recognized as the territory of the Mississaugas of New Credit First Nation. This space has historically been a meeting space for many First Nations and has been the responsibility of the Seneca Nation, Anishinabe⁶ and other Haudenosaunee Nations. Even though I follow many of my Nation’s protocols on this territory, I also have been taught to follow the protocols of Anishinabe as well. I feel that it is my responsibility to name when I am following Haudenosaunee protocols and when I am walking as a Guest in Anishinabe spaces.

Definitions and terminology:

Many terms that I use in my work are based on my understandings of the world through an Onkwehonwe lens. In order to support and encourage a deeper understanding for all readers, I feel that I need to provide a short set of definitions of terms that I use. Onkwehonwe worldviews share a base framework that is remarkably consistent with other Indigenous Peoples across the globe (Baskin, 2011, Smith, 1999).

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⁶ I acknowledge that there are multiple ways to spell Anishinabe. I have decided to use this spelling as it is the spelling used by Mississauga New Credit First Nation on whose territory I am producing this work.
Onkwehonwe worldviews are a way of living and seeing one’s life. It is not just a concept that is used in research. As implied by the word “worldviews” Onkwehonwe worldviews are about looking at all interactions, all relationships and all facets of life through this lens (Baskin, 2011). These worldviews have been marginalized and attacked by the dominant society as a way to assimilate and annihilate the cultures of Onkwehonwe peoples (Royal Commission on Aboriginal People, 1996; Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). The resistance that has transpired within Onkwehonwe communities has created a movement that insists and struggles against the oppressive structures to ensure that Onkwehonwe ways of knowing and being in the world not only survive, but thrive (Alfred, 2009; Simpson, 2011; Hill, 2010).

These understandings include holistic, reciprocal and interconnected relationships between individuals, families, clans, Nations, animal and plant life, and the whole cosmos (Cajete, 2000). Onkwehonwe knowledges are the teachings and ways of knowing that come from the cultural practices of different Onkwehonwe cultures. These ways of knowing might include (but are not limited to) dreams, traditional teachings, Earth knowledges, and blood or genetic memory (Baskin, 2011, Lavallee, 2009).

Onkwehonwe pedagogy is based on the Onkwehonwe worldviews and Onkwehonwe knowledges. The way that Onkwehonwe content is taught is just as important as what is taught. As scholar, educator and Mi’kmaw knowledge keeper, Marie Battiste (2002) explains, Onkwehonwe education
…is a process derived from creation, and as such, it has a sacred purpose. It is inherent in and connected to all of nature, to its creatures, and to human existence. Learning is viewed as a life-long responsibility that people assume to understand their world around them and to animate their personal abilities. Knowledge teaches people how to be responsible for their own lives, develops their sense of relationship to others, and helps them model competent and respectful behaviour. Traditions, ceremonies and daily observations are all integral parts of the learning process. They are spirit-connecting processes that enable the gifts, visions and spirits to emerge in each person (p. 14-15).

These ways of teaching include concepts such as experiential learning (Baskin, 2011), the uses of metaphors (Harris, 2002), stories (Baskin, 2005) and non-interference principles (Sakoieta personal communication, September 22\textsuperscript{nd}, 2013; Prowse, 2011; Brant 1990) to growth and learning. Onkwehonwe pedagogy can also include learning that occurs on the land (Baskin, 2011; Cajete, 2000; LaDuke, 1999), in ceremony (H. King, personal communication, October 9\textsuperscript{th}, 2013; Wilson, 2009, Simpson, 2011) and through self-reflection and exploration (Baskin, 2011).

One other important construct in Onkwehonwe education is that all people within the teaching/learning relationship will gain and give knowledges. This reciprocal relationship is contrary to many schools of Western education that are based on the teacher/professor knowing all and espousing this knowledge to the empty vessel student (Freire, 1970; Harris, 2002).
A bit more of a “Standard Introduction”

This research project set out to understand how post-secondary education from an Onkwehonwe worldview impacted and altered Guests. In asking the question of “how do courses on Onkwehonwe topics, taught using Onkwehonwe pedagogies, by Onkwehonwe instructors impact the abilities of Guest people to stand in solidarity with Onkwehonwe struggles?”, I was able to understand how revolutionary education can be!

In designing this project it was imperative that I centered myself within the philosophical, spiritual and intellectual discourses of Onkwehonwe worldviews. It was my understandings of these worldviews, woven together with teachings of ceremony, which formed a methodological framework that grounded my research. In gathering Traditional Teachings on Guest-Host responsibilities and engaging Elders and Traditional Teachers as transmitters of knowledge and theory, I was able to structure questions, gather data and analyze stories from a research paradigm that privileged Onkwehonwe epistemology and axiology. I have also used Wampum Belts as documents to inform my knowledges of Guest/Host relations. In doing so, I am able to acknowledge that there have been different understandings of responsibilities and relationships that are not taught in the dominant education system.

This project only had one Onkwehonwe participant, myself, along with nineteen Guest people. In order to participate, all Guests had attended at least one post-secondary course on Onkwehonwe topics, taught by an Onkwehonwe instructor within the last ten years. Participants were recruited through what I have
called a ‘web of community’. I sent out a call for participants to other Onkwehonwe educators and mentors in the southern Ontario area. I was also granted permission to send out a recruitment email via the “Indigenous Education Network’s” listserv of over 500 subscribers interested in Indigenous education, which is housed at OISE/University of Toronto.

In engaging a research method that has been rooted in Onkwehonwe knowledge transmission since time immemorial, the sharing circle as a research method provided participants with an open ended, reflexive way to contribute to this project. We sat in sharing circles in the very institutions that had marginalized Onkwehonwe education, universities located in Toronto, Ontario. Some circles had six participants while others had only two. Over the span of seven months, from September 2014 until April 2015, data was gathered and stories were shared.

This thesis is divided up into short chapters that can be grouped into larger sections. The first section is dedicated to a review of literature and gathering of Traditional Teachings. In the chapter that shares the Traditional Teachings that I gathered, I have intentionally created an Onkwehonwe space that contains only our voices, worldviews and theories. This section also includes a chapter that explains my research methods and research paradigm. The second section focuses on the stories that participants shared with me and is divided into four chapters: Pre-understanding and Motivation for taking Courses, Wholistic\(^7\) Experiences in Education as seen through Ongwehonwe Pedagogy, Personal and Professional Growth, Ally/Solidarity Work and Guest Responsibilities. The third and final section

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\(^7\) Wholistic is intentionally spelled this way in line with the understandings discussed by Baskin (2011). Baskin cites Linklater (2010) as she states “wholism refers to wholeness and is, therefore, an ‘all encompassing term’ (p.230)” (Baskin, 2011, p. 107).
includes my thoughts, learnings and discussion in response to the stories I have gathered and a commitment that I am making to the participants around my future learnings and actions.

The main findings of this thesis are 1) the primary, secondary and post-secondary education systems are not providing students with a historically accurate or relevant current education in relation to Onkwehonwe people, histories and topics; 2) when participants engaged in Onkwehonwe courses and pedagogies they all experienced a paradigm shift that led to personal and professional growth; and 3) this growth fuelled a desire to work in solidarity with Onkwehonwe peoples and a responsibility to share the learnings with other Guest people.

This thesis has provided me with wonderful learning experiences in seeing how participants expressed their learnings and commitment to the advancement of Onkwehonwe peoples, histories, and futures.
Brief History of Onkwehonwe Education

In this chapter, I explore how the works of Onkwehonwe educators have been used to discuss and challenge the dominant structures of the academy. In this challenge, I will assert that even though Onkwehonwe studies have been the most important contributor to the advancement of Onkwehonwe knowledges in academia, embedding and immersing Onkwehonwe knowledges throughout all courses, programs and departments will allow for a greater engagement with holistic education for Onkwehonwe and Guest students alike. Onkwehonwe students, like all students, engage in many distinct disciplines and Onkwehonwe knowledges are vast and diverse. The expectation that only Onkwehonwe students engage in Onkwehonwe studies and that Onkwehonwe studies are only of interest to Onkwehonwe students is problematic. It is my opinion that all people can learn from the knowledges in Onkwehonwe worldviews. It is from this perspective that I will also discuss my own observations and interest in researching the experiences of Onkwehonwe and Guest students after taking courses that address, support and acknowledge Onkwehonwe ways of knowing and being.

I have come to realize that the history of Onkwehonwe education is not a straight and linear path, but rather, like so many constructs within Onkwehonwe ways of knowing, they are circular and interrelated. In understanding this interrelated path, I know that the directions that Onkwehonwe education has travelled on for the past four decades have been important, life giving and groundbreaking (Kidwell, 2009).
Education has historically been a tool that was used to remove the ground from under Onkwehonwe peoples. The residential school system, the underfunding of band-operated schools and the historical omission of Onkwehonwe peoples from provincial curriculum or relegating our relevancy to the past when it is included, are all examples of how the master’s house (Lorde, 1984) has been maintained. “In Canada, as in most colonized countries, the education of Aboriginal peoples was approached by colonizers as a duty to civilize, that is to educate into the colonizers’ worldview and associated practices” (Oberg, Bladens and Thom, 2007, p. 114). In using education as a tool of resistance, Baskin (2011), opens the first chapter of her book, *Strong Helpers’ Teachings*, with an invitation to learn of and from Onkwehonwe worldviews but differentiates about “not attempting to practice cultural specifics without the proper protocols, trainings and respect” (pp. 1-2). I bring these two quotes together to demonstrate a large difference. In a colonial ideology, it is expected as an outcome that the colonized will adopt the culture of the colonizer. In Onkwehonwe worldview, practicing or adoption of culture by those outside of it is problematized as appropriation and is cautioned against.

This distinction of forcing Onkwehonwe peoples to perform as a colonizer versus colonizers being told not to ‘practice’ as an Onkwehonwe person, demonstrates the ways that education can be used as a master’s tool of oppression or as a liberator for Onkwehonwe peoples and settlers alike. In studying the

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8 It is my understanding that Baskin is making a distinction between individuals learning the ways that engagement, relationships and social constructs are understood versus the distinct cultural practices used in different Nations. An example of these distinct cultural practices could be the protocols that govern how or what ceremonies are performed. These protocols and ceremonies come from worldview but are not the ‘take aways’ from Onkwehonwe education.
difference between these means of educating, I am hoping to find ways to support the embedding of Onkwehonwe histories and worldviews within all curriculums.

I respect and honour the work that has occurred over the last few generations of Onkwehonwe academics as a means of addressing the oppressive nature of the educational systems (for example please see Cote-Meek, 2010, 2014; Harris, 2002; Kidwell, 2009; Monture-Angus, 1995). Many individuals have dedicated their life work to creating spaces of liberation education for Onkwehonwe peoples and our allies. I know that it was through their struggles and hard work, I am able to sit here questioning and pondering the path that I feel Onkwehonwe education will and should take. I am questioning the current necessity for the siloing of Onkwehonwe education/studies programs within the dominant structures of academia. Historically the creation of stand-alone Onkwehonwe Studies Departments has been fundamental to the advancement of Onkwehonwe scholarship (Kidwell, 2009). The fact that some universities have been granting degrees in Onkwehonwe studies throughout Turtle Island has advanced Onkwehonwe knowledges and communities. This was a political way to assert and ensure that the voices of Onkwehonwe people in the academy could be gathered and heard.

I am not arguing that there needs to be a discontinuation of Onkwehonwe specific programs, however I feel that there needs to be an embedding of knowledge across all educational spaces within the dominant structures of academia. There are specific programs that have been able to require all students to complete a course on Onkwehonwe topics (some examples can be found at Ryerson University which has two programs and University of British Columbia has multiple programs
including social work and law.) Two universities, University of Winnipeg (Martin, 2015) and Lakehead University (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 2015) in Canada have recently mandated that all new admissions must complete a course on Onkwehonwe people before graduating from undergraduate studies. I see these advancements, and the ones that will hopefully follow, as instrumental to the education of all people within the geo political nation-state of Canada. Even with these recent advancements, which will target all students, there will continue to be need and importance for Onkwehonwe Peoples to access Onkwehonwe universities and educational facilities. Institutions such as First Nations University of Canada and First Nations Technical Institute, provide an important emancipatory space for Onkwehonwe people that work to address the structural issues such as access to education that have not been eradicated (Goar, 2008).

During the Civil Rights movement in the late 1960s and early 1970s, there was a development of Onkwehonwe studies departments across Turtle Island partially in response to the struggles of marginalized groups asserting civil rights. These incubators of Onkwehonwe thought became important as they offered spaces for Onkwehonwe students to enter into discussions of Onkwehonwe knowledges. Many of these first students have now become the educators within Onkwehonwe studies departments and across different disciplines in universities. Since the inception of Onkwehonwe Studies programs there has been a space for Indigenous knowledges to flourish and be introduced to Guest people and Onkwehonwe Peoples. Onkwehonwe studies programs have supported Onkwehonwe Peoples that have been forcibly removed from these knowledges as a result of the colonial
structures and assimilation policies of the geopolitical nations states that currently
dominant Turtle Island (Kidwell, 2009).

The struggles to bring Onkwehonwe knowledges and ways of being into the
academy have rested mainly on the shoulders of Onkwehonwe academics (Cote-
Meek, 2010). It is through their works and perseverance towards self-governance
and determination that there is a space within the academy for Onkwehonwe voices
(Fitznor, 2005). This struggle has not always been easy nor at the beginning were all
the teachings and teachers coming from an emancipatory lens. Harris (2002) tells a
Coyote story about trying to find the “Native” instructors within a department of
“Native Studies”. All the instructors were white people that wanted to impart an
understanding of Onkwehonwe peoples, spirituality and history while speaking in a
classroom and reading from books “written by a dead white guy!” (p.195)

The current structures of Onkwehonwe studies programs have led to the
“growing acceptance of [Native American Studies/American Indian Studies] as a
legitimate field of intellectual inquiry and even perhaps, an academic discipline”
(Kidwell, 2009, p 2-3). The “creation” of a discipline, however, has not allowed the
growth of Onkwehonwe education to fully occupy the processes and discourses of
the academic structures (Monture-Angus, 2001; Cote-Meek, 2010). The silo effect of
a discipline means that Onkwehonwe knowledges are not integrated or embedded
across all programs.

The discussion of Onkwehonwe studies programs being interdisciplinary is
seen in both positive light (Innes, 2009) and as problematic (Harris, 2002). Innes
(2009) argues that when Onkwehonwe studies are viewed as interdisciplinary, our
scholars have the ability to draw upon and engage with theories, approaches and/or methods that might not be situated within the scholar’s home discipline due to the breadth of knowledges grounded within Onkwehonwe studies. This in turn allows for dissemination to a wider academic audience that demonstrates that Onkwehonwe research, pedagogies and knowledges have “significance not only to Indigenous communities but also to the broader scholarly community” (p. 441)

Harris (2002) on the other hand asserts that in defining Onkwehonwe studies as an interdisciplinary field of study that draws in knowledges from multiple and diverse theoretical frameworks, Onkwehonwe knowledges are then confined to “Western-defined disciplines based on Western (usually scientific) worldviews” (p. 190). In discussing the fact that in Onkwehonwe worldviews, an individual is considered unbalanced if they become an ‘expert’ in any one field as encouraged through the dominant structures of academia; and if the only program that speaks to Onkwehonwe knowledges is an Onkwehonwe studies program then there would be an unbalancing of the roles and responsibilities within communities as these programs might be the only space that speaks to the lived experiences of Onkwehonwe students. If, however, there was to be curriculum across all spaces, programs and departments within universities, these knowledges would support Onkwehonwe and Guest students to develop a holistic worldview of not only their major, but of life as well (Baskin, 2010, personal communication).

If Onkwehonwe studies was not a specific discipline but was embedding knowledges across all university courses, programs and departments many more students would have access to this vast and important understanding and worldview
(Fitznor, 2005). This change would allow Onkwehonwe students that are not enrolled in an Onkwehonwe studies program to access, learn and integrate their traditional knowledges within their field of study. It would also allow Guest students the ability to enter into conversations with Onkwehonwe worldview, knowledges and theories.

I have read the work of quite a few Onkwehonwe academics (the late Monture-Angus, 1995, 2001; Lowery, 1997; Harris, 2002; Fitznor, 2005; Marker, 2006, Cote-Meek, 2010, 2014) that have taught within Onkwehonwe post-secondary education (in multiple disciples) and have challenged the structures of dominant universities that situate Onkwehonwe knowledges as ‘other’. This creates an illusion that these knowledges do not need to be engaged by all students. If Onkwehonwe knowledges were embedded across all fields of study, the contributions to academia would be ‘transformative’ (Freire, 1970). It is from this understanding that I believe that Onkwehonwe studies cannot be confined to the study of itself, for it is vast and expansive, with much to offer all disciplines. It speaks to all fields of study, be it science and mathematics (Cajete, 2000), medicine (Anderson, Smylie, Anderson, 2006), or the arts and humanities (Lowery, 1997).

Western education has been slow to respond to programs that counter hegemonic discourses that uphold and center patriarchal, ableist and racist theories, pedagogies and practices. Programs like Women and Gender Studies (Boxer, 2002), Critical Disability Studies (Titchkosky, 2000), and Mad Studies (LeFrancois, Menzies and Reaume, 2013) have all struggled, and continue to struggle, to be seen as rigours, valid and reliable. As disciplines that address the marginalization and
oppression of diverse groups, each has been challenged as ‘soft’ science and siloed or pushed to the fringes within academic structures. Onkwehonwe education and programs can look to these disciplines to unpack the pros and cons of program development. Although Onkwehonwe education has been formalized in academia for several decades, it is now at a turning point.

I have personally struggled with the idea that for the sake of political independence and equality there needs to be an academic department that specializes in Onkwehonwe knowledges instead of having courses offered or better yet, mandated on Onkwehonwe knowledges across programs and professional degrees. If the separateness and difference of Onkwehonwe knowledges continue, dominant structures will continue to state that they have addressed colonization and isolation as long as there is a provision of space for Onkwehonwe knowledges. The creation of these spaces allows for the dominant voices and spaces to ignore the teachings of Onkwehonwe knowledges while at the same time congratulating themselves for providing an “equitable” solution to the ‘Indian’ education problem (Kidwell, 2009).

It has been argued that Onkwehonwe education should not be amalgamated into anti-racism or anti-oppression education. Lawrence and Dua (2008) affirm this challenge as it fails “to integrate an understanding of Canada as a colonialist state into anti-racist frameworks” that perpetuates the silencing of Onkwehonwe voices. They state:

In our classes on antiracism, token attention—normally one week—is given to Aboriginal peoples, and rarely is the exploration of racism placed in a context of
ongoing colonization. In antiracist political groups, Aboriginal issues are placed within a liberal pluralist framework, where they are marginalized and juxtaposed to other, often contradictory struggles” (p 133).

It is sometimes within these spaces that Onkwehonwe academics find their personal reason for engaging in the hostile environment of academia (Monture-Angus, 1995; Cote-Meek, 2010, 2014).

**Isolation of education/knowledges:**

Onkwehonwe scholarship is still a relatively new addition (or is seen as an add on) in many academic spaces. As stated above, many universities did not start to engage Onkwehonwe studies (in an emancipatory way) until the mid 1970s. Even since this time there have been many struggles for acknowledgement and place within the dominant spaces of universities. As I have stated elsewhere:

Mainstream education institutions do not allow for other ways of knowing and learning to occupy a valid space within curriculum. It is for this reason that many peoples’ lived realities and understandings of the world are not represented within the learnings offered in mainstream education (Koleszar-Green, R., 2008, p. 12)

This exclusion is continued when dominant structures feel that they have “given” space to placate Onkwehonwe academics, communities and Nations but in reality isolate our knowledges within a Western paradigm or “discipline” instead of its rightful place as a foundational knowledge (Cajete, 2000; Kidwell, 2009; Monture-Angus, 2001).

The inclusion or addition of Onkwehonwe knowledges within the dominant
structure of the academy can still be a space of “intellectual homelessness” (Monture-Angus, 1995). Many Onkwehonwe scholars write about a sense of isolation and exclusion (Monture-Angus, 1995 and 2003; Lowery, 1997; Asmar and Page, 2009; Cote-Meek, 2010), even when the role of a faculty is to further Onkwehonwe worldviews within the academy. Asmar and Page (2009) further the notion that the ‘intellectual homelessness’, that Monture-Angus discusses, can be compounded by the physical separateness that will in turn further isolate the knowledge and understandings from the rest of the university. Delivering Onkwehonwe worldviews is not always a simple task of writing curriculum and delivering a course. It is a process of personal dedication to the education of both Onkwehonwe and Guest students. As noted in a report on racism at a midsize urban university in Ontario, one faculty member discussed the struggle of being “hired because they wanted Aboriginal knowledges brought into the institution, so why must it always feel like an upwards battle?” (ART, 2010, p 98).

I know that the experience of this faculty member is not uncommon, as many others have discussed a sense of isolation and exclusion from the rest of the academic departments within their universities. This taskforce (ART, 2010) recommended that curriculum development occur so that “integration of Aboriginal world views, ways of knowing and learning, and research across the disciplines and programs the university offers.” (p. 20). The report goes on to discuss that another local university “has recently introduced an Aboriginal Science course that will be available to students in the arts and sciences alike.” (p. 20). It is these sorts of advancements that will embed Onkwehonwe knowledges without further
marginalizing or tokenizing the knowledge and worldview. As Fitznor (2005) states, universities and educational institutions need to take on the responsibility to ensure that Onkwehonwe education is foregrounded in all students’ learning.

**Educating across difference:**

**Where might we go?**

In Asmar and Page (2009), two Indigenous academics from Australia gathered stories of the experience that other Indigenous academics have had within universities. Many of these academics spoke of their strong commitment to teaching and supporting the education of Indigenous students as their main source of satisfaction. This being said “Indigenous teachers are nevertheless committed to their work with non-Indigenous students, recognizing the education (and indeed, national) important of ensuring such students graduate with a real understanding of Indigenous issues” (Asmar & Page, 2009, p 398-399). It is this commitment that I am so intrigued by. I am wishing to explore how the education of Guest students can create a national understanding of the struggles and issues that have historically impacted, and are currently being addressed, within the lives of Onkwehonwe individuals, communities and Nations.

Fitznor, (2005) states that there needs to be “education for all Canadians about our true history” (p.6). This education is needed so that the deep suspicion and resentment about Onkwehonwe Peoples can be addressed and the public “claims of injustice or unfair special status for Indians” (Marker, 2006, p 485) can be dispelled.
The work of Lawrence and Dua (2005) set forth five understandings that create friction between Anti-Racist discourse and Onkwehonwe ways of knowing and being. These five fundamentals need to be explored as Guest people learn to fully understand the impacts of colonial structures on Onkwehonwe individuals, families, communities and Nations. First, they state that there needs to be open conversations about the failings of critical race and postcolonial theories to truly engage and acknowledge Aboriginality. In many cases, this is simply because the experiences and bodies of Onkwehonwe Peoples have been erased from the conversation on race and racism. Secondly, this creates a space (and place) where diasporic scholarship disregards the impact and subjection of benefitting from colonial settlements on Onkwehonwe lands. Thirdly, in layering the diasporic struggles over top of the Onkwehonwe histories, such histories become invisible or erased. Fourth, the labeling of de-colonial or post-colonial theorists and their theories as post modern or anti-racist removes the self definition and meaning making that is based on de-colonization as the central task of de-colonial scholars. In having anti-racist or post-modern discourse layered upon de-colonial scholars, there is a recentering that distracts from de-colonial agenda. Finally, the construct of a national identity (ie Onkwehonwe people as Canadian citizens or the possessive language such as Canada’s Aboriginal people), challenges, delegitimizes, and excludes the assertion of Onkwehonwe nationhood as a central identifier of de-colonial identify (Lawrence and Dua, 2005).

In exploring this scholarship, I am able to ground my understandings and the further conversation that I will have with research participants in a discourse that
does not ignore the differences, struggles and similarities between an anti-racism theory and an Onkwehonwe self-determination, self-governance and de-colonial theory. This is a space, for me personally, that can be explained by ‘pedagogy of discomfort’ (Bloer and Zembylas, 2003 as cited in Leibowitz et al., 2010). This pedagogy invites people to “critique [and explore] deeply held assumptions, and destabilise [any] view of [self] and [the] worlds. The process is painful, but contains the promise of hope for the future” (p. 84).

The work that I am exploring and engaging in the education of Guests and/or those communities that experience settler privileges on Turtle Island⁹. These populations are of great interest to me as I have found that there is a somewhat hospitable climate within a classroom of individuals that choose to engage and expand their understanding of Onkwehonwe peoples and issues through an educational experience. I have watched in awe the courageous acts of self challenge and relearning that can occur for non-‘Other’/settler people.

Over the past seven years I have taught a mandatory undergraduate course on Onkwehonwe approaches to social work. I have found that in this classroom there can be quite a bit of resistance to the course, however there are also moments and learnings that support an equitable sharing and respecting of Onkwehonwe peoples, Nations, issues and histories. This course has become embedded within the education of future social workers not just so that they know how to approach Onkwehonwe peoples, but so that they can start to see their professional practice as

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⁹ I want to acknowledge that there are many different experiences of Guest that people have due to their subjective social locations and the structures of oppression and privilege. The intersections of identity that some Guests have be it with whiteness and racialization, disability and ability, gender and sexuality all complicate and inform the ways that they engage as allies and Guests.
a more expansive and holistic form of engagement that honours the lived realities and experiences of people that they work with (Koleszar-Green, 2008).

In the winter of 2014, I taught an upper year undergraduate elective in the same school of social work. I have been shocked and awestruck that so many students wanted to engage in Onkwehonwe education! I have also been in wonder of their learning and understandings of the struggles from an anti-oppressive lens. It truly has been an honour to witness their respect, learning and determination to stand as allies to Onkwehonwe Peoples.

I have also been privileged over the last few years as I have also taken five courses (one at an undergraduate level, one at the Masters level and three while in my doctoral program) that were elective courses that were based on Onkwehonwe Peoples, our knowledges, ways of being and knowing, and histories. In these classrooms, it was interesting for me to observe my fellow students that were Guests engaging in what for many was an introduction to such content. In my personal observations of these courses, I was amazed with the acceptance and growth that occurred, as well as great moments of discomfort, learning, and sharing.

This growth and acceptance, from my observation, was not always easy for Guest people to achieve. Most individuals do not want to be seen as racist or over privileged, they want to be seen as an ally or as a ‘good white person’ (Thompson, 2003). The learning about unearned privilege can be painful and challenge the lived realities of Guests or non-‘Othered’ peoples. (Reason and Evans, 2007). It is important to acknowledge that these students do need to be supported as they unravel and travel towards being racially cognizant as “painful emotions [will] likely
follow” (p. 72). This being said, Thompson (2003), in quoting Patricia Hill Collins (1998), demonstrates that it is not the responsibility of Black women “to support and applaud ‘White women in their efforts to foster an antiracist feminism as it diverts Black women’s energy away from addressing social issues facing African-American communities” (p. 10). The same sentiment can be applied to Onkwehonwe Peoples being diverted from our struggles for decolonization if we are constantly called upon to placate and applaud the acceptance of Onkwehonwe issues by Guests segments of society.

In the past few years, there have been numerous texts written by Onkwehonwe people that have a focus of educating Guests from a perspective of building relationships. Writers such as the late Patricia Monture had been “madly writing chapters for books, to try and get some Onkwehonwe content into those books...” (Monture-Angus, 2001, p 36). Cyndy Baskin (2011) has taken this a step further publishing *Strong Helpers Teachings: The Value of Indigenous Knowledges in the Helping Professions* in which she gently and carefully opens up a dialog for Indigenous and non-Indigenous helpers and educators to understand and learn about Indigenous worldviews.

The work of both of these authors (and many more Onkwehonwe writers across disciplines such as Hart, 2002; Bruyere, Sinclair and Hart, 2009; LaDuke, 1999; Cajete, 1999; and Wilson, 2008 to name a few) discuss Onkwehonwe worldview and do not focus on only the cultural ceremonies and rites. Their work is grounded on the knowledge that Onkwehonwe Peoples have a responsibility to the Earth, our teachings and our communities, but also to build a relationship with
Guests people. It is through the writings of these educators that Onkwehonwe Peoples are portrayed as contributing members to a discourse of re-education; no longer stagnant and archaic relics of history and anthropology.

I see the continuation of education for Onkwehonwe students and Guest students forming a bridge (Baskin, 1999; Cote-Meek, 2010) and creating a new discourse that will span across the struggles, without ignoring them. This discourse will listen to the knowledge of the Elders and will cherish the faces that are not here yet. It will create a new way for allies and Onkwehonwe Peoples to stand side by side with Love, Respect, Truth, Honesty, Bravery, Humility and Wisdom.

I see my research exploring the struggles and joys that Guest students experience when confronted and changed by their un/relearnings within a classroom that is based or grounded in Onkwehonwe histories, education, struggles, and, most importantly, strengths. I know that for Onkwehonwe people teaching these courses, myself included, it can be a painful journey, but if I understand the words of so many Onkwehonwe academics, they would not stop teaching for the world! (Monture-Angus, 2001; Lowery, 1997; Asmar and Page, 2009; Cote-Meek, 2010).

I think that the only way that I will ever conclude my thoughts on the topic of Onkwehonwe education is if there is an inclusion of Onkwehonwe knowledges and worldviews across all academic disciples. Inclusion for me does not mean an assimilation or an appropriation of Onkwehonwe knowledges. Inclusion does not mean that Onkwehonwe education or ‘unit’ will be covered in the interest of diversity education. Inclusion means that all Turtle Island educational institutions have made

10 These seven words are from a Nishnabe teaching called the “Seven Grandparents or Grandfathers Teachings.” The full teaching appears in “Mishomis Book: Voice of the Ojibway” (1988) by Edward Benton-Banai,
Onkwehonwe education, histories, ways of being, and knowledges a priority topic for ALL students to learn.
What is a Guest?

Many spaces and events that I have attended over the past few years, both on university campuses and in the greater community have been opened with an acknowledgement of the land that the people are standing on. Many times the words that are spoken are in thanksgiving to the Nation that is ‘hosting’ the event on their traditional territory. The speaker usually states that they are a ‘guest’ on this land. But what is a guest? What are the rights and the responsibilities that go along with being a guest? In acknowledging the land, have guests done all that they need to do to uphold their responsibilities to the land and the Nations that are treaty holders?

In looking at ‘Guest’ discourse, I turned to the Elders and Traditional Teachers that reside in or around the Toronto area to gather stories and teachings of the proper protocols and engagements that are expected in a ‘host’ and ‘guest’ relationship. These teachings originate and span from the east coast to the west coast as I spoke to Elders and Traditional Teachers from six different Nations. Even though the stories may differ, the expectations on how to treat individuals that are in one’s home, community or territory were similar. It is through hospitality and care that Onkwehonwe people are taught to treat those that are guests in their territory. Guests also have responsibilities.

The Elders and the Traditional Teachers that I spoke to for this research project are not participants in the data. These individuals are knowledge holders and resources. In many ways they are my library. I heard the teachings they shared as a way to inform my methodology and my data analysis. I have returned to them
numerous times as I have been writing this thesis; both through reflections on our conversations and by reconnecting personally to ask further questions.

As a Haudenosaunee person, I am going to start this conversation by sharing the teachings and learnings that I have received about Wampum Belts and then move through conversations that I have had with traditional teachers and knowledge keepers from other Nations. Wampum Belts are woven documents that have existed as a means of recording and passing on agreements prior to contact with Europeans. The beads are white, made from Whelk shells, and purple/black, made from the growth rings of the Quahog shell. These belts are considered to be living and binding agreements between different groups of Onkwehonwe people or between Onkwehonwe people and guests. The three belts that will be discussed here are “The Hospitality or Welcome Belt”, “The Coming of the People with White Faces – A Record Belt” and “The Two Row Wampum” or Guswhenta, in Mohawk. Most of my understandings of these belts come from teachings that I have received over the past few years from Sakoieta and Tewentahawitha\textsuperscript{11} (Sakoieta and Tewentahawitha, personal communication, September 22\textsuperscript{nd}, 2013) however there is a brief description and image in \textit{Wampum Belts of the Iroquois} by Tehanetorens (1999).

The Hospitality Wampum Belt is pre-contact. This belt contains certain laws that Chiefs of the Confederacy\textsuperscript{12} would use when hosting council meetings and welcoming other people from visiting Nations. It explained the important roles that

\textsuperscript{11} Haudenosaunee longhouse names, such as Sakoieta, are only given to one individual at a time. There is currently no other person named Sakoieta because each Longhouse and each clan has a set of names that the Faith Keepers hold. When a child is born, they are given a name for life. When that life is over, the name is returned to the Faith Keepers to give to another clan member. Sakoieta is the only name that he needs to use, as a ‘last name’ is redundant due to cultural protocols on naming.

\textsuperscript{12} In saying the Chiefs of the Confederacy, I am speaking of the 50 chiefs that make up the Six Nations confederacy. These 50 chiefs are foundational to the political, social, and cultural understanding of the Haudenosaunee.
hosts would play when delegates from other Nations would arrive in their territory. An example of the expected hospitality is that “the candidate chief shall furnish together the cooked venison, the corn bread and the corn soup” for it is considered “not good nor honourable for a Chief of the League [to not provide for the people] he has called [together].” (p. 51). As explained by Sakoieta it is the responsibility of the host to welcome, give water and food, and offer the best bed. These responsibilities are still expected and lived in Haudenosaunee homes, communities and Nations to this day. It is expected that a host will have more food and drink than the guest will ever need. It is the host’s responsibility to fill the plates so that they are never empty, fill the cups so that there is never thirst and offer gifts to every individual. (Sakoieta and Tewentahawitha, personal communication, September 22nd, 2013)

As we sat and talked, Sakoieta pulled out a Wampum that I had never seen before. He told me that this belt was a promise made to the Guests. He said that the Haudenosaunee would support the Guests and help them learn to live and thrive on this land. The belt is predominately white with a pattern of angled wide purple beads holding up a thin and dotted line of purple beads supported with another wide band of purple beads. This pattern is repeated four times. The wide bands represent the Haudenosaunee and the dotted band represents the new comers or the Guests (Sakoieta and Tewentahawitha, personal communication, September 22nd, 2013). It is a reminder that the Haudenosaunee pledged to “hold them up so that they did not fall down, that is, showing them how to hunt, to farm and teaching them how to survive and live in this country until they were strong enough to support themselves.” (Tehsnetorens, 1990, p.70) Sakoieta could not remember the name for the belt, but
Tehsnetorens (1990) called it “The Coming of the People with White Faces – A Record Belt” (1990, p 70). As a Record Belt, I understand it to be a reminder of the promises made. This Record Belt is important to my work as I feel that it is a promise that I am attempting to live up to.

There is still a lot of work to be done for the Haudenosaunee to uphold our end of the bargain. Many Guests still need support and help to thrive on this territory. The need for the recommitments and engagement of the Haudenosaunee is not due to the disengagement of the Haudenosaunee, but due to the structure of the Canadian state. The Record Belt, is a living testament to the promise that was made but has not been fully realized due to the colonial engagement. It is my understanding that we as Haudenosaunee still have a commitment to acknowledge and support those individuals, communities and peoples that are newer to this land. In saying this, I am not absolving Guests of their responsibilities; I am acknowledging that wampum belts document the responsibilities of both parties. I will discuss some of the Guests’ responsibilities next.

The third belt is famous. It is called Guswhenta in Mohawk or the Two Row Wampum in English. The original Guswhenta is over 400 years old and was accepted as a treaty in 1613 by the Dutch. However, it is now seen today as a symbol of how our relationships should continue to be. This belt is made up of three rows of white beads separated by two rows of purple beads. The purple beads run parallel to each other. It is said that the purple beads are to represent two vessels (one a canoe and the other a ship) that travel down the same river without interfering with each other or attempting to steer the other vessel. The white beads are to
represent Peace, Friendship and Mutual Respect (Sakoiet and Tewentahawitha, personal communication, September 22nd, 2013).

This metaphor for the engagement between Guests and Haudenosaunee is about historical and current relationships that are based on integrity. As Taiaiake Alfred (2009) explains:

Two vessels, each possessing its own integrity, travelling the river if time together – was conveyed visually on a background of white beads (representing peace). In this respectful (co-equal) friendship and alliance, any interference with the others partner’s autonomy, freedom or powers was expressly forbidden. So long as these principles were respected, the relationship would be peaceful, harmonious, and just (p. 76).

In my understanding of Wampum being a living document, Guswhenta talks not only to those that accepted Guswhenta but all those that have entered Onkwehonwe territories since. In the current relationships with Guests, there needs to be a reflection and a memory of the promises as outlined on the Coming of White Faces Belt to support those that have recently engaged, entered and settled on Turtle Island. There also needs to be an acknowledgement that not all individuals and communities that are on this space chose to be here. Slavery, exploitation, and colonial histories and current realities across the globe have impacted settlement and the ways that the ‘original’ treaty makers engage with newer Guests. The current Canadian state has created policies and laws that contravene the teachings of Guswhenta, and these racisms and colonial histories need to be acknowledged.
In our conversation, Sakoieta tells me that Guswhenta also explains that for both parties to come together with Peace, Friendship and Mutual Respect each group must be operating from these values within themselves. Each of the three white bands beads has three strings of beads for a total of nine rows of white beads. He teaches me that before Onkwehonwe people and Guests can fully engage in Peace, Friendship and Mutual Respect, they need to be working for these values within each community (Sakoieta and Tewentahawitha, personal communication, September 22nd, 2013). It is my intent that my doctoral research will support Guests in seeing how they do and can engage in Peace, Friendship and Mutual Respect with Onkwehonwe peoples.

The words that Sakoieta and Tewentahawitha shared with me are specific to the Confederacy of the Haudenosaunee; however, the underlying message was about peaceful interactions that respect the autonomy of both Onkwehonwe and Guests. I also had the privilege to speak with Elders and Traditional people from other Nations. These conversations mostly happened as one-on-one meetings in the Teachers home/office or in my own home. I did sit with Kathy and Hilton as a couple, but they also provided me with some one-on-one time. These conversations started with me approaching individuals according to the protocols I have been taught regarding speaking with Elders and Traditional people. As I reached out to people, I explained before we met that I was gathering teachings on Guest/host relationships and that I was going to use this information like a literature review for my comprehensive exam. I spoke to Kathy Absolon-King, Amanda Thompson and Hilton King from the Anishinabe Nation, Joanne Dallaire and Blu Waters from the
Cree Nation, Cyndy Baskin from the Mi’kmaq Nation, and Lee Maracle from the Stolo Nation\textsuperscript{13}. Each individual gave me some amazing gifts and teachings about how to engage and treat Guests. Each also spoke from their viewpoint on the responsibilities that Guests have to Onkwehonwe and to Turtle Island.

The sharing each individual did, came from their teachings and worldview, however, there were many similarities to the teachings that Sakoieta and Tewentahawitha shared with me. All spoke to the importance of sharing food and drink, introductions, and gifts that would be exchanged. But the one thing that was an opening place for all of these teachers and their histories was an understanding, as Kathy named it, of the “authentic intentions” of Guests to engage in (K. Absolon-King, personal communication, October 9\textsuperscript{th}, 2013).

I was presenting at the 14\textsuperscript{th} annual Indigenizing the Academy conference at Queen’s University. I was struggling with the words: non-Aboriginal, settler, colonizer and Canadian, when Lee Maracle, a traditional teacher, writer and member of the Stolo Nation from the Fraser River Valley in British Columbia, gave me a gift. I was struggling to find a word that felt right and acknowledged the relationships that I wanted to research. I do not really like the word “Aboriginal\textsuperscript{14}”, thus to use “non-Aboriginal” was uncomfortable. “Settlers” and “colonizers” sounded adversarial when I speak them as an Onkwehonwe person. I feel that there are already so many assumptions implicit in the term “Canadian”, ie. who is allowed that label, that I felt it excluded many other marginalized groups. I did not know how to address the people that I wanted to research. Lee reminded me that each Onkwehonwe Nation had

\textsuperscript{13} I will refer to Traditional Teachers and Elders how I would refer to them in the community. I would call these people by their first names mostly, and would not address them by their academic titles or by their last name.

\textsuperscript{14} The term Aboriginal is not a term that Onkwehonwe Nations have given ourselves. It is a term that has been legislated as part of our identities.
teachings on the proper protocols and ways to engage Guests of the territory and that there are also expectations and responsibilities that go along with being a Guest. From that moment onwards, I knew that I would be talking to Guests of this land; the people on the other side of Guswhenta (L. Maracle, personal communication, February 4th, 2012).

One of the very first engagements between European Guests and Onkwehonwe people occurred in 1534 at the Bay of Chaleur, where Cyndy Baskin is from. Cyndy speaks about how when Jacques Cartier landed, he and his crew were approached in friendship by the people there and that they were taught how to survive in Mi’kmaq territory. In her territory, hospitality was also greatly revered and equalled civility. It would have been against Mi’kmaq understandings and worldview to not share, provide and teach Guests all that the Mi’kmaq knew. These interactions included, as much as possible, a reciprocal relationship between teaching and learning. These relationships included, but were not limited to, understanding the Guests’ religious ceremonies and sharing traditional Mi’kmaq ceremonies, and teaching Guests’ to respect the spirits of the animals and to view the land as sacred while living in harmony with it. This understanding of supporting, teaching and sharing with Guests is echoed by all of the other teachers I spoke with (C. Baskin, personal communication, September 23rd. 2013).

Much like the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, the Mi’kmaq Nation made treaties with the French because the French saw them as fully independent Nations that had a territory and constituency to represent. These treaties were, and still are, a means to ensure peaceful co-existence between the Mi’kmaq Nation and the
Guests. Cyndy talked about how these treaties did not transfer territory, independence or freedoms to the Guests and that this was not the intent of the French Guests that signed those treaties (C. Baskin, personal communication, September 23rd, 2013).

I was able to sit down with Lee Maracle again, who was the individual that initially suggested that I look into Guest teachings. In our conversation she spoke about the Entrance Ceremonies from her culture. Guests are expected to explain who they are, where they were coming from, how they got to “this place” and what their intentions are in entering the community. She described a ceremony in which the host community members would respond with their own stories so that the Guests and the hosts had a common understanding of “this place”. Lee explained that most of this sharing would be done through song. When the hosts felt that they understood that the intentions of the Guests were honourable and good, they were allowed to enter. Once a Guest has been allowed to enter the Longhouse/community, they are welcome to return and they are then treated as family. After explaining this to me, Lee laughed and said “You know, we have never let any government officials into our Longhouses. They do not have good intentions” (L. Maracle, personal communication, October 6th, 2013).

Grandmother Joanne Dallaire reiterates this conversation of intentions as she lays out how she welcomes people into her spaces. She stated that at first she is hesitant to open the doors and invite people in. However as relationships are built and strengthen, she describes how she welcomes Guests: once she is comfortable understanding their intentions she opens up her home. In offering the Guest food, a
drink, a gift and a safe place to be, she also expects to have her space respected and treated like a sacred place. She told me that being a Guest has just as many responsibilities as being a host. And as with many of my conversations, she laughs and says that she has no problem reminding her Guests to pick up their cup or plate because there are expectations and responsibilities associated with being a Guest. She reminds me that being a Guest is just as much work as being a host (J. Dallaire, personal communication, October 7th, 2013).

In receiving teachings, one thing that I have learned is that I need time to reflect on the words that I hear. My conversation with Hilton King was interesting because he decided to tell me about his recent Fast\(^{15}\) He spoke about the place that he was told to set up camp and fast for four days and nights. Just a short distance outside of the circle in which he sat, were two trees that were rooted very close to each other. The trees were about the same size, however, one tree had grown up straight and the other tree appeared to have grown outward and then upward. These trees, he said, remind him of the work that I am doing. I think that I have come to understand this teaching as a story of resiliency and natural order, had the one tree not grown outward and provided a space for the other tree to grow, neither would have thrived. Hilton said that it was like the essence of the Onkwehonwe teachings I was using to ground my work in. In the natural environment, plants and animals find ways to be resilient and flourish even under questionable circumstances. Onkwehonwe people and Guests can find ways to flourish when we work together. (H. King, personal communication, October 9th, 2013).

\(^{15}\) Fasting is a ceremony where an individual will spend time alone in a sacred circle out on the land without food or water for a specific number of days (usually 1-4 days) to pray, dream, celebrate, and give thanks for Creation.
One of the teachings that I asked each Teacher about was related to what they do when they are in another Nations’ territory. I was given very similar answers from everyone. I was told that it is expected that when in a new territory, one is to behave and learn the teachings of that territory. As Sakoieta told me “When you are away from home, you accept the teaching even if it is not your teaching.” The protocols of an individual’s own Nation are not to be forgotten, however, it is one’s responsibility to learn and follow protocols of the hosts. This creates a space where different Nations share teachings and build relationships as the Traditional person and new community share the importance of respecting protocols (Sakoieta, personal communication, September 22nd 2013).

One of the greatest examples of this teaching that I received, in talking to these Traditional people, was around a sacred medicine, Tobacco. Tobacco is one of the first medicines of the Haudenosaunee people. We burn Tobacco in prayer and it is not something that we give to people. However, I made Tobacco ties (small bundles of the medicine tied up in a piece of cloth) to give to Traditional Teachers as per teachings I was given by Anishinabe teachers. In Anishinabe and Cree teachings, as I have been taught, Tobacco is given by a seeker of knowledge or information as an intentional way to ask for help or guidance. As Wilson and Restoule (2010) discuss, this is not just an intellectual exchange but that “Tobacco works with the spirit” (p. 34).

When I first sat down with each Elder, I decided to ask about offering Tobacco to them. In doing this, I was able to have some very candid conversations about the expectations that following protocols create. Traditional people that come
from Nations that do not offer/accept Tobacco historically, said that they regularly
accept Tobacco from people as it is the proper protocol for the Ongwehonwe people
that have lived in this territory from time immemorial. In some of these conversations,
the Traditional person and I mutually decided that I would not offer Tobacco to them
(however, I did gift each Traditional person. All of the people I spoke to accepted my
non-traditional gift with great thanks) (Sakioeta, personal communication, September
22nd. 2013 and L. Maracle, personal communication, October 6th, 2013)

In opening up these conversations about following traditional protocols, I was
able to hear about the struggles that can occur when Onkwehonwe people travel to
other territories. I was told stories about how when Onkwehonwe people from
different territories visit they have been confused at first by the offering of Tobacco
but in respecting the protocol of the territory and the teachings of their host, the
Guests in the end, usually accept the medicine. Accepting Tobacco might not have a
cultural significance to some Nations, however. if it does have significance to the
individual or group that is offering the Tobacco, the protocols of the host Nation is to
be followed. In accepting the gift of Tobacco, the Onkwehonwe Guest is
demonstrating a respect for the protocols of the Nation that they are visiting and are
respecting the host.

All of this being said, when an Onkwehonwe person travels to other
Onkwehonwe Nations, the offering of Tobacco may occur due to the adherence of
the teachings of the individual doing the offering. It would then be the responsibility
of the individual or Nation offering the Tobacco to explain the protocol of responsibly
accepting Tobacco. As Blu explained “If you are a Guest in a space, it is okay to do
it your way, but you need to explain your way.” (B. Waters, personal communication, January 7th, 2015). These adherences to protocols of other Nations also creates a space for the visiting Onkwehonwe to receive a teaching on being a Guest in another Onkwehonwe territory (Sakoieta, personal communication, September 22nd, 2013 and L. Maracle, personal communication, October 18th, 2013).

Sitting and learning from these Teachers has been an important part of my work. It has informed how I heard the stories of Guests as they reflect on their learnings and their responsibilities through Onkwehonwe education. In knowing that I would be asking Guests to share their stories that I would then analyse, I felt that hearing teachings on Guests and responsibilities would provide me with a framework to honour their words and support their journeys into allyship. I know that as I sit and think about these teachings and revisit the Teachers, my understanding and thoughts will deepen and broaden. I say Nia:weh Ko:wa\textsuperscript{16} to each teacher for her or his words and support.

\textsuperscript{16} Nia:weh Ko:wa means “big thank you” in Mohawk.
Brief History of Ally Education

Educating and supporting Guest people is one of the most important parts of my work. It is foundational to building healthy and respectful allies. In my conversation with Kathy and Hilton, I was told about how Kathy starts conversations with Guests that she teaches. She spoke about how when she starts to teach them, she does not share cultural protocols, she starts with unpacking histories and experiences of colonization. In opening her relationships this way she is opening peoples’ minds instead of delving into the heart space where people can find pain and get stuck. She spoke about how some Guests, when learning about the pain, feel a sense of guilt that will not allow them to move towards their responsibilities (K. Absolon-King, personal communication, October 9th, 2013). These responsibilities that Kathy spoke about could be called solidarity work or ally-ship.

Ally-ship is a learned behaviour/belief system that is a constant state of unlearning and relearning about the unearned privileges that society bequeaths upon those that are in the majority or dominant group. Waters (2010) uses the most concise definition of an ally that I have encountered. She states that an ally “is an individual who consciously commits to disrupting and ending cycles of injustice” (p. 2).

The study of ally-ship and ally education is a relatively new field. The first major works appeared in the past twenty years with one of the forefront texts being Anne Bishop’s *Becoming an Ally: Breaking the Cycle of Oppression in People* (1994, 2015). Much of the current literature focuses on the power imbalance between
White/Racialized, Straight/Queer, or Male/Man/Female/Woman. In exploring this field of literature, most articles and studies come from a place of social justice and prejudice reduction strategies. There is a close link between ally literature and advocate development.

Bishop (1994) lays out a six-step process to, as she says, “Becoming an Ally”. Step one is to understand the historical roots of oppression, how it is maintained and how it continually recreates itself by impacting on individuals and institutions. This first step is discussed by many authors and includes a personal unlearning of the ways that society has validated certain experiences and afford certain privileges due to social location (Alimo, 2012; Bolen and Sheoardson, 2012; Case, 2012; Dessel and Green 2010; DeTurk, 2011; Evans and Broido, 2005; Fingerhut, 2011; London, 2010; Milstein, 2013; Munin and Speight, 2010; Smith and Redington, 2010; Stockdale, 2013; Storms, 2012; Waters, 2010)

The second step is to understand different oppressions, how the experiences of oppression can appear similar or different and how different oppressions reinforce each other. Case (2012), touches on this when discussing white women that are struggling to learn about white privilege but unconsciously have an urge to re-center themselves as victims of oppression, absolved of power and privilege, because they have experienced sexual discrimination.

From the educational understandings of oppression, an ally then moves into a consciousness and healing space, the third step. This step focuses on acknowledging oppressions and awaking from a space of ignorance. The ally needs to then heal from the pain and guilt that can come from learning about unearned

17 There is little research on the experiences of able-bodied peoples ally-ship with differently able people.
privileges. Without healing from the pain and guilt that occurs, as privileges are uncovered and comprehended, the oppressor will not move forward to allyship. As Freire (1970) states “Discovering himself [the ally] to be an oppressor may cause considerable anguish, but does not necessarily lead to solidarity… rationalizing his guilt through paternalistic treatments of the oppressed… will not do.” (p. 49)

The fourth step is to work toward liberating one’s self from the oppressive mindset that impacts the ally’s identity. Every individual is impacted by the oppressive structures, whether through their own oppression or unearned privileges, and these impacts need to be examined and worked through. In order to become an ally, individuals must see how their own sites of oppressions and privileges have harmed them without equating this experience to the group to which they wish to be an ally to. It is through this healing that an ally is able to engage with other groups and communities that face other forms of oppressions. If an individual does not address their own experiences of oppression or privilege and attempts to engage other oppressed groups, a transference or recentering of the “ally” may harm or further marginalize the group that they are striving to assist (Applerbaum, 2008; Case, 2012; Leibowitz, Bozlaek, Rohleder, Carolissen and Swartz, 2010; Pleasants, 2011; Thompson, 2003). In conversations with young men that were studying feminism, Pleasants (2011) found that many of the men struggled with the impacts of their identity. The participants did not ask for male privilege and felt that because of this, they did not deserve to feel guilty. This assertion is a re-centering of their experiences as more important than the oppression that they proclaim to be in solidarity with.
Ally-ship is a large role that gets taken up very differently depending on the oppression that is being addressed and the group/individual dynamics. There are many ways to engage as an ally. As Bishop’s fifth step, she offers a list of eighteen ideas and suggestions on ways to engage however, she prefaces it by saying that “Having written the title, I must now admit that I cannot tell anyone exactly how to be an ally” (p. 114). It is my understanding that she cannot tell anyone how to be an ally as it will be different for everyone!

The last step that Bishop offers is to maintain a sense of hope that there can be social and structural change. She does not offer an end goal for what the world could look like, she offers a hope that through social and structural change, liberation from oppressions can occur. Although it is a somewhat simplistic explanation, her work has assisted people wishing to start on a journey of ally-ship and advocacy.

As London (2010) discusses, allies must be motivated to seek change, they must have strength of conviction, self-confidence, transformational skills, and a belief that other people can and will change (optimistic). When allies work to advance the issues of oppressed groups in society, their work can be called advocacy. London (2010) defines advocacy as “taking a leadership role that is more than volunteering (actively working to help a cause) or providing support to a cause (voicing agreement or contributing monies), an advocate embraces the ambiguity and acknowledges the gaps in their knowledges” (p. 235).

It is in this space that Guests start to work with Ongweoweh people to uphold Guswhenta. Allies usually work in conjunction or alliance with individuals, groups or
Nations that are facing oppressions. An alliance is a political relationship “in which parties are interdependent and responsible for, and to, each other. Intercultural allies recognize their cultural differences as well as their interdependence, and often seek similar goals, but they are not necessarily friends” (DeTurk quoting Collier, 2011, p. 571). I respect this understanding of alliances, however I think that building friendships and positive regard is incredibly important to ally work. I also recognize that in a classroom, the relationships between student and teacher are inherently fraught with power dynamics that might make friendship impossible. However, creating space of positive regard and respect are foundational to teaching allies.

Pittinsky (2009), through his work on leadership and equity, has coined the term “Allophilia”, that he uses as an antonym for prejudice. He discusses how many equality measures are “tolerance promotion initiatives” that do not address the underlying struggles of out-groups being coerced into assimilating or being accepted as long as they “vanish into us” (p. 213). Allophilia steps over the idea of reducing prejudice and works at building healthy, meaningful relationships between individuals and groups of different social locations. It is from this relationship that allies are able to advance and support the struggles of the oppressed (2009). In an interview on how to heal and address the cleavages between Onkwehonwe people and Guests, Restoule (2014) offers a simple sentence that grounds these ideas. He states “Relationships break down fear.”

This construct of allophilia reminds me of my most recent conversation with Lee Maracle. She was telling me that she has created another word for people that stand in solidarity with Indigenous people. An Indigenist is not Indigenous, but is
able to forge friendships and relations with Indigenous people that respects Indigenous worldview, autonomy and protocols (L. Maracle, personal communication, October 6th, 2013). One of the people that Lee spoke about was her friend Victoria Freeman. Freeman co-authors a chapter in Alliances (2010) with Ongweoweh scholar Dorothy Christian. In the chapter, Freeman writes about relationships with Ongweoweh people. She explains that there needs to be more than just political relationships. She states that relationships need to occur on every level, especially personal friendships (p. 383). It is this work that allies engage in that Sakoieta was speaking about when he said that both Ongweoweh and Guests need to be working on their own Peace, Friendship and Mutual Respect (Sakoieta, personal communication, September 22nd, 2013). Addressing the impacts and structures of oppressions through authentic friendship is actually a way that Guests/Indigenists/Allphilics can engage with other Guests in a way of Peace or solidarity.

As hooks (1990), asks in her foundational text, *Yearning: Race, Gender and Cultural Politics* “What process enabled their perspective to shift? Understanding that process is important for the development of solidarity; it can enhance awareness of the epistemological shifts that enable all of us to move in new and oppositional directions” (p. 54). This process of (un)learning and rebuilding understandings is the basis of ally work and what I strive to better understand. hooks’ question here is foundational to how altering and changing the understandings of oppression and privilege alters and changes the ally.
As Smith and Redington (2010) explain, the learning of how oppression operates is a continual process that requires constant inquiry on the part of the ally. Waters (2010) states that “Developing allies requires an appropriate balance of time, challenge and support to grasp the intertwining nature of cycles of privilege, power and oppression on the cognitive and intrapersonal level before working to make meaning of allyhood in a more multifaceted way” (p. 4). There have been numerous studies done that ask how allies are developed. Many of these projects or papers engage university students (many who self select) who have or are taking courses in social justice issues and explores the pedagogy used to create a space for transformative education (Alimo, 2012; Applebaum, 2008; Dessel, Bolen and Shepardson, 2012; DeTurk, 2011; Evans and Broido, 2005; Fingerhut, 2011; Howard, 2011; Leibowitz, Bozalek, Rohleder, Carolissen and Swartz, 2010; Munin and Speight, 2010; Pleasant, 2011; Reasons and Evans, 2007; Rodriguez, 2009; Smith and Redington, 2010; Storm, 2012; Thompson, 2003; Waters, 2010).

In a literature review by Storm, (2012) she references three studies that concluded that pedagogy had a greater impact on students in a one-semester course than the actual course content. In using intergroup dialogues (Alimo, 2012; Dessel, Bolen and Shepardson, 2012), engaging with role models from oppressed populations (Evans and Broido, 2005; Smith and Redington, 2010) and experiential learning (Baskin, 2011; Smith and Redington, 2010), students are able to unravel and reflect on information that they are learning from a “collaborative, democratic, participatory and inclusive” space (Storms, 2012).
In speaking with Amanda Thompson, an Anishinabe educator and academic advisor, on how knowledge of colonization can be taught, she talks about how it is important to disrupt and disarm the students so that THEY can find a place of learning for themselves that they did not know existed (A. Thompson, personal communication, November 7th, 2013). Many students do not fully understand the power that they hold in the world and need to learn how to be critically reflexive of their privileges. She says in a bit of a tongue in cheek way “Ally-ship is not a tiara, it is about standing beside [Ongweoweh] people even when they are not there standing beside you.”

Amanda talks about the struggle of teaching the history of oppression in a way that students can pick up and how it is hard to walk with people as they uncover the multiple layers to colonial oppression. In learning about the history, some students want to know how to change things now. They want a single answer on how to deal with the Indian Act or education attainment or suicide rates. They expect that there is one way to be an ally. Amanda talks about how they miss that there are many answers and that different Ongweoweh individuals have different lived experiences (Urban vs. Reserve, white skin privilege, education and class differences etc.) that impact on their needs. Ally ship is using privileges to assist in actions and advancement (A. Thompson, personal communication, November 7th, 2013).

The Nishinaabeg scholar and activist, Leanne Simpson wrote the “First Words” of *Alliances: Re/Envisioning Indigenous-non-Indigenous Relationships* (2010). In writing about working with allies or Guests, her words are gentle, but a
true declaration of the current struggle within Ongweoweh/Guest solidarity movements. She states:

Building relationships with our supporters has been a key strategy in our movement for change. But these relationships do not always come easy...

Too often we have forged these relationships without taking the proper time to clearly discuss our different roles and responsibilities. Too often, tensions and misunderstanding have plagued even the very best of intentions (p. xiv).

It is with this caution, but also with the understanding that with commitment, patience and perseverance, good relations are possible. In looking to find allies to Ongweoweh people who work for action and advancement, I find myself reading the works of Guests such as Victoria Freeman, J. Edward Chamberlin, Lynne Davis, Celia Haig-Brown and Paulette Regan to name a few. I am astounded that these allies were/are in positions to situate themselves in honest and authentic ways.

Chamberlin (2004) tells stories of his family history to demonstrate the occupation that his ancestors participated in. Freeman (2002) shares a story in which she is painfully able to see her privilege as a white woman reflected back through the pain that she causes to a friend and colleague that is Ongweoweh. In the introduction to her book, she tells a story in which she is walking with a friend on her property and comments that she would like to participate in a Sweat Lodge that her friend had erected. Her friend commented in pain and anger “Our Spirituality is all we have left. Will you take even that?” (p. xvi) In the moment, Freeman attempts to defend her privileged location by excusing herself in stating “I did not ask to be born here!”
In sharing this story in print, Freeman is publicly demonstrating the struggle that unlearning privilege entails.

Another way that allies are known to use their privilege is to geographically locate themselves according to the traditional territory that they occupy. Haig-Brown (2010) acknowledges the land that she lives and works on as being a traditional space of the Mississaugas of New Credit First Nation while at the same time speaks about the many other Nations that have lived and care taken this space before Mississaugas of New Credit First Nation. In acknowledging the territory, Haig-Brown is ensuring that the connection to land is not a forgotten history and experiences. As Lawrence and Dua (2005) discuss in their article, “Decolonizing Anti-Racism”, Ongweoweh connection to the land is fundamental to our understanding of self, identity, community and Nationhood. This understanding is a politically supportive action that allies can perform:

Usually within antiracism theory and practice, the question of land as contested space is seldom taken up. From Indigenous perspectives, it speaks to a reluctance on the part of non-Natives of any background to acknowledge that there is more to this land than being settlers on it, that there are deeper, older stories and knowledge connected to the landscapes around us. To acknowledge that we all share the same land base and yet to question the differential terms on which it is occupied is to become aware of the colonial project that is taking place around us (Lawrence and Dua, 2005, p. 126).

Another way that ally academics use their privilege is to challenge and question their readers. As a way to open up conversation, Regan, in her introduction
to *Unsettling the Settler within: Indian Residential Schools, truth telling and reconciliation in Canada* (2010), pointedly asks “How can we, as non-Indigenous people, unsettle ourselves to name and then transform the settler- the colonizer who lurks within- not just in words but by our actions, as we confront the history of colonization, violence, racism and injustice…?” (p. 11).

Many Guest academics and activists who want to move Ongweoweh/Guest relationships beyond the current state discuss Regan’s work. Battell-Lowman (2007) uses Regan’s earlier work to challenge her understanding of the current ways that histories are taught within Canadian curriculum. Battell-Lowman discusses the need to challenge “dogmatic ideologies and the national myth that in too many cases pass for and direct history teaching” (p. 8). It is from the teacher’s own personal experience with unsettling her/his privileges that teaching and curriculum can change. Barker (2010) clearly states that the “fundamental premise of Regan’s approach is that we as Settlers must learn to accept that being unsettled is not something to be avoided, but rather to be embraced and explored” (p.323). This unsettling of privilege needs to occur for educators and students.

In a five part reflective essay, Jennifer Hendry, (2008) a young, white Bachelor of Social Work student discusses how learning about the history of oppression and colonization from an Onkweoweh scholar has altered her understandings of her responsibilities. It is her experience of learning and becoming an ally that I am so interested in studying. She explains:

“I will never be an expert on Aboriginal issues; that would be impossible. I will never fully understand the effects of colonization, as I am not part of the
Aboriginal populations. However, I can try to build alliances, educate myself and educate others about the issues that Aboriginal communities face today” (Baskin, Koleszar-Green, Hendry, Lavallee and Murrin, 2008, p. 99).

This young woman is a bead. She is working on her and her community’s understanding of Peace, Friendship and Mutual Respect. She is unpacking her privileges and is willing to be active in words and deeds. She is also willing to unsettle herself and other around her. She is standing on the other side of Guswhenta.

The construct of an ally and ally education that has been discussed throughout this chapter will be revisited as I unpack and discuss the stories that have been shared with me by the participants. It has been important for me to read and learn about how social justice education has developed over the past few decades. It has helped me to conceptualize and enunciate the importance of pedagogy, while at the same time allowed me to see the gaps in literature that I hope my work will contribute to addressing.
Methodology

One of the most important parts of this research project for me is how I see relationships and reciprocity as sacred. Performing research from an Onkwehonwe worldview has resulted in an understanding that engaging in research can and should be held as a sacred ceremony (Wilson, 2008). In looking at my research through this lens, the sacredness of relationships, reciprocity, learning and sharing is entrenched as part of the ceremony. The preparation, the gathering of gifts, the speaking to Elders and Traditional Teachers, the making of food, and the intention placed into this work are all part of the ceremony (Restoule and Wilson, 2010; Absolon, 2011).

In reality there have been many different ceremonies within the larger research ceremony. We have a teaching in my Nation that before a child leaves the Spirit World to come to this world, they sit with the Four Sacred Beings and plan out all of the teachings and learnings that the child will need throughout their life. These learnings will all be part of the Ceremony of Life. As with all ceremony, I have learned, grown, and changed due to the learnings and reflections I have experienced. Ceremony for me means that this endeavour is not just a step towards the completion of my doctoral studies, but is an integral part of my life’s work that I laid out for myself before I left the Spirit World to come to this.

The purpose of this Ceremony was to hear the experiences of Guest people with regards to their engagement with Onkwehonwe-based education. This project used a sharing circle design to discuss the growth and reflections that participants have had since attending a course taught by an Onkwehonwe instructor that used
Onkwehonwe pedagogy. The two primary purposes of this chapter are to (1) describe the research paradigm and methodology of this research project and (2) explain the research design. I will discuss research method, sample selection, the procedure used in designing the instrument and collecting the data, and provide an explanation as to how I analyzed the data.

**Paradigm and Methodology**

Onkwehonwe research is a dynamic process in which scholars utilize traditional means of learning and data gathering such as observation, experiential learning, sharing circles and storytelling (Baskin, 2005, Absolon and Willett, 2004, Wilson, 2008). Many Onkwehonwe scholars have written about how they utilized Traditional Knowledge collection or learning tools to gather data and understand and analyze results. In using the Traditional Teachings on Guests as well as my learnings on Wampum Belts, my framework for my research gathering, my methods, and analysis naturally flowed from these understandings as well.

These methodologies were not used as a reaction to the problematic discourse of dominant research, but as a rigorous means of data gathering, analyzing and disseminating, all the while not engaging a single Onkwehonwe research participant. Onkwehonwe worldview and theory are not trying to alter or change Western ways; Onkwehonwe ways are equal to and stand beside Western thought. In staying grounded in Onkwehonwe worldview, this project will be evaluated and defended in line with the teachings gathered. It has been an Onkwehonwe wholistic ceremony.
As I started this research ‘phase’, gathering the teachings on Guests as outlined in chapter 3, I engaged with the stories that my participants shared in their reflections through this lens. The teachings that were shared by Elders and Traditional Teachers have been integral to the process of my research and analysis. It is from this subjective understanding that I have written my findings. In presenting my findings through an Onkwehonwe lens, I know that I may be criticized for my subjectivity, emotional connections and personal investment in this project. I am unapologetic for this non-objective stance. In saying this, I also acknowledge that this is an area of tension between Eurocentric research and Onkwehonwe research. (Baskin, 2011)

This subjectivity is something that I am proud of and centered throughout the whole research process. I feel that it is important that I offered an understanding of my worldview and a perception of my responsibility to a respectful relationship. This was my intention to locate myself as an authentic participant within my research work (Absolon and Willett, 2004). As an outside researcher, situated at the margins, looking into the experiences of prominently non-racialized and dominant-bodied Guests, I have explored how my location outside of my research topic confuses and unsettles my assumptions about my project and the individuals that have participated in this research. Using a research paradigm that is in line with Traditional Teachings about Onkwehonwe scholarship and pedagogy, but not engaging Onkwehonwe participants, appears to be a novel undertaking. When scanning literature, and researching I was unable to find a study that utilized Onkwehonwe paradigm, methods, or worldview, with non-Onkwehonwe participants.
To me, this meant that parts of my methodology had to include a sharing of my experiences and stories. I needed to ground my research in my own lived experience and commitment to Onkwehonwe education. In introducing my research to participants, I spoke about classes that I attended and/or taught that had Guest learners. I spoke of the respect and humility I learned as I witnessed the (re)education of Guest people. I thanked them for all that they could offer. These understandings greatly informed my thinking and my writing about this research.

As I started to gather stories, it was at this time of relationship building and engagement, I shared food that I made with participants. In the larger sharing circles I provided a home-cooked lunch or dinner, and in small, one-on-one sharing circles I either made snacks, or cookies. In making the food by hand, I was able to put my intentions and good thoughts into the food. I was able to provide the Guests with the best hospitality that I could. In one of the large sharing circles, I was able to adhere to my Guests’ dietary requirements by making a gluten free, vegetarian lasagne. Thus, all participants could engage in the ceremony of feasting together. I also provided all of my Guests with a gift that was handmade by an Onkwehonwe crafts person, my mother. This gift was meaningful to me because it represented a decolonizing action. It is a reclaiming and a recentreing of Onkwehonwe knowledges, as my mother learned to make dreamcatchers later in her life. My mother was someone that was taught by society to be ashamed of her heritage and the very act of learning this craft is a reclamation of her identity and her self-determination. Over the past few years, she estimates that she has made a few hundred dreamcatchers to give as gifts or as a means of supplementing her income. She has made many for
my older sister’s friends, as thank-you gifts for supporting my sister through her battle with breast cancer. And now my mother has made dreamcatchers for all of my participants. As she explained, “I cannot do much to help either you or [your sister], but this is one thing that I can do” (R. Green, personal communication, January 2014).

I was taught that dreamcatchers were a craft that an Onkwehonwe mother made for her child to support ‘good’ dreams and halt ‘bad’ dreams from reoccurring. Many dreamcatchers have beads woven into their webs. The web represents a spider’s web, where the beads catch the bad dreams and the good dreams are able to move through the web. In the morning light, the sun burns up the bad dreams. Mothers would hang dreamcatchers over the spaces where their little ones slept. (L. Wright, personal communication, June 2008). When I was a child, these teachings were unknown to my mother due to the impacts of intergenerational trauma and colonization. However, in making my participants dreamcatchers, I feel as though she is assisting me in achieving my adult dreams. It is with great humility and gratitude that I thank my mother, Rhea Green, for providing these gifts.

When hosting our sharing circles, one of the other benefits to the participants was that they were able to reconnect with past classmates or build relationships with other Guests/allies. It was/is my hope that the relationships made in the sharing circles could assist Guests/allies by providing them with support and solidarity in their work of decolonization. In hosting sharing circles as a method of inquiry, participants were able to introduce themselves and hear about the work of other
allies. I hope that in creating these shared environments, I was able to support the work and networks of allies.

Locating myself, and providing food and a gift, as well as holding space for building relationships, felt like tangible ways for me to give back to the individuals who supported my research through providing their stories. These acts are part of Onkwehonwe worldviews and can be referred to as ‘reciprocal relationship’ (Wilson, 2008), as I did not expect that the participants would simply come and give to me. There was giving and taking. There was sharing.

**It is not just a Pot of Soup**

Before I go into explaining the design and methods of my project, I want to offer a story and an analysis to the story. It was recently pointed out to me that my engagement with theoretical frameworks is so focused on maintaining an Onkwehonwe lens that in hearing my work, many will not fully see it as emancipatory due to their own lens. As I travel between the worlds of academic and ‘authentic Indian’, I sometimes find myself caught in trying to explain what I am doing. And no matter how many times I tell my story or show myself there is a space of confusion.

In a personal experience, I was teaching an undergraduate social work class on identity and anti-discrimination, and there was an inclusion of Aboriginality as one of the weekly topics. On this week, I assigned a reading by Bonnie Freeman (2011) in which she talks about making soup for the students to eat as a way to build community and create a learning space. As this brilliant scholar and I are second cousins, I mentioned in my Facebook status that I was teaching her chapter. She immediately asked me if I was making soup for the students. I understood she was
not asking me if I was being a nice person and making food as a good ‘Indian’. She was pushing me theoretically to ask if I was willing and able to be a strong host who would take the responsibility seriously. She was asking if I was walking my theory or if I was just speaking to practice without engaging it. Onkwehonwe worldviews are living cultural practices and knowledges that situate learning as more than just intellectual engagement; it is a wholistic process. Was I setting up the relationships between host and guest as the wampum and teachings explain?

In telling the story about the “pot of soup”, I want to center a foundational understanding to this work. Onkwehonwe theory and ways are valid and provide a rigorous framework for academic inquiry. This is not a way to set myself up as authentic or create a space where I am bringing traditional teachings into a dominant Western space; nor is it a way that I am turning and critiquing the ways of that dominant discourse and the ways that it’s teaching, engaging and creating knowledge have been structured as problematic.

My understanding of the primary and secondary educations that I have received are based on philosophies that centred modern knowledge of science, math and language. In my post-secondary education I was introduced to work that challenged my understanding of structure. Thinkers such as of Marx, Foucault, and Butler altered my understanding of capitalism, power and discourse and gender regulations (Brock, 2003). In challenging the modernistic understandings or my earlier education, the postmodern thinkers allowed me to start to theorize how I understood and saw the world. But even with the theories of the postmodern or critical thinkers I found incongruities with my Onkwehonwe worldview.
As Baskin (2011) explains there are challenges from a Onkwehonwe perspective to post-modern thought such as discourse on truth claims and identity politics. She also asserts that the lack of spiritual understanding is counter to Onkwehonwe worldviews. One way that I see this incongruency is the inclusion of Onkwehonwe people as postmodern. In personal discussions I have, in a tongue and cheek way, explained that modernism is a rejection of the religious and spiritual knowledges. In the thinking that science and logic could know and reason all issues out of existence, modernist knowledge was knowledge of knowing. The rejection of the truth claims of modernism and the meta-narrative explored by postmodernism are also incongruent with Onkwehonwe worldviews. Modernism and postmodernism exist and coexist in worldviews that do not enter into my Longhouse. I am not passing judgement on these worldviews, however I am decentring them from my analysis, my thoughts, and understandings.

As I was making the soup for the students, I was not doing it because it was a nice gesture to treat students differently. I was performing and taking a theroretical stance that rejected “essentializing” myself or replicating the cultural competence models of acceptance.

Onkwehonwe worldviews are different frameworks that are multidimensional and not invested in the rejection or the upholding of my dominant primary and secondary education. Onkwehonwe theory is its own set of theories, ideologies and methodologies that are not comparable or even communicable in the same language. Even though there may be some spaces that critical thinkers might stand along side Onkwehonwe ideas, there is still some inconsistencies that cannot be
reconciled due to the fundamental difference. I can understand that there is a move for the critical to dismantle power structures that have been set up by the dominant (such as patriarchy, classism and racism) however neither are truly situated in relationship to the Onkwehonwe.

In making soup, I am not being nice. I am not looking at the dominant or the critical from a space of how I am deficient or different. I am really not even looking at them. I am situated in understandings, responsibilities and relationships that are grounded on Onkwehonwe theories. Onkwehonwe theories that have spoken for itself and to itself since time immemorial; I am continuing this conversation through designing and executing a research ceremony steeped in Onkwehonwe theories.

**Research Design**

**Sharing circles as a research design.**

Sharing circles and storytelling are traditional ways of engaging, learning and exchanging knowledges. Both have been used as a means of healing, and allow for personal growth and reflection. As Cree scholar, Laara Fitznor (2005) explains:

… sharing circles embrace such concepts as learning from one another and learning from what is said, gaining information and knowledge to incorporate into one’ life, honouring and respecting what is heard, honouring the confidentiality of who said what, sharing the joy and pain of others, recognizing that what each person says is placed on an equal footing (no one person’s voice is more important than another’s) , and the willingness to share information about one’s experiences in light of personal growth and
development. Sharing circles promote personal well-being and the well-being of Aboriginal Peoples. They reflect the traditional concept of interconnectedness (p33-34).

The use of sharing circles also promotes community building in which all participants have an opportunity to share and engage in ways that are meaningful to them (Baskin, 2005; Fitznor, 2005). They can establish “dignity and unity” (Hart, 2002, p 59), where participants are able to hear and support the struggles, actions, and thoughts of other people.

Some people have suggested that sharing circles might be comparable to focus groups or could be labelled as “qualitative research” methods (Baskin, 2005; Lavallee, 2009). Like Baskin (2005) I reject this understanding for this project. Sharing circles do not need to be situated within the dominant discourses of research, even the subjective and emancipatory constructs of qualitative, community-based research. These forms of knowledge gathering and sharing are used within a traditional Aboriginal communication model since time immemorial. A sharing circle is a forum in which people are gathered together to share their experiences and stories around a specific topic. However, there is a sphere around the circle that differentiates it from a focus group: Ceremony (Absolon and Willett, 2004; Archibald, 2008; Baskin, 2005; Fitznor, 1998; Hart, 2002; Nabigon, Hagey, Webster, & MacKay, 1999; Wilson, 2008).

In a sharing circle, participants are asked to share their experiences or stories with the other participants and the researcher. Storytelling in Onkwehonwe cultures, and hence in Onkwehonwe research methodologies, is a means of transmitting
more than just a simple story; it is a means of knowledge transmission. As Baskin (2005) states:

Storytelling is a valid form of Aboriginal knowledge [production] as it includes responsibility on the part of the listener/researcher, incorporates both interpretation and analysis, has room for many explanations for the phenomena being researched, is a creative search for solutions, and is a political act of liberation and self-determination (p. 179).

Baskin (2005) further explains that the use of sharing circles in research supports “the direct involvement of participants and the community; the reciprocal relationship between researcher and participant; the goals of self-determination, decolonization, and direct benefit to the community; and the potential for learning and healing” (p. 171).

In a sharing circle, participants are given as much time as they need to speak, without interruption or questioning. This tradition, which sometimes is denoted through the use of a talking or speaking stick, was encouraged. The item, which is passed between individuals, denotes whose turn it is to speak. It can also be an Eagle feather, or a stone (which may also be referred to as a “Grandfather” or “Grandmother”). In the sharing circles that I hosted, participants all agreed to this principle and as a result, the transcripts have complete and uninterrupted comments by all individuals.

Sample selection

The sample of participants was gathered by contacting Onkwehonwe faculty, and instructors at both the university and college levels. I call this recruitment strategy a
“web of community”. I, as an educator, have had contact with quite a few other Onkwehowe educators throughout Canada. After I received ethics approval from my institution, I sent out recruitment emails via the “Indigenous Education Network’s” listserv of over 500 subscribers interested in Indigenous education, which is housed at OISE/University of Toronto, as well as to a list of colleagues and mentors generated by myself.

Many of the educators forwarded my recruitment email to their past students. I was overwhelmed with the responses that I received. I hoped to have 20 participants as a maximum. Within two weeks of the call going out, I scheduled 24 potential participants (knowing that I would not be able to connect with all interested parties). I was able to host three group sharing circles and seven sharing circles where I sat with individual participants between the period of September 2014 and April 2015. It was privilege to hear and collect the stories and reflections of 19 individuals.

All participants agreed to have their sharing circles audio-recorded and then transcribed verbatim. The large sharing circles, with multiple participants, were on average one hour and forty-five minutes in length. The one-on-one sharing circles were on average thirty-five minutes in length with the longest being just over an hour and the shortest being around twenty minutes.

In the selection and recruitment of participants for this project, I understand that there is a selection bias. In researching Guest people that firstly, attend a post-secondary course on Onkwehonwe topics and secondly, feel that this educational experience has changed them, I acknowledge that this sample is very specific. I
recognize that the participants that self-selected to engage in this research had predominantly positive experiences within Onkwehonwe classrooms, courses and learning. This positive experience is the phenomenon that interests me. I want to know what factors played into the education that supported such a positive learning environment and what are the ways that participants’ worldviews shift and change. I want to be as transparent as possible in participant selection as I focused on understanding the changes that can occur through education. In future studies I would be very interested in hearing the stories of all students including those that felt neutral or negatively towards their education. I am also very interested in understanding how elective courses versus mandatory courses alter the students perception and participation in their education.

I also wanted participants to have time to reflect on their learnings. This meant that for some, their first learnings at the post-secondary level occurred in previous degrees. Quite a few participants had taken more than one course on Onkwehone topics. I encouraged them to reflect on their education and growth as a complete and wholistic experience. I limited the time lapse to be no more than ten years from when they took their educational course to project participation.

**Instrument design and data collection**

Since my research is based on storytelling I felt that I needed to sit with people in discussion, relationship and ceremony (Archibald, 2008). My research questions were designed to give a voice to the experiences and learnings that Guest students encounter as they are (re)educated about Onkwehonwe topics from Onkwehonwe perspectives. I used broad questions that the participants were able to
explore for themselves. (For a list of questions please see appendix A). My methods included holding a space for an individual’s stories and growth to be honoured and explored.

In creating questions for the sharing circles, I first reflected on the multiple teachings that I had gathered about Guests’ responsibilities and the relationships to and between Onkwehonwe people. The Elders and Teachers all spoke about knowing where one comes from and a responsibility to the space where one is at. I wanted to reflect these understandings in the questions that I asked. This included asking participants to think back to their understandings or thoughts about Onkwehonwe people and histories before enrolling in a course, or as Lee had taught me, "where they were coming from". Participants were then asked to reflect on what had motivated them to enrol in a course, or as Lee said, "their intent for entering the community." I also asked participants to reflect on their wholistic experience within their course as it impacted the four aspects of self: the physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual. The latter half of the questions that I asked participants focused on their post-course reflections and current engagements with ally work that disrupts colonization.

**Looking at stories through the Teachings I gathered**

Since my data was in story format, I listened to the stories as well as read a verbatim transcription of the sharing circles. As a way to start analyzing data, I looked at participants’ motivations for taking the course; their personal, political and professional learnings that they took away from the course; and how the course informed their solidarity work in both personal and professional spheres.
I want to do justice to the stories that have been shared with me. Hence, my analysis has left large portions of text stand without interruption to preserve the fullness of the stories that participants have shared. In doing so, I discuss what the stories bring forward and mean in relation to other stories. This practice will also allow me to highlight what I understand from the participants while not "speaking for" the participants. As Yee, Wong and Janczur state (2006) from “an antiracism research perspective (as well as an Aboriginal perspective), there is little analysis by the researcher of the data, rather it is the data that leads and directs the findings” (p.4). This is my attempt to “listen and trust… that meaning will be made…[If I do] as the Elders say… and listen with ‘three ears: two on the sides of [my] head and the one that is in [my] heart” (Archibald, 2008, p 8).

My findings are presented in four sections that discuss: Pre-understanding and Motivation for taking Courses; Wholistic Experiences in Education as seen through Ongwehowe Pedagogy; Personal and Professional Growth; Ally/Solidarity Work and Guest Responsibilities. These sections and discussions predominantly emerged from the questions I asked. The section on Personal and Professional growth however was grounded in the stories that participants shared. I was not expecting to include this section, but participants shared such profound growth that I was compelled to include it. I directly asked participants to share their stories of what motivated them to enrol in courses and about pedagogy employed by Onkwehonwe instructors. The last section of data was originally planned as two questions that I collapsed into one due to time constraints in the first sharing circle. The questions individually seemed to overlap and I continued to ask them as one. I asked
participants to discuss their work in relation to Ally/Solidarity work and Guest Responsibility. This final section has been constructed in a way as to welcome the reader into the sharing circle to listen and learn with their own heart.

In the writing up of my findings and sharing my participant’s stories, I gave participants the option of using their own names or a pseudonym. Some people felt strongly about using their own names while others wanted to use a pseudonym. A few participants said that they did not care either way and so I have decided to use their names. It did not matter to me whether people asked for a pseudonym or not; it just felt important to let people name themselves (most that decided to use a pseudonym provided one that they would be comfortable with).

**Participant Sketches**

I asked each participant at the beginning of the sharing circle to fill out a short demographic form (appendix B) that allowed him or her to identify his or herself in any ways that they felt comfortable. I decided that I wanted to politically ask participants these questions as a way to give them control over how I discuss their subjectivity and positioning. My reasoning for this is that in my teachings from the Elders I have been taught that it is important to our relationships to introduce ourselves and where we come from. As Lee previously mentioned, there are songs that Guests are expected to sing before entering the longhouse. This is a way for participants to express who they are in their own song. As a decolonial act, I wanted to give back to the participants the power to label and situate themselves. This was a small act but really resonated with participants.
I would now like to introduce the wonderful and dedicated group of participants that helped to make my thesis possible.

- Olive identifies as a white cisgender woman who attended courses on Onkwehonwe topics in both her undergraduate degree and master’s degree. Her education has been at two different universities. Her childhood love for Buffy Saint Marie made me smile as I engaged with her words.

- Christine identifies as a white, heterosexual woman. She is the only participant in this research project whose program had a mandatory Onkwehonwe course as part of her undergraduate degree. She has completed a course in her master’s degree as well.

- Anne is a woman of Irish heritage who attended her course at a graduate level when she returned to do a master’s degree after many years working in the field that included some work with Onkwehonwe individuals, families, and communities.

- Allie is a third-generation Canadian woman who comes from a middle-class family. She has taken two undergraduate degrees. In her first degree she enrolled in multiple courses on Onkwehonwe topics. Her second degree was taken at an “Aboriginal publicly-funded, post-secondary institution”. She is currently enrolled in a master’s program.

- Janet is a white woman that had worked in a remote Onkwehonwe community prior to taking a graduate course in Onkwehonwe social work.
• Angela is an Italian-Canadian woman that has taken multiple courses on Onkwehonwe topics. She is an educator who strives to educate settlers on their responsibilities. She has a love for radio bingo.

• Michael is a white male who initially took a course in his first master’s. At the time of the sharing circle, he discussed that he had just started a second master’s degree that focuses on Onkwehonwe social work.

• Michelle identified as a white, Irish-Canadian woman. Her course was in the first year of her master’s program. She has worked with urban Onkwehonwe people in an educational setting.

• Paula identified as a Romanian woman who came to Canada in 2005. She completed an undergraduate degree in Onkwehonwe studies and is currently in a program studying to be a health care provider.

• Tyler is a white male, an educator and academic. His first course was in his undergraduate degree, however, throughout his education, he has engaged with Onkwehonwe knowledges and teachings. His doctoral work addressed his understandings of being a Guest in a colonial state. His dry humour and use of sarcasm made our conversations entertaining!

• Elena is a woman who has taken multiple courses throughout her undergraduate degree. She mentioned in the sharing circle that she would like to pursue a master’s degree that focuses on Onkwehonwe topics.

• Julie identified as a woman from a professional, middle-class family with Anglo/northern European heritage. She attended a course during her master’s degree.
• Marie Louise is a woman from a mid-size northern Ontario town. Her family is rural, upwardly mobile (or middle-class) and is engaged, indirectly, in natural resource industries and the service sector, with roots in farming and blue collar work. She complicates her identity as a white French-Canadian woman having Onkwehonwe heritage that her family has occasionally acknowledged but did not always engage. She has worked for numerous years in Onkwehonwe organizations. She is also currently working on her doctoral degree.

• Rosemary is a person with a disability and identified in the sharing circles as an Italian-Canadian woman. She attended an Onkwehonwe research perspective course in her master's degree.

• Joey identified as a high-functioning autistic male. He is of both European and African descent. He also identified his sexuality as homosexual. He has an undergraduate degree in Onkwehonwe studies and has worked within mainstream agencies addressing Onkwehonwe issues.

• Lisa is a first-generation Canadian of Croatian heritage. She is a person with a disability. She attended courses in both her second undergraduate degree and master’s degree.

• Thomas is a racialized Southeast-Asian man and a Canadian citizen born on unceded Algonquin land. He is an educator and an academic who attended a course on Onkwehonwe law while completing his Master of Law.
Amanda is a heterosexual woman of British and Fijian ancestry. She enrolled in a course on Onkwehonwe worldviews and healing during her master’s degree.

Maya is a South Asian woman who works with newcomer women. She took one course on Onkwehonwe topics during her undergraduate degree in social work.

In spending anywhere from twenty-five minutes to almost three hours with these participants, it is a pleasure to introduce them. It is with great excitement that I am now going to share the stories, thoughts and learnings they imparted to me. I would like to say Nia:weh ko:wa to the participants for sharing with me their stories and journeys in attaining an education that centres Onkwehonwe knowledges, histories and pedagogies.
Preunderstandings and Motivation for Enrolment

Over the past few decades, there have been a lot of changes to the primary and secondary education systems regarding Onkwehonwe representation and content. (Ministry of Education, Ontario, 2009) There is now a small amount of literature that discusses how some Guest teachers and teacher candidates have been exposed to social justice-based education (Nardozi and Mashford-Pringle, 2014; St. Denis and Schick, 2003). In looking at the current literature on how to teach educators to engage histories and knowledges about Onkwehonwe people, there is a move to not only discuss history but to include contemporary issues and challenges.

In this chapter, I asked participants to reflect on how they see their pre-course education and thoughts towards Onkwehonwe individuals, communities and Nations. I also asked them to tell me about their motivation to enrol in their first course. However, the reflections that were provided by participants show that they experienced mis-education and a lack of education. When participants reflected on their educational experiences about Onkwehonwe people they spoke mostly about history or social studies in public school. Many spoke about either a brief learning or problematic understandings that were based on colonial discourses.

Pre-course understanding

The first two questions that I asked participants were based on their pre-course memories. I first asked about education (“Please think back to before you enrolled in the course about Onkwehonwe Peoples, issues, knowledges. What was your perception of your education about Onkwehonwe Peoples?”) The second
question was designed to open up conversations on any interpersonal experiences and relationships (“Still thinking about before your course, what would you say were your feelings towards/perceptions about Onkwehonwe Peoples?”) These questions were designed to engage discussion, not only on the education system, but also to look at how Guests understood and saw both their relationship to Onkwehonwe people and their responsibilities as treaty people.

In all of our conversations, participants spoke of a lack of knowledge, and for many, an anger that accompanied their ignorance. In thinking of formal education, participants cited brief chapters/topics covered in history classes. Before taking a course, quite a few participants felt or knew that they had little knowledge. As Julie said, “I think that I knew, enough, to know that I did not know very much.” Elena, in uncovering her lack of knowledge, simply said, “I was taken aback by how little I knew”. She further contextualized this lack of knowledge as she uncovered the political agenda of colonization prior to enrolment as well as at the very beginning of her course. She spoke to a definite mix of feelings “between guilt, embarrassment, and in some sense, anger”.

Rosemary clearly labelled her experience of the public education system as Eurocentric and “inappropriate”. She reflected on an education that was not only based on misinformation, but also provided the students with a superficial activity that was repeated yearly around the colonial holiday of “Thanksgiving”. “I remember going through elementary school and the big thing was they would do “thanksgiving”. You know, pilgrims and Indians. I remember colouring that picture all through grade school. I think I coloured it every year.”
Michelle explained her pre-course lack of understandings in saying:

…to the best of my knowledge, I had almost zero knowledge. The quick summary was that we arrived here, there were some fights and we won the land. I know that sounds terrible, but that was messaging I received in my very, very limited education.

These comments and analysis by participants that the education system had not provided adequate learning were the norm within my research. Christine reflected that she knew she had missing information but did not understand why there was missing information. The conversations in courses started to open up participants’ understandings that the lack of education provided by the school system is actually part of a larger political agenda that intends to keep the “ordinary Canadian” unaware and unconnected to Onkwehonwe issues. As one of the participants shared:

…there obviously is a large missing piece and when I took the course, it obviously opened my eyes a lot more, but, I guess I knew there was something missing, but I guess putting it together and understanding why it wasn’t there was, I didn’t get that yet (Christine).

Even participants that had some exposure to Onkwehonwe peoples prior to enrolling in a course problematized how Onkwehonwe topics were presented. As Lisa explores my questions further, she relates that her understanding of Onkwehonwe topics started as an ‘exotic fascination’ that grew unfettered due to her limited exposure to Onkwehonwe topics that did not disrupt this fascination. She said:
And then when I was in high school and I read some of the literature that was written by Aboriginal people … Aboriginal ways of looking at things… was like “oh that is really cool” and that might work with my way of looking at things too. I did a project on world philosophies with the book by David Suzuki, “Wisdom of the Elders”; it was my first exposure to different worldviews. Gave me a fascination of wow, would it not be so cool to have those sort of similar ways of looking at things. But it was very “othering” type of view points on it.

In asking participants to reflect on their pre-course knowledge and understandings, I was actually shocked to hear so many emotional responses. Participants spoke to being ashamed of their lack of knowledge or of an anger that was quickly sparked as they started to attend classes. It became glaringly obvious to me that participants' primary and secondary educations simply did not provide them with a base understanding of Onkwehonwe/Guest relations, issues or histories. Participants’ comments on the lack of education they experienced supports discussions by Nardozi and Mashford-Pringle (2014) as they found that for many teacher candidates in their study, the only exposure to Onkwehonwe ways of knowing and being was “a 45 minute to 3 hour workshop” that they facilitated (p. 58). In knowing this, I would venture to say, most children, both Onkwehonwe and Guest, educated in the public school system are not receiving a balanced understanding of history or an analysis of current implications. Even though I do acknowledge that there is a selection bias, the participants clearly understood that the education system was lacking and problematic prior to the course(s) that they enrolled in.
While many participants spoke to feeling guilty, angry or ashamed prior to and throughout the course, Michael was the only participant that spoke to a worry that there would be anger directed at him due to his social positioning before taking his course. I am intrigued as to why this worry and fear did not come out in more stories, confounding my expectations due to my reading of literature on ally development (Thompson, 2003). His comments here interest me as I reread the transcripts. I would like to further explore this in future work.

Michael struggled with how he felt, with his identity as a white male, with the idea that he might be ‘blamed’ for colonization, and have his intentions for in enrolling in the course challenged. He said:

Before the class, I... yeah, I feel slightly ashamed to think so, but I didn’t have any relationships with any Onkwehonwe, so I assumed most, if not all, would be resentful and angry at me for being a white male. I have always had a real interest, I mean, I look back on it now and I want to be believe it was really sincere, if not naïve, about Onkwehonwe traditions.

As one of the two white male participants, Michael claims his identity in a way that holds him accountable and responsible to educate and engage with Onkwehonwe issues and communities that uses his power and privilege to benefit individuals, groups and communities.

When participants shared their experiences in the school system around learnings about Onkwehonwe people, one of the ‘activities’ that was reflected on was learnings coming from grade six social studies classes. As many of the participants grew up in Toronto, quite a few spoke about taking class trips to an
Ontario historic site, Sainte-Marie among the Hurons, that claims to be a replica of the first European community, founded in 1639, near present-day Midland, Ontario. This site replicates the daily lives of French Jesuits and Wendat people between 1639 and 1649, which is when the community was burned to the ground. One of the participants spoke about her class trip to Sainte-Marie among the Hurons as being without any understanding of historical or current relationships:

I mean, it doesn't really provide context to it, they let you try on the clothes and you get to walk through the long house and there’s no talk about [it], they provide you the historical, but there’s no contemporary topic, or ok this is what’s happening now, this is why this relationship exists or why we’re really taking you there (Elena).

Many of the participants spoke about their pre-course reflections being based on Onkwehonwe peoples as historic relics that had been either demonized or idolized through the portrayal of history through mass media, consumed mostly in family settings. The depictions provided in the media were problematized by participants (as noted below) around novels in the series Little House on the Prairie (Wilder, 1935) and the various television programs that were based on the novels that ran from 1974-1983 (IMDB, 2015).

Maya provided my favorite comment about the consumption of Onkwehonwe cultures. She speaks to her childhood love for Little House on the Prairie (1935), but at the same time, troubles her understandings of whiteness within the characters. She then returns to the readings as an adult with an analysis on colonial discourses and reacts to the texts in horror. This quote resonates with me as it allows the
participant to trouble the dominant narrative on the history of Onkwehonwe people, reflect on her pre-understanding and voice her position as ally.

When I was a kid, one of my favourite books was *Little House on the Prairie* and I did recognize that, how they were talking about the “Indians” in the book, was wrong. My parents would speak to me. I mean I grew up with a strong sense of how the British treated the Indians in India. But, in terms of what I was reading at home, it was very much from there, and I remember the one scene in *Little House on the Prairie*, in the book, where Laura wants to steal a brown… she called it papoose. And I always just found that really odd, because I’m brown, right, and so why does this kid all of a sudden become obsessed with… because it’s a scene where, although they don’t call it that or I don’t even think the author recognizes that in terms of the trail of tears and they’re leaving, cuz they’re being driven out and so there’s a long line of families walking and they walk past the cabin and Laura starts begging for a brown papoose and I just thought that was the strangest thing. And years later, when I came across the book again with my goddaughter, and she was 7 at the time, and had the books and I would read them to her before bed, I was completely mortified. So that was basically one of my earliest socializations, right. And then going back to it (Maya).

The consumption of Onkwehonwe cultures, heritage and personal depictions in mass media is beyond the scope of this dissertation, however, it was interesting for me how different forms of media provided first points of reference for the
participants. In almost every sharing circle, there were discussions about movies, books, or television. A few of the many comments shared were:

I remember that my mother was a fan of Dr. Quinn, Medicine Woman, I think was the show (room breaks out laughing) I remember being a child in the age of one television and I would sit down and watch it with her (Rosemary).

I was fortunate enough to be around when APTN first came about as it was on basic cable, all of a sudden I discovered that the Indians were not gone! (group laughter) They are now all on TV! (Joey).

I remember actually being into historical fiction books, movies and stuff because I used to read a lot as a kid and there’s so many… but in terms of depictions, it was like all kinds of romanticized ideas (Thomas).

I was shown was a romanticized view. I grew up with the Disney generation, so, I was, I remember being given my Pocahontas doll, I remember watching the movie (Elena).

These historic views were all problematized by the participants. However, their pre-course learnings all appeared to have a common element of archaic people or stereotypical and/or romanticized ideologies.

In responding to the second question about participants’ thoughts and feelings to Onkwehonwe people, many participants said that they either had no current context or did not even know an Onkwehonwe person. Lisa stated this
clearly in saying that, “I never really kind of had any thoughts about what it would be like to BE Aboriginal. I did not meet an Aboriginal person until my first degree in university.” Maya also spoke about a lack of connection between knowing an Onkwehonwe person/people/community and any deep analysis or understanding. She recalled, “I think it wasn’t until when I came to Toronto … you know walking around and seeing Aboriginal community organizations, I knew there was a large community in Toronto. Didn’t know anybody personally. But I think that was part… I just didn’t really think much about it.”

Even though Rosemary is laughing at her own ignorance, her lens as a child is very common when she shares that she thought, “as a child (said with laughter) ‘these people do not live in Toronto’. My whole opinion would be that they would walk around with ceremonial clothing on and feathers.”

One of the participants who grew up in North Bay spoke about her elementary school career noting that she had had some exposure to Onkwehonwe culture due to the large population of Onkwehonwe people in her school. However, even with the presence of Onkwehonwe students, her exposure was apolitical. To me this situates the school as creating an appearance/sense that the Onkwehonwe children as almost set up or on show for the enjoyment of the Guests. This participant explained:

My grade 5, 6, 7 and 8 was in North Bay and there were a lot of Aboriginal students, mostly First Nations students. So we had big eagle artwork in the class and Mrs. MacLeod would come in and do, like cultural stuff. I kinda felt like there was some content. The school would host a powwow in the gym
and we would all go out and the First Nations kids that would go to our school would wear their regalia and dance. We would all go out and watch. The drum came. So maybe like there was an exposure but there was no education (Marie Louise).

Even where there was personal exposure to communities, participants still expressed a romantic view or an individualistic understanding of struggle that was not tied to a political analysis. Anne, who had worked for years in a northern Ontario community, spoke to this when she struggled to express her pre-course understandings:

I don’t think I was even conscious really of it…I think, I guess I had a romantic sense of who people were and that I had, I wanted to know better, I think that’s maybe [it], yea. I mean, I was working alongside of women from the Cree Nation, I had an enormous respect for them while having that whole experience of living as a white person next door, in wall- to-wall carpeting and color TV, while the people that I was working with were carrying water to their homes.

Motivation

After discussing pre-course assumptions and thoughts with participants, I asked them about their inspirations or motivations for enrolling in their first course. There seemed to be two major reasons that participants took a course on Onkwehonwe topics: personal experiences and/or engagement with an Onkwehonwe professor in either a previous class or a public forum.
One group of participants, in having a connection or an experience with an Onkwehonwe individual, community or group, expressed personal interest. This is congruent with the literature as in many educational studies on building alliances between Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans* people, and straight people, discussions around “contact theories” are prevalent (Evans and Broido, 2005; Poynter and Tubbs, 2008). These contact theories look at how when interpersonal contact occurs between members of a dominant group and a subordinate group, dominant participants will then seek out education about the socially marginalized group(s). In my research project, participants spoke of a commitment to strengthen or to seek out more education due to exposure at an interpersonal level between themselves and Onkwehonwe individuals, communities, families, groups, or Nations. This was the case for Paula, Angela, Olive, Joey, Michelle, Anne, Marie Louise, Amanda, and Allie.

In one of the most personal and moving stories shared with me, Joey explained how his life was changed by an assignment that put him in relationship to a survivor of the Indian Residential School system. His story is long but was shared with such heart, I will keep it whole.

I got a group English assignment that was to do a report on Residential Schools. I went to find a survivor. We were going to go hard-core and do a live interview! We found a survivor that agreed to meet with us at the Native Women’s Resource Centre (in Toronto) and when we got there, we arrived and our interview was OVER! A sharing circle was to commence with a 65-year-old survivor of the residential school system. I cannot repeat what I
heard in the circle, but what I can tell you is that I come from a history of abuse. I remember being out of school for two weeks because I got sick of my father and drunken uncles getting us to wrestle so I climbed up and punched him [my father] in the face. My father smashed my head so hard against the concrete basement floor that I could not go to school for two weeks because I was so black and blue. How you are feeling right now is about a tenth of what I heard and felt that day. A tenth! I come from real shit kickings and I was in tears by the time she was done. The circle ended and she asked me why I was crying? I said, ‘Because I am looking out the window and I could not get the concrete up’. My entire life was a lie. I was 31 years old and everything that I had ever lived, the land I have lived on, the water I drank, the air I breathe, it was stolen. I could not do anything about it. I was ruined, I was ruined. And she took me up in her arms and told me “You would not be here if the Creator did not want you here”. This is a child, my father is Portuguese and he comes from a colonial legacy and my mother was French Canadian and the French are dealing with their own backlash from Africa as we speak, a child of woe. And here the oppressed stood so that I could keep standing. So at that point I decided that I was going to upend my life and I was going to get an education. I would get an education of the truth that I was lied to about all my life, and that is how I first chose to major in and then specialize in Aboriginal studies.

This heart-wrenching story had a profound effect on the participant but also on the other participants in the sharing circle, including myself. His sharing really
opened up the group to discuss the questions in a very profound way. People really were able to bare themselves in an organic and wholistic way. I was honoured to hear this story.

One of the participants, Angela, experienced a personal transformation that was built on the relationships she formed, and her perception of differences in engaging between her home community and a First Nation community that she lived and worked within. Angela returned to her home after a two-month stint working in a First Nation community. Once home, she expressed a need to seek out other people who were “angry” and understood the struggles that she had witnessed and learned:

I think what that was about for me was making amazing relationships and then coming back and being angry feeling that nobody in Toronto gets this, like I felt very alone in that I remember walking around the street and feeling isolated, thinking ‘oh my God, nobody knows these communities even exist’. And being, I actually went through very little culture shock after arriving there, but I had a lot of culture shock coming back to Toronto and feeling very isolated from everybody, always wanting to be wrapped in really warm sweaters, it was really weird for me, it was a very physical thing that I went through. Anyway, I was very angry and really missing those people and that community dynamic and I think that’s why I took that class and I actually changed all of the classes I took after that too.

In contrast to Angela’s experience of culture shock, Janet spoke about how when she enrolled in a course, after she experienced a summer of engaging with a First Nation community, she felt that her learning had prepared her to be a
knowledgeable student. Janet actually created a space that challenged how she understood what she thought she knew and how much she had to learn. She explains this in saying:

I think prior to the class that I took, I am not proud to say this, but I felt like I... knew a lot because I spent, I think it was a summer in a First Nations community up in North West Territory.

In speaking about educational experiences that sent students into community, two participants spoke of travelling abroad to engage with Indigenous populations globally. These two students were able to connect their learnings abroad back to a lack of education about Onkwehonwe peoples. Olive spoke about her international experience with two Indigenous communities in Thailand. While she was away, she was able to connect what she was witnessing to the struggle of Onkwehonwe people in the geopolitical nation state of Canada. She states:

Coming back I realized that there was so much that I had to learn about Canada and the history of the land that I live on. My relationship with the land. How it is all connected. I was super curious about it and, in Thailand, I was forced to face, or at least partially face, how intrinsically connected my worldview is connected to how I am in relationship to not only land, but the people that are around me... when I got back I took mostly Indigenous studies courses or Canadian studies courses. I specifically wanted to take a course on worldview and land and history on treaties and how that all worked.

Similarly, Paula’s experience with a summer-abroad program that focused on Indigenous issues in Australia was linked to the struggles of Onkwehonwe people in
the geopolitical nation state of Canada. Her learning was compounded by the education she received from some of her classmates who identified as Onkwehonwe and who also attended the Indigenous knowledges classes in Australia as part of their program.

So before that I had no idea, I was unaware of anything. I then took a course in Indigenous studies, it was a summer abroad at [my university], it was about Indigenous studies in Australia. And I just picked that course because it was Australia and I wanted to go to Australia. And then once I got there and I started to realize the issues were there. We had a few Aboriginal women in our class from Toronto. They started sharing some of their stories and I realized "whoa this is going on in Canada as well'. So then I enrolled in an Aboriginal studies minor when I returned to school in September. That is where it started...

Two participants spoke to how political activism or engagement supported their enrolment. Julie’s motivation for taking her course was based on her commitment to social justice. Her undergraduate degree is in a field that discusses oppression extensively, and she is engaged in community activism. She said:

Politically I had definitely come to identify myself as an ally. I identify myself as a settler. I come from a settler background and I did not really know how to be politically useful in the struggles that First Nations People were having. You know, on the news, I was asking myself “what can I do? How can I be useful in this situation?” and I think that is what pushed me to take that course because it was like… “Yes solidarity work! Yes absolutely! Let’s theorize it!”
Another participant discussed enrolling in a course after being challenged by an Onkwehonwe activist about the political organizing he was doing in solidarity with groups on the other side of the world. Tyler’s reason for enrolling in a course was to help him learn more about the impacts of colonization in Canada and the linkages of those impacts to the global impacts of colonization.

There was this Cree woman [named] who came to the event and in the question period at the end was like “This is great that you care so much about colonialism and settlers on the other side of the world, but what are you doing about [it] here, because colonialism is still happening here?” A bunch of the other organizers were quite defensive and I was like “Oh? Ya, I do not know, what about the people here” It is not like I had not heard, but I was like that is a legit criticism… I had local social justice work that I did but the connections were not being made that well. And I will honestly say, I was not making them. And when she pointed to it, I was like “oh…uh…”

There were two participants that enrolled in a course at a master’s level after working with Onkwehonwe community organizations. For both of these participants it was a desire to deepen knowledge and advance their work in solidarity with Onkwehonwe individuals, communities and Nations while still acknowledging their subjectivity. Amanda is one such student:

My motivations for enrolling in my first course [were] I wanted to further my understanding of work with the Aboriginal community and I wanted to go back to the organization I worked with, so I wanted to learn some more formal teachings and take that with me when I went back… so a lot of it was learning
about the school system and then a lot of it was learning about being mindful as a non-Aboriginal person or guest; you know of, you know that history and also your own gaps in knowledge/awareness and kind of being transparent about that.

The second most commonly cited reason for enrolling in a course was as a result of experiencing an Onkwehonwe professor speak or engage a group. I am separating the experiences of participants that enrolled in a course after being inspired by an Onkwehonwe professor, because the professors’ work and the materials that they present are tied to the courses they teach. Many of these participants spoke so highly of their professors that I wanted to acknowledge all of the outside classroom work and/or the invited lectures that Onkwehonwe professors do offer. Even though this work is outside of their usual ‘teaching’, it is important and integral work. It is work that inspires Guests to learn more. Participants that really cited a desire to learn from a specific person included Maya, Lisa, Rosemary, and Thomas.

Maya told me a story of when she first heard a woman speak who would later become her professor. Maya’s future instructor spoke up against colonization in a very strategic and political way that challenged some very problematic assumptions around Onkwehonwe people. Maya was at a school-wide forum on anti-racism and spoke of watching in awe as her future professor critiqued colonial discourse with respect and integrity in a public forum:

I had sort of seen [the professor] around and the first time I saw her she challenged a racist white woman who was doing an anti-racism workshop for
us and I knew this particular white woman…she put up this black and white cartoon showing… I forget what the point of the cartoon was trying to make but in the cartoon, there was a so called “Indian” with a feather, like the one feather standing up and [professor] just stood up … and said really quietly and pointed to this racist image and said ‘what’s that?’ Like in that tone of voice, very quietly and the facilitator didn’t even understand what she was pointing to and then [professor] repeated her question again a little bit louder and said ‘what’s that?’ and it was really powerful because she was trying to get her to name it or explain it or at least think about it… and you could see, she just couldn’t, you know, and then [professor] started to speak [and explained that using the cartoon was also an act of racism].

Thomas had a similar experience in his master’s program. One of his courses brought in a different school of thought each week to discuss a different dimension of his discipline. One week a guest lecturer came in to speak about her work. He remembers:

So, one of the weeks it was [professors name]. She talked about her research on Dodem (clans) and identity and kinship and how some of the research she did helped in a fishing rights case for Cape Croker. So she was talking about all of this and it was very different from what some of the other folks had been talking about in previous weeks… I remember being in awe and that pretty well is it, so I ended up taking her course. It was also right around the time that I was also looking at different issues of immigration and refugee law. In going back to the issue about sources of authority, you know, that grounds
people’s right to be here, and immigration law, her teachings changed how I see it.

These last two quotes demonstrate that there is a commitment by Onkwehonwe instructors to educate and engage critical thinking in spaces that might not always be their assigned courses. I see it as a commitment to bring these understandings and knowledges forward even in spaces that are not ‘classrooms’ or course related contexts. Both Maya’s instructor and the guest speaker in Thomas’ course really inspired these Guests to engage with Onkwehonwe education.

When I started my thesis, I decided that I was going to focus on students and not interview any Onkwehonwe scholars and educators to hear about their experiences teachings Guest people for this ceremony. These important conversations are being held (for examples please see Cote-Meek, 2010, 2014), but I realized that they are beyond the scope of this work. As a way to acknowledge and give voice to the great work that Onkwehonwe educators do, I would like to share a story of a colleague.

**Jesse’s Story**

I was recently scrolling through my news feed on Facebook. I saw a post by Jesse Thistle\(^\text{18}\), a Métis scholar and educator, about a guest lecture he gave where he explained the history of his family in the 1869 and 1885 Métis Resistances. He shared that one of the students in the classroom self-identified as a member of the Canadian military during the question period of the lecture. Jesse writes:

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\(^{18}\) I have been given permission to use this story and Mr. Thistle has read and approved this section.
"Well," the student said, "I am in the military. I'm stationed here in Toronto, and we have a battle standard in our Regiment that commemorates the Battle of Batoche in 1885. My Regiment is the regiment that put down the Rebellion and your ancestors under General Middleton's command."

He was right. I wasn't ready for what he had to say. I was shocked and confused.

"…We are told a much different account of the Battle of Batoche than the one you have presented here. We are told it was a glorious victory that forged Canada, but from what I have heard here today, it sounds like the exact opposite: it sounds like an army against a bunch of families trying to defend their homes. I feel conflicted and sad...and...I'll never look at that standard the same again. Never."

I am including this story here as a way to demonstrate the commitment and bravery I have seen Onkwehonwe scholars embody as they educate Guest people. Even though it is our 'jobs', teaching can be just as hard as the learning that students do. Jesse’s post concluded with a statement on how this lecture impacted him. He writes:

This encounter has played in my head numerous times since that lecture. In that moment I wish I had the courage to tell him how I felt, but I didn't. I just stood there speechless, but perhaps that was enough to let him know how much it meant to hear him say that, and how much of a gift it was.

As students have demonstrated to me in their stories, many feel that the education they receive is a gift, however for Jesse (and I would venture to say, other
Onkwehonwe scholars), teaching receptive students is also a gift that move relationships closer to understandings of Peace, Friendship, and Mutual Respect.

It is one of my hopes that more schools and universities will institute core courses on Onkwehonwe topics as there is literature that supports students’ requests for mandatory and core courses. (Nardozi and Mashford-Pringle, 2014; Koleszar-Green, 2008). There was only one participant in the project that had a mandatory course on Onkwehonwe topics for her degree. Christine is a social worker and her university has a course that all second year students must attend in order to move forward into their third year of study. In speaking of how her program has been able to integrate Onkwehonwe knowledges prior to the course, she felt that the exposure would have been enough to enrol. She says:

I guess my motivation to take it was to graduate from the program but, I’m really glad we had to take it and I don’t know many people in the program who thought it was a bad idea. We were all very happy. It was an extremely valuable course for us and it provided a lot of insight in something like social work. [My University] does a fantastic job on integrating Aboriginal worldviews and I feel that it really enriches the program and I had [professor’s name] teach that course for me … I realized how valuable she was as a professor in the way that she taught, and the teaching she provided for us, so yeah, I think [even] if the second year course wasn’t a core course, I feel some of us, or most of us still would have wanted to take it. It definitely was very interesting and eye-opening for sure.
This comment supports the idea that students enrol in courses due to prior engagement with content as she cites a pre-exposure to worldview as a probable predictor if she had the option of voluntarily enrolling.

In asking participants to reflect on their pre-course knowledge and the motivation for taking courses, I found that entrance points into Onkwehonwe education are usually personal yet have political implications. All participants also shared that their pre-course knowledges were lacking and that the education system had not provided them with an understanding of Onkwehonwe guests relationships or responsibilities. This finding was not shocking to me as there has been much discussion on this lack of learning.
Wholistic Education

The research and literature on ally education assisted me in understanding the links between the pedagogical tools and methods that are foundational in Onkwehonwe pedagogy and their positive association to the experiences of Guests’ education. Storm (2012) stated that in a scanning of studies that explored the experiences of dominant students learning about social justice, “pedagogy had a greater impact on a student’s commitment to social action during one semester than did the course content” (p. 549) I would challenge the assertion that the way we teach is just as important as what we teach might be a bit simplistic. I would complicate this assertion to say that the content (Onkwehonwe topics) is knowledge that disrupts the dominant narrative (‘Canada the good’) received differently due to the pedagogical philosophies used to deliver the content. According to the participants, the methods of delivering information in their Onkwehonwe courses deviated from the classroom structure that they had previously experienced. This difference allowed many of them to hear challenging and new learnings in a way that supported personal reflection and implication.

Onkwehonwe ways of teachings are based on experiential learning, storytelling and reflexive practices (Battiste, 2002). The history, content and information about Onkwehonwe and Guest relationships are foundational to developing a Guest’s understanding of responsibilities. The topic materials that are taught in many social justice courses are based on oppression and marginalization, which can elicit feelings of guilt (Pleasants, 2011; Munin and Speight, 2010; Case, 2012; and Howard, 2011) and shame (Spanierman, Beard and Todd, 2012;
Pleasants, 2011), which in turn can challenge or unsettle students that have privilege. These challenges or unsettled feelings can be expressed as painful learning moments for students (this was the case for Olive), which can foster either growth or places that learning gets stuck. It is at this point where pedagogy and wholistic teaching are important to ensure that Guests are able to move forward in their education.

Wholistic teachings bring in and acknowledge that there are many interconnected aspects in learning. As individuals we are not just our intellectual minds, we also learn through physical, emotional, and spiritual means. I have been given many Traditional Teachings that discuss these four interconnected and interrelated aspects of the self from Elders and Traditional Teachers. All of the Elders and the Traditional Teachers I spoke to also discussed wholism in some way. Some Traditional Teachers will discuss it as one of the many teachings of the Medicine Wheel (C. Baskin, personal communication, September 23rd, 2013; J. Dallaire, personal communication, October 7th, 2013; A. Thompson, personal communication, November 7th, 2013; B. Waters, personal communication, January 7th, 2015). It is for this reason that I asked my participants to reflect on their educational experience as it impacted them from physical, emotional, spiritual, and intellectual aspects.

This section will first look to the pedagogy and the course design that participants spoke about. I will then link how different topics are taught to the actual learnings and the wholistic impacts of the learnings on the students. This will be addressed through personal healing and reflections using the teachings of the
Medicine Wheel and the four aspects of an individual: the physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual. This chapter will also look at how education can be a space of discomfort and/or a place lacking safety for students.

**Pedagogy**

Maya and Lisa took the same course offered in different years. Both spoke to their experiences of the course design and how it impacted their learning. Lisa loves to read and majored in English in her first degree. For her, it was exciting that the course was designed around stories. She said:

> And I have to admit that I really like the professor that was teaching it. I also really like the way that the course was being taught. We did not have to read all these boring dry articles and that we got to read these three books. And having such an interest in reading books and fiction, which really appealed to me.

Maya, on the other hand, initially struggled with the design of the course as she was expecting, wanting and needing it to be based on ‘facts’. When I asked her about the pedagogy and course design she started by saying that:

> Actually, it was funny, in the beginning, I was really irritated, not by the content, but I was irritated, I wanted more facts, I wanted more books, I wanted more articles looking at different land agreements and names of organizations… I wanted factual!

When I asked her if she still felt that way she discussed how one of the required course books, an autobiography by a Survivor of the Shubenacadie Residential School in Nova Scotia (Knockwood, 2001), had impacted her during the
tenure of the class, but also how it altered her engagement with a Survivor of the Indian Residential School system who she met years later. She reflected that while reading the autobiography, she needed to seek support in unpacking her feelings and learnings. Maya then spoke these words:

So yeah, reading that and hearing the actual stories that the children described was really important because fast forward, maybe 4 or 5 years later when I was at work, I was running this project and one of the participants in the project brought [her] friend who was of Aboriginal background. He was an artist and we were just chit chatting and you know, small talk, one day and he said to me, “yea, you know my brother and I went to a residential school” and he was describing 1988 or 1989 and all I could say was… and this is extremely ‘social work-y’, all I could say was “holy shit!” That was my great response, but there really is no good response to that, because it’s horrible, so, I sort of see those two experiences connected because if I hadn’t read Out of the Depths, I think my reaction to his comment would’ve been much different, much more flippant, or superficial, or even worse--academic! I would’ve been like “wow, there were still residential schools?” I don’t know, but I think it would not have had that same sense of horror and quiet sadness. I went to silence, because I felt that was the only way I could show respect in that time, because there was no right thing to say. So, yeah, I think that was really important.

Anne spoke to the textbook that was assigned in the course that she took and how it had impacted her learning and her personal development. She spoke to the
ways she was able to use the text, *The Sacred Tree* (Bopp, Bopp, Brown and Lane, 1984), as a self-reflective tool, not only in her commitment to Onkwehonwe learnings but also in her personal life. The text centred The Medicine Wheel and Traditional Teachings as a foundation for the course. According to Anne:

I think the way the course was developed was wise in that we started off by using *The Sacred Tree* book, that I actually was able to use as kind of a life review. So those teachings became very personal for me because I was looking at it in terms of my own life and what did I learn from each of the four directions and then, so, after that we were introduced to readings about, from the lawyer who had done some work with residential school survivors…people who had double post traumatic, I forget the term now…Ruth: Intergenerational Trauma?
Anne: Yes! And post traumatic stress. So, when that was introduced, it was already within a context of, probably a deeper understanding then, I think. I was able to hear it. I was able to feel it. Also, when I think of my ancestors as Irish immigrants, you know coming to this land and why they came. Because of the oppression they experienced in Ireland. And then it was probably those Irish Catholics that were at the residential schools doing, you know…So, there was obviously that sense of guilt, you know, for being part of a system that led to such atrocities and silence, but there was also a great sense of joy in the learning because of the bonding that happened, because of the circular nature and the experiential and the stories linked from the book.
Another pedagogical tool that a very few participants were able to engage in was experiential learning or learning through ‘doing’. Thomas briefly mentioned that he had also found spaces to learn about ‘other legal traditions’ in numerous ways including attending the Anishnabe Law Camp and that he had felt it was a “privilege to learn about them (other legal traditions)” as a Guest. Some courses are designed to include activities or classes out on the land that couple Traditional Teachings, and environmental justice, with academic learning. The last course on Onkwehonwe topics that Olive took in her undergraduate degree was a course that was based on the land.

…the final course that I took was in the summer and that was the living and learning from the land course. It was 10 days on… I think [blank] Lake or [blank] Lake. I forget which one, but it was in the Kawartha Lakes area. It was again, a deepening of this kind of learning that I was trying to do on worldview and my worldview and being in relationship to healthy and wellbeing and spiritual and mental connections. Why that is important? Why it is overlooked in most everything? So that was an amazing opportunity to learn from mostly Anishnabe and Haudenosaunee Elders.

The pedagogies used by many of the instructors/professors are grounded in Onkwehonwe worldviews that strive to engage people in learning that develops and supports many ways of knowing and learning. The use of story, of circle, and of land-based pedagogies resonates with the learner’s complete person. In understanding that an individual is made up of four aspects and that wholistic education supports growth in each area. In asking the participants to reflect on how
their learning impacted them in these four aspects, I was grateful to hear such personal and profound experiences.

**Physical**

The physical engagement of wholistic education was actually a challenge for many participants to discuss. Some spoke about the physical space that the class was taught in, which included the use of Circles instead of classrooms organized into rows. Even with this being said, the predominant physical spaces that courses occurred in were still mainly within the walls of dominant educational facilities. The ways that professors engaged with the space seemed to still challenge the dominant paradigm even if it was only through the use of movable furniture! Very few participants spoke to the physical space as being anything other than a classroom. Olive, Thomas, and Paula all experienced learning outside of a classroom setting that included exchanges and culturally based, on-the-land camps. This form of ‘physical education’ still seems to be developing as an pedagogical tool within academia and the classroom.

Michael states that this ‘new’ tool for learning inspired him. His words are reflective of many participants’ experiences as he says:

I was really inspired by the circle and by the circle as a tool for learning, just... the pedagogical tool and tools that [professor] used in that class really inspired me in terms of my own education, my educational approaches, how I teach and practices education. It changed the dynamics in such a positive way.
Another aspect to the physical learning that was talked about was within the body of the learner. Amanda actually spoke to her physical reactions to the content of the course. She felt that the education that she was receiving negatively altered her physical state. She said:

I think, physically, I felt certain things we talked about or even videos we watched. I could feel it manifest in my body and how it kind of caused tension and discomfort sometimes with certain topics but openness to discuss it which is kind of being mindful of my response to that.

This physical response to learning demonstrates how the learning experience of participants transcended just intellectual growth. Molfese (2012) explains that trauma is held differently, physically, for everyone, however the manifestation of trauma in the body can cause physical pain and discomfort. Even though it was not Amanda or her Indigenous community’s trauma (she identifies as Fijian), she still experienced the learning physically. In her learning, it was a very physically painful process to learn about trauma and colonial violence.

In my own reflections, I realized that I should have probed participants to discuss how their instructors included physical movement and activity within the course content. The use of experiential learning and teaching does not always need to occur outside of a classroom, but through the body movements and activities utilized within one.

**Emotional**

There were participants that spoke to their own personal healing through education. These discussions included participants’ understanding of it being a
privilege to engage with the learning and healing that Onkwehonwe educators’ courses provided. These courses offered, for many, a complicated space of challenge and growth. On one hand, participants spoke to being angry about the history of the relationships between Onkwehonwe and Guest peoples, while at the same time, spoke to their own reflections on self and personal development. As Allie explains, her experiences of an education from a wholistic space are not easily answered:

There was a big focus on healing through social work practice. I think of my own connection and I found my own way back to spirituality through the teachings that we received and the focus on healing and even the ways that the classes were conducted. A lot of it was in circle and we did a lot of sharing. A lot of it was on our own personal histories and things like that. I think that a lot of learning, initially learning about colonization and residential schools, it was so, it was having a purely physical response, of being enraged and that type of stuff. Very emotional in that sense. I think that spiritually, for me though, it was a way. It allowed me to heal.

Of course, this healing and growth was complicated with other feelings. As participants started to reflect on how the course impacted them emotionally, many spoke to two distinct topics that Anne and Allie both discussed above: personal reflection and healing coupled with a sense of shame and guilt. The shame and guilt had two manifestations: 1) a shame of whiteness or settler privilege and 2) a shame and guilt about not knowing the history and the impacts of the Canadian/Onkwehonwe ‘relationship’.
The concepts of whiteness or settler privilege were discussed in all of the sharing circles. Naturally, the concepts were addressed differently as all the participants responded subjectively (Heron, 2005). However, the divide between Onkwehonwe and Guests was at the forefront in participants’ minds. Many participants were able to articulate that their educational experiences were the results of whiteness that erased and ignored the colonial histories and perpetuated current struggles. As Christine explained her experience, she discussed how she and her classmates needed to have guidance on how to deal with the emotional responses they had to learning about the historical impacts of the colonial project.

So, a lot of us who identified as white, because we were deconstructing whiteness and privilege so much, we couldn’t help but have those feelings of ‘holy shit’. Sorry, but, it was just, you would sit there and be like, I can’t believe this is where I came from, the people before us could have done this and there were a lot of very strong emotional reactions to it, I think the whole white guilt thing is. A lot of professors have addressed it and talked to us about it because it is something that comes up so much when we talk about these topics.

However, this sense of struggle around white privilege was not only linked to the historical impacts, but was also recentred into the current realities facing many Onkwehonwe communities. Tyler was able to articulate that the traditional Eurocentric Canadian education systems are still perpetuating the “violence of colonialism [as it] was not [just] something that happened in the past. It happens all the time. This production of knowledge is always being reproduced.”
Angela articulated a strong desire to have people work through their guilt and shame. She was able to express clearly how staying in a place of guilt was actually selfish of allies and not an emotion that is helpful to bringing Onkwehonwe issues to the foreground. She challenges herself and other allies she works with to move through their guilt, grief and shame:

...you’re probably feeling shame or guilt or anger or all of these things and so acknowledging that is very important but… I think sure, like grief, absolutely deal with these emotions but I think the key piece for guests is to remember that you need to move through them and keep moving because they can, especially guilt, can be such a selfish emotion if you stay there. ‘Well I feel so guilty I can’t do anything’, like ahh, you know? Well then nothing is going to get done! You have to move through them. I think absolutely, healing and for everybody, everybody… this … this process of grief that belongs to everybody because we all live on this land and yes, we're all grieving, we're all in a state of upset and experiencing all these emotions. So yes, we all need to heal but then especially guests need to then remember that we have responsibilities because if we don’t pick that up, we’re just going to keep perpetuating that cycle of violence and grieving and be stuck right there!

The discussions that the participants engaged with on the topics of whiteness and settler privileges spoke to a growth and movement through the struggles. In labelling whiteness and settler privilege, many participants perceived themselves to be in a space of continual growth and reflection that did not rest but moved through the shame and guilt.
The second sense of shame and guilt was actually linked to anger. There was an enunciation of anger towards the education system that had mis-educated them. This guilt and anger are starting points to becoming an ally, but as Dr Lynn Gehl, an Algonquin Anishinaabe-kwe, states in the first point in the Ally Bill Of Responsibilities (no date\textsuperscript{19}): an ally is not to act out of guilt. She then complicates this in point five when she states that it is the role of a responsible ally to “reflect on and embrace their ignorance of the group’s oppression and always hold this ignorance in the forefront of their minds. Otherwise, a lack of awareness of their ignorance could merely perpetuate the Indigenous people’s oppression” (Gehl, no date).

Many participants had strong emotional reactions while learning and unpacking the traumas that had been ‘hidden from history’ or excluded from the general provincial curriculum (Ministry of Education, Ontario, 2009; Nardozi and Mashford-Pringle, 2014) As Rosemary talked about her anger, she spoke to the fact that for her:

...growing up, the education system, it was very Eurocentric. I have a passion for history, but every history that we ever learned about was about Europeans coming over to Canada. When it was discussed, it was very inappropriate. It was the term Native and Indian…. It was at that point I was angry at our school system for being that way. You know my nieces are probably going to learn the same things that I did growing up in school.

\textsuperscript{19} In efforts to have a complete citation for this work, I contacted Dr. Gehl and she was unable to provide me with a publication date. As she wrote to me “I went on a writing frenzy when Idle No More took off as I want to make a contribution. Dating things was not something I did.” (L. Gehl, personal communication, Aug 4\textsuperscript{th}, 2015)
As all of the participants were engaged in an academic setting, the central focus of their education was to expand the intellectual aspects of the individual. The learning that was discussed was vast and diverse due to the many different disciplines and topics/courses that participants were engaged in. Topics that were covered included: worldview and education, worldview and helping, reconciliation, language courses, health care, legal implications and treaties, history from an Onkwehonwe perspective (both pre and post contact), research perspectives, and environmental stewardship.

As Thomas said, for him, learning about Onkwehonwe legal traditions challenged his intellectual learning greatly. He says:

Mentally, I guess, it was challenging in the sense of just getting through the material, because it spans such a wide range of time and also disciplines and types of documents and all that. I mean it was also really exciting to be looking at that stuff. And in some ways scary, because when we talked about it in class, because sometimes these old, one-sided documents could be very determinative of people’s rights and resources, less so responsibilities, which like when somebody said you know, responsibility has to do with the ability to respond, makes sense when they’re apportioning everything, they’re not giving out abilities to respond. So yay, it was challenging in all those ways but also exciting. I mean, it was also like night and day, in my learning. Hearing about different laws and legal traditions and normative orders or whatever you call it. I mean that’s just a revelation because it’s not taught. These laws exist,
they’re living traditions, they’re connected to communities and they speak with authority. That’s kind of been a big, I guess a big consequence of taking these different courses.

In recounting how one of her first classes impacted her intellectually, Olive told a story of her tutorial assistant, who identified as Onkwehonwe. In the story, Olive needed to have her core thinking challenged in order to absorb teachings on treaties. This story highlights for me the disruption of dominance and the different ways of thinking that participants were exposed to.

There was a lot of content and I remember being impatient about it and missing the significance of treaties. I remember hearing about them, but thinking this is not sinking in. I had a TA and there was a moment towards the end of the class and the TA told me that he did not vote. And I was shocked and appalled! And that was probably the biggest moment that I remember in that intro class and having a very strong emotional reaction. I lived through the Mike Harris years and my mom lost her job in the schools because of that and I was like HOW CAN YOU NOT VOTE? I had no understanding about sovereignty. I never… it makes sense to me now, but at the time, it was shocking. I think that I was not getting the issues around sovereignty and nationhood. So to me it was like “if things are so bad…” we saw this movie about the conditions on a lot of the Reserves and I think that I straight out asked him… if things are so bad, then why don’t you vote to try and change them? And he gave me a really nice explanation that was kind of like “WHOA”

I was totally, I shifted and it was a big shift for me on how to think about
political and how to think about Canadian politics and a lot of my assumptions around voting and civic engagement. Yay, that was a big shift.

An understanding of the political and the histories of Onkwehonwe/Guest relations seem to be the main topic that people spoke to when discussing their intellectual growth. In reflection on why these two sites of intellectual growth were central to conversations, I realized that many participants spoke to the fact that their professors had to create a lot of space for discussion and people being able to talk about what they didn’t know. In providing students with political analysis and histories, professors were spending time teaching “Aboriginal 101 because the majority of us didn’t have all those pieces” (Michelle). As participants discussed in their pre-course understandings, these histories were excluded in any meaningful way from the curriculum in public and secondary schooling. It is my feeling that participants needed to have background understandings of the relationships and history. It was not possible to delve into intellectual discussions on worldview, implications of theory to practice (depending on discipline).

Janet explained that even though she had previous experiences with a community, her respective professor had to backfill a lot of information even before the class was able to get to the planned curriculum. Janet is quoted here discussing her experience:

I remember the instructor realized a lot of background knowledge needed to be given before we can get into a lot of more current topics. I mean, just the context because there’s such a lack in all, most of all of our education system. Because of the lack of information so many people had or… belief in myths, it
took a while for us to get through the curriculum. I wonder what it would have been like without all that back filling.

The general feeling expressed by participants was along the thought lines of “I did not know, I just did not know” (Amanda). Tyler, in speaking to his learning intellectually, shares a story of his first day of his first course. This is an excellent example of not only the intellectual learning that he has had, but also speaks to the ways that Onkwehonwe educations might ask questions that engage students to unpack what they know and what they think that they know.

The class was really good! I mean it was a small class. I mean Treaties did not solicit a large amount of interest. There was something because of where I was coming from and the way that [professor] started her course: [she] was like “who are the treaty people in this classroom?” and of course, white folk do not identify and Indigenous folks do. In that moment there is something, a kind of teaching about how we understand who has treaty rights. I ended up writing a paper on the treaty right to be here… that is not what I called it! I called it “white Treaty responsibilities” which is more blunt, I guess. In that experience, I had this really positive experience in just opening to new kind of horizons.

Tyler’s story here is centering how participants did not have a political understanding, prior to their course, on the means that colonization had benefited them individually and Guest peoples as a whole. In excluding the history and current experiences of Onkwehonwe people from education, the systems and structures of our society are able to perform and uphold the image of “Canada the
good” and the ideals of multiculturalism without a critical consciousness of the attempts at Onkwehonwe erasure.

In order for learning to happen, students must find a way to be invested in the content of the course. As discussed in the section, “Motivation for enrolling in a course”, many participants cited personal reasons or relationships for engaging with a course. However, I still think that the pedagogy and the ways of building reciprocal relationships that are part of Onkwehonwe worldview are foundational to creating a space where students are open to learn.

**Spiritual**

Baskin (2011) defines spirituality in a broad and interconnected way. She says that spirituality “is difficult to articulate on its own… Spirituality isn’t just about attending ceremonies; it’s about how we walk in the world, what we believe, how we connect, how we practice our beliefs” (p. 135). I resonate with this definition and it appears to have been understood by so many participants.

I found that participants really wanted to discuss the impacts that their courses had on their spirituality. Many felt that the courses, through a combination of design, teaching style or topics, offered a space for them to explore their faith, spirituality, or connection to the cosmos. When I brought up the topic of spirituality, I was a bit hesitant as I was worried that participants would talk about ‘taking up spiritual practice’ or engage in behaviours that I felt appropriated Onkwehonwe spirituality. I was very happy that this was not the case.

One participant that still stands out to me was Joey and how he discussed his connection to Onkwehonwe spirituality. In his courses, he felt his spirit was finally
validated. He talked about how as an individual he walks “around with a lidless third eye” and that his spirituality was connected to the teachings he received “from the air”. In learning about Onkwehonwe teachings and gifts that the Creator gives individuals, Joey’s label of ‘high functioning Autistic’ could be re-centred. He embraced different ways of knowing and validated his personal experiences and belief systems.

In a different vein, Michelle, who spoke about not having an understanding of Onkwehonwe spirituality, shares such a beautiful and open exploration that occurred for her throughout the course. It really altered her understandings of the world. She says:

Well, I had a major shift in worldview, which is I guess the whole point of the course (laughter). First of all, I became aware of worldview, I had to Google that word how many times before I figured out what that meant because I had never had that discussion before. I went from operating in the family and the community in which I was raised to seeing the world as this vast place and becoming aware of the spirit world… I never even contemplated that before and a far more relational world and the importance and the responsibility of maintaining good relationships, which again, I had never really learned before in my life… so that was the biggest shift with me, spiritually is seeing the world, not even trying to, but seeing the world through new eyes, which was an incredible gift…

In being open to a shifting worldview, Michelle is able to articulate through her personal experience, the common experiences of participants. In a very personal
reflection on how the course altered and supported his spiritual growth, Michael shares a very hard story. He speaks to a shame and a hurt that he had inflicted on other beings as a youth, and the empathy that his course inspired. He was able to connect his previous actions with the importance of the spiritual realms where all of Creation is interconnected. (PLEASE NOTE THE NEXT PASSAGE DEALS WITH ANIMAL CRUELTY)

I became, yeah interested in the worldview and languages that were largely relational and it really started to open up my inner world to the possibility of being more connected than I originally thought I was and it started off in that course in being connected to the non-human world. We had some little assignment, I can’t remember what it was, but I ended up writing about, this is hard… I killed a bunch of frogs when I was a kid you know. I went through a phase over a couple of summers of breaking their legs, shooting them in half, doing all this stuff. I had this experience working on this paper where I just, I don’t wanna say I went into a trance... but you know, came to this space. I was talking to a frog and I started weeping and I remember seeing this 'king of the frogs' or the 'essence of frogs'. I was so sorry and it sparked this empathy in me for non-human relations. Something about the assignment and where I was at the time made it possible for me to connect with the impact of my actions and the pain I caused another living creature. That really affected me personally and inspired me in what I see as my work, professionally and spiritually on this earth at this time, which is reconnecting to the non-human world, yea, something [of] immense value in and of itself…
I learned that there’s no difference, no separation from myself and all of creation. I don’t know if I’m making sense, it was really profound.

The healing and learnings that are shared in these reflections are all about individuals connecting to the greater cosmos. The spiritual experiences shared by participants were humbling for me. Participants spoke to connecting or reconnecting to forces outside of themselves while at the same time connecting or reconnecting to their inner selves. Their stories speak to the “search for the sacredness inside” that Baskin (2011) discusses as an act of “finding one’s relationship with the world” (p. 137).

**Fear and Safety.** As Guests, all of the participants had some level of privilege in relationship to their course. Learning about oppression is hard and is also personal, as it challenges individuals to look closely at themselves and the privileges that they have. Classrooms, as spoken to, can be the site of great personal growth and political transformation. However, one of the topics that came up organically was around participants’ feelings of safety in the classroom. I found this to be an interesting conversation and ended up probing participants to better understand their experiences.

These feelings of discomfort or fears of being perceived as a ‘bad person’ is a phenomenon that is discussed at great length in ally development literature (Storms, 2012; Smith and Redington, 2010; Howard, 2011; Pleasants, 2011). I found it interesting that even when participants discussed these fears of being seen in a negative light, they owned it and did not shy away from implicating themselves in the greater issues.
As individuals learn about the oppression and struggles of a marginalized group, their membership in the dominant or privileged group caused them concern and disruption (Howard, 2011). In some instances, the literature discusses how individuals want to be good allies, but the guilt of unearned privilege actually transforms that desire into guilt and shame where they then turn the responsibility of ‘ally’ back onto the oppressed group (Pleasants, 2011). This guilt and shame is a way of recentering the very privilege that the individual is learning. The act of being concerned that one will be seen as on oppressor or blamed as an individual for the collective oppression of the marginalized, can stagnate the learning process and impact the relationships that the ally or individual in a dominant location has with the ‘marginalized’ (Smith and Redington, 2010).

Many of the participants discussed feeling discomfort in the classroom at different points throughout their courses. However participants moved through this in what I consider to be healthy ways. As many participants identified as White, there was also a layer of fear of being seen as ‘bad people’. Michael talked about the fear of being labelled the ‘oppressor’ and ‘blamed’ for the historical issues of colonization as a white male. However, there was also a fear of ‘saying the wrong thing’ or ‘being seen as a bad white person.’

Michelle expressed a fear of saying the wrong thing, which caused her discomfort. However, she also knew that her own lack of knowledge was driving her discomfort. She expressed a fear of speaking in class due to her own ego and desire not to be making a mistake or be seen as a ‘fool’. In trying to catch up, before she
would speak in class, she sought out resources, but she was rightfully worried that she would access problematic materials:

I was often quite scared to talk up in class. Not because the instructor or the other class members hadn't created a safe space. I think he did a great job of that, but I felt scared talking up in class, in case I said something wrong or it became very apparent how little I knew or whether I was being accidentally disrespectful or using the wrong language or making some major faux pas – I remember asking “can you please help me not put my foot in my mouth” (laughs)… if I had been given some readings like an Indigenous primer 101 that had been vetted a little better than Wikipedia, outlining the important history I needed to know, which I know is difficult to do in a succinct document, but I would’ve read it, just so that I didn’t feel so ignorant in the classroom.

Rosemary was able to link back feelings of discomfort to all education that unsettles the privilege/oppression dichotomy. In knowing her privileges, she also knows that there are invisible or hidden histories that she needs to unpack and work through. As she explains here, she knows that discomfort and tension are part of her learning:

I think that toxicity, and tensions and feeling ashamed is really important. Not only in courses with just Aboriginal content. I think that it is important [to feel discomfort] because we are not human if we do not feel some of that. I think that [these classes] show a lot of the graphic history, as they should because it is important. But I have also felt that way in an African history course as we
learned about how they packed slaves into ships to get them across the Atlantic.

In talking about the discomfort, I acknowledge that for many people, learning about their privileges and their role in the oppression of others is an important step to ally development. Feeling uncomfortable is good, however, there needs to be a distinction around when educational spaces intentionally inflict pain. The literature on ally development speaks to the fact that learning about privilege and oppression is not always an easy task for any individual (Smith and Reddington, 2010; Howard, 2011; Spanierman, Bread, and Todd, 2012). Discomfort, as unsettling as it might be, is necessary for individuals’ growth and transformation (Waters, 2010).

As discussed earlier around the participants’ unpacking of white guilt, it is important to ensure that students do not get stuck or left in that space. As an educator, I acknowledge that there are no safe classrooms as learning about privilege and oppression is a painful process. It is not the responsibility of the professor to create a safe space for learning; it is every individual’s responsibility to engage in a respectful and ethical manner. Moving through guilt and shame is transformative, however, there is a difference in some participants’ experiences around discomfort, and perceived sense of safety within the classroom.

In one story, Lisa spoke of a fellow classmate who struggled to understand and unpack a conversation that occurred in the classroom. Lisa recalled a conversation: “can people decorate their houses with dream catchers?” which was challenged by the professor as a form of appropriation. Her classmate ‘broke into tears’ and needed to be comforted by her peers during a break. Lisa spoke to the
fact that even years later her classmate brought up the incident and was still not able to unpack the privilege and appropriation that made her feel discomfort. I offer this story to demonstrate that there are students in Onkwehonwe courses that might not be ready to face the discomfort of topics and discussion. These students can deflect the learning away from them and turn it into the feeling of ‘unsafety’ as a means of not addressing their privilege. In personalizing the situation and problematizing the professor for calling out acts of appropriation, the student was stuck in the need to see themselves as “a good white person”.

In three of the sharing circles, a number of participants spoke about a singular Onkwehonwe course, taught by an Onkwehonwe professor, that they felt was about ‘performing angry’, ‘performing being a good activist’ and that there was a space to ‘inciting violence in the classroom’ (Participant #7)\(^20\).

As Participant #16 explained:

…there have been other [classes] in particular, one class that I, me, myself and my colleagues, a lot of my colleagues both Ongweoweh peoples and Guests or settlers have left, right, like over the year, one class is still running here and I think it’s because the instructor (Professor A) doesn’t do the same work that [other professors] do around setting an environment which is safe and in fact, [Professor A] encourages violence. Not physical violence, but emotional violence. That was a really hard one for me and I really struggled with that and a lot of my colleagues, again both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, sort of we sat together and we talked, but like you know, should

\(^{20}\) The participants that spoke about this professor asked not to have their quotes tied to their names. These three participants are all speaking about the same course but the three attended in two different years. In informal conversations with Onkwehonwe students (I have spoken to two) felt that this space was not supportive to their learning either. They felt wounded in the classroom as well.
we be uncomfortable or should we be okay with this or is this just violence for the sake of it?

In speaking about how the toxicity of a classroom can impact learning, Participant #3 discussed her experience in greater detail:

And then the other aspect of the course that was emotional was the actual classroom; it was a really hard place to be because there was a lot of, how to say it… there was a lot of tension in the room that was never acknowledged and anger that could sort of be…it felt really individualized. It was the kind of classroom that, um…I process readings by talking about them and I am not really used to not talking in class for fear that I would be targeted, that I would not say something quite right and that I would be targeted. It was one of the more toxic classrooms that I have ever been in!

These feelings of “unsafety” are major concerns for me as an educator but also as a believer in the teachings of the Wampum belts that I shared. I see it as incongruent to Peace, Friendship and Mutual Respect. I am not implying that Onkwehonwe scholars need to be gentle educators, however, there needs to be a foundation in a classroom that supports Guests in unpacking privilege in a mutually respectful way.

The discussion on what is unsafe in a classroom versus what is just the discomfort of learning is challenging for me. If I understand the stories of the participants fully, the distinction lies with how the instructor/professor is able to negotiate the different emotionally charged spaces of learning. Holding a classroom where people are examining themselves as privileged individuals takes skill and
commitment to support and build relationships. In the spaces where students spoke of discomfort they were able to discuss how that was a cathartic tool for them to examine their privileges. Students felt supported to learn through reflection. In the conversations where students talked about unsafe feelings, they labelled their experiences as violence in which they were unable to see their educator as an ally in their learning. They did not feel encouraged to explore their thoughts, lack of education or queries.

It feels counter to how I personally understand Onkwehonwe pedagogy that includes building reciprocal relationships. It also runs counter to the responsibilities of being a good host as taught to me by Sakoieta. I have included it here not as a shaming of the individual instructor but because it was shared with me. I feel that I have a responsibility to respect the wholistic understandings and complete stories of participants’ experiences.

Onkwehonwe education attempts to address the whole person and all of their multiple identities and understandings. In engaging with students in ways that support learning beyond just intellectual growth Onkwehonwe instructors/professors are fostering education that is holistic.
Personal and Professional Growth

As I have been reading the words of the participants, I am struck with a notion that the relationship between instructor and student is very similar to the relationship between an individual host welcoming a guest or a group of guests into their home. There is a reciprocal responsibility between the professor and the students. Professors, in designing and offering a course are opening a space or a home to people. They invite them in. They promise them teachings. They offer to be in relationship. There is an expectation that there will be respect. As Sakoiaeta’s teachings on the Hospitality wampum dictate, the host is responsible to provide “The deer meat, the corn soup and the corn bread”. In an educational space, the lessons, the readings, the lectures and the discussions are all part of the hosting responsibilities. The students also have responsibilities: doing their reading, coming to class, writing assignments, and participating are all responsibilities of the Guests. These items are what the Guests need to sustain them as well as support them in growth.

This chapter will create space for participants to discuss firstly, their personal growth and development as individuals and as allies. Secondly, the chapter will look at how participants have made decisions on either work within Onkwehonwe spaces or have rejected that idea. I will also discuss how participants talked about utilizing their knowledges, teachings, and experiences in their professional lives.

Personal Growth

In the literature on ally education, there are a lot of positive stories about personal growth that students experience as they learn about the struggles and
oppression of others (Storms, 2012; Alimo, 2012). When there is a struggle and a 
rupture in the ways that people view themselves and the world, there is an 
opportunity for growth. In reflecting, many of the individuals that agreed to participate 
in this project, expressed a rupture in not only how they understood Onkwehonwe 
topics, but how they also understood themselves and their place in society. The 
participants also spoke openly about personal reflection and growth. Sometimes this 
growth was spoken about with comfort while other times participants spoke about 
emotional upheaval that challenged how they saw themselves and their 
responsibility to social justice. Paula, in speaking about her learning and growth, 
discussed ways that her course challenged her understandings of herself. She said:

Yes. [The course really] pushed you to sort of look deep. It challenged you to 
look back and look really deep within yourself and see and reflect what 
causes you to act a certain way and your unintentional ways. So yeah, my 
experiences were: I just felt that I grew in the course. And even though things 
that were shared in the course were very, very emotional… there was a lot of 
personal growth. And it required you to look at yourself and reconcile what 
you see within yourself. But I felt safe and I learned so much through her [the 
professor’s] stories and sharing.

As I further probed her to discuss her personal growth, she talked about how 
vast her learning was and how it led to an awareness that she has a responsibility 
for her actions and self-reflections. She said:

A lot! I do not even know where to start!! I am just aware of things I was not 
even aware about before. I felt myself, I just changed individually, meaning
that I take time to reflect and sort of think about my daily encounters. And I think that is important in retaining that balance physically, emotionally, spiritually, and mentally... and on an individual basis, taking the time to reflect and sort of look at how my day is going and how I affect others.

As a participant who had taken multiple courses, in different degrees, Olive, like others, spoke to the fact that she was still unlearning and reflecting on the impacts of colonization in her own life. Olive spoke about how in her most recent course she knew that she still needed to work through 'stuff', but that she was building the skills to do that. She said:

Yeah, I think that [professor's] course last semester was helpful in breaking me open again and seeing what is there. And seeing how big that guilt or shame bag is and being shocked with myself that it is still there. It is still so big and moving through that and recognizing it and seeing it. Yeah, try and accept it and move on...I think that [professor's name] course was eye-opening about how big that bag actually still is and how much of that stuff I am still carrying around. Actually, in more of a subtle way, it gave me tools to work through that on my own. Before that course, I thought that I had done my work or something....

When Joey spoke, he talked about how in learning about Onkwehonwe histories, knowledges and ways of being, he was able to find people that thought and learned like he does: from a more experiential pedagogy. His words spoke to the fact that in learning about the impacts of colonization, he had a respect for Onkwehonwe people, not being afraid to discuss the problematic implications of
these impacts. As one of the three participants that identified as having a disability, Joey clearly linked how his disability aligned him and his thinking with Onkwehonwe worldviews. When asked if his educational experiences changed him as a person, he so beautifully said:

Has it changed me as a person? No, it’s added to me as a person! This was the way I was born and I finally found people who also learned from the air, whose words come from what they see and who aren’t afraid to say ‘yes, we were jealous and we wanted some of what you have’. Can you say the truth now? That’s something I’m always saying to the other as well and as an Autistic person without the kind of boundaries that neuro-typicals will dance around, saying “I’ll smell it, but I won’t say it”… here’s a group of people [Okwehonwe people] who can say ‘yea we can admit that we got gangs, we got troubles, we got everything else’, can you admit it? Can you admit it? And I said why not? And so if I can be even a little bit of an example of that, I’ll never be Aboriginal, I hope to speak Ojibwa, you know in a broken way, some day and when people say did you try, that’s not gonna matter so much to me as it will… what did I do when I found out the truth?

The personal growth that so many participants shared was not only based on the information that was covered as content in the course, but also on how information was taught and shared. The pedagogical tools employed by the instructors, from the texts used to the inclusion of ceremony (circles or smudging were two examples given by participants), created for many, a learning environment that was supportive of growth.
Angela explained how her instructor held class, much like an Elder would hold a circle, by centering healing through education. Angela felt that the instructor’s deliberate teaching style, created a space in the classroom where difficult growth occurred in a way that was calm and peaceful. Her respect for her professor was obvious:

I’m always struck by, again the intention towards healing, you know, both personal and relationship-wise, and I just find them to be very positive spaces to be in and very comfortable spaces usually… I really trust [my professor] and I always think okay, he’s gonna handle this, no matter what happens, you know and that may be unfair to him, but you know as an instructor, he handles it and is great and I feel very calm and at ease, always, in his classes. The material and learning was hard, but the space was safe.

I agree with Angela that the intention of the professor is fundamental in ensuring a space of growth and learning. There were many comments and stories shared about the ways that the instructors created spaces and courses that challenged, supported and engaged both personal and professional growth.

In supporting the personal growth of students, instructors built relationships that enabled them to challenge and engage students in intellectual growth that filters through other aspects of students’ selves. In centering relationships, participants felt that instructors connected with them at a level that honoured them as individuals. For many, this felt revolutionary or, I would assert, emancipatory.

Emancipatory education is a means to disrupt the colonial processes that have been predominating in Canadian policies since before confederation (Alfred,
In understanding that education is both personal and political, Elena shared how unsettling it was for her to learn about colonization. She realized that she was a product of a problematic system that Onkwehonwe education was able to disrupt. She says:

I was taken aback by how little I knew and why it’s not talked about, and it’s a way of control and you realize that. A way of...yeah, just a way of control and you realize how we all have colonized minds in a sense and that’s actually the biggest, I think it is one of the biggest lessons I’ve learned from my studies.

Political awakening that leads to personal development and growth seemed to be a common experience in both the literature (London, 2009; Evans and Broido, 2005) and for participants. Christine was able to link how her personal reflections and learning from the course supported her abilities to discuss and look at structural and systemic issues that affect the relationships between Onkwehonwe and Guests. She says:

I definitely think it provided a very good basis for me to talk to other people about it. And, that’s one of the things that definitely happened more, was conversations with other people when things were said, and led to a lot of fights and disagreements, but I’m hoping that at least it triggered something in them to continue thinking about it critically. I definitely think I’m more prepared to have conversations with people and not necessarily tell them, you know, this is how you need to think. But try to engage them... And I think that’s something that comes from personal reflection and thinking about yourself
and what you’re capable of, but I definitely think the course provided a good basis for that conversation and to start challenging that dominant thought.

It was from this space of growth that included understanding and reflection on their position as a Guest, that many discussed a desire to challenge the dominant thinking within their own communities. In challenging the problematic assumptions that people had, participants spoke to a sense of isolation, but also to a commitment to keep learning and sharing their new knowledge. Angela expressed it so well:

I personally feel really passionate about these issues and I’m really excited about the stuff that I’m learning [but] have dealt with feelings of loneliness around it. Especially at the beginning, my friends where like “oh man you went and worked in that community, that’s so cool”, but then when I start talking about it, they didn’t want to hear it.

However, as Angela, and other participants, started to find other individuals that supported healthy Onkwehonwe and Guest relationships, the loneliness lessened.

Another participant who spoke to the personal growth in her education was Janet. As previously mentioned, she spent the summer before her course in an immersive experience as an outside helper in a remote, northern Dene community. It was part of a national program designed to facilitate Guest peoples’ learning about Onkwehonwe people. Janet problematized the ways that the community was constructed before she engaged with it. However, upon her return to school, she wrongfully assumed that she had a full understanding of colonial impacts. In this quote, she is speaking to a realization that her previous experience was incomplete and how that realization impacted her personal growth:
I do remember one specific night, it was a night course in the summer, [the impacts of colonization] just hit me, like they never hit me before. The instructor had sort of walked us through [a conversation as] if we were parents at the time of children being stolen to go to residential schools. I’ll never forget that evening. I felt like the instructor allowed a lot of, like the pace was slow, which I think allowed a lot of us to digest and to talk about how, where we were, how we’re feeling…letting us grow into the knowledge.

**Mentorship and Guidance.** Mentorship by Onkwehonwe professors was a topic that came up in a few places. As an academic, Tyler has collaborated with many Onkwehonwe scholars and activists to write articles and deliver papers that support Onkwehonwe issues. In these following two quotes, however, he speaks to his personal and professional growth as he reflects on the teachings of one of his Onkwehonwe mentors. I asked directly about her, and how she had supported his growth. He told me about how she had encouraged him to continue his education, not because he was smart, but because she knew he had a passion for social justice. In relaying a conversation that they had years prior to the sharing circle, he said:

She was like ‘I am going to let you know, changing things is really hard! And people don’t really listen to you and people will still not listen to you even if you go to grad school. But they might give you a second-more consideration with more letters behind your name. For people with an intellect, it is worth it to try and get the letters so that you can at least speak and people will at least pause to hear what you say.”
When he spoke about how she had supported his growth as an intellectual and academic he, said:

Lots of things about her approach really resonated with me. Thinking through how it is that we begin to address issues or decolonize and really valuing the work of grassroots activists so that it is not just about you know, you go to university, you get letters and then you tell everybody. But it was from the university [that] you can strategically try and leverage your voice to help hear and understand… I also ended up getting more involved in the law because of her and following a lot of her trajectory and starting from the position that rather than understand that the Canadian law was a space for Aboriginal people to find rights or justice that it dispenses, but to problematizing Canadian law and the way that Canadian law is based on obscuring Indigenous legal traditions.

This mentorship that Tyler spoke about came up in the stories offered by a few other participants. The commitment and support that individual Onkwehonwe scholars have offered students is so motivating to me. I truly felt an urge to reach out to other Onkwehonwe educators to tell them about the growth and reflections students had had due to their courses, the material covered and the teachings from the educators.

Professional Development

The impacts that Onkwehonwe courses had on an individual’s professional development were very interesting and diverse. I have divided this section into three
sub sections: Employment engagement, utilizing wholistic learning, and sharing knowledge.

Employment Engagement. For some participants, what they have learned has supported them in working with Onkwehonwe people or communities. Other participants felt a responsibility to not engage in professional or paid work with Onkewhonwe people, communities or Nations. The latter spoke to connecting what they had learned in courses about Onkwehonwe topics to their work and life in a more wholistic way. I am not making a judgement on either professional understanding as I think that these individuals make very thoughtful and respectful decisions on the work that they do (or do not do) with Onkwehonwe peoples.

Lisa, Marie Louise, Tyler, and Angela have all engaged in employment or academic work as allies and advocates for Onkwehonwe people. In speaking to their work, it was obvious to me that there was a passion and an understanding of responsibilities for working with communities. These participants, when speaking to their working relationships with Onkwehonwe individuals, communities or Nations, clearly positioned themselves as continual learners that were able to provide a needed skill set. This was clearly spoken to in a statement made by Lisa:

I actually got a job working for an Aboriginal agency supporting education skills, which I basically turned into support groups, support is the wrong word, but like social and support and friendship and basically whatever they wanted to do (laughter). It was like, it was the white girl who worked with Aboriginal people but I think because I had the education that I have from the courses I took… I think that was the reason why they hired me … so that they felt that
there was some trust in me and I felt that trust when I would go to work in these [programs] and be with the Aboriginal people and I would try to take on the approach of learning just as much from them as I was there to teach them…

Angela is an educator and she works on a project, together with an Onkewhonwe man as they deliver workshops and seminars for other educators around Onkwehonwe topics. The program is striving to support a reeducation of Guest educators. In speaking to her work, she complicated how she saw earning a living engaging Onkwehonwe teachings. By engaging with teachers and other educators, she is working with a community of people that she is a member of, and hence, is doing work on Onkwehonwe topics in a multi-intersected community. The beauty of this work is that she is doing what she loves: learning constantly and helping further decolonial understandings. She says:

I think it’s that work around the Deepening Knowledge Project\(^{21}\) that I’m doing, I had similar questions like you had mentioned earlier, like what is my role being employed in certain places, am I taking salaries away and positions away from Onkwehonwe people who should be here, I still want to work on these issues, I don’t see my life going in a direction where I don’t somehow work in this field and dedicate my life to these sort of Indigenous, settler spaces so what’s that going to look like and I think, I didn’t know where it’s from, I didn’t know who said it, but someone, somewhere along the line said

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\(^{21}\) The Deepening Knowledge Project is an initiative of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto to implant the histories, knowledges and worldviews of Onkwehonwe people into its teacher education program.
something, or I read somewhere about the importance of working within your own communities…so I just grew up around teachers, my mother, my aunts, many cousins, these are my people.

On the other hand, for a few participants, the idea of working in direct practice with Onkwehonwe peoples became a philosophical struggle as they questioned their own motivations to ‘help’ in decolonizing work. This is a recurrent process that does not just stop once a course is complete but is a commitment to continual growth, learning, and self-reflexivity. This constant learning or life-long acquiring of knowledge is foundational to an Onkwehonwe educational framework (Battiste, 2002). Olive and Janet shared their internal struggles on working with and within Onkwehonwe spaces.

Olive was able to explore her continual learning and unlearning process in her contributions to the sharing circle. After taking multiple classes in her undergraduate degree, Olive took two classes in her masters. In reflecting on her more recent course, Olive delved further into her own understandings and struggles. As her discussion around this shows layers of thoughts and reflections, she says:

I am enrolled in the Aboriginal [certificate] program sort of alongside my [master’s] degree. I think that I am not attached to the certificate anymore but I was coming into the program. I think that I thought “I have done a lot of the work, I think that I am ready to pursue a focus in Aboriginal health” … But in taking [this most recent] course it was like… (LARGE INHALE) NOT DONE! And I do not know about this. I was questioning my motives and questioning
why? Why Olive, is there a desire to help? And does that desire have integrity to it or does it not have integrity to it?

Janet, even though she shared quite a lot of professional growth from her education, was very clear about her feelings around seeking employment in an Onkwehonwe organization or agency. In this quote she talks about how she previously accepted a paid contract position, but that she struggled with this decision.

I like being very aware of space that I take up. I do not want to take on paid roles where those roles can be accessible to people from those communities. Being involved as only a volunteer has been something that people have called me on, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, but I think that’s something that I always try to keep in check; What spaces I take. But that being said, when I was having difficulty finding work when I was in Ottawa, I was volunteering with the community health centre and they knew I had a sexual health background, they needed a 6-month contract to be taken and approached me. I took that contract and that was difficult. My colleagues knew that I had reservations about taking on that space as a paid person in that health centre, so it’s something that I still don’t know what the best role or position is for myself as an ally with the different communities that I work with, so something I’m still working on.

In the sharing circle, I gently contested this line of thought with Janet as I asked her if it was better for the community to have that position vacant, and the funding expire or if it was in fact an advantage to the community to have a passionate ally in the contract position that could share skills and knowledge with the
community. I was not trying to downplay or minimize her struggle around employment. It was my intention to engage a conversation about allies working in cooperation and support of Onkwehonwe struggles. I, of course, could not answer any of her questions as they are her questions to explore; I was just attempting to offer alternative ways of looking at her struggle.

**Utilizing Wholistic Learning.** The third, distinct professional-growth outcome for participants was an inclusion or shift in thinking that they attributed back to their learnings in the course. As Michelle states, this learning was pivotal in her work-based relationships. As an individual that assists people wanting to explore post-secondary education, she used her learning to re-centre and break down the construct of ‘valid’ knowledge and learning. This shift to understanding incorporates wholistic learning where her students could be their authentic selves. She says:

> I learned Aboriginal ways of knowing and was exposed to a lot more Aboriginal knowledge through ‘Native Science’ [a book by Gregory Cajete (2000)] and came to the realization that all knowledge is equal regardless of where it’s learned and that, because I was so used to the [idea that] knowledge that you learn in school is the only knowledge that is valid ‘cause it’s in a textbook and you learned it in school (laughter) and it had a profound impact on my work and ‘cause I must’ve used that line with a lot of the students I worked with…most of the students hadn’t finished high school and are now coming to university… all knowledge is equal regardless of where it was learned…
One of the most wholistic growths demonstrated throughout the story-gathering process was made by Lisa as she was talking about how the courses she took have impacted her professional work. In her counselling work with people, she has experienced a shift in her understanding and ways of looking at what resiliency and strength are and that she attributes to her learning about Onkwehonwe approaches to helping. Lisa used her learning as a lens to see her clients as whole people that have internal skills to address their struggles. She says:

…what comes to mind is that I was shown a demonstration of strength of survival and when I am working with people and clients who are struggling with issues and it’s not about so much that I talk to them about Aboriginal strength and survival, but it’s just even something that I have in me that makes me look at their issues in a different way and look at how or what are the ways they can survive or what are their strengths because all of the things that we talk about, about what Aboriginal people have gone through, they are really hard things and... but the survival and strength that they had can be taken and seen that other people can survive and have strength in other hard times that they’re going through.

This new understanding is a result of a shifting worldview that supports individual’s struggles as connected to a larger sphere of communities and resources. Lisa’s education has altered her own lens as a helper. She is not comparing the struggles of her clients to Onkwehonwe communities, but her learnings have opened a space for her to view her clients wholistically. She is able to see that even in times of hardship, people have internal and external strengths that can be drawn upon.
Sharing of Knowledge. In a course on Onkwehonwe approaches to helping that I have taught quite a few times, one of the first things that students learn is around terminology and correct use of language. This is one of the barriers that I personally have heard students speak to: an uncertainty on what to call Onkwehonwe people. Students have expressed a fear of speaking to or about issues because they do not know the words that should be used in addressing Onkwehonwe topics. I found it interesting and encouraging that this discourse around language is one area that many participants felt that they were able to utilize to disrupt colonial thoughts within their own families, friend groups, work spaces, and communities. In learning about terminology participants felt stronger in asserting allyship while still being open to all of the (un/re)learning that was offered in their courses. Amanda discusses supporting decolonization in these spaces “Terminology, language, respectful language, but to be open, to be transparent about lack of knowledge or understanding, to not avoid going there or opening yourself up to that vulnerability of saying--I don’t know.”

In knowing that language is important and, in learning to use language as a tool, many participants shared that this was one way that they felt confident in sharing. But as demonstrated by Amanda, humility is important when admitting that even though one has a base knowledge, there is so much more that anyone can learn. One of the most common ways that participants saw their roles and responsibilities as Guests, was in teaching other Guests what they had learned in their courses. This understanding is very much in line with a traditional teaching that I have heard time and time again from many different teachers. I have been taught
that all the knowledge I have been gifted with does not belong to me nor do I fully know and understand it until I am able to share and pass it on (J. Dallaire, personal communication, October 7th, 2013). In order to do this, Amanda created the word “sharer” to express her role. In taking what she learned in her course, she would in turn share that knowledge with her family and community.

Sharer isn’t a word, but a lot of the times where I would walk away from something powerful, I would share with my friends and my family, so kind of sharing that experience and that history or that story, so that becomes a part of their awareness as well, their understanding.

After participants took their course, individuals discussed knowledges gained that gave them the confidence to call out misinformation that others maintained or perpetuated. Paula speaks to this, but she further employs an Onkwehonwe worldview in doing this hard and important work as she engages in a way that is respectful and gentle.

I think that I am much more aware and if conversations come up, I sort of just sit back and listen to what people say and not judge, but be mindful. However, when I hear something that is not right or that I do not agree with, now that I am much more aware, I would stand up and tell them. You know, not in a judgmental way, you know, maybe they do not know any better. I think that the responsibility comes in situations like that as well.

Elena also discussed engaging in this decolonial work. She told a story about one of her coworkers and the conversation that they had:
She said some really ignorant things and she legitimately thought that what she said was not an issue and was okay. At first I let it go but then this kind of kept coming in conversation here and there a few months later and I sat that person down and while we were sitting, having lunch and I kind of went through this whole explaining what I knew, not that I know a lot but my experiences from what I’ve learned from courses, people I’ve talked with, and explained this is why there are certain issues, why there’s these certain stereotypes, and this person actually thanked me after because they actually had no idea. So in my day when I come across these comments and things, I want to share what I’ve learned thus far, what I know, what I don’t know, I want to be honest about it and so I just try to be mindful and let people know there’s more to it and a lot of people appreciate it.

In committing to educating and communicating in a respectful manner, participants demonstrated a dedication to the responsibility of what it means to be a thoughtful Guest. Almost all participants in some way discussed this work. I was pleasantly surprised at how committed participants were to share information and support the education of other Guests.

**Responsibilities**

In all of the discussions that I engaged in, one term or concept kept coming up for participants: the concept that there are responsibilities for Guests. Building relationships, knowing history, disrupting colonial structures, speaking against injustice and acting in solidarity came through many of the stories even if the participant did not label their actions as such. I was actually very happy to hear how
important this concept was for participants as it was one of the foundational discussion points that I had had with all of the Elders and Traditional Knowledge keepers.

A document that I have mentioned previously and have found to be inspiring is the “Ally Bill of Responsibilities” by Dr. Lynn Gehl. In a sixteen-point list she offers an extensive and challenging discourse to Guests who want to stand in solidarity with Onkwehonwe people. Gehl’s brilliant work focuses on the fact that Guests have responsibilities to solidarity work. Gehl flips the discourse on privileged communities ‘rights’ as a way to recentre responsibilities. This document discusses how important it is that allies work through their own guilt so that they are able to work genuinely from a place that challenges the power structures and systematic oppression faced by Okwehonwe peoples. Additionally, it is important that they know who they are, themselves, and not centre the work and the struggle on their own advancement. Gehl offers many ideas for Guests to ponder and reflect on. Her work as an Onkwehonwe scholar provides Guests with a strong foundation as they learn, engage, and support communities. I found that the participants embodied this document. Of course some engaged in this work on a daily basis, while others might not have been as active. However, there was a dedication on the part of the participants to fulfill their responsibilities as Guests in an authentic, healthy, wholistic way.

Tyler spoke to his commitment to treaty responsibilities when he started to discuss his academic work; it flowed through a discussion that linked to activism and
allyship. He cautioned that a Guest needs to walk a fine line between standing in solidarity and profiting off of Onkwehonwe oppression. He stated:

But I think that a lot of my work is intellectual work, and I try and rupture the ways of knowing that have become normalized and sometimes that is through rational argument and sometimes that is through doing childcare so that someone else can participate in a conversation, sometimes it is in just pointing out the fallacy and the ridiculousness of what a position is and showing how ruthlessly ridiculous it is. And sometimes humour can be useful to do that. I think that it is in those spaces that taking responsibility for the relationships that we are in and also remembering that there are different relationships. I do not have all the answers, there is a degree that I need to be accountable to the people that are impacted by these processes; to make sure that what I am trying to do is in concert with the ways in which they are trying to [address the] struggle and make sure that I am not speaking for Onkwehonwe people or making myself the proxy, ‘the voice of Indigenous self determinations’ [participant being sarcastic], because then I am just like a new form of colonialism. I think that is a dangerous slippage that a lot of ‘allies’ make. It is a responsibility to always try and act like an ethical settler. And if we are taking responsibility we are taking responsibilities for all of the kind of relationships that we enter into and the spaces that we are in.

In using the term ‘ethical settler’, I found that Tyler was holding himself and other participants accountable to building relationships that acknowledge Peace, Friendship and Mutual Respect. Other participants also commented on how they see
their own responsibilities to relationships as Guests. Some spoke to responsibilities on a personal level, while others talked about professional commitments to educating and working with other Guests to learn about Guest responsibilities. Paula spoke to her understanding of how, as a Guest, she needs to behave and engage others with respect. Her words also implicated her role and responsibility in the education of other Guests:

Responsibly being a guest on this land means respect. I think that is very important; to be mindful and respect the different [Nations]. I feel that Guests should have the knowledge and a lot of them don’t and I think that is problematic. That is part of my responsibility. In regards to Onkwehonwe issues, it means to me: responsibility, communication, knowledge, and sharing.

Thomas speaks quite passionately about how he sees his responsibilities as a Guest on this land. One of the first things that he spoke about was his understandings of responsibilities, as a Guest, in relations to Treaties. He challenges the dominant discourse of the legal discipline as he expresses that “We’re all treaty people. What does that mean? That’s not in any kind of citizenship handbook.” He furthers his understandings of a political and professional responsibility to Onkwehonwe issues in the education he provides to law students about immigration, migration and migrant work. He states:

…whether it’s as a teacher, even just trying to share some of what I’ve been lucky enough to learn. So my course is on migration and migrant work, but part of what I started with is about Toronto [and how it] has no history or
something like that and sort of going into the background of where we are, because I don’t know, I think it’s important I guess, so that people just don’t think about migration as whatever happens to be happening right now… So I try to look at some of the historical and contemporary issues of migration and mobility in a way that people will learn about here and also how it kind of is repeating in some of the current migration policies of Canada and other wealthy countries. So yeah, partly through teaching and partly through, I don’t know if you’d call it activism…And so, I can’t bumble along in immigration and refugee law and just be like, okay, the reason we can all stay here is because the Crown said so, because what underpins the Crown?

Thomas’ comment and understanding that “we are all treaty people” was further expressed by Maya when she discussed her work with newcomers. She challenges “what is a newcomer” and “what is a “Canadian”. Maya explains, “It’s not like they’re the newcomers and then the white settlers here are the Canadians, it’s like no, everybody’s a newcomer, everybody has, as you say, that responsibility”. She holds that all Guests need to acknowledge and work in solidarity with Onkwehonwe peoples. I find the previous two quotes interesting in that they come from participants identifying as racialized. Maya and Thomas both situate themselves as ‘settlers’ with privileges over Onkwehonwe Peoples. There is a respect and an understanding that their racial oppression is different than the experiences of Onkwehonwe people and Nations. Here they demonstrate their responsibilities to call out the privileges that racialized communities have and educate others about settlement and settlers.
I am so thankful that there is a group of people that is so committed to educating other Guests: this work is important. Fighting for Onkwehonwe rights is one way of engaging responsibilities, but so is sharing teachings and histories. One of the participants who found an organic way of doing this is Michelle. In talking to other Guests she says that she tries to normalize her relationship with Onkwehonwe Peoples and communities in her everyday conversations. She says:

I'll say, “oh yeah, when I was talking to my Aboriginal Elder…”, it’s okay that I go see an Aboriginal Elder and just sort of making that part of yeah, that's just what we do. I do not understand how that is not relevant to everyone, I sort of demonstrated how it’s relevant to everyone.

In normalizing and accessing Onkwehonwe Elders and spaces, Angela talks about a balance that she knows exists. She speaks to how there are appropriate and healthy relationships and that there are spaces that do not ‘belong’ to her. In decolonial work, similarly in anti-racism work, Onkwehonwe peoples do not need to be on display or grant unrestricted access to ourselves, knowledges, and spaces. Figuring out where these boundaries are is important ally work. She says:

Being okay with not knowing and being aware that there are things that it's not my place to know and there are questions that aren't okay to ask, whereas, the value of curiosity has boundaries, you know, and there are boundaries between Indigenous or Okwehonweh people and guests and that I need to try my best, do my due diligence to find out what those boundaries are, not by pushing them, but by asking good questions and listening and by respecting them.
As I listened to all of the stories over and over again, and I read the transcripts, one comment stuck out to me as encapsulating of participants’ growth experiences within their respective courses. Anne, in this passage, was able to summarize her experience of moving from guilt to a sense of interconnection with others and a self-reflexivity that has endured over time. Anne said:

There was obviously that sense of guilt, you know, for being part of a system that led to such atrocities and silence, but there was also a great sense of joy in the learning because of the bonding that happened. Because of that circle nature, and the experiential, and the stories; the bonding that happened within the class was quite remarkable. The stories that came out of people’s lived experiences, of you know oppressions, or coming from different backgrounds and what not. But also the smudging we did in the class was helpful; it was part of healing. When I was coming today, I was thinking about the class and realizing that of all the classes I took, probably I could pick out more instances out of that class than any other ones I took. It was kind of that profound nature, even though it was in the first term of my studies, it was very profound for me.

Anne’s comment and her reflection here echo the impacts that other participants shared. These ideas have been discussed multiple times: a sense of guilt that grew into a sense of commitment to share and appreciate the teachings that participants have been given; that engaging with the whole person (spirituality included) creates a learning/healing space; that in Onkwehonwe pedagogy, all
students have knowledge and have gifts to share; and that this form of education has a lasting impact on the individuals that are active participants in knowledge.
Sharing Circle

The teachings of Guswhenta that were shared with me by Sakioeta and Tewentahawitha spoke to building relationships based on Peace, Friendship and Mutual Respect. In speaking to the Elders and Traditional Teachers, I asked about the roles of being a Host and a Guest. All of the teachings spoke to a responsibility for people to engage and support healthy relationships. The teachers also did not expect that people knew about responsibilities inherently. Responsibility is learned and is taught.

When I first heard the stories of the participants and as I have listened to them over and over again, I am reminded of a quote by writer, academic, and all-round strong Onkwehonwe activist, Thomas King. King (2003) concludes all of his essays in *The Truth about Stories* in a similar way. He writes:

“Take [this] story. It’s yours. Do with it what you will. Tell it to friends. Turn it into a TV movie. Forget it. But don’t say in years to come that you would have lived your life different if only you had heard this story.

You’ve heard it now.” (p.29)

I quote King here for two reasons. First, his words and storytelling are in response to teaching people about the history of the relationship between Onkwehonwe and Guests. He teaches Guests with humour and wit that is both gentle and unsettling. In telling his audience that they do not get to come back later to claim that they would have lived life different “if only [they] had heard”, he is centring responsibility back onto the learner. He has invited people into the story, however, with the right to read it there is a responsibility to live differently. These
rights and responsibilities are similar to the ones that Onkwehonwe professors and instructors offer Guest students when a course is designed and offered. Secondly, this quote is a reminder to myself that I have now heard the stories of the participants, and I too have a responsibility to do with it as I will (which is to gather, analyze and disseminate these stories). I need to live my life differently because I have heard them.

This project has changed me. I have learned and grown throughout this process. As Shawn Wilson (2009) concludes in Research as Ceremony, “If research doesn’t change you as a person, then you haven’t done it right.” (p. 135) [emphasis in original] I also know that even as I am close to the completion of this exercise of writing, the learning and reflection will continue. Life is different now. My community has grown. My relations have increased. We, the participants and I, are now in a reciprocal relationship where I have responsibilities as a researcher to honour and hold their stories sacred and to ensure that I represent their stories as they intended.

I was humbled repeatedly as individuals shared with me the work that they have done or are currently doing. All of the participants spoke about either their commitment to a personal and/or a professional responsibility that they had developed throughout their course(s). I do acknowledge that this is not a surprise to me as these participants all self selected to engage with this research project; however, the words and the passion that they used to discuss their ally/solidarity work were inspiring to me, both as an Onkwehonwe person, and as an educator.
In sharing their stories, many participants stated that they did not know if they were living up to their understandings of Guests’ responsibilities. Some expressed that they felt they were not doing enough even as they spoke about sharing the learnings that they had gained from the course that they attended. I spoke with participants about an unspoken definition of what was ‘good ally work’. This idea that they were not doing enough, constructs ‘formal decolonial work’ as a goal that needs to be met. Since this goal might be considered lofty or elusive, many participants shared their ally work as being ‘not enough’ and apologized for what they saw as a shortcoming. Hearing so many individuals question whether what they were doing was ‘enough’ or disregarding the impacts that their work has had on others evoked in me a sense of sadness. The work of decolonization is not a project that will be completed by any generation soon and in order to address issues, there needs to be a commitment on both sides of the Wampum to walk our paths. It was my understanding that these individuals are doing good work and that they are using their education and knowledge productively.

In thinking and reflecting on how participants constructed or deconstructed their ally work, I feel that there are understandings of how vast decolonial projects are. It felt to me as if participants’ desire for change was immediate; that to be good allies they needed to facilitate healing and rebuilding of relationships ‘instantaneously’. Unfortunately, the structures of our society have created oppression and marginalization that is so deep and wide, that decolonization needs to be addressed at all levels of society. Intrapersonal and interpersonal reflection and re-education is an important first step in rebuilding Onkwehonwe/Guest
relationships, but the work does not end there. The commitment to decolonization is only a beginning.

In prefacing this final section of my data, I have decided to present it very differently than I have written the previous sections. I want to allow all of the participants to explore their thoughts on what it means to be an ally and to see how their work is disrupting colonization in as complete a way as possible. In gathering their stories via sharing circles, I am going to write this section of the data in the same way. I do want to acknowledge that this means of writing up the data was not planned prior to data collection but has occurred as an organic response as I have sat with the data. This sharing circle is being presented as if one circle with all participants occurred however, this is the result of multiple circles that all included the same questions. As participants spoke without interruption, there is a clear line between each contained individual statement.

Theoretically, in my methodology chapter, I spoke to how I see research as a sacred ceremony that would have many little ceremonies within the larger ceremony. This final section of data 'analysis' returns to this understanding of research as a ceremony. I am inviting you, the reader, to be a participant in this ceremony. In many sharing circles there are different roles for participants. There is sometimes an inner circle where people are able to speak and share and an outer circle where people are there to participate as witnesses and as community supporters. I would like, at this time, to offer you a chair in the outer circle to bear witness to the growth and commitment that the research participants share. It is my hope that as you engage with this sharing circle, you will challenge, analyze and sometimes laugh at how the
participants responded. I want it to draw you in, and inspire your conversation, questions and further thinking. Yours is not a passive seat in the sharing circle; it is an invitation to engage with this research from your lens. I hope that this will not be a one sided conversation but will draw you in and inspire your own thinking and analysis.

I want to maintain the integrity of the sharing circles in a way that gives an opportunity for every participant to speak and to speak until they are finished their thoughts. These understandings were part of the cultural protocols that participants engaged in, both in the courses they took and in this research project. As Kovack (2009) discusses, Onkwehonwe research methods “are more elastic, and this gives research participants an opportunity to share their story on a specific topic without periodic disruptions” (p. 124). In recording their stories as whole, the participants were able to provide context to their answers.

Contrary to the academic canon of research dissemination, I have not given an analytical introduction to the words that the participants have spoken, nor have I highlighted the sections or words that I feel have more ‘importance’. In the teachings that I have been given on sharing circles, what needs to be said in a circle will be said and that the other participants in a circle (and this will include the reader) will hear the words in the circle that they are ready and able to hear. As a subjective researcher, I will include my own voice and feelings after the participants have a chance to speak. My sharing will be a reflection of my own analysis as an educator and it will be my contribution to the sharing circle.
I would like to offer you, the reader, a space where your ears and your heart can hear and feel the words of the individuals that have supported my thesis. I have ordered the participants in the same order that they were introduced to you in the participant sketches provided at the end of the methodology chapter.

Ruth
The last two questions actually intersect and overlap so I would like to ask them together. What work have you done/are currently doing that you see as ally work? And how does your work disrupt colonization?

Olive
I think that I, that is a really hard question. I am going into my second year of my masters. I am really forcing myself to really think about where I am going. I think that coming into this degree I really wanted to get my degree, become a health promoter and work in… there is a part of me that wants to… I have a skill set that I want to share and work in an Onkwehonwe organization because I think that I want my work, whatever my life work is to be… I want it to be disrupting colonization but I am unsure of that path. I think that I thought coming into this degree, now that I know that I have a certain skill set and that I have a particular knowledge base and I have done some emotional work, not all but some thinking through relationships between Onkwehonwe and Guests but it is almost this feeling of I can do it and I think that I can do it with integrity and well. And better than some people [who have not had any education on Onkwehonwe topics] that go into this with no questioning or learning stuff along the way. I know that is their learning process but it is at the expense of people. So having that on the one side and having myself and overarching, wanting
to disrupt colonization and another side of myself that is like you are not, is it right to
go out and help in a helper role to Onkwehonwe people. I am not sure and I am questioning that and I am not sure if I can do it or will it make an impact, maybe. Is that really, will it make an impact or will it continue the cycle and make it worse? Will it be to satisfy my own ego and sense of myself? I am going to disrupt colonization through this means. And so I guess I do not know! I just hope and think that more and more I am leaning towards not necessarily wanting to work so intentionally in an Onkwehonwe community as a health promoter but to do more community work and have a particular knowledge set and approach and way of thinking at some point, or not, and it may come in handy in the ways that it comes in handy now like challenging Guests that are doing things that affects, well it affects everybody, but particularly Onkwehonwe people. And maybe that will come in handy and I will be able to disrupt colonization in unpredictable ways that I cannot even fathom right now.

Christine

I’m currently a youth worker and I think even though [my work] is not focused on the [Onkwehonwe] issues just in general, sometimes you know those kids will say something and in just my responses, so there have been times, kids have said something in relation to Aboriginal issues and we talk about it as it comes up. So even with family too and just friends, anything that’s said, just having that time to critically think about it and resist and not necessarily attack, cuz sometimes that’s the gut reaction to pounce on them, because it just really gets you going, but to at least have that conversation, ‘cause I think even the small little acts of resistance are
important. I think just because I haven't stopped education yet, I've gone from school
to school… I haven’t been able to get outside of the education aspects and start
doing more ally work in that sense, but for me, it’s purely been you know, integrating
that decolonization sense in my mind and into the papers that I write and the critical
analysis I do and the conversations I have and the topics we bring up in class and
just having that always be there, I think is, that’s what I've been able to do and then
hopefully, the further I go in the work that I do, integrating it more and having more
conversations and hopefully being in places where it's already happening.

Anne
With my grandchildren, trying to pass on some of what I’ve learned and expose them
to the experiences of Aboriginal Peoples. That’s part of what I’m doing, but I don’t
feel I’m doing enough and I’m not engaged enough right now, so that’s part of my
struggle is finding my place to do that.

Allie
So, I think that in going to the school that I did and wanting to learn from Aboriginal
people, I think how can you be an ally unless you are learning from the people that
you want to be an ally with? Because you cannot go and speak or impose your idea
of what is right or what is hopeful. So I think that learning was work towards being an
ally. I still feel very much like a learner. I am still learning about how I can be an ally.
I guess the organizations that I have worked for have been Aboriginal organizations.
I think that I have not been confident enough in my position or in my role as an ally
to use my voice too much. I think also that it is work… I think that in taking part in
marches and rallies and anything that is pertaining to missing and murdered Aboriginal women is something that is important for me to be involved in and to stand in support of. I will walk for reconciliations and things like that. And using my voice in general when there is a chance for it in order to shift peoples’ understandings, I guess. I think that giving voice to the need for decolonization and taking part in those discussions is one thing. Yeah. I think in terms of my [research paper] I want to do something that will be beneficial but not using my voice to speak for anyone but to critique and use critical social work to look at dominant institutions that seek to keep these power relations in play. I think that is something.

Janet

I moved around a lot, different communities, so I think the thread of actions going toward being an ally is predominantly been just being very reflective of the space that I’m taking up. Reflections of being an outsider and also looking at what I share in common, for example, working with [an?] Inuit Women’s organization as a woman and supporting the work that they were doing and that they identified as important and supporting that work. Also not applying to permanent positions, being on a contract, taking on such roles, supporting AGM and working with the community health centre, predominantly being a volunteer for the 2 years I was there. As I did mention, I took on a paid role as a contract as needed for the 6 months, so I think that’s a thread that’s gone through most of it, just being very reflective of the space that I’m taking.

To take a break from Ottawa, I took an opportunity to volunteer at Moose Factory for a month, which was an amazing experience which I gained a lot from but
then really putting in time to support the organization that was continuing after that time, moving forward with what I learned. So I think that's the biggest thread, is really trying to be self aware of the space that I take, I do acknowledge that I feel stuck sometimes… we are in a time when we need money, what does that mean with how I sustain myself, so I do acknowledge and I do feel stuck sometimes in knowing how to be an ally by being cognizant of the space that I take, whether it be paid or unpaid and what it looks like, so at this time, my paid role isn’t directly related to supporting any Indigenous communities, but with working with high school students, I’m so interested in our curriculum, so I feel that is a thread through a lot of our conversations and there is a new course for grade 11s, their English credit can be an Aboriginal course. So, I’ve really enjoyed those conversations with students about what they're learning and how they feel and what feelings they get from the instructor especially, I find that interesting, so how, I wonder, how deeply do the instructors care about the topic, because that's what’s being admitted, if students feel it’s boring, asking them why… watching movies, there was a guest speaking, we went on a field trip… like talking to them about that experience because it’s new for curriculum to do this… there’s a steep, steep learning curve for our curriculum to take, I enjoy those conversations with students. There is an organization near ours where a lot of Aboriginal Youth attend, so I’ve gone over to build relationship there… so lots of the staff are familiar that our organization is nearby, so if there are students that live in that geographic area, they can access the program I work with now. I feel a little bit stuck right now, in what it means for me to be an ally and it’s different from experiences that I've had before.
**Angela**

I think in my personal case, I think it that’s the nature of the work right? It’s the nature of, we talk about the Guswhenta and I talk about my understanding of it and how it’s only a beginning understanding. How I’m a part of it and how I need to learn my roles and responsibilities. Even the words [that I use], I’m really cognizant of words now right, that I use and I explain them and I say to them, the land we now call Canada. [Students are] all like ‘whoa, what are you doing right there’, or you know this land we now refer to as North America and things like that. Like the smallest things, I’ve become very aware of. I think those things, the words especially disrupt this processes, these things, things that we take for granted.

**Michael**

The first part of that question is a tough one for me, but I ended up after leaving OISE, doing a circle with a man that I had met and he grew up on a First Nation in Alberta near Edmonton. I’m not sure if that was ally work, but the circles were open to people of all denominations and there were men from all backgrounds (coughing hard to hear) but it was like yeah… I’m not sure if it was a grief circle or just a sharing circle, to bridge cultures and experiences by using the Aboriginal approach.

I want to be more of an ally, I have a couple of students, one who is Inuit and the other whose mother is Ojibwa. But they were adopted and I want to become a better ally in giving them, well, I just want to become an ally in the mental health field and become involved. Since my master’s I have worked in a few community-based organizations that use Indigenous perspectives to build community and that really feel like decolonization. That feels like disrupting colonization in that, we’re fostering
deep natural connection but also intergenerational mentoring which is huge and giving adults over the age of 55 or 60 the chance to become mentors in a way that they haven’t been able to become in their families or Societies, so we call them owls and so yeah, trying to recreate this village feel, that we might have once had. All with the intention of fostering a deep nature connection, maybe that term is a bit vague, but that feels like disrupting colonization (mumbling, hard to hear).

**Michelle**

I think I got two pieces; one is in my job work. I’ve been asked to look into some models in supporting international students and [I have] done some focus groups and what they’ve come back with is [the international students wanted] informally facilitated discussions [that were] based around an activity such as crafts or beading (laughter) and so instead of pretending that we invented something clever [participant being slightly sarcastic]… So, that is part of it, now I’m like okay, if we’re going to do this, let’s connect with the Aboriginal community and how can we co-deliver and develop this together, because why wouldn’t we? So that, trying to make sure that what we’re doing is bringing in all of the practices in the communities that exist, not segregating them out into different pieces. So, that was the one, and then, the second I think I’m not sure if it’s disrupting specifically Indigenous colonization, but it’s more about disrupting power dynamics and seeing other forms of colonization in discourse where certain groups of people have been deemed less powerful and but like, how I’m tying this to this discourse is that’s what I learned in this course and that’s how I learned to start to see things and then I’ve been able to
apply it to the rest of my life and see where there’s been these really harmful power
dynamics and start to really challenge those and bring those into awareness.

Paula

I think that the biggest [way I am decolonizing] would be in my [current] educational
program. I think that with nursing now, my first placement starting in October is with
public health in Toronto. It is a lot of health promotion, social determinants of health
and disease prevention and so on. They talk about a big part of it being vulnerable
populations and they include Aboriginal people, immigrants and all of that. I think
that having [the] knowledge in my undergrad with majors in health studies and
Aboriginal studies and bringing that into it [nursing] and sort of seeing how issues
like that are being played out now and how much importance they are. I remember
studying or reading about how many Aboriginal people accessing healthcare, when
they have encounters with the western health care system, doctors and nurses and
all, some, not all, do not have that trust there because of issues that have happened
in the past. And in seeing if I will encounter that and if so what can I do to… it is back
to responsibility.

Tyler

What I try to do in opening the space is to just show [how the laws and structures of
society act as] containments [to Indigenous self-determination] and the other part is
really to gesture and understand that the violence of colonialism was not something
that happened in the past. It happens all the time. This production of knowledge is
always being reproduced. Indigenous people continue to struggle and maintain
traditions, so it is important to remember that there are Indigenous people that
continue to enact their ways of being in relation to the world still today. It is not a tragedy of the past! We feel sad about it and in feeling sad about it, we can be cleansed by it. It is something that is happening right now and the political stakes are right now and we actually need to be understanding that right now when we enact this false recognition we close ourselves to understanding and we do violence in this moment to Indigenous efforts to continue to renew their traditions in the world today. And we need to understand that those other relationships are always still here and that when we are doing it, it is this moment and this instance that we need to take ownership so that when we talk about responsibility, which is what I am supposed to be talking about, coming in a circle back to, it is responsibility not just for history and the legacy of history as it is informed by that, but it is responsibility for the way we come into this moment in the world. Responsibility for understanding the violence that happened in this moment and taking ownership for and creating space to understand that Indigenous people continue to exist and continue with other ways of knowing here today. We need to continue to critique colonialism as something that is happening today. It happens in our departmental meetings, it happens in all of the governance structures and processes that we have, it happens in corporate boardrooms and it is happening in prisons! You know, in primary schools in both white and Aboriginal spaces. It is this diffuse thing that is enacted in many sites but it also has just as many sites as we can resist. And if we are taking responsibility we are taking responsibilities for all of the kind of relationships that we enter into and the spaces that we are in. I suppose that there are different strategies for resistance. I mostly use sarcasm.
I think that it is in those spaces that taking responsibility for the relationships that we are and also remembering that there are different relationships. I do not have all the answers, there is a degree that I need to be accountable to the people that are impacted by these processes to make sure that what I am trying to do is in concert with the ways in which they are trying to struggle and make sure that I am not speaking for them or like making myself the proxy, the voice of Indigenous self determinations because then I am just like a new form of colonialism. I think that is a dangerous slippage that a lot of ‘allies’ make.

Elena

I’m in a transition phase in my life and it is probably a daily question, what can I do? How can I go about it? You touched upon a little bit before, but how to do it in a respectful way? How to do it in a mindful way? I guess it was last winter, we wrote at U of T, it was a part Amnesty International…I tried to go to as many meetings as I could, but one of the first things we did, we wrote as a group, we got together one night, we showed this documentary that was playing and we wrote letters to Mr. Harper. No more stolen sisters! Whether or not he read them, he would’ve received a pile, there was a lot. I did my share on Facebook, I tried to, brought my friend along, she wrote a letter as well. That was one of my little acts of resistance, I’m glad I did it. It’s been… every little bit counts at least and I think coming from an institution like the University of Toronto, to realize you are receiving letters from people who are in the medical field and all these different fields coming together to do this, it shows that it’s not just people in Indigenous studies that are wanting to see this change, it’s a growing community that are getting sick and tired the more you hear
about these things, you want to see something happen, you want to see the system
wake up and the people making all these decisions and stuff. So, that was really
nice to see, just everyone from all these different disciplines coming together for that
3 hours, just writing it out. They’re sick of it. So, that was my latest act.

Julie

For me I feel like the main shift that it created for me is that it made me see
decolonization as being part of my responsibility, living where I do and just being
here. Yeah, it made me see decolonization as something that I had to participate in.
I hope that I have been more of an ally in my work, in my writing. Definitely in my
personal life, in the sort of everyday stuff on challenging assumptions and all of the
small and big decisions that we make about what’s important and what we should
pay attention to, it’s really, I think it’s played a role in my life in some ways, so I feel
committed to continuing to educate myself but also to always be looking for
opportunities to take action and sometimes that’s the tricky part because, because
I’m still contemplating asking myself that question of how, what can I do, like how
can I be, what’s my role as a guest, but maybe… maybe that’s an okay question to
be asking all the time actually. “What’s my role?” So, it made me much more aware
and supportive and I don’t know, vocal for example, like a couple years ago during…and even today, I’m much more linked in to Indigenous, what’s happening in terms
of resistance and it’s made me more, yeah, sort of paying closer attention to how I
can be supportive basically. I think.

Marie Louise
The Anishnabe course… I just wouldn't characterize it, cause it's a whole PhD right… It was the course work, the comps and it's been and plus other things, that's what I would call the course. So, in terms of my understanding of justice, because that's always been, since like a little kid, I've always had this thing about justice and fairness and that's why I did the undergrad in international development, not because I wanted to be an international development technician, but because I thought it would teach me why the world was unequal. But it didn’t really. Same with the MA, it did a little, but… so you know how I said I did the PhD because I wanted to know how Ontario can keep doing that (in reference to the Ipperwash crisis and continued failure to honour treaties)? After the first two years, I kind of know now, I’m ok now to move on to other questions It’s a story. There’s all kinds of things that feed it, like white supremacy, racialization, like settler colonialism, the law, the doctrine of discovery, the psyche, all these reasons, I could go off on that, but now I’m feeling like ok, I could teach that, and I don’t need to be stuck on it anymore. In terms of my interest in justice, I've learned about the linkage between colonialism and capitalism and patriarchy too, so back to when I was interested in the international context at the time, there’s still a lot of continuity, between when I was a 5 year old interested in justice to today, those threads, and when I was doing work in India, Cameroon, Sri Lanka, like it's all the same. This sort of enlightenment thinking, modernity, patriarchy and the colonialism that all grew up together, and white supremacy, they all feed today my life in Canada and my family’s experience. I re-placed, because every place, every geography, has different expressions of colonialism, and I feel super empowered to teach this stuff maybe one day and it helps me understand the
nature of this injustice where before it was this big question mark; so that’s cool, so that’s like teaching I guess and education and professional career is how I would go forward in decolonization work, just breaking down the stuff, people don’t understand that this stuff isn’t natural, this is all made up of institutions, history, blah blah… I feel like that’s a really great way to go, it’s going to take a while. Personally, I just want to talk a little about ways that it has informed what you should pay attention to and what’s important. For sure, the same with me, like learning some Aboriginal, or Anishnabe worldview stuff. I’m more interested now in home and place, like where I’m from and I don’t have the same desire to travel anymore. I don’t have a desire to be a world consumer you know, I’m way more conscientious of the idea that you can’t just pick up whatever you want from all cultures. I’m not as much of a consumer of stuff and like I’m more interested in how relationships to place and home are understood.

In my personal life, I feel motivated to learn more about what I can eat, what’s wild and how to grow food and I feel like I lead a pretty content life, just like living in Northern Ontario and learning these things and thinking through that capitalist colonial thing that’s led to so much injustice, everything kind, they work together, that these threads that I’ve always been interested in are all working together, you know what I mean. And of course, we could sit here for hours talking about the 4 quadrants and the circle and how everything works together, you know what I mean? So it’s a nice road to be on professionally and then personally. So, there’s always, only more and more resolution is what I’m seeing… it’s really cool.

Rosemary
So I’m the type of person to think, you never know what’s going on today, you want to backtrack so basically it was important that I took those courses and like I said before, it was a little bit of anger and curiosity mixed together that motivated me, so taking the courses, definitely was important to know where we are today and what has gone on today. I just have a curious mind in general and so I think just knowing, but I also think that one thing that I remembered growing up in school, Canada, the Canadian history was obviously very wrong, Canada itself doesn’t put a lot of emphasis on its land and on people. I mean, all people, but definitely Aboriginal people. It never did any of that. I remember when I was in school and finally in university, I remember getting exposed to that. I think that it was helpful for me to know what is this land and history because you can’t move forward without knowing the past and you can’t stand on a foundation, which you don’t know anything about. Believe me there’s still lots to learn. I’m not even close to knowing everything but I think it did definitely inspire me to continue to learn, continue to challenge and to be critical of things that happen and go, and have happened or happening currently.

Definitely the challenging piece is important for me because you can’t really challenge something that you have no clue about, you know? I think some of you have said how do you, what your role is and I think you’re always going to challenge your role, but I think as human beings you know if you saw some injustice going on, sometimes in another group, you don’t hesitate so why would you hesitate about Aboriginal discrimination that has gone on over the years and still goes on today?

You know, in terms of being an ally, a true definition of an ally is basically a friend. You can’t be an ally without knowing anything about a particular population, a
particular person, whatever it might be, and I think that was important to move forward. You can’t call yourself an ally unless you know a little bit, you’ll never know everything because we’ll never experience everything that another has experienced as you can never experience everything that has gone on obviously. We will never know everything, never know all the stories of everyone but the storytelling is very important because I think that’s what you do learn from. I will continue to be open, be honoured and be privileged if anyone wants to share a story with me or a topic with me or provide me with some information that I did not know about. I think that's, in terms of moving forward as an ally, I will always cherish that because it does align, be exposed to other people, you know other topics that have happened and I think it’s just being open as an ally and it just, like I said, continuing to challenge it.

**Joey**

Well, I found out as much as I could and then I found a way to live that way… I’ll keep my fingers crossed that you know, well if a conversation like this can happen, if a study like this can happen, then I have all hopes in the world because in my 10 years in the university, in the research world, I’ve never been asked how is it for the Aboriginal students in the class, but today, I’ve been asked how was it was for you in Aboriginal studies courses, well, it would appear there is a certain side that has some catching up to do, if I may be so bold… Has the university asked any of the Aboriginal students how they feel or how they felt in the last 20 years in the education stream? But, this is the way reversing colonization works? It's because I was presented with grace for the first time, that I felt, when I'm asked a question like this, that I take the time to come, I don't come to strange places with strange people
to sit around for 3 hours, at First Nations House,\(^{22}\) my favourite place to go sometime… but this was an important question that I’ve been asked for the first time and I’m hoping that on that parallel path, one day those questions will be asked another way, because once we have that happen, reciprocity doesn’t stop.

**Lisa**

I guess for me it is that kind of like understanding in the most direct place and definitely, what everyone has been saying about the decolonization of my own personal, my own mind, and way of thinking. Realizing, you know, about the difference between how I viewed Aboriginal people before I took the course to how I view Aboriginal people after taking the course. What may have been very problematic with how I viewed Aboriginal people before hand and you know I would try to share it with my family and friends to some extent when there were moments to… I think sometimes I feel like in the political aspect, I feel sometimes I might’ve been not keeping up my responsibilities for being an ally. I’ve gone to some different events in terms of nationhood and I don’t know but… again,.. feeling like sometimes what is the responsibility of being an ally and it needs to be something more and that, that’s something that was different in my motivation after the courses to how it is now and then I think of how it’s affected my work with my clients who aren’t Aboriginal.

**Thomas**

\(^{22}\) According to First Nations House website: First Nations House provides culturally relevant services to Aboriginal students in support of academic success, personal growth and leadership development. We also offer learning opportunities for all students to engage with Aboriginal communities within the University of Toronto and beyond.
There’s this one quote about people in academia being the dominant part of the dominated part of society. So, like we’re here doing our stuff, but it’s in the part that’s the weakest. But, I like to think that it’s hopefully just reminding people of that cause of, and solution to, all of the problems that we’re facing, in whatever contexts we’re working in that they don’t start and end with the Crown or the Canadian state! Then you can get into the details and you SHOULD get into the details but that there are other sources of authority. These sources are at the very least, they kind of mutually constitute what the structure that we have that we’re all living together, or in the case of people whose status is being taken away from them, whether under the Indian Act or the Immigration Act, you know, how we’re not living together.

I guess in terms of disrupting colonization, part of it is in terms of that work with questioning the migrant work programs, but in a way that doesn’t just sort of say that and we should just stop everything because that can be very exclusive to folks who don’t fit whatever the current criteria or the desirable traits are. At the same time we also disrupt colonization by respecting the fact that there are laws that pre-exist and that still continue, that have lots of things to say about hosts and guests, if we were able to hear that.

**Amanda**

On a personal level with friends and family, I find in that domain, I speak a lot more about it, because they know me and they know and I think we have similar interests, so we kind of, those discussions tend to flow more naturally, so yeah kind of through friends and family.
I’d say there are certain arenas or individuals that I may be around that I wouldn’t, like conversation wouldn’t tend to that direction naturally for sure, it’s like the people that I feel would have more understanding, I’m more willing to go there, so if I have to break through the ice, I may not. Really, I mean, my work before coming here was working with Aboriginal youth, so I’d like to continue doing that. I ran a mentorship program, so the value that I saw in that was unbelievable, so I’d love to go back and work in that organization but from a clinical capacity. Outreach work, you know. I really like the idea, I’d like to… my goal is one day to create a program where you do your clinical work while you’re outdoors, doing something... so, and I’m sure there’s you know, there’s things that happen like that in the communities anyways. I think connection, being connected to the land or being around or just in nature, outside of the city in nature... I’ve seen a huge shift in youth that I’ve been with as soon as we go for a hike or we go for a paddle or something like that, it’s just everything becomes more focused, more slowed down, more honest, more safe in a lot of ways so, I think there’s a lot of value in that which is why I like outreach work, it’s going to where the individual is, it’s not saying you come to me and so I like that idea.

Maya

In terms of my work life, I see it as, for example, we do programs with newcomer women and it’s one of education. But, not just of education, of normalization of actually naming it, so for example, if I’m doing a workshop and the women start identifying issues of racism or injustice…. I think it’s important to point out Aboriginal struggles so they can also make that connection and they experience, they have that
moment of shock because then it’s not just about me always bringing it up in an anti-oppression workshop but bringing it, but it’s me trying to mainstream it, I guess, trying to pepper it through out so. They’ll have a number of connections to or you know, pointing out, you know, my background is South Asian, pointing out to other South Asians, like yea, you realize we have Indigenous communities back home and they’re really badly treated and their natural resources are being stolen and we have residential schools back home in India, that continue today… when I was there a couple years ago, one of my aunts was talking about a residential school and she said, oh Maya, they dance so well, they clean them up and they dance so well and so I started talking to her about what happened here, and unfortunately, I don’t think I changed her mind, but at least I named it, so that’s sort of part of it. And this is a woman who is relatively well educated and, ironically and sadly, more progressive than most of my family, she casually mentioned that she had organized a Muslim-Hindu wedding for a young couple which is pretty impressive today and she organized a number of inter-caste marriages, so it’s not like, she’s your typical middle-class Hindu Indian woman and that was part of it, I had this really visceral reaction because she was, you know when she meant dance so well, it’s a Hindu dance, so it’s us doing the exact same thing. And I was really happy when I was there this time that I was able to find publishers, there’s a number of publishers now that are actually publishing Adivasi writers into English, so I now know how to access that material. So, I think in terms of work, it’s trying to… the big learning for me is you know if newcomers are brought here with this whole idea of the Canadian dream, and then we need to dispel them of that myth right and ironically it also helps
the fight for their equity as well because it’s not like they’re the newcomers and then the white settlers here are the Canadians, it’s like no, everybody’s a newcomer, everybody has as you say that responsibility, but we also need you to know that because and certainly with my colleagues here who are teaching English as a second language, pointing out that the white washed history that they’re given as immigrants of the Canadian identity and what’s behind that. So yeah

**Ruth**

As I have sat and listened to and read the words that have been shared, it has been a journey to be a witness to different and important ways that education has altered, supported and ‘added to’ individual participants.

I have many reflections and thoughts that I would like to share in response to what I have heard. I feel that those who have chosen to participate in this sharing circle underestimate the power of their contribution to decolonial work. I am not implying that for these individuals, their work is done or that they have reached the pinnacle of Guest/Onkwehonwe relationships (not that I truly know what that would look like!) However the commitment to be reflective, to examine their intersections and to integrate a decolonial sense or understanding within their own minds is powerful and fundamental work. The sharing of knowledge; be it correct terminology, history, or current struggles contributes to shifting the problematic discourse and dynamics that have been perpetuated through previous education, the media and current social policies. In the personal commitment to continual learning, these Guests are committing to occupy a space of shifting dominant powers.
That being said, when I reflect back on how Kathy spoke of students getting stuck in an emotional place, I also see that this has occurred for some participants. The emotional and spiritual challenges that participants spoke to as they engage in intellectual learning, positioned some students as reflective learners instead of pushing their learning into a reflexive self change. These are different ideas of how learning is internalized and processed. In self-reflection, the learner is asking thoughtful and intelligent questions about their learning. This learning will broaden an individual but will not alter them and their core understandings. Reflexive learning is transformative and will alter the individual as they deeply explore the implications of the knowledge within their core. It is these participants that have had a paradigm shift.

While I read and re-listened to the sharing circles, I also know that all of these participants have more to learn (as we all do) but I also know that the average post-secondary course is only 12 weeks long for 3 hours a week. Onkwehonwe professors are providing so much re-education and information in roughly 36 hours of teaching. As an educator, I have felt this contention. I want to share so much information and touch on so many topics, but due to the lack time, I find I must prioritize the discussions. I have joked that if I can get students to leave a first course just knowing how to use terms correctly, I would be happy.

I would also like to pay tribute to and recognize the role and the great work that Onkwehonwe educators have played in the re-education of Guests. In unveiling injustice Onkwehonwe educators have provided Guests with the confidence and
determination to engage in multiple spaces and arenas of decolonial work. It has been a great privilege to hear how this work has inspired and instigated change.
Reflections, Learnings and Places to Grow

This final section or chapter will turn and look back at my complete work to provide summary and reflection on my learnings to date while at the same time look towards a future where more Guests are engaged and learning about Onkwehonwe/Guest relationships. I have divided this chapter up into three sections that parallel the chapters throughout the thesis. I will firstly review each of the three areas of literature and discuss how I see this thesis engaging with each area of literature. Secondly, I will briefly state the key finding from each of my data chapters. Thirdly, I have developed a list of my own personal commitments that reflect my growth and understanding to the implications and scholarly contributions stemming from this work.

Future of Onkwehonwe Education

As I sit on this side of this ceremony, reflecting on all that I have learned, I need to acknowledge that while I have been invested and engaged here, there has been another ceremony that has occurred on a national level. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of Canada, lead by Justice Murray Sinclair, has gathered the testimonies from over 6750 witnesses of the Indian Residential School System (TRC, 2015). The TRC published their 96-point recommendations on June 2, 2015 in an open (and nationally broadcasted) event in Ottawa, Canada. The recommendations address a vast number of current and historic issues that need to be addressed, not just by Onkwehonwe people, but by all people that reside in the geo-political nation state of Canada. The TRC recommendations have implications for my work and the work of Guest people as there are recommendations that are
directed at the post-secondary education system and to my discipline, social work, specifically.

As my research has demonstrated, participants felt that they had little to no education or understanding about the history of colonial relations and the current and continual implications of these relations. I am very happy to see that one of the main tools that the TRC’s recommendations engaged with is education. The commissioners directly called for the education of social workers (recommendation 1), public servants (recommendation 57), and teacher candidates (recommendation 62) in addition to the adding of wording in recommendation 10.3 which charges the federal government to draft new legislation for Aboriginal education that includes “Developing culturally appropriate curricula.” This call to action is so important!

On June 29 2015, Universities Canada, an organization that represents 97 (out of the 98 publicly-funded) universities across Canada, released a document that outlines 13 principles that they, as post-secondary educators, strive to address. This document was inspired by, and in response to, the TRC’s recommendations. The TRC challenged educational spaces to step forward to help build an understanding within the greater Guest population as to the needs and responsibilities to reconcile the disparities and issues faced by Onkwehonwe communities. The stated commitments by Universities Canada aim to address the disparities in the educational attainment of Onkwehonwe people while at the same time rectify the lack of education that Guest people have in relation to Onkwehonwe issues and topics (Universities Canada, 2015).
As I started this thesis with a review of the history of Onkwehonwe education, I questioned the segregation of Onkwehonwe studies to only degrees focused on Onkwehonwe studies. I felt and still feel that these sites of education are foundational to supporting Onkwehonwe and Guest students, however, there also needs to be education on Onkwehonwe topics across disciplines. As my participants explained, having contact or a connection to Onkwehonwe individuals, communities and Nations inspired them to engage with an Onkwehonwe course. As these individuals self-selected, they already had an introduction, however, many Guest people do not have understandings of Onkwehonwe/Guest relations as the participants demonstrated in the discussions around their pre-understanding prior to enrolment in the first course. In participants’ evaluations of their elementary and secondary learning, they noted either a lack or very little understandings or problematic teachings. In not knowing what they do not know, it is possible that many individuals will not self-select to engage with Onkwehonwe education.

In studying teacher candidates, Nardozi and Mashford-Pringle (2013) surveyed their participants after they were exposed to a three-hour workshop on Onkwehonwe issues. Based on their findings, “it became clear that, for some teacher candidates, the workshops represent the only professional instruction about historical and current Aboriginal topics to which teacher candidates are exposed before entering their teaching careers” (p 8-9). This means to me that even though the majority of my participants all attended elementary and secondary school over a decade or more ago, the education system has been slow to change.
In thinking about the lack of knowledge, as explored by Nardozi and Mashford-Pringle (2013), a mandatory education course on Onkwehonwe topics would support a furthering of Onkwehonwe history, knowledges, and experiences. St. Denis and Schick (2003), however, discuss their trials and tribulations in teaching a mandatory course to preservice educators in Western Canada. Their article focuses on the resistance that many students, especially those that come from privileged locations, have engaging in anti-racist education. Many students question the need for this education as they do not see themselves as racist. During the course, the wholistic nature and pedagogy, as described in the article, creates an environment where resistance is moved towards understanding race consciousness. Even though St. Denis and Schick acknowledge that this move is a “difficult process for those who learn and those who teach” (p. 67), I believe that the inclusion of Onkwehonwe courses are fundamental in decolonial education.

In returning to the principles outlined by Universities Canada, I am excited there has been a recognition that not only are there inequalities in Onkwehonwe educational attainment but that there also are large disparities in the education of Guest people about the history and current issues faced by Onkwehonwe individuals, families, and Nations. In saying that this organization recognizes “the importance of providing greater exposure and knowledge for non-Indigenous students on the realities, histories, cultures and beliefs of Indigenous people in Canada” and recognizes “the importance of fostering intercultural engagement among Indigenous and non-Indigenous students, faculty and staff”, I am hopeful that more courses will
be developed to support a greater understanding of responsibilities to treaties and to Peace, Friendship and Mutual Respect.

**What is a Guest?**

I have been told by many Elders that in hearing a story or teaching many times, the listener will hear the teaching as they are ready to. In learning for the chapter that first explored what it means to be a Guest, I heard many teachings from Elders and Traditional Teachers. Sakeiota and Tewentahawitha gifted me with teachings on the Wampum Belts. Cyndy, Lee, Joanne, Blu, Hilton, Kathy and Amanda all offered much knowledge and many gifts. In reflecting back on the teachings that I gathered, I am honoured to see how my understandings have altered and shifted over the course of less than two years. I am so thankful for my growth as an individual and as a scholar.

I think of Cyndy sharing the history of her people as they first engaged with Guests. She spoke to exchanges that were between sovereign Nations and cultures where knowledge was respected as equal without one worldview being held as better than the other. In learning about different worldviews, participants were able to see that there needs to be an exchange and reciprocal relationships built.

Lee spoke to the intentions that individuals and groups had when they approached a community. She spoke to how they would bare their stories and histories in order to show good intentions when entering into a community. This baring of intentions was also an act that participants spoke about as they struggled to unlearn and relearn how and why they wanted to work with Onkwehonwe people. The baring of intentions was a space of great pain, reflection and growth for many
participants. I am so thankful that I have heard these stories. As Lee explained, once a Guest had been welcomed into a community, they were treated like family. I feel that my family and my community has increased due to hearing the entrance intentions of so many wonderful people.

These positive steps forward do not absolve Guests from continuing to learn and grow. Being welcomed into one Onkwehonwe space does not secure admission into all Onkwehonwe spaces; an “Entrance Song” will need to be sung every time individuals travel. There are also responsibilities to being in a community. As Joanne joked, “guests still need to clean up after themselves and learn to treat Onkwehonwe spaces with the same respect as their own.” These spaces are physical, emotional, spiritual and intellectual. And like Hilton’s teachings on the trees, there will need to be respect and cooperation to ensure that both trees can find the space and nutrients to grow as they need. This growth will be both upwards as the branches reach for the sky, but also will be below ground as the root systems of the trees anchor themselves within the Earth. Since the first meeting between Guests and Onkwehonwe people, there have been many incidences where Onkwehonwe people have been forced to cut off our roots due to colonial policies. The attempts at removal of roots are still a very real and present day struggle. It is going to take both trees working together to find ways to ensure that the Earth will be able to sustain their lives and the lives of their seedlings.

It is not mandatory that Onkwehonwe peoples, communities and Nations always agree with Guests but there needs to be a learning to respect the different ways of doing and thinking. We need to know each other, to teach each other, and
to work together to build reciprocal relationships that are based on Peace, Friendship, and Mutual Respect.

**Ally education**

In reflecting back to the literature that was reviewed on ally development, I am again drawn to Simpson’s (2010) words that were quoted in Chapter 4, where she discussed the importance of building relationships that centre different roles and responsibilities as foundational to working in allyship. She cautioned that without proper time to discuss differences, ‘tensions and misunderstandings’ can surface even within relationships that have honourable and good intentions.

The six steps on ally education that were outlined and discussed in Chapter 4 are revisited to explore the similarities and differences as reflected on by the participants. For the participants in this research project, relationships and individual reflections sparked the first step to learning. In my theory development, I would agree that the first step to Peace, Friendship and Mutual Respect is to connect and build relationships.

As I spoke to in my findings, I always bring a replica of Guswhenta and the teachings of the Two Row into my first meeting with students as a way to open up relationships that situate Peace, Friendship and Mutual Respect as central premises to the educational relationship. In the sharing circles, participants spoke to many different ways that professors/instructors opened the course or the classroom, from “Check ins and check outs” (Paula), “Starting classes with Smudging” (Anne), to “bringing in an intention of healing” (Angela). All of which helped to build relationships.
In Bishop’s (2002) work, however, she starts with the idea that individuals need to understand the historical implications of the oppression; its perpetuation and impact on individuals and structures. I would say that, yes, this is an important step, but I would situate it as a second step. After developing relationships, my second step would be to learn about the implications of ongoing oppressions and the history of colonial struggles and relationships.

Bishop’s second step is to understand that different oppressions might appear similar or contrary and that those different oppressions reinforce and maintain each other. This linking and contrasting of oppressions is an important step in ally building. Bishop uses words such as “hierarchy” and “competition” in an attempt to demonstrate the problematic nature of comparing oppressions. I found that participants in the research project had worked through this competition prior to our conversations. There was an acknowledgement of subjectivity that ties personal privileges to the political oppressions, clearly seen in a few passages of participants’ stories. An example of this subjectivity was how Thomas self-identified as “a racialized Southeast-Asian man and a Canadian citizen born on unceded Algonquin land”. By knowing who he is, he is able to state the contradictory identities of racialized person, citizen, and ‘settler’ without creating a hierarchy. Similarly, Maya also situates her understandings of racial struggles when she says “I am a racialized woman who is over-privileged to support other racialized women on stolen, fourth world land!”

The third step in Bishop’s theory is that the ally moves into a consciousness of how oppression impacts her/his life and strives to find healing from the impacts of
privilege and oppression within his/her life. In my research, this is an important step that participants discussed. The pedagogy used by the Onkwehonwe educators centred self-reflection and wholistic learning that included emotional, physical, intellectual and spiritual teachings. These ways of teaching are directly tied to Onkwehonwe worldviews that support balance and relationships.

The fourth step in Bishop’s theory is around liberation of oneself from oppressive mindsets. This was one of the strongest spaces that participants spoke about. The intention of healing and the self-reflective focus as demonstrated by Michael’s story with the frogs, really facilitated a space of liberation from the trappings of the Guests’ privileges. It is unsettling to have one’s worldview altered, but as Michelle shared, this was one of the most liberating aspects of the course she took. She learned not only a new understanding of worldviews; she learned what one was for the first time!

In Bishop’s fifth step she offers a list of eighteen ideas that an ally could possibly engage with, but she acknowledges that she cannot tell anyone how to be an ally. Her list is intended to support people in privileged spaces to feel empowered to support those in spaces of less power. Although this list is a starting point, I feel that it does not speak to responsibilities. On the other hand, Gehl’s (no date) list of ‘Ally Bill of Responsibilities’ speaks to similar understandings but challenges allies to be more critical about how the structures of oppression have impacted Onkwehonwe people, communities and Nations. Gehl’s work seems to be closer to the understandings of responsibilities that participants demonstrated.
Bishop’s final step is the most important and was embraced by the participants in this project. She titled this step: “Maintaining Hope”. I love this idea of being hopeful that in the future our world can be a place of social justice; that people, plants and all of Creation can live in Peace, Friendship and Mutual Respect.
Summary of Findings

In this final chapter, I review the major findings of my thesis project and reflect back on the original questions that started this work. This research project was designed to explore the experiences of Guest people in relation to courses that they have attended on Onkwehonwe topics. It focused on individuals that do not self identify as an Onkwehonwe person. The participants all contributed their stories in sharing circles that took place in Toronto, Ontario between September 2014 and April 2015. A total of 19 individuals shared their stories and experiences via sharing circles that were conducted by the researcher.

The research participants were from various demographic groups and although I collected this data to give the participants a voice in self-identifying, I found that there were a few sites of intersectional identity that provided me with pause:

- Three individuals identified as having a disability. One participant clearly linked how his disability aligned him and his thinking with Onkwehonwe worldviews.
- Four individuals identified as racialized or as non-white. Two of these four individuals situated themselves as ‘settlers’ with privileges over Onkwehonwe Peoples. I found this interesting as all four individuals that identified as non-white still held themselves to a responsibility to understand, acknowledge and provide context to who they are while at the same time calling out the complacency that being non-Onkwehonwe had occupied prior to their education.
• The participants that identified themselves as white, amazed me as they were able to articulate the privileging they had experienced at the erasure of Onkwehonwe histories and experiences.

• The two white male participants both commented and claimed their identities in ways that centred responsibility to educate and engage with Onkwehonwe issues and communities that used their power and privilege to benefit communities.

I started this research project to understand the motivations of participants for taking courses, their experiences throughout the courses and the impact, both personally and professionally, on participants. I asked questions that attempted to draw out the experiences of Guest students as they engaged in a post-secondary course on Onkwehonwe worldviews, knowledges and epistemologies that were instructed by an Onkwehonwe person who employed Onkwehonwe pedagogies. Also, I asked whether from their educational experiences, if Guests expressed an ability to build relationships and engage in activities that they felt demonstrated a commitment to advancing Onkwehonwe/Guest relations? And finally, I questioned whether these learnings stay with or impact Guests, even years later?

The key finding of this thesis is that when Guests engage in education that builds healthy relationships that respect treaties, these individuals live up to the roles and responsibilities that were explained by the Elders. In speaking to the Elders and Traditional Teachers, I was taught that responsibilities are not inherent, but are learned by individuals. There is a responsibility to teach
responsibility. This understanding became obvious to me as participants traced their educational journeys to date. As these Guests learned about historical and current implications on colonization, they also learned about the role that they have in the decolonization of the relationship between Guests and Onkwehonwe people, communities and Nations.

Key findings by data section:

Pre-understandings and Motivations. All participants discussed the fact that they had little to no knowledge about Onkwehonwe people, issues, and topics, either from a historical perspective, or from present understandings prior to attending the course that they discussed. Most of the education that came from elementary or secondary school was deemed incomplete or problematized by the participants. One of the other main spaces of pre-course knowledge came from the consumption of media (television, movies, and books) that portrayed Onkwehonwe people as either noble braves or vanishing populations. There was only marginal conversation about contemporary Onkwehonwe topics.

The primary motivator for engaging with a course on Onkwehonwe topics was personal contact with an Onkwehonwe individual, community, group, or Nation. This finding is in line with the teachings that the Elders gave me around the importance of reciprocal interpersonal relationships that assist in building an understanding of responsibility.

Wholistic Education. My key finding in this section is that pedagogy is imperative to the acceptance of knowledge and that wholistic education supports the personal reflection and healing of learners. This understanding reminds me of
the teachings that I have had about ceremony. It is said that when we sit in ceremony all aspects of oneself are engaged with learning, healing, and growing. Education has been said to be the White Buffalo (a symbol that I have been taught represents rebirth, hope and unity) (Stonechild, 2007). It is also reminiscent to the teachings on the record belt that Sakoieta showed me, ‘The coming of the people with white faces’ and how there is a promise to support Guests until they are ready to stand on their own. Education and knowledge that are wholistic is a traditional means of sharing. These forms of engagement impact individuals at a deeper level than just the intellect; Onkwehonwe education feeds them, nurtures them, inspires them, and sees them as whole people.

**Personal and Professional Growth.** One of the most profound findings from this section is that education from an Onkwehonwe perspective supports the personal and professional growth of participants. For many there was a trajectory of growth that started with guilt and anger towards the problematic relationship between Guests and Onkwehonwe people and culminated in an acceptance of responsibility to share knowledge with other Guests, support the political and self-determination of Onkwehonwe individuals and communities, and engage in continual learning and education. The movement away from anger and guilt towards acceptance of responsibility was discussed profoundly by many participants, however, this acceptance of responsibilities did not erase the anger or guilt but rather used it as cathartic fuel to transform and educate other Guests.
Ally Solidarity Work and Guest responsibilities. In the final section of the data, as I listened to all the participants discuss how they see their role and responsibilities as a Guest, I was moved by a number of ideas. Many times, in my personal life, I have heard Guest individuals state that they do not know what their jobs are in decolonization. The participants were able to provide me with ideas and words to offer other Guests. Even though many participants expressed feelings of not doing enough to support Onkwehonwe struggles, many were actively disrupting colonial thought and discourse in their own families, groups, and communities. Most participants considered this to be a small action, however, the more Guests that start to question the dominant education and seek other ways of knowing, the better our society will be.

One of the topics that I expected to be discussed at length, that did not come up in the circles, was the adoption or appropriation of cultural teachings and practices. Worldview was discussed at length, however, not one participant attempted to show me all of the cultural protocols or stories that they had ‘acquired’ in their course. This reflection made me very happy. I struggle, politically, with Guest people attending a course with the aim of learning ceremonies and culture. As an instructor I tell my students that I am not there to teach them how to be an Onkwehonwe person, I am there to support them in being an ally. An example of this is that I usually start my classes explaining Guswhenta and that this is a document that both Onkwehonwe and Guests have responsibilities to. I say that this was not a cultural teaching, because it is actually a treaty in which all people have responsibilities. I do not teach my
students how to smudge or other ceremonies that I might participate in. In my research, participants seemed to have a very good grasp on what their roles, responsibilities and rights are (what they had access to).

**Implications for future work.** There were a few discussions or topics that came up in the sharing circles that I feel the need to revisit in my future work and research. Firstly, Michael discussed being afraid that he would not be welcomed in an Onkwehonwe education space because of his social membership as a white man. I am interested in, if and how the fears of being judged as 'bad' has halted privileged people from engaging in Onkwehonwe courses. Secondly, I would like to scan and develop a better understanding on how the physical aspect of people can be more engaged within Onkwehonwe post-secondary education. As there are many different ways to include physical learning, I am intrigued to understand the in and out of classroom ways that other Onkwehonwe scholars have brought into course design.

A third area of study I would like to delve into is understanding how mandatory courses are taken up by students and faculty. The creation of mandatory courses in Onkwehonwe topics at the University of Winnipeg and Lakehead University are of great interest to me. Will there be resistance to the courses? Will students experience a re-education? Will there be negative reactions and implications? Will mandating the courses create a backlash against decolonial education? How will this education be decolonial? How will these courses support decolonial work? As an educator, I am very interested in evaluating the reactions and responses to mandatory courses across universities.
In looking towards future research, I will observe the impacts and implications that a required course in Onkwehonwe education has on classroom climate and safety.

**My Personal Implications (or what might be called Recommendations)**

In reflecting on all that the participants shared in this last section, I am humbled and honoured to be gifted and trusted with such personal thoughts. The impact that Onkwehonwe courses have had on the personal and professional lives of the participants has been so great; life changing for some! I respect that their roles and work to be agents of decolonial change are diverse and vast. As an educator and as a researcher, I need to situate myself in this circle that I am a part of and I have responsibilities to. Since I am unable to tell anyone else how to live their life, I am not making recommendations from my findings but am creating a list of commitments that stem from my reflections on this thesis work. This list of commitments strives to implicate my future work as an Onkwehonwe scholar. I want to humbly thank the participants for what they have taught me. Hearing their stories has also changed my life. Here is how I plan to live my life differently:

- As an educator, I will design courses that foster healthy and wholistic educational learning for Guest students. I will strive to mentor and support as many Guest students as possible.

- In designing courses, however, I will acknowledge the many different ways that colonization has impacted the Onkwehonwe students that I teach. I will not expect them to be the educators but to be learners. I will celebrate
all of their knowledges that they bring to class; if they decide to share their experiences and teachings.

- Since I am also personally impacted and committed to the education of Onkwehonwe students, I will also build reciprocal relationships that support the growth and the dreams of Onkwehonwe students, as my mentors have for me.

- I will support and encourage my Guest colleagues to engage their students in dialogues that enhance their own education and that of their students as to the responsibilities of being a Guest on this land.

- I will strive to build relationships that are mutually respectful and supportive with other Onkwehonwe scholars. I will acknowledge that I am a part of a larger web where relationships have multiple roles. I will seek advice and guidance from those ahead of me and I will offer support and mentorship to the ones that will come after me. I will also know that these roles are not fixed or stagnant.

- I will continue to research and develop scholarship that supports educational impacts and engagements in relation to Onkwehonwe courses and topics.

- As a parent, I am committed to teach my children to respect themselves and their roles and responsibilities as Onkwehonwe people.

**Scholarly Contributions**
I have attempted to structure and engage this thesis experience in a way that is organic to the woman that I am. I am fortunate that I have a supervisor and a committee that are encouraging of challenging the academic canon in ways that support the advancement of Onkwehonwe scholarship and worldviews in education. In the gathering of the Elders’ and Traditional Teachers’ teachings on what it means to be a Guest, I was able to acknowledge that oral knowledge and teachings are valid forms of information that can be gathered and disseminated with respect. Due to the work done by a great number of Onkwehonwe scholars before me, there was no question from my committee that utilizing research methodologies that stayed grounded in Onkwehonwe worldviews was scholarly.

As I write up the final section of my findings as a sharing circle, I feel that this has been a ceremony that I am excited to talk about, to share and to grow from! I hope that my work will support and inspire others after me.

I know that my learning from this thesis project is far from over. The growth that many participants spoke to during their courses did not end once the semester was over. For many participants there was a commitment to continue learning and seeking knowledge. This work will also continue to be a journey of learning, reflection and growth for me. In a private conversation that I had with Julie, a few months after her participation in the sharing circle she revealed to me about growths that she had not known at the time of the circle. In the interim between the sharing circle and our one-on-one conversation she had returned to school in a PhD program. She reflected on the fact that while in the sharing circle she thought that her intellectual growth from the course was over. However, as
she sat with the readings and discussions in her new course work, she found that the course on Onkwehonwe topics had impacted her thinking and how she links systemic issues, on a deeper level. The effects of her intellectual growth were not observed until much later. This return to growth is really interesting as it reinforces an Onkwehonwe pedagogical tool: reflection! I know that I have more to reflect on and I look forward to all that I will learn!

As I have been taught, at the end of a ceremony it is important to thank all those that have come, to offer gifts and thanksgiving, and to acknowledge the ancestors that are present and to send them back to the Spirit world. It is with a very humble heart and a full soul that I give thanks and wish you a safe and pleasant journey home. I thank you for the time that we have spent together. I thank you for attending this ceremony. Nya:weh Ko:wa
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Appendix A

Information form
Understanding Your Education:
Guests and Onkwehonwe working together to “Extend the Rafters”

1) How would you like to be addressed in the sharing circle portion of the research? What would you like other participants and I to call you? You are welcome to use your real name or a pseudonym.

2) How would you like to be identified in the written portion of the research project? You are welcome to use your real name or a pseudonym.

3) How may I identify your gender (pronoun usage)?

4) Would you like to provide any social location markers for me to use? (Race, sexual orientation, sex, gender, class, etc)

5) When did you attend a course on Onkwehonwe topics?

6) Where did you attend this course? (I will NOT use the name of the university but will describe it vaguely if need be. EX McGill would be explained as a large English university in Quebec or University of Saskatchewan would be described as a mid size university in the prairies.)

7) What was the topic/issues that were central to the course? (This does not have to be the course title. Was it a course on treaties, worldview, history, disciple specific, etc.)

8) Was this course at the undergraduate or graduate level?

9) Please provide me with an email address that will only be used to send you a copy of the transcript of this sharing circle and a copy of my final paper,
Appendix B

Research Questions
Understanding Your Education:
Guests and Onkwehonwe working together to “Extend the Rafters”

1) Please think back to before you enrolled in the course about Onkwehonwe Peoples, issues, knowledges. What was your perception of your education about Onkwehonwe Peoples?

2) Still thinking about before your course, what would you say were your feelings/thoughts about or towards Onkwehonwe Peoples?

3) Can you remember what your motivation was to enroll in your first course on Onkwehonwe topics?

4) Do you remember any of the topics/issues that were covered? If so, what were they?

5) What were your reactions to this course? Emotionally, Physically, Spiritually and Mentally?

6) I am not using the words ‘non-Aboriginal’, ‘settler’, and ‘colonizer’ in my work. I am focusing on the responsibility of Guests and Onkwehonwe as explained on Guswhenta. What do you see as your role as a Guest on this land?

7) Since taking this course, how would you say your understandings have changed?

8) Have you taken any other courses on Onkwehonwe teachings/learnings? If so, what were the topics covered? What was your reasoning for taking this other course?
9) How would you say this (these) course(s) have informed your role as an ally?

10) What work have you done/are currently doing that you see as ally work?

11) How does your work disrupt colonization?