AN EXPLORATION OF TEACHER CANDIDATE WILLINGNESS AND READINESS TO INCORPORATE ABORIGINAL CONTENT INTO THEIR TEACHING PRACTICE

BY

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Teacher education is a crucial site for the (re)education of the Settler Canadian public concerning Aboriginal perspectives on histories and current events. This thesis explores the infusion of Aboriginal content into one professional learning community (called Central Option) of approximately 70 teacher candidates at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education over the period of its Aboriginal infusion initiative (2009-2014). The research emerged from a framework of Participatory Action Research, Research as Ceremony, and Appreciative Inquiry. Our work was guided by the question “what strategies increase teacher candidate willingness and readiness to incorporate Aboriginal histories, current perspectives, and pedagogies into their teaching practice.”

Three instructors who led the Aboriginal infusion within the Central Option participated in one-on-one interviews which gave context to the decisions behind their efforts. Their experiences are interpreted based on the relationships which emerged when their transcripts were considered together in accordance with Wilson’s (2008) framework of *relationality*. The thesis positions those various relationships as the vehicle through which the work to further Aboriginal education within the teacher education program was carried out. Quantitative and qualitative data was also collected from the 2012-2013 cohort of Central Option teacher candidates through surveys at the beginning, middle and end of their program, and through one-on-one interviews with five candidates conducted twice that year. The findings are that the majority of candidates
entering into Central Option had little knowledge of Aboriginal content, and if they recognized the importance of including this material in their future curriculum, lacked the confidence to enact it. Strategies such as inviting Indigenous guest speakers into the program was a powerful tool for teacher candidate learning, as was in-depth instruction on current and historical events, and a continuous examination of privilege as means to prepare teacher candidates for incorporating Aboriginal content into their future practice. Comments reveal that a political understanding of Aboriginal perspectives often bolster teacher candidates to give Aboriginal content prominence in their future teaching. Candidates also indicated that more guidance and clear instruction on exactly what this material might look like in a classroom would be helpful to build their confidence and willingness.
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# Table of Contents

Abstract ................................................................................................................................. ii  
Acknowledgements ............................................................................................................... iv  

1. INTRODUCTION ................................................................................................................... 1  
   1.0 Introduction.................................................................................................................. 1  
   1.1 Rationale (Who Am I? Why am I doing this?) ......................................................... 3  
   1.2 Context ...................................................................................................................... 5  
   1.3 Research Site ............................................................................................................ 5  
   1.4 Research Question and Data Accumulation ............................................................... 8  
   1.5 My identity ............................................................................................................... 10  
   1.6 Outline of the Thesis ............................................................................................... 12  
   1.7 Overview of the Manuscripts ................................................................................... 14  
   1.8 Contributions to the Literature .............................................................................. 16  
   1.9 Overview of the Chapter ......................................................................................... 17  

2. RELEVANT LITERATURE ...................................................................................................... 18  
   2.0 Introduction .............................................................................................................. 18  
   2.1 Terminology ............................................................................................................. 18  
   2.2 The Context: Mainstream Teacher Education in Canada ........................................ 20  
   2.3 Mainstream Teacher Education .............................................................................. 24  
   2.4 Decolonizing Mainstream Institutions .................................................................. 26  
   2.5 What Is Appropriate Indigenous Content? ............................................................. 28  
   2.6 What Prevents Settler Teachers From Teaching Appropriate Indigenous Content? ... 34  
   2.6.1 Teacher Candidate/Teacher Identity and Indigenous Content ......................... 39  
   2.7 Why Do Non Indigenous Teachers Take Up Indigenous Content? ....................... 44  
   2.8 Transformation through Decolonization ................................................................. 45  
   2.8.1 Decolonization ..................................................................................................... 46  
   2.9 Summary .................................................................................................................. 52  

3. METHODOLOGY .................................................................................................................... 54  
   3.0 Introduction.............................................................................................................. 54  
   3.1 Participatory Action Research ............................................................................... 55  
   3.2 Research as Ceremony ............................................................................................ 60  
   3.3 Appreciative Inquiry ............................................................................................... 62  
   3.4 Research Participants ............................................................................................. 64  
   3.5 Ethical Considerations ............................................................................................. 66  
   3.6 Procedure ............................................................................................................... 67  
   3.6.1 Preliminary Phase ............................................................................................... 67  
   3.6.2 Phase One ............................................................................................................ 68  
   3.6.3 Phase Two ............................................................................................................. 69  
   3.6.4 Phase Three ......................................................................................................... 70  
   3.6.5 Phase Four .......................................................................................................... 71  
   3.7 Chapter Overview .................................................................................................... 71
## Appendices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appendix</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appendix A</td>
<td>Aboriginal Postsecondary Programs in Ontario – Teaching-Related</td>
<td>183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix B</td>
<td>Phases Of The Research Project</td>
<td>184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix C</td>
<td>Surveys Distributed To Teacher Candidates In Central Option</td>
<td>186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix D</td>
<td>Surveys Distributed To Teacher Candidates In Central Option</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix E</td>
<td>Information Letter To Central Option Students</td>
<td>195</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

“It is our view that in broad terms education has brought us to the current state of poor relations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples in this country. But it is also our view that education holds the key to making things better” – Justice Murray Sinclair on the Truth and Reconciliations Commissions’ findings

1.0 Introduction

This thesis, for me, represents the closing of a circle which began when I became a teacher candidate in the Initial Teacher Education program at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education in September 2007. The only thing I knew when I entered the program was that I was not called to become an elementary or a high school teacher. Having been surrounded by the profession since I was a child, by my mother, aunts, and many cousins who had each in turn taken up the role of educator, I knew that teaching was part of my identity. My particular path forward did not become clear to me until I took a position working in an educational camp setting in a First Nation community the summer after I graduated from that program. It was the relationships that I developed that summer, with myself, with community members, and with the land, that have continued to inspire the work that I do. That circle has, in the past five years, led me back to teacher education. Specifically it has led me to the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) where I have been invited to co-create space where Aboriginal histories, pedagogies and current perspectives are present and to facilitate discussion around Aboriginal-

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1 http://www.fnesc.ca/2012-provincial-conference
Settler relationships and tensions. It is these experiences and this work that informs the ensuing pages.

Many teachers lack knowledge of the Aboriginal histories, worldviews or pedagogies which would allow them to develop culturally relevant and responsive pedagogies for students who identify as First Nations, Métis or Inuit (Toulouse, 2006). This is also true for teachers who wish to assist all students, not just those who identify as Aboriginal, to develop understanding of Indigenous ways of knowing (Dion, 2007). Training in these areas has historically been missing from initial teacher education programs, as is discussion of the place of teachers within Canada’s colonial history and present (Cannon, 2011). In the quotation above, Justice Murray Sinclair, Chair of Canada’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission, implicates the Canadian educational system in the historical and present colonization of Indigenous peoples. However, he also highlights the great potential that lies within the education system – a potential that this thesis seeks to examine. Given the relative lack of Aboriginal content in the Ontario elementary and secondary curriculum, and the present (albeit limited) flexibility of in-class curricular choice available to teachers, whether or not Aboriginal content makes it into the hands of students depends to some extent on the willingness and readiness of teachers to bring that content into their classrooms.

My study ultimately explores this “readiness” and “willingness”. When exploring in terms of readiness I ask how ready teacher candidates feel to incorporate Aboriginal content into their teaching practice at the beginning, middle and end of their program? And what strategies and interventions used in teacher education elevate their feeling of readiness? Regarding willingness, this thesis investigates the degree to which teacher candidates are willing to teach Aboriginal content and explore their reasoning. My thesis documents one particular journey at
OISE to educate teacher candidates in a professional learning community called Central Option, which at the time had “Aboriginal Education” as one of its main foci. In 2012-2013, Central Option consisted of 70 to 72 candidates\(^2\), who were training to become primary/junior level educators.

1.1 Rationale (Who Am I? Why am I doing this?)

In 2008 I graduated with a Bachelor of Education from OISE’s Initial Teacher Education program (ITE). At that time, there was no overarching program within ITE to ensure that teacher candidates were aware of the colonial implications of Aboriginal history being left out of the Ontario curriculum, nor was there much systemic attention paid to the unique needs and perspectives of Aboriginal students. In the summer of 2008 I worked and lived in a Treaty Three First Nation community in north western Ontario. It was there that I began to realize what had been omitted from my mainstream education in Ontario. One way that I attempted to honour my friends and other members from that community who entered into relationship with me and trusted me to work in their territory was by initiating a research project with the community. The project (completed in 2011) was entitled *Perceptions of Postsecondary Education in a Northern Ontario Community* and fulfilled the thesis requirement of my Master’s degree.

I am from a family of Italian immigrants, and am a Settler on this land. After completing my project with that First Nation community, I wondered how I could work within the communities I belonged to in order to bring attention to Aboriginal histories and perspectives, and do what I later would come to know as decolonizing work. In the spring of 2011 I was first hired to work in the Deepening Knowledge Project (DKP) at OISE and in the fall of that year I

\(^2\) Enrolment in Central Option fluctuated over the 2012-2013 school year.
became the Project Manager. As a Settler in Canada, this project and my role in the DKP is the way I currently work within my own community (ITE and education in general) to promote decolonization, anti-colonial work, and to build stronger relationships with Indigenous communities.

It is important for reconciliation that non-Aboriginal peoples develop a decolonized sense of who First Nation peoples are and understand First Nations perspectives on the formation of the nation of Canada (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996a). In June 2012, I attended the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s meeting in Toronto as a youth delegate. Over the three days, one of the strongest themes that emerged from group discussions about what needs to happen in order for reconciliation to become a reality is the education of teachers and teacher candidates. That experience and the earlier words of Justice Sinclair inspired me and the research team that I am a part of to seek pedagogical and content-based strategies that we could implement within the educational institution at which we are employed. Our main goal became to increase teacher candidate willingness and readiness to incorporate Aboriginal Education into their practicum and future teaching.

Teacher education programs at institutions across Canada have begun to document and analyze their initiatives created to bring meaningful instruction in Aboriginal Education to their programs (Finney & Orr, 1995; Dion, 2007; den Heyer, 2009; Cherubini, Hodson, Manley-Casimir, & Muir, 2010; Vetter & Blimkie, 2011; Sanford, Williams, Hopper & McGregor, 2012). This study adds to the growing body of literature around such programs by providing a more in-depth look at what makes candidates willing and ready to incorporate Aboriginal content. It highlights both quantitative data across one cohort, including the voices of teacher candidates both on surveys and in interviews. It also documents the stories behind the creation
and development of the Option that housed them. The results will benefit and have benefited the teacher education program at which I am currently employed, and have an influence upon those in other parts of the country as results are published and disseminated at conferences.

1.2 Context

When this project began, there was no mandatory inclusion of Aboriginal content in Initial Teacher Education in the province of Ontario. Mandatory inclusion in ITE had been implemented in other provinces such as British Columbia\(^3\) and Saskatchewan. Only in February 2015 did the Ontario College of Teachers add an extended section on First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Perspectives, Cultures, Histories and Ways of Knowing in their accreditation guidelines to be integrated into newly extended teacher education programs by September 2015. The Ontario context also includes various Bachelors of Education Programs which are directed specifically to Aboriginal teachers. These include the Aboriginal Teacher Education Program at Queen’s University, the Native Indian Teacher Education Program at UBC and the Aboriginal Teacher Education Program at Six Nations Polytechnic on Six Nations territory (See Appendix A).

1.3 Research Site

The research for this study was conducted between September 2012 and June 2014. Since the beginning of this project, much has changed at OISE, but all the programs that I am about to describe were open for the duration of this study. The Initial Teacher Education (ITE) program prepared teacher candidates for a career of teaching, and successful candidates were awarded a Bachelors of Education (B.Ed.). During the late 1990s and 2000s, OISE had one of the largest

\(^3\) http://www.educ.sfu.ca/abcde/documents/abcde-ruralschooling-ab-ed-te-07-08.pdf
ITE programs in Canada, with over 1200 teacher candidates graduating each year between 1998 and 2010. The program was split into two streams. The consecutive stream required candidates to have already acquired an undergraduate degree prior to admission. It admitted the largest number of teacher candidates until it was closed July 1, 2015. Within this program was a smaller program which involved teacher candidates who were admitted to teach technical subjects in high schools, and successful entrants had a minimum of one year of work experience in their field. The second stream is the concurrent program, where teacher candidates are able to simultaneously acquire an undergraduate degree and B.Ed. at the University of Toronto completing both bachelor’s degrees over 5 years. Candidates in this stream enrol in teacher education courses and those offered by their other program. The concurrent program or CTEP was open at the time of writing, but is currently being phased out, and is not accepting new applicants.

The Master of Teaching Program (MT), which previously ran alongside these programs, is now the major available pathway to elementary or secondary teacher certification at OISE. The program is two years in length and has both practicum and a major paper component. The MT combines teacher certification with graduate studies, and may lead to a doctoral program.\(^4\) Finally, the Dr. Eric Jackman Institute of Child Study which is affiliated with the University of Toronto has a two year Master of Arts in Child Study and Education program which also includes an Elementary Certificate of Qualification from the Ontario College of Teachers.\(^5\)

OISE is a signatory to the ACDE Accord on Indigenous Education, which has committed the institution in part,

\(^4\) http://www.oise.utoronto.ca/mt/
\(^5\) http://www.oise.utoronto.ca/ics/M.A._Program/MACSE_Program_Welcome/
To challenge existing curriculum frameworks and structures in order that they may engage learners in experiencing the Indigenous world and Indigenous knowledge in a wholistic way. To include Indigenous wisdom-keepers and knowledge holders in curriculum development and renewal activities. To promote the development of culturally responsive curricula and to infuse Indigenous content and ways of knowing into all curricula at all levels.” (ACDE, 2010, p.5-6)

Prior to the Deepening Knowledge Project beginning its work in 2007-08, there was no systemic effort to infuse Aboriginal histories, worldviews or pedagogies into the Initial Teacher Education Program at OISE. Indeed, the efforts of the project remained the central advocate for this work in the B.Ed. stream until the program was closed.

The Deepening Knowledge Project (DKP) began as an initiative of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education to embed Aboriginal worldviews and pedagogies into a large one-year consecutive initial teacher education program. Since 2008, the DKP has grown from a program to develop lessons incorporating Indigenous understandings for OISE’s consecutive B.Ed. Program, to an initiative offering presentations for teacher candidates in all streams of ITE, a website of resources for teaching Aboriginal perspectives in all curriculum areas at all grade levels, and workshops for instructor development. Members of the Deepening Knowledge Project began collecting data about teacher candidates’ knowledge of Aboriginal information in 2010. We also distributed evaluations after presentations to learn more about the level of knowledge teacher candidates entered the ITE program with, the level of confidence they had teaching Aboriginal content, whether or not they felt Aboriginal content is important to their future teaching, and whether or not they are inspired by the in-class presentation to learn more about the topics covered. The feedback we obtained from these evaluations inspired the team to
conduct more in-depth research, to learn more about teaching strategies used within ITE which inspire teacher candidate willingness and readiness.

While there were as many as 10 to 15 cohorts or professional learning communities within the consecutive stream of the B.Ed. program in any given year, Central Option was the only one to take on a mandate to provide consistent infusion of Aboriginal topics. In 2009 the lead instructors of the Option, one of whom is a member of DKP, independently took on a mandate to focus on Aboriginal content within their program. Other stated focuses of the Central Option included drama and conflict resolution. Year to year, this cohort consisted of approximately 70 elementary teacher candidates, all of whom were training to teach Primary and Junior levels of education, encompassing grades K to 6. Teacher candidates who were enrolled in the Central Option had various reasons for choosing the cohort, and most often were placed into it after ranking it their second or third choice of cohort. Some teacher candidates reported not knowing about Central Option’s Aboriginal focus until after the school year began. The relationship between the Central Option and the Deepening Knowledge Project, and the reality that the Central Option was the only cohort at OISE that had a stated and consistent focus on Aboriginal content, means that the Central Option was an ideal site of study for this research.

1.4 Research Question and Data Accumulation

This document is presented in Oxford or Manuscript style, consisting of three publishable peer-reviewed papers. The main research question to guide the three separate papers is: What content and pedagogies used in a teacher education program increase the readiness and willingness of teacher candidates to incorporate Aboriginal content in their teaching practice? The first manuscript (chapter four) focuses on the experiences of selected instructors who were
the main architects of the Aboriginal content infusion in Central Option. It explores their motivations, documents their experiences within the cohort, and records their insights into motivating teacher candidates to take up Aboriginal content. Data for this manuscript were collected from the instructors using semi-structured one-on-one interviews, and were also based on my observations of the Central Option collected over my time as Project Manager of the Deepening Knowledge Project. Chapter four sets the context for the following two, which focus on the 2012-2013 cohort of Central Option teacher candidates, and their learning about Aboriginal content and pedagogies from their experiences in Central.

Manuscript two (chapter five) explores data around “readiness:” how ready do teacher candidates feel to incorporate Aboriginal content into their teaching practice at the beginning, middle and end of their program? What strategies and interventions in Central Option elevated their feeling of readiness? Finally, the third manuscript (chapter six) explores the concept of “willingness” to teach Aboriginal content and the reasons why teacher candidates said they are willing or not willing to include it in their practice. Three surveys which were distributed to the Central Option cohort during the 2012-2013 academic year provided both qualitative and quantitative data for both of these manuscripts. Five one-on-one interviews were conducted by members of the research team. These interviews did not provide as robust of a picture of the knowledge, attitudes and perceptions of the teachers candidates as the surveys did. The surveys captured a range of opinions from candidates who were eager to bring Aboriginal content and perspectives into their teaching to those who were uncertain or did not see that material as important for their students. The candidates who volunteered to be interviewed only voiced their enthusiasm. Perhaps because of the anonymous nature of the surveys, the feedback felt more representative of the group than the small sample of five candidates, and so that survey content is
featured most prominently in chapters five and six (however, the interviews did contribute to the identification of themes during the analysis process).

1.5 My identity

I am the first daughter of Italian immigrants who came to Canada after the Second World War. Throughout the project I strove to recognize when and how my privilege as a White, upper middle class, female affected how I approached situations and how I incorporated information I receive (Max, 2002; Nardozi, 2011). Regan (2010) outlines important considerations for settlers working and researching with Indigenous communities arguing that, “settlers cannot just theorize about decolonizing and liberatory struggle: we must experience it, beginning with ourselves as individuals, and then as morally and ethically responsible socio-political actors in Canadian society” (p. 23-24). I was initially thrust onto a decolonizing path when living in the aforementioned First Nations community. I have continued that journey in my own life personally, socially, professionally and academically. Part of this journey is my continuous exploration of the ways I have accrued privilege living in Canada and benefitted from the oppression of Aboriginal peoples. In the words of Nishnaabeg scholar and activist Leanne Simpson, as a settler and a Canadian I, among other things, “directly benefit from Indigenous poverty” (Klein, 2013). While this project does not directly involve an Indigenous community, the content which was being delivered to the teacher candidates was necessarily informed by Indigenous people and communities through relationship, and through their writing and scholarship. Community members also became involved in Central Option when brought in as guest speakers and sessional instructors. With respect to these questions, I cannot take on the role of academic and expert, but continuously strive to fully embrace the role of listener (Regan, 2010).
In 2011, Dr. Kathy Broad (then Executive Director of the Initial Teacher Education Program) and Dr. Jean-Paul Restoule (Associate Professor in Aboriginal Education) hired me as a consultant to the OISE’s Deepening Knowledge Project (DKP), whose members aim to infuse Aboriginal histories, ways of knowing and pedagogies throughout the Bachelors of Education Program. My preliminary responsibility was to work with Angela Mashford-Pringle, who identifies as an urban Algonquin woman from Timiskaming First Nation, to deliver presentations to individual classes on Aboriginal histories, cultures, and current experiences. Together we have written about our work on these presentations and our feedback from teacher candidates (see Mashford-Pringle & Nardozi, 2013; Nardozi & Mashford-Pringle, 2014).

The presentations were designed to spark the curiosity of teacher candidates so that they might seek out and learn more about Indigenous perspectives independently of their formal studies at OISE. Dr. Broad and Dr. Restoule believed that the workshops should be co-taught by both an Indigenous and a Settler instructor to model a positive working relationship to teacher candidates. Having an Indigenous person on that team was essential to provide First Voice testimony, and to direct the presentation content and lead the team. I was specifically hired because I was a graduate of the OISE’s ITE program, and because of my experience working in a First Nation community. Dr. Broad and Dr. Restoule thought that non-Indigenous teacher candidates might be better able to imagine themselves taking up Aboriginal content in their classrooms through my example of a Settler person engaged in this work.

In September 2011, I was given the additional role of Project Manager. My new position expanded my responsibilities to include overseeing the administration of the DKP, the creation and development of an online repository of teacher resources, support teachers in their questions about Aboriginal curriculum, and to build relationships between the DKP, OISE, and the greater
University of Toronto community. In September 2012, I began the Ph.D. program in Adult Education and Community Development in the Department of Leadership, Higher and Adult Education with the goal of supporting the work of the Deepening Knowledge Project through an increased emphasis on research and scholarly reflection on our work and impact on the ITE program.

1.6 Outline of the Thesis

This thesis documents the manifestation of the Aboriginal focus in Central Option, through the eyes of three of its core instructors. It then explores the development of teacher candidate willingness and readiness to teach Aboriginal content over one academic year in Central Option. In this chapter I have introduced myself, my reason for taking on this research, the purpose and rationale of this research, and the context that unites the research together.

Chapter two explores literature and government policy related to Aboriginal content in curriculum and initial teacher education in Ontario. I begin by setting down relevant terminology. I then explore the Canadian context with respect to Aboriginal education, and how it manifests itself in mainstream teacher education. I look at efforts to decolonize mainstream institutions, ask what Indigenous content should be taught in school and who should we look to for direction. After this my review explores Settler teacher candidate willingness, asking why some take up Indigenous content, and what prevents others from doing so with a special look at identity. Finally I ask, what does transformation have to do with it, and how can it occur?

Chapter three explores methodology related to the three manuscript chapters, specifically Participatory Action Research, Research as Ceremony as outlined by Shawn Wilson (2008), and
Appreciative Inquiry. It also looks at the research procedures, and the stages of the project, documenting the timeline within which they unfolded.

Chapters four, five and six are the chapters based on the data collected and submitted as publishable manuscripts. They will be discussed in greater detail shortly.

In the final chapter of this thesis, I discuss the limits of the three studies presented in the thesis. I also provide thoughts on future exploration and research stemming from and related to this thesis. I then explore the implications for teacher education and in particular the impact of the study on Central Option. The chapter concludes with a discussion on the capacity for teacher education to facilitate experiences of transformation related to teacher candidate willingness and readiness to incorporate Aboriginal content into their practice.

The three manuscripts which make up chapters four, five and six are connected by the site of research, Central Option. They are also connected by their exploration of strategies, curriculum and pedagogies which increase teacher candidate self-reported willingness and readiness to teach Aboriginal content. They were completed at different times throughout my Ph.D. program and reflect the best available scholarly literature available at the time. The first manuscript (chapter four) was actually the final piece to my writing puzzle. Written in the winter of 2015, it is a direct look at the Aboriginal infusion in Central Option, based on insights from three of the main instructors who developed curriculum and taught in the Option. While it was written last, in the context of this thesis it sets the stage for the research that follows. I have edited this manuscript for length and submitted it for consideration to the Canadian Journal of Education. In order to provide the most comprehensive look at the data which emerged from the interviews, it appears here in its longer format.
The next two manuscripts are based on surveys and interviews with one cohort of teacher candidates from Central Option in 2012-2013. A condensed draft of chapter five was submitted to OISE’s Inquiry into Practice program in August of 2013. It was then subsequently expanded and published in the journal *in education* in their Spring 2014 edition. The third manuscript in chapter six was written to prepare for our team’s presentation at the OTF/OADE conference in February 2014. It appears in this thesis in an expanded form which will be submitted to the journal *Teacher Education* for publication. Below I give an overview of each of the three chapters.

### 1.7 Overview of the Manuscripts

The first manuscript is located in chapter four and entitled “*Exploring Relationships while infusing Aboriginal content into Teacher Education.*” Wilson's “*Research Is Ceremony*” (2008) inspired the approach of examining the relationships activated when engaging in a process of infusing Aboriginal perspectives throughout OISE/UT’s Central Option. In 2009 Central Option began to incorporate an Aboriginal focus into its curriculum, along with its other focuses on drama and conflict resolution. The manuscript looks at the relationships between Central Option and the institution, the instructors in Central to one another (and to the material), between Indigenous and Western content and pedagogical methods that have been enacted in Central, between the students and the instructors, between Central and Indigenous peoples and communities and within the student community, and the significance of these relationships to the Aboriginal content infusion. Examining these relationships gives rise to a full picture of the strengths, weaknesses and challenges that emerged with respect to the infusion of Aboriginal histories, perspectives and current events into Central. I share this approach which has been helpful to our work and hope it provides insight to others involved in bringing Aboriginal
content into existing programs and inspires them to examine relationships that are developing and changing.

Chapter five contains manuscript two, which focuses on the data collected from Central Option’s teacher candidates in 2012-2013. It is entitled “Deepening Knowledge to Inspire Action: Including Aboriginal Perspectives in Teaching Practice” and was published in both OISE’s Inquiry into Practice released in 2014 and in the online peer-reviewed journal in education in 2014. It explores the research OISE’s Deepening Knowledge Project undertook within the Initial Teacher Education program to explore the relationships between teacher candidates and Aboriginal content. Our research question was: Which strategies used within OISE’s Central cohort are most powerful in increasing teacher candidates’ willingness and readiness to incorporate Aboriginal knowledges and pedagogies into their classroom practice? Data consisted of surveys administered to approximately 70 teacher candidates at three key points in their program as well as two rounds of interviews with five purposively selected participants.

The third and final manuscript in chapter six is entitled “Teacher Candidate willingness to incorporate Indigenous content into teaching practice.” It explores the data on willingness that was collected from that same Central Option cohort in 2012-2013. The research specifically on willingness has revealed a variety of Settler teacher candidate attitudes towards Indigenous content in the classroom, including some deep misunderstandings and underestimations of Indigenous Nationhood.
1.8 Contributions to the Literature

The review of the literature available in the fields relevant to this thesis is provided in chapter two. With respect to the specific topic of teacher education and Aboriginal education, the existing literature consists of some description of programs that are available. It also includes accounts provided by scholars of assignments they have used to encourage (mainly Settler) teacher candidates to explore their relationship with Aboriginal peoples and communities. Others have explored the challenges and resistances they and their colleagues have encountered both within their departments and within the teacher candidates they instruct when addressing Aboriginal topics. However, my review found that no one had yet looked directly at what is working (or not working) with respect to the goal of encouraging more teachers to explore Aboriginal histories, perspectives and contemporary experiences within their classrooms.

Chapter four contributes a comprehensive look at Aboriginal content focus that instructors in the ITE program (and members of the Deepening Knowledge Project) created in Central Option. Until now this work has remained undocumented and largely unrecognized in the greater OISE community. It does so using the novel approach of describing the Central Option through the lens of the relationships which were involved in creating and fostering the Aboriginal focus of their program. This approach emerged from my reading and interpretation of the instructor interviews which contributed to this paper, and was inspired by Wilson (2008)’s ground breaking concept of relationality.

Chapters five and six of this thesis directly explore what sorts of pedagogical and content interventions lead to an increase in self-perceived teacher candidate readiness and willingness to incorporate Aboriginal content into their teaching. They underscore the importance of having
Indigenous peoples represented as instructors and guest speakers in teacher education, and make the case for having a variety of overlapping strategies in order to reinforce teacher candidate learning. These two manuscripts also bring to the surface the attitudes and perceptions of candidates when confronted with Aboriginal education, including what might be holding them back from a more in-depth inclusion of the topics in their teaching practice. It is my hope that by revealing these perceptions, other teacher educators may be able to anticipate and address them in order to increase the effectiveness of their initial teacher education programs.

1.9 Overview of the Chapter

In this chapter I have given a brief introduction to the topic of teacher candidate willingness and readiness and why it is relevant to the field of education for both Indigenous and Settler peoples today. I have introduced myself, what has drawn me, as a Settler on this land, to the field of Aboriginal Education, and explained how my connection to the research stems from my previous professional experience both in a First Nation community and working in the Deepening Knowledge Project at OISE. I have also outlined the research question, described the rationale and provided the context for this research. In order to create fluidity throughout this thesis, I have introduced the three manuscripts, described them individually (including a brief explanation of their data sources), and have described how they are connected to one another. I then gave an outline of the entire thesis, explaining each of the three manuscripts separately. Finally, I have explained how the individual manuscripts contribute to the existing literature on teacher education in teaching Aboriginal topics. I am excited to share with you, the reader, the exciting and hopeful findings this study has uncovered.
CHAPTER 2
RELEVANT LITERATURE

2.0 Introduction

The following literature is crafted around the following questions: What are some present initiatives within mainstream teacher education programs to incorporate Indigenous Education? What discourses within teacher education undermine these efforts? What can the decolonization of mainstream, institutions and their programs look like? What do Indigenous scholars and community members want mainstream students to learn about Indigenous peoples? What prevents teachers from taking up this appropriate content? What brought teachers who do strive to take up this content to do so? What is decolonization? How are educators trying to facilitate the process of decolonization for teacher candidates within teacher education programs?

2.1 Terminology

To ground this discussion it is important to make clear the meaning of terminology including “Settler”, “Indigenous”, “mainstream”, and Indigenous Nationhood. The Assembly of First Nations, a political organization representing status Indians, based in Canada, views the term Indigenous as a general term, “collectively used to describe three distinct cultural groups known as the “Inuit”, the “Metis” (sic), and “First Nations”” (AFN, 2002, p.1). In Canada, the collective term Indigenous is often used interchangeably with the terms “Aboriginal” and “Native” (AFN, 2002), and so in this paper I often use Indigenous and Aboriginal interchangeably. According to the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (no date), due to the diversity of Indigenous peoples around the globe, “the most fruitful approach is to identify, rather than define indigenous peoples” and no official definition of “indigenous” has been adopted by any UN-system body (p.1). The United Nations use the following to form their
understanding of who Indigenous peoples are: “Self-identification as indigenous peoples at the individual level and accepted by the community as their member; Historical continuity with pre-colonial and/or pre-settler societies; Strong link to territories and surrounding natural resources; Distinct social, economic or political systems; Distinct language, culture and beliefs; From non-dominant groups of society; Resolve to maintain and reproduce their ancestral environments and systems as distinctive peoples and communities” (p. 1-2). While this definition is useful for the purposes of the United Nations, and in general the purposes of this thesis, I acknowledge that requiring Indigenous nations to be defined as being from “non-dominant groups” is limiting in terms of the future prospects of nations, and indeed contradicts current scenarios such as in the Plurinational State of Bolivia where Indigenous peoples have taken positions of power within the government.

In using “Settler” I am referring to a person (or whose ancestors) or whom themselves came to land already occupied by Indigenous peoples as part of the process of colonization. Barker (2010) uses the term Settler to refer “in general, to any non-Indigenous individual who is living on Indigenous lands and participating in contemporary Euro-American society. It is a term that attempts to break free of totalizing racial or ethnic signifiers such as ‘white’ or ‘European,’ while still recognizing the influence of race and heritage in identity construction and social privilege” (Barker, 2010, p. 329). Finally, I use the term mainstream to refer to the values and assumptions commonly accepted by North American society, which currently reflect Euro-American norms. In terms of teacher education programs, mainstream programs are those whose curriculum and pedagogies reflect the assumptions and values of current North American society.
During the first winter of the Idle No More movement (2012), a portion of grassroots peoples adapted the acronym INM to indicate Indigenous Nationhood Movement. At the time, the now defunct nationsrising.org was the centrepiece for Indigenous Nationhood and defined their beliefs as follows: “Indigenous self-determination and autonomous nationhood; Re-empowering traditional governments; Defending and protecting the natural environment and all living beings; Reclaiming, renaming, and reoccupying Indigenous homelands and sacred spaces; Restoring nation-to-nation relations with Settler people and governments; Learning and teaching Indigenous languages, traditions, ceremonies and knowledge; Eliminating all forms of violence within Indigenous communities, including violence based on gender and sexual orientation” (Unsettling, 2013). Āpihtawikosisān, also known as Chelsea Vowel emerged as one of the voices during that time. She writes about Nationhood as an active process arguing that it is “not a final destination it is a process of strengthening relationships—and claiming space” (Vowel, 2013).

2.2 The Context: Mainstream Teacher Education in Canada

There is currently a movement towards greater incorporation of Indigenous content into education programs across Canada. In 2004, the Council of Ministers of Education Canada (CMEC) declared Indigenous education a priority, recognizing that “existing curricula and teaching methods do not sufficiently reflect Aboriginal needs and values” (Council of Ministers of Education Canada, 2004). In 2010, the Association of Canadian Deans of Education released their Accord on Indigenous Education which echoes the sentiment that within teacher education programs, “Indigenous Education and Indigenous knowledge systems are marginalized and have limited application to students in general” (p. 4). As signatories, universities across Canada have

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6 While the Nations Rising website where these ideas were originally posted is no longer active, I center this definition to privilege the voice of this grassroots collective which I now believe to be working in their own communities to achieve these goals.
committed in part, “to provide opportunities within all teacher education programs for candidates to have authentic experiences in a variety of Indigenous learning settings” (Association of Canadian Deans of Education, 2010, p.8).

Inclusion of Indigenous content and pedagogies in the school curriculum at all levels is crucial to create a basis of understanding between Indigenous and Settler peoples. Inclusion could potentially contribute to moves towards reconciliation and relationship building as Settler peoples develop a decolonized understanding of who First Nation peoples are and their unique perspectives on the formation of the nation of Canada (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996b). Teacher education programs at institutions across Canada have begun to document and analyze their initiatives created to bring meaningful instruction in Indigenous Education to their teacher candidates (Finney & Orr, 1995; Dion, 2007; den Heyer, 2009; Cherubini, Hodson, Manley-Casimir, & Muir, 2010; Vetter & Blimkie, 2011; Sanford, Williams, Hopper & McGregor, 2012). These articles explore initiatives taken in mainstream teacher education programs which mainly consist of Settler teacher candidates, and analyze their impacts in the short term on teacher candidates and/or programming.

Den Heyer (2009) documents initial conversations around taking up new curriculum in the province of Alberta that required central themes such as “identity” and “citizenship” to be explored through both Francophone and Indigenous perspectives. Den Heyer reports that many in the province felt “ill-prepared to enact” the policy, observing that

Issues related to Aboriginal perspectives also elicit difficult emotions that reflect a colonial legacy, ongoing land disputes (including land from which great oil and gas wealth is currently being extracted), and material and symbolic divisions between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Alberta. (p. 344)
The article reveals an uncertainty among faculty as to how to instruct candidates with regards to Indigenous content. It was observed from comments and evaluations that there was a tension between student teachers’ “desire to teach about – rather than learn from – Aboriginal perspectives” (den Heyer, 2009, p. 351). This tension was reflected in the general lack of recognition that the process of learning something new within the initial teacher education setting modelled a pedagogical tactic that could be used in the classroom (den Heyer, 2009).

Like den Heyer, Donald (2009) is a scholar at the University of Alberta, and was invited by instructors to give presentations (two hours in length) to Secondary-level teacher candidates, on the topic of Indigenous perspectives on the new Social Studies curriculum in Alberta. Donald was effectively “parachuted into the classroom unaware of the context or previous discussions” (Donald, 2009, p. 31). He reports that the teacher candidates “rarely engaged with these issues in ways that would indicate that they felt” the presentation was interesting and provocative (Donald, 2009, p. 31). Donald praises the authors of the new curriculum for “linking Aboriginal perspectives with larger topical issues like globalization, nationalism, democracy, ideologies, and Canadian history” but notes that it has caused a “particularly high level of stress for Social Studies educators” (Donald, 2009, p. 28).

The teacher education program at Brock University, in St. Catharines Ontario, has also reported on their efforts to encourage their teachers to take up Indigenous content in their classrooms, with a focus on decolonized curriculum, which promotes the self-determination of Indigenous peoples (Cherubini, Hodson, Manley-Casimir and Muir, 2010). Significant developments are reported such as “innovative programming in Aboriginal teacher education offered at a distance at locations across the province, partnerships with Aboriginal groups and First Nations, language programming, a vibrant Aboriginal Education Council, unprecedented
increases in the number of Aboriginal undergraduate and graduate students, as well as a research centre” (Cherubini et al., 2010, p. 343). Their Tecumseh Centre for Aboriginal Research and Education has brought together Indigenous community partners, scholars, and students and has partnered with York University in Toronto and the University of Waikato in Hamilton, New Zealand (Cherubini et al., 2010, p. 344). The authors identify three possible sites of greater work on Indigenous content that all Faculties of Education in Ontario can take up, including Continuing Education to reach in-service teachers, Pre-service Education where they call for the infusion of more Indigenous content above their efforts during Brock’s Social Issues days, and Graduate Possibilities, for those educators wishing to further their knowledge of Indigenous Studies and Education through graduate work (Cherubini et al., 2010). Finally, they acknowledge the important role of Indigenous professors who are “intimately connected to their communities” in this work (Cherubini et al., 2010, p. 347).

Vetter and Blimkie (2011) documented the efforts of infusing Indigenous content into one cohort of teacher candidates located at the Barrie, Ontario site of York University. There, non-Indigenous instructors modeled “not knowing” as a pedagogy in their teaching of the content, in an attempt to create a space between lack of awareness and zealous desire to appropriate in order to “right past wrongs” to their teacher candidates (Vetter & Blimkie, 2011, p. 178). They also allowed candidates to submit assignments that communicated learnings through a variety of mediums in order to encourage and “implement pedagogy that engaged and developed all four dimensions of learning” (Vetter & Blimkie, 2011, p. 181). Based on the work of Poole, (and reminiscent of the concept articulated by Ermine [2007]) instructors created an “ethical space” where all student, community, and instructor participants, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous were listened to without judgement in order to move candidates “away from a
place of ‘not knowing’” (Vetter & Blimkie, 2011, p. 180). As part of the program, students completed placements in First Nation communities both in Ontario and in other parts of Canada, where they often stayed in the homes of community members to develop relationships and gain greater insight into the community (Vetter & Blimkie, 2011, p. 179).

2.3 Mainstream Teacher Education

The initiatives above all describe isolated interventions, which fall short of permeating throughout entire pre-service teacher education programs. Despite constant change and so-called innovation in teacher education in Canada, these programs continue to echo the European model of education, which is built upon neoliberal ideals of schooling and ultimately remain a colonizing space (Sanford, Williams, Hopper and McGregor, 2012). These neoliberal foundations carve out a space that is counter to Indigenous worldviews in that they value “linear over cyclical progression, competition over collaboration, dualism over complexity, and product over process” and indeed, disadvantage not just Indigenous learners but also “(do) not accommodate the learning needs of many students” (Sanford et al., 2012, p. 20). Shahjahan (2011) argues that a colonial discourse permeates the entire profession of education, and notes that in Britain, the United States and Canada, arguments are made in favour of civilizing the profession, which is painted as savage and/or backward, and in need of Western/scientific reasoning. Shahjahan (2011) also documents that in these contexts there has been an increase in emphasis on so-called “evidence-based” and outcomes-based educational policy and practices, which “continues to perpetuate colonized power relationships” (p. 197) because what then constitutes evidence, data and learning outcomes, and whom this evidence matters to, is defined by European cultural assumptions and histories (Shahjahan, 2011; McConaghy, 2000). These
colonizing discourses are certainly present within the Ontario context, for instance within recent policy documents which target Aboriginal students and claim to aim for their success, but continue to define terms like success using mainstream criteria (see for instance the Ontario Ministry of Education’s: Ontario First Nation, Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework [2007], Building Bridges to Success for First Nation, Métis and Inuit Students [2007], Aboriginal Perspectives: A Guide to the Teacher’s Toolkit – Teaching Resources and Strategies for Elementary and Secondary Classrooms [2009]).

Multiculturalism is another dominant discourse present in teaching and teacher education. The Canadian policy of multiculturalism initiated in the 1970s “has resulted in some practical benefits and relief” such as a climate of tolerance towards people of colour more so than other Western Nations (Wilmot, 2005, p. 68). However, as a policy it “has had a significant negative impact on organizing around anti-racist demands by converting racism into race relations” and supports “neo-liberal political-economic policy in propelling the rightward direction of our society in the last few decades” (Wilmot, 2005, p. 69). The assumptions behind multiculturalism are heavily criticized by many Indigenous community members, Indigenous scholars, and their allies for erasing their history and unique position within the nation of Canada, and for furthering colonial ideals and contributing to further assimilation (Kanu, 2011; St.Denis, 2011). By asserting a discourse of racial and ethnic equality, multiculturalism denies the existence of White supremacy, while simultaneously erasing Indigenous responsibilities to land which have existed since time immemorial. As a result of its assumptions, Indigenous peoples are positioned as ethnic minorities which is in itself a form of colonialism (Curthoys 2000 and Short 2005 cited in St. Denis, 2011, p. 311).
Within classroom settings, teachers and teacher educators can call upon the set of assumptions that underlie multiculturalism to deny Indigenous histories, and claim that coverage of Indigenous content should not take up more time than any other “special interest” or “minority” group. For instance, in her study conducted with non-Indigenous teachers in Hawaii, Indigenous scholar Kaomea (2005) noted that one participant had reframed the Hawaiian studies curriculum into a multiculturalism approach so to stress to the students (in her words) that “we are all immigrants here” (p. 37). One site in Waldorf (2012)’s study of the OISE’s teacher education curriculum in the Secondary Consecutive program was the School and Society course, where issues of social justice are most likely to be addressed in our university’s Initial Teacher Education Program. While the course varies depending on the biases of the particular instructors who teach it across the program, her study of course outlines and associated readings found that the most prevalent discourse related to Settler Colonialism and Indigeneity across the program was “that the nation state is a good and necessary vehicle for addressing social inequalities” (Waldorf, 2012, p. 65). OISE’s program is thus not exempt from colonizing discourses that deny Indigenous histories and sovereignty.

2.4 Decolonizing Mainstream Institutions

Instructors at the University of Victoria’s teacher education program are on a journey to decolonize their offerings and move away from a focus on neoliberal and multicultural discourses. They have taken steps towards adopting an Indigenous framework for their program, one specifically based upon Lil’wat conceptions and ideals (Sanford, Williams, Hopper & McGregor, 2012). Instead of fully replacing Eurocentric thought and modes of operation with Indigenous concepts, they argue that their new framework is more inclusive in that,
Indigenous education draws on an organic metaphor for learning that includes diversity as an asset, creating spaces to value and nurture multiple forms of knowing and ways of being in the world. As such, Indigenous education would embrace Eurocentrism as another form of knowing rather than the form of knowing. (Sanford et al., 2012, p. 22)

This change began tentatively with a course entitled “Learning and Teaching in an Indigenous World” led by Lil’wat scholar Lorna Williams. The course has had many iterations, beginning with a Pole Carving course, and includes the “Earth Fibres” course documented in Tanaka’s thesis (2009). The experience of this course has resulted in the University of Victoria’s teacher education program offering numerous other courses with an Indigenous focus, an option for an alternative practicum, the creation of inquiry courses, and different grading procedures to encourage cooperation in some courses (Sanford et al., 2012). Many of these new initiatives are built on the foundation of a number of Lil’wat principles which encourage self-directed learning, community building, and other holistic practices (Sanford et al., 2012, p. 23). The authors feel this is an indication of dramatic movement in the culture of the entire program, offering as evidence that,

Shifts can be seen and felt in the way the program is offered, the ways in which students’ contributions to the program have been recognized and valued, and the ways in which Indigenous ways of knowing have become integral to the overall program. (Sanford et al., 2012, p. 25)

At the time of writing, no other mainstream teacher education program serving mainly Settler teacher candidates in Canada besides the University of Victoria has documented such comprehensive efforts to decolonize their entire program.
2.5 What Is Appropriate Indigenous Content?

There has been and continues to be a dearth of information and education on Indigenous worldviews in the elementary and secondary school curricula across Canada. A report by the Coalition for the Advancement of Aboriginal Studies published in 2002 entitled Learning about Walking in Beauty found that two-thirds (67%) of “students across Canada may never have discussed issues of “current concern” to Aboriginal Peoples in Canada in their elementary or secondary classrooms” (Canadian Race Relations Foundation [CRRF], 2002, p. 109). The report also found that 80 per cent of young people are dissatisfied or strongly dissatisfied with existing Aboriginal Studies curriculum (CRRF, 2002). Finally, and perhaps most tellingly, survey results indicated that students who rely on school as their primary source of information about Aboriginal Peoples were most poorly informed about this content, compared to those students who learned the information tested in the study’s survey through personal reading, popular culture, personal contact with Aboriginal communities, and newspapers (CRRF, 2002, p. 107).

OISE professor Jean-Paul Restoule conducted follow-up research in selected elementary and secondary classrooms in Toronto in order to note any changes since the CRRF’s report was published in 2002 (Restoule, 2008). Using similar survey questions (adjusting for grade-level appropriateness), with approximately 275 elementary and secondary students, Restoule (2008) found that

The results of the survey in 2008 show that student awareness of Aboriginal issues remains low, with 80 per cent reporting they had inadequate opportunity to learn about these issues and 74 per cent reporting no understanding of current Aboriginal issues. (p. 6)
A notable challenge reported by the author was that some principals declined their schools’ participation in the study due to their confidence that their teachers and subsequently the students did not have a good working knowledge of Aboriginal issues (Restoule, 2008). Taken together, *Learning about Walking in Beauty* (2002) and Restoule (2008) indicate that schools in Canada are not presently ensuring that students come to an accurate understanding of Aboriginal Peoples.

For the purposes of my work, taking into consideration my identity as a white, Italian-Canadian woman who grew up in Markham, Ontario, I believe it is important to listen to voices from Indigenous communities, including scholars, activists, and educators when planning curriculum. The following questions were of interest to me in this review: what do Indigenous peoples and their allies think of what teachers are teaching and what is being taught in mainstream teacher education programs? What do Indigenous peoples want Settler teachers to teach? What are practices and content Indigenous people and their allies want included and what practices and content is less important to them? And what are those pedagogies and content pieces which people are divided on, or that seem acceptable or not based on the context that they emerge from?

In *Learning About Walking in Beauty* (2000), the authors identified what they felt curriculum content about Aboriginal topics presently looks like:

At a bare minimum, it is fair to say that Aboriginal histories and cultures are conventionally presented in Canadian curricula as quaint, curious, exotic, and past tense – the underlying message being that all one can learn from them is their “old way” of doing things” rather than then communicate the reality that “Aboriginal people had, and still have today, their own distinct and valid social and political
systems, spirituality, family structures, personal and collective responsibilities, and customs. (p. 76)

It is clear that the assumptions described above are out-dated. Indigenous peoples wish to see a more complex portrayal of themselves, their histories, and their current concerns in the curricula (CRRF, 2002). According to St. Denis (2011), Indigenous teachers want their non-Indigenous colleagues to develop

A more meaningful understanding of what it means to incorporate Aboriginal content and perspectives. As one (Aboriginal) teacher stated, “when non-Aboriginal teachers ask us to deal with Aboriginal issues, they expected us to make bannock.... They don’t really understand how to make it meaningful. (St. Denis, 2010, cited in St. Denis 2011, p. 314)

It is this inability to think beyond bannock (and I would add tipis and totem poles) on the part of Settler teachers which I would argue indicates the presence of elements of Dion’s (2009) Perfect Stranger identity, which will be discussed later on. These ideas also stem from and lead to tokenistic use of Indigenous peoples in classroom and community settings. Graveline (1998) argues that a one-off invitation to dance, sing or share their stories decontextualizes Indigenous peoples from their communities, and reifies the Eurocentric notion that one voice speaks for all (p. 120).

Not only are Indigenous peoples tired of the oversimplified portraits of themselves in the curricula, the literature indicates that they also find some of the messages about their communities and cultures in the curricula offensive and misleading. Situated in Hawaii, Indigenous scholar Kaomea (2005) observed non-Indigenous teachers who taught the required curriculum about Native Hawaiians and was dissatisfied with what she saw. She identified three
main themes that were being transmitted through the lessons of the non-Indigenous teachers: the
notion that Indigenous Hawaiians were savage and waged unnecessary wars among themselves
that would have killed them off if colonizers had not intervened; the image of Native Hawaiian
society having rules which were random and brutal; and the idea that the rulers of Indigenous
society were unfit to rule and unjust in their actions. Kaomea (2005) also noted the use of
outdated textbooks in the classroom which reiterated colonial discourses, and the use of
inappropriate examples for comparison for Native Hawaiian society that only served to cast its
customs and attributes in a negative and overly savage light (for instance comparing the Native
Hawaiian judicial system to the system of punishment in place at the school rather than the
American judicial system) (Kaomea, 2005). In her work observing teachers, Settler scholar Kanu
(2011) found that her Settler teachers participants did not include a critical examination of the
colonial history and present of this nation. She rather found that the teachers couched the
material in a framework of multiculturalism, which as mentioned earlier, she and other scholars
find problematic (Kanu, 2011).

The presence of material in classrooms which offends Indigenous peoples and that they
consider simplistic and stereotypical is a real concern given Canada’s colonizing past and
present. Teacher education is the one common requirement that all potential teachers must clear
in order to enter the profession, and would be an ideal place to address these concerns. The
reality that such damaging material is being perpetuated by the school systems explored in the
literature brings up real questions about how training is currently done around Indigenous
content in pre-service teaching programs. It also challenges us to think of how it might be
changed in the future to bring about attitudes, curriculum and pedagogies which are more
acceptable to Indigenous peoples and those who stand in solidarity with them.
Indigenous scholars and their allies have also registered critiques of bodies of scholarship and educational movements for their treatment of Indigenous concerns. Calls for Indigenous cultural revitalization in the education system are problematic according to St. Denis (2004), who argues that while such a movement is seen “as a cure for systemic social inequality” (p. 41) a sole focus on the need for culture denies the existence of colonization, and places the blame on Indigenous peoples. This is evident in terms such as “language loss”, which masks the fact that Indigenous languages were effectively stolen from, beaten and tortured out of Indigenous peoples (St. Denis, 2004). St. Denis (2004) further argues that “the focus on cultural revitalization helps to distract and minimise the effects of racialization and racial discrimination, in Aboriginal Education” (p. 44), all the while absolving Settler peoples and teachers from their complicity and responsibility. Ultimately, a focus on cultural revitalization encourages a fundamentalism, and denies Indigenous peoples and communities the ability to change and grow and still be labeled “authentic” (St. Denis, 2004). Criticism has also been levelled at much antiracist education and scholarship which has historically left out an analysis of colonialism, and the particular claims of Indigenous peoples (Lawrence and Dua, 2005).

What does appropriate content about Indigenous histories, culture and current concerns look like? And what approaches should be used to enact this curriculum within the classroom? To replace disrespectful, colonizing and racist curriculum, the authors of “Learning About Walking in Beauty” proposed a list of learning expectations (available as an appendix to the report), based on their vision of

A critical pedagogical shift, which focuses on moving away from compartmentalization of separate study units on Aboriginal Peoples towards the
integration of Aboriginal perspectives and content across the curricula in Canadian classrooms. (CRRF, 2002, p. 70)

These learning expectations fall under the categories *Aboriginal World-View Since Time Immemorial, The Era of Colonization, Many Nations/Many Stories, Decolonizing and Rebuilding, Development of Will and Volition (Aboriginal Pedagogy) or Personal and Social Growth of Student (Canadian Pedagogy)* and bring together a set of complex understandings of both concrete events and concepts related to Indigenous worldviews (CRRF, 2002). In the excerpt below from *Learning about Walking in Beauty*, the team of authors give a general overview of their vision of what a new curriculum would look like:

Young Canadians must gain a knowledge base about where Aboriginal Peoples are going in their efforts to remove the damaging structures and barriers resulting from colonization. This information will bring Aboriginal Peoples into the present time and will help explain the TV news reports about protests and rights disputes or the news they read in print media about youth suicides and abuses in Residential Schools. An understanding of contemporary spiritual, cultural, economic, political and social issues, events, trends and customs will help develop insightful learning and critical analysis. The dynamic presentation of these issues in the classroom, together with vibrant, positive presentations of contemporary Aboriginal cultures, will enhance self-esteem and provide Aboriginal students with opportunities to gain a broader knowledge base on the issues facing their communities. It will promote and develop critical analysis skills, and provide the information required to tackle the many problems facing Aboriginal communities today. It will build understanding, pride, respect and, ultimately, justice. (CRRF, 2002, p. 77)
It is clear then, that the authors behind *Learning about Walking in Beauty* believe appropriate Indigenous content is not only meant for Indigenous students to gain a better understanding of their history and present circumstances. It is meant for all Canadian youth to learn this information in order to counter the racist structures that are still prevalent in Canada today. According to McConaghy’s (2000) analysis of various traditions of Indigenous Education (grounded in the Australian context) the educational goal of disrupting the products of colonialism emerge from a *Postcultural Postcolonial* approach to Indigenous Education in that it strives to bring out “an understanding of particular sites of colonialism and its material and social consequences” (p. 266). For curriculum like that proposed by the authors to be taken up, Settler teachers (who are in the majority) need to act as facilitators with respect to this information. This idea is explored in the next section.

### 2.6 What Prevents Settler Teachers From Teaching Appropriate Indigenous Content?

Some scholars note the duality of importance and difficulty which comes when attempting to prepare Settler teacher candidates to teach this material. Smith (2014) argues that it is important for Settler teacher candidates, even those training to teach at the primary/junior level, to “think beyond myopic understandings of a simplistic world” because “when teachers see the complexity and myopia of some of their historic, geographic, and political commitments that they can then make such complexity available to their students” (p.33).

What does it mean to be willing to take up Aboriginal content in your teaching practice? What does it mean to be ready? In this study, willingness refers to whether the teacher candidates feel Aboriginal content warrants a place in their curriculum – that is, they understand the importance of the content for all Canadian students, and that they are eager to do so. Readiness on the other hand refers to level of competency: do they know the material and do they have
strategies to teach it? When participating in the surveys which provided the data for this research teacher candidates were able to define those concepts for themselves (see chapter three). In section 2.6 below, I explore how these concepts are framed with respect to Aboriginal content.

What does it mean to be willing and ready to teach Indigenous content? While perhaps not named explicitly, the literature documents roadblocks to teaching this content which I believe can be sorted into the two concepts. Scholars and educators have identified a number of perceived barriers which prevent non-Indigenous/Settler teachers from including appropriate Indigenous content in their classrooms (for instance, Blood [2010], Deer [2013], Kanu [2011], Kaomea [2005], Kerr [2014], and Zurzolo [2010]). Blood’s (2010) study of Settler science teachers attempting to incorporate Indigenous content in their curriculum reported that many factors inhibited their efforts including: lack of confidence, lack of knowledge of Indigenous content, lack of ability to access members from the Indigenous community, lack of school support, lack of professional development opportunities, lack of knowledge of what they are exactly supposed to teach (which I believe culminate into unreadiness) and lack of initiative to ask for school support and a lack of comfort with teaching the subject because they are not Indigenous, which constitutes unwillingness to teach this content. Sometimes within the literature, willingness and readiness are written about together under the banner of confidence. Kanu (2011) documented a lack of confidence in teachers to address Indigenous subject matter in class, with teachers worried about whether they had “the right” to teach the material as non-Indigenous teachers (Kanu, 2011, p.180). Deer (2013) also noted that apprehension among non-Aboriginal people, and adds that non-Aboriginal pre-service teachers he interviewed with respect to their integration of Aboriginal perspectives expressed a fear of failure, discomfort with the subject matter, and guilt, which I understand as feelings which may contribute to unwillingness.
These feelings in turn prevent candidates from seeking out the information to become more ready to teach Aboriginal perspectives. Kanu (2011) and Kaomea (2005) also found that teachers felt they did not have the time to include more Indigenous content into their curriculum. By some accounts this unwillingness to incorporate Indigenous content manifests itself in teacher education. In her work in a pre-service teacher education program in Toronto, Ontario, Tarc (2011) found her candidates became “visibly anxious” when she asked them “to consider the possibility of incorporating Aboriginal history in their classroom teachings” (p. 358). She links “their nervous and defensive reactions to (her) suggestion of national and collective wrongdoing in this history” (Tarc, 2011, p.358). She also observed how invested the candidates are in the narrative of Canada as a “kind, just nation” (Tarc, 2011, p. 358). Here unwillingness and unreadiness become tied together as it becomes difficult to disentangle not-knowing from wanting to not-know. Choosing to not-know once Aboriginal perspectives are introduced is tied to teacher candidates desire to remain comfortable, both in their understanding of Canada as Tarc (2011) observes, and in their self-image of the teacher as a good person. This self-image is further connected to the three “discourses of professionalism” identified by Dion (2009) which are discussed below. These discourses define for teachers what it means to be good at and effective in their job. By investing in these discourses and choosing to not know, teachers avoid feelings of discomfort that they may encounter as they learn more about the history and present day reality of colonialism and oppression in Canada. They also avoid working through their fear of offending through their teaching, and having to defend the content if confronted by students, parents, colleagues, or administrators who express ignorant views. Exploring Aboriginal content may also be seen as a journey which would take too much time and effort for teachers and teacher candidates. Ultimately, I believe that this not-knowing is an attempt to shield oneself
from exploring personal beliefs about Aboriginal peoples (including their Aboriginal students), especially any ignorant or racist attitudes based on stereotypes. When confronting your own knowing, people are often faced with their own feelings of shame, which Brown (2010) defines as the belief that “I am bad” (which she distinguishes from guilt “I did something bad”) (p.41). Brown (2010) reminds us that shame is sometimes referred to as the “master emotion” and that we do not necessarily need to “experience shame to be paralyzed by it – the fear of being perceived as unworthy is enough to force us to silence our stories” (41). While training teachers, Kerr (2014) asks self-reflexively “how I will do this work of engaging with difficult knowledges, as an instructor, in a way that does not result in an epistemic collision with my students and a refusal to engage” (p.97). Despite the challenges inherent in this task, she asserts that engaging critically with the realities of the Settler-nation state “should be an essential ethical requirement for any teacher in this context, not something separate” (Kerr, 2014, p.97).

When practicing teachers do explain that Indigenous views will be brought into their class, some encounter resistance and racist reactions from students (Blood, 2010; Zurzolo 2010). Negative reactions from students, as well as from colleagues, school and board administration, and parents, cause some teachers to perceive that by teaching Indigenous content outside of the curriculum, especially curriculum which might fall under McConaghy’s (2000) notion of radical Indigenous Education (which is education that reverses the power relationships of colonialism with a focus on the class dynamics inherent in that structure), they make themselves professionally vulnerable (Kanu, 2011).

When Settler teachers do make a personal commitment to overcoming whatever perceived barriers might prevent them from incorporating this content, supportive resources from their school board might not be available to them as they navigate the curriculum content.
Zurzolo (2010) interviewed five non-Indigenous teachers in Manitoba who were willingly incorporating Indigenous content beyond what is required in the provincial curriculum into their programs. From that study she identified that the teachers she interviewed disagreed with many of the initiatives taken by the school board in terms of policy and professional development, and were critical of the lack of diversity in the Indigenous nations and people represented (p. 282). While teachers willing to teach this material seem to want school boards and administrators to provide better resources to support their work, teachers who presently are not yet comfortable want those entities to assist in strengthening their professional efficacy in order to increase their confidence and their ability to teach the material, and provide easily accessible classroom-ready resources (Kanu, 2011), which may assist to improve their readiness.

The literature indicates that even teachers who do incorporate Indigenous content beyond what is required in the curriculum do not necessarily feel completely comfortable or confident discussing every aspect of the subject area, citing their identity as a Settler teacher as one of their concerns. Zurzolo (2010) reports that teachers who did teach additional Indigenous content considered the limitations of a non-Indigenous person providing an Indigenous perspective, and acknowledged their discomfort in discussing complex/risky topics like spirituality, land claims and treaty rights. (p. 282)

Rather than a pure sense of comfort, acceptance of discomfort in teaching these subjects may be important to teacher willingness to wade into the topics considered most “controversial” to Settler peoples. Another key element of willingness according to the research seems to lie in whether or not a teacher experiences a transformational experience which somehow inspires them to take up additional content. This phenomenon will be discussed later in this chapter.
2.6.1 Teacher Candidate/Teacher Identity and Indigenous Content

Many authors argue that what ultimately stands in the way of teacher candidates taking up Indigenous content in their classrooms is their identity, which includes the investments that non-Indigenous teachers have in the Canadian state (Kaoamea, 2005; Dion 2009; Kanu, 2011). Here I will explore the identity investments of teachers and how they factor into the relationship between education and Indigenous content.

In Ontario, there exists a fairly stable demographic of teacher education students, made up of mainly white, heterosexual, middle class women, with some increase in the amount of minoritized students (Solomona et al., 2005), especially given our University’s location in downtown Toronto and OISE’s efforts to increase diversity in population through targeted initiatives such as equity questions on the admission application. Like other mainstream teacher education programs across the country, most teacher candidates enter our program ignorant to their social privilege and to the existence of white supremacy (Solomona et al., 2005; Schick & St. Denis, 2005). Lack of awareness of their privilege, and the assumption on the part of White and/or Canadian teacher candidates that they have a neutral culture or no culture at all can lead to problematic assumptions regarding their Indigenous students which serve to reify colonizing discourses in their approach to teacher education.

The equating of good with white permits education students to think that they are going to learn of the other, to learn how they can be helpers, to discover how to incorporate practices of the dominant society. This is the assumption of superiority that whiteness permits: what we have and who we are is what the world needs, whether it wants it or not. (Schick and St. Denis, 2005, p. 308)
Whiteness is then connected to notions of respectability, and so to be considered a respectable citizen or teacher, one must take up the normalized attributes, values and beliefs of White society (Fellows & Razack, 1998). These beliefs can also cause teachers and teacher candidates to view their role in teaching Indigenous content as assisting their Indigenous students to define their own culture (Schick & St. Denis, 2005). Cannon (2012) reminds us that colonialism is not just something which Indigenous peoples are involved in, but rather a reality in which Settlers are also implicated, arguing that within Initial Teacher Education, curriculum should be present which creates encounters between non-Indigenous peoples and histories of Settler Colonialism (Cannon, 2012). For non-Indigenous teacher candidates this means it is necessary for them to explore their relationship with Indigenous peoples and the history and present of colonization, whether they hold a Settler or Settler-diasporic identity (Cannon, 2012). This includes thinking through “matters of restitution, their own decolonization, and transforming their complicity in ongoing dispossession” (Cannon, 2012, p. 22). The enormity of this task for Settler teacher candidates must not be underestimated. Writing from Australia, O’Dowd (2012) argues that some Settler peoples in general and teacher candidates in particular may not be able to fathom the existence of a rich and dynamic Indigenous history or comprehend Indigenous sovereignty on what is now colonized land because the very process of creating and telling stories which created the colonized nation and a national identity “was an act of destruction of indigenous history” (p. 112). These myths effectively have rendered Indigenous histories as an ‘unhistory’, that is, “a history that could not be” (O’Dowd, 2012, p. 104).

In my work, I have witnessed teacher candidate resistance to Indigenous content during in-class presentations across the ITE program when they learn about the history and present oppression of Indigenous peoples on this land. The resistances felt throughout this presentation
process seem to be typical of attempts to discuss race and racism with mostly non-Indigenous students in a teacher education setting (Aveling, 2006). Aveling (2006) recognizes that conversations about race (and I extend this to the colonized history and present of Indigenous peoples in our society) are very difficult conversations to have with teacher candidates because “exploring ‘race’ and racism with White students goes to the very heart of our socially constructed identities” (Aveling, 2006, p. 264). Investments of identity tied into the stories of the nation state may run so deep that, at first, they may cause teacher candidates to reject the truth, as they get lost in reactions of denial, shame and hostility (O’Dowd, 2012). O’Dowd (2012) thus argues that to be successful in getting non-Indigenous/Settler peoples to engage with these truths, constructs around identity

Need to be engaged with to foster critical awareness of the roles of myth and imagining in the creation, acceptances, and rejection of Indigenous history; simply adding Indigenous content to a curriculum will not be a very effective approach. (p. 114)

The resistance teacher candidates have displayed in the past has taken many forms. Whether teacher candidates are White, or have an identity tied into a diasporic settler community (which is often true in our program [Cannon, 2012]), candidates from across the program will argue that their families work hard and deserve their success for instance, and that Indigenous people just need to stop being lazy in order to achieve the same degree of integration. Spoken resistances such as this most often reflect a misunderstanding of the colonial foundations of Canada, and reveal a lack of awareness on the part of teacher candidates of their own social privilege (Schick & St. Denis, 2005, p. 300).
Teacher education programs are heavily invested in shaping the identity of a teacher, and most often this occurs in ways which support the existence of the Canadian state and reinforce national identities. As noted earlier, Waldorf (2012) identified that discourses within OISE’s School and Society course deny Indigenous claims to sovereignty by foregrounding the nation state of Canada as the site to address inequalities. Waldorf (2012) also noted that a core theme in both the Secondary program’s Teacher Education Seminar course and Psychological Foundations of Learning and Development course is “the development of “good” or “expert” teachers, which her review found is an “underlying logic of teacher education pedagogies more generally” (p. 102). These discourses are not unique to OISE, but rather are present in teacher education in general, where multiple investments in the identity of teacher education exist. Donald (2009) argues:

When we consider that so much of teacher education is predicated on the need for the individual who wants to be a teacher to conform to predetermined identity roles that suits institutional needs, demonstrate normalized competence in these contexts, and unconsciously conflate teacher thinking with teacher identity, we begin to understand the intense postcultural dynamics that are invested in the creation of a teacher. (p. 29)

These identity roles and discourses around teaching play out into teacher practice in the classroom, influencing teachers as they navigate their roles and responsibilities in relation to their students. In her work observing teachers plan and deliver stories about Indigenous peoples in their classrooms, Dion (2009) identified three “discourses of professionalism” which she argues are key components of a “complex grid of ideas about what (is) required by teachers as professionals and what they, in wanting to be good teachers, are invested in” (p. 176). These discourses are teaching well, pastoral care, and citizenship education. “Teaching well” includes
“questions about engaging student attention by ensuring the relevance of context, meeting curriculum expectations, and providing students with opportunities to develop their skills and master new vocabulary”; “pastoral care” is to have a desire to “take care” of their students, and their emotions in the midst of teaching about oppression, how they could “maintain order and… ask questions [students] would be able to answer”; and finally “citizenship education” where the history teachers involved in the study felt it was their responsibility to nurture good citizens (p. 93). Even if they are exposed to Indigenous histories and current events, any change that might come to their practice as a result may be mediated by these discourses, and other identity markers (Kanu, 2011).

Another phenomenon that Dion (2009) observed in her work was the existence of what she terms the “Perfect Stranger” identity, where she observed non-Indigenous teachers who claimed they knew nothing about Indigenous people, and had absolutely no relationship with them, with ease (p.179). She argues that this position is supported by the fear of controversy and of offending, and challenging the dominant narrative of what Canada is (Dion 2009, p.179). These unexamined identity pieces, and identities tied into Settler nations and the nation-building stories that tell of their founding and growth, ultimately prevent teachers from teaching the sorts of information (like that identified earlier) that Indigenous peoples would like them to (Kaomea, 2005; Dion, 2009; Cannon, 2012; O’Dowd 2012). Without recognition of their privilege and the role of White supremacist and colonial assumptions in the creation of their own identity and how they view their students, teacher candidates are ultimately poised to recreate these discourses in their future classrooms.
2.7 Why Do Non Indigenous Teachers Take Up Indigenous Content?

Throughout the literature, there is indication that if Settler teachers feel compelled to take up Indigenous content in their classroom beyond the baseline curriculum, they have often had some personal transformational experience. In *Learning About Walking in Beauty*, the authors define transformational experiences as “those that alter the paradigm by which the individual operates, evaluates, and make decisions” (CRRF, 2002, p. 22). Both Kanu (2011) and Zurzolo (2007) observed the key role of the transformational experience, with Kanu (2011) finding that many of the teachers whom she worked with in her study credited some such experience as to why they wanted to incorporate Indigenous understandings and content in their curriculum. While the teachers in Zurzolo’s (2007) study “resisted the idea that they had actually had a particular transformational experience” (p. 97) her analysis of the transcripts revealed that every participant in her study had indeed mentioned one, whether it be from their childhood or adult life. Personally, an immersive experience working and living in a First Nations community in north western Ontario changed my life, career direction, and my understanding of worldview. The idea that a transformational experience could precipitate action to teach this material is immediately persuasive to me.

If a transformational experience is crucial for non-Indigenous teachers to take up Indigenous content in their work, is it possible for teacher education programs to facilitate such an experience for most if not all teacher candidates? In her thesis entitled “Transforming perspectives: The immersion of student teachers in Indigenous ways of knowing” Tanaka (2009) documents the experience of teacher candidates and Indigenous wisdom keepers in the “Earth Fibres” course at the University of Victoria, one of the iterations of the “Learning and Teaching
in an Indigenous World” course. By creating a course which was totally facilitated by Indigenous wisdom keepers, and whose curriculum and activities were in line with the Lil`wat principles as mentioned earlier (Sanford et al., 2012), Tanaka (2009) found that teacher candidates developed a deeper respect for Indigenous ways of knowing and built confidence in teaching Indigenous content. The teacher candidates in her study, who were in their final term of their university program, reported feeling unprepared to “deal with emotional issues in the classroom” and “to teach Aboriginal students as well as Aboriginal content” prior to beginning the course (Tanaka, 2009, p. 113). By the end of the course, they had developed an emerging understanding of who Indigenous communities are as well as a greater understanding of their own relationship to Indigenous peoples. Comments also indicate that teacher candidates gained a greater sense of what they could and could not teach (Tanaka, 2009, p. 182) as well as an understanding that the land that they and the University occupy are colonized spaces (Tanaka, 2009, p. 174). Like the title of her thesis suggests, through this one course participating Settler teacher candidates seemed to have a transformational experience with respect to Indigenous content.

2.8 Transformation through Decolonization

What is the overlap between transformational experiences and the process of decolonization? Is a transformational experience which inspires a teacher to take up Indigenous content beyond the standard curriculum part of a process of decolonization? Donald (2009) states that “resisting the temptation to frame Indigenousness in isolated and exclusionary ways is the first step towards decolonization” (p. 39), but definitions of decolonization seem to vary among Indigenous scholars.
2.8.1 Decolonization

Godlewska, Moore and Bednasek (2010) concur with the belief of many Indigenous peoples and those that stand in solidarity with them that “Ontario’s education system is a primary instrument in ensuring that colonialism remains unchallenged” (p. 418). Before exploring the various strategies to bring about decolonization that educators are attempting in their classrooms, I will first define colonization. Gage (1991) identifies the following seven pillars of colonialism which emphasize the processes of land expropriation and the erasure of culture: (1) Grabbing the Land; (2) Growing (crops) for Europe; (3) Developing Europe; (4) Consuming Colonially (as opposed to developing industries in the colonies); (5) Hatching Hierarchies; (6) Killing Cultures; and (7) Exploiting the Land (p. 13-14). Upon these pillars stand the physical impact of colonization on human bodies, but also the behavioural, emotional, and spiritual impacts that are noted by other scholars. Fanon (1963), Battiste (2000) and Ng (2012) have identified that colonization is often manifested in bodies and minds, and can impact processes of thinking and modes of behaviour. Ng (2012) argues that colonization is “condensed in our emotional and physical beings” becoming “patterns of behaviour” (p. 351). These manifestations have been described at times as cognitive imperialism (Battiste, 2000) and Occidentosis or western-stuckness (Ahmad, 2003). In The Colonizer and the Colonized, Memmi (1965) reminds us that these colonial scripts do not just impact the colonized, but are prescribed for the colonizer as well.

Colonization processes are accompanied by racist ideology, and the process of “othering”, that is, of making the colonized seem savage and in need of help from the “civilized” colonizer (McConaghy, 2000). This allows for the justification of the dehumanization of the...
colonized other. As Sartre (1965) summarizes, “colonialism denies human rights to human beings whom it has subdued by violence, and keeps them by force in a state of misery and ignorance that Marx would rightly call a subhuman condition” (Memmi, p. xxiv).

In *Red Skin, White Masks*, Coulthard (2014) states that decolonization “must account for the complex ways that capitalism, patriarchy, white supremacy, and the state interact with one another to form the constellation of power relations that sustain colonial patterns of behavior, structures, and relationships.” As a Settler and an educator, I am interested in the ways in which individuals and classroom communities can engage in a decolonization process. Graveline (1998) calls upon the work of Blaut (1993) to define and explain decolonization as a process having two parts:

First, it is necessary to resurrect one’s own history and to find out how it has contributed to the history of the world. Second it is necessary to rewrite colonial history to show how it has led to poverty rather than progress. (p. 37)

This process must include a reconceptualization of relationship to land as Settler peoples come to understand “the differential terms on which it is occupied (so) to become aware of the colonial project that is taking place around us” (Lawrence and Dua, 2005, p. 126). Ng (2012) identifies four elements to decolonization: “resistance, questioning, reclamation, and transformation (from negative to positive and from margin to centre)” (p. 360). These elements are present in Laenui’s (2000) analysis of the processes of colonization and decolonization, which draws heavily from his experience with the Hawaiian context. Laenui (2000) outlines five “distinct phases of a people’s decolonization”: *rediscovery and discovery*, that is “rediscovering one’s history and recovering one’s culture, language, and identity, and so on” (p.153); *mourning*, “a time when a people are able to lament their victimization” (p.154); *dreaming*, the “most crucial” stage for
decolonization according to Laenui, dreaming must not be cut short or rushed as it is the stage where “colonized people are able to explore their own cultures, experience their own aspirations for their future, and consider their own structures of government and social order to encompass and express their hopes” (p. 155); collective commitment “to a single direction in which the society must move” (p. 157); and action that is “not a reactive but a proactive step taken based on consensus of the people” (p. 158). Laenui (2000) notes that in reality “we often see combinations of these social changes” and that stages are often revisited numerous times in the process (p. 159). Here I will explore some methods of decolonization which have been used mainly with Settler teachers and students.

Noting that transformational experiences and decolonization can go hand in hand, educators have begun to document the pedagogical approaches they use in order to facilitate a decolonization process with teachers and teacher candidates. A professor at York University in Toronto, Dion (2009) suggests that participating in her File of Uncertainties project is a transformational experience for some teachers who take her class, and in completing the project argues that they participate in a “decolonizing practice – challenging the ahistorical memories of Canada’s colonial past” because “(the project) offers a way to challenge the hegemony of Western regimes of knowledge and representation” (p. 182). For the assignment, teachers are asked to

Draw together stories and images from their past with contemporary work by

Aboriginal artists and, through juxtaposition, speak to their understanding of themselves in relationship with Aboriginal people. (Dion, 2009, p. 180)

Through positioning artefacts from their own lives beside these works, the teachers then
(Bear) witness to their own inscription. It is a process that supports a reworking of
the normalized frames of understanding themselves as perfect strangers to Aboriginal
people. (Dion, 2009, p.183)

In addition to looking at counternarratives of history and how dominance is crafted
through difference in their course for teacher candidates at the University of Regina, St. Denis
and Schick (2003) have included a major assignment which is similar to Dion’s in that it forces
teacher candidates to turn their focus to their own identity. They describe it as an autobiography,

In which (teacher candidates) are asked to engage in reflective social and political
self-analysis. Employing information from their own histories, students are
expected to write a reflective and analytical essay-and not a chronological report-
that incorporates a minimum of 10 course readings. They are encouraged to comment
on their own social production, exploring how their own families achieved and are
achieving what is commonly understood as respectability. (St. Denis & Schick,
2003, p. 60)

The two assignments both ask teacher candidates to think through their identities on paper,
whether through the written word, or through the use of artistic and found objects. Their
direction to question the common sense notion of respectability is reminiscent of Ng’s (2012)
analysis of Gramsci’s notion of common sense as well as Fellows and Razack’s (1998)
understanding of respectability’s relationship to Whiteness. In the following examples, diverse
modalities within a classroom setting are used in an attempt to bring out a process of
decolonization.
In teaching School and Society classes in the Initial Teacher Education program at OISE, Cannon’s (2012) aim is “to foster a collective responsibility for our complicity in social inequality, and to work toward changing this” (p. 26). He writes:

With respect to finding common ground, I start my course with a “step exercise” developed by Logan et al. (1991). The goal is to introduce the concept of privilege and oppression and its effects on all individuals, to foster a better sense about the complexity of individual identities, and to make transformative use of developing empathy. (Cannon, 2012, p. 26)

From this exercise, Cannon (2012) argues that teacher candidates are able to see the complexity that comes along with their own identity, how it is most likely that they at once embody different elements of victim and oppressor. Once they are able to see this, he then pursues the work of revealing “the violence engendered in privileged ways of knowing—through real or perceived whiteness, heterosexuality, Christianity, colonization, class status, and/or physical and mental ability” (Cannon, 2012, p 26).

Stemming from a belief that colonization impacts the whole self, including mind, body, spirit, Ng (2012) argues that for decolonization to occur, two critical acts are engaged: “deep reflection and some form of embodied mindfulness practice that (re)integrates body, mind and spirit” (p. 360). In the last years of her life, Ng, a professor at OISE, used the Chinese practice of Qi Gong in her classes, which promotes wellness but also mindfulness and detachment. Ng (2012) argued that it was crucial for decolonization that we

examine our patterns of behaviour objectively, without attachment, in order to
determine whether and how to change. This requires that we be reflexively critical,
that we be open to examining the integrity of our being without guilt and judgement.

(p. 352)

Ng (2012) termed practices which incorporated mindfulness and that engaged the whole body *Embodied Learning*, which she classified as an integrative embodied critical pedagogy.

At the University of British Columbia, Butterwick and Selman (2012) have explored the use of embodied theatre practices within the teacher education program. In their classes, teacher candidates participate in a variety of theatre processes such as creating tableau, exercises involving candidate’s bodies as intelligent clay and which not only engage those giving the performance but also engage what they identify as the “implicated audience” (Butterwick & Selman, 2012, p. 66). While the “implicated audience” may not be acting in a particular scene, when watching the performance the authors argue that audiences can tap into some unconscious thinking about the practice and how it reflects on their own thinking, behaviour and teaching practice (Butterwick & Selman, 2012, p. 66). Some students in their classes commented that these processes “helped to visualize elements of their discussion” (Butterwick & Selman, 2012, p. 65). Ultimately, the embodied theatre practice can bring about experiences and shifts that are “felt in the body, often before intellectual interpretation” (Butterwick & Selman, 2012, p. 66).

Both Butterwick and Selman (2012) and Ng (2012) warn of the sometimes uncomfortable emotions, memories and stories these pedagogies may trigger. To anticipate and channel these emerging experiences, Butterwick and Selman (2012) explain how they mount their pedagogy of embodied theatre processes within

Pedagogical and ethical frames or containers so fear and other triggered emotions can be explored in such a way that participants are not stuck but rather guided to a safe place, informed by self-determination. (p. 67-68)
This includes a series of principles or community boundaries that are responsive to what emerges in the theatrical space. Stories disclosed are treated as “gifts that must be handled with care in gentle yet strong containers” (Butterwick & Selman, 2012, p. 68). Participants are informed ahead of time of what processes are being embarked upon and facilitators prepare them by anticipating the power of what might arise, all the while setting out conditions within the group that ensure safety of all involved. By making oppressive practices visible, their use of embodied processes of theatre in their teacher education classrooms “offer great potential to interrupt such forms of violence and to contribute to decolonization” (Butterwick & Selman, 2012, p. 63).

2.9 Summary

Many mainstream teacher education programs across Canada are attempting to incorporate Indigenous Education in their offerings, including through individual courses, presentations, or program-wide efforts to decolonize. On the whole, however, these programs remain colonizing spaces which reify neoliberal and multicultural discourses. This is also true for school curricula across Canada.

Presently students in Canadian schools are not receiving representative or consistent content about Indigenous People, their histories and current concerns. Both inaccuracies with the curriculum as it is written, and a lack of willingness or confidence on the part of Settler teachers to teach better content with respect to Indigenous Peoples contribute to this. There is a strong indication in the literature that this willingness in Settler teachers is determined by both identity investments and whether or not the individual has had a transformative experience with respect to Indigenous Peoples. Some educators have recognized the importance of transformational experiences and are attempting pedagogical approaches with teacher candidates designed to
facilitate such experiences, and ultimately contribute to teacher candidates’ personal processes of
decolonization.

Situated within these findings, my thesis research explored to what extent the work of the
Deepening Knowledge Project within the ITE program at OISE promoted decolonization. The
reactions of teacher candidates to incorporating Indigenous content into their teaching practice
which are collected in this research are compared to those in other studies, while common and
new reactions are also noted. My research also explored the nature of transformative
experiences, and what pedagogical approaches and experiences teacher candidates find to be
transformative.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

The motivation for this thesis stemmed directly from my participation in the Deepening Knowledge Project, and the research that we undertook together as a group of professors, instructors and graduate students. However, prior to, during, and now that this project has finished our team has been and remains built on friendships of respect and trust. We are bolstered by our common goal to advance Aboriginal content within education in general, through our training of teacher candidates. The methodologies employed in this research reflect this collaboration and our pre-existing relationships.

Our process for the research documented in chapters five and six was grounded in the principles of Participatory Action Research, and our results had an immediate influence on the teaching that was being done in Central Option. PAR allows for the use of data from non-objective and non-quantitative sources (Reason, 1994) such as the interviews which form the foundation of chapter four. However, the circumstances of the research and relationships behind that chapter called for an additional methodological approach. I anchored that process within Shawn Wilson’s Research is Ceremony (2008) which allowed my prior relationships with my co-researchers to shine through. Those relationships acted as a lens through which to view their stories and the emerging data. Billies, Francisco, Krueger and Linville (2010) note that often within PAR teams, relationships between the lead researcher and the community co-researchers “often move beyond professional acquaintances to friendships and are complicated to maintain” (p.283). The perspectives central to Appreciative Inquiry assisted me in setting boundaries around the research, and resulted in a positive and constructive tone to this thesis which was representative of how I viewed our work, and I believe our team’s overall approach.
In this chapter I will introduce Participatory Action Research and Research as Ceremony as the methodologies operating/chosen in doing our research, with a brief mention of the contribution of Appreciate Inquiry. I will also outline the procedures and protocols through which we gathered the data. Finally, I will summarize the stages of the project and their corresponding timeline. Each of the three manuscripts included in this thesis have sections which detail the methodology used to frame and gather the information described within them. These sections have been named and organized according to the requirements of the journals to which they have been or will be submitted.

3.1 Participatory Action Research

The research contained in chapters five and six emerges from a very fluid, very real manifestation of Participatory Action Research (PAR) methodology. Here I will detail PAR and how it applied to our work. As a methodology, PAR surfaced after the 1970s, and is rooted in an academic tradition which sought to contribute to social justice (Billies, Francisco, Krueger & Linville, 2010). Its aim is

Not to establish generalizable laws for multiple contexts but to know, understand improve or change a particular social situation or context and to advocate for the benefit of the people who are also the ‘participants’ (not ‘subjects’) in the inquiry and who are affected by the results and solutions. (Zuber-Skerritt, 2011, p. 80)

Members of the Deepening Knowledge Project came together around a strong desire to motivate and train teacher candidates to incorporate Aboriginal content in their teaching with the greater goal of social change through their present and future teaching. In 2011 we became inspired to conduct research into the efficacy of these efforts. We chose Central Option as our research site.
because one of our members was the lead instructor of that Option and was deeply invested in teaching to promote Aboriginal content.

Real and active participation in the research process distinguishes PAR from other types of research. PAR is a methodology which is not “done on other people” but “by particular people on their own work, to help them improve what they do, including how they work with and for others” (Carr & Kemmis (1986) cited in McTaggart, 1991, p. 181). According to McTaggart (1991), “people are often involved in research, but rarely are they participants with real ownership of research theory and practice” (p. 171). Our work was characterized by real participation from all team members. We came together to develop the research questions and tools, and to analyze the data. The results then informed our teaching practice, both within Central Option and across our work at OISE. Our team included the lead Aboriginal infusion instructor in the ITE program, who was also a co-coordinator of Central Option. She had never conducted academic research before, but became convinced of its value as this project unfolded. Her participation aligns with the stipulation that PAR include “authentic participation: It is research through which people work towards the improvement of their own practices” (McTaggart, 1991, p. 174-175).

PAR is “a participatory, democratic process concerned with developing practical knowing in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes” (Reason & Bradbury, 2001, p.1). It is a methodology where “research and development, theory and practice are integrated” (Zuber-Skerritt, 2011, p.80) Members of our team contributed based on their strengths. All participated meaningfully in developing the research program and connecting it to relevant theory. By endeavouring to improve the outcomes for Aboriginal learners and to instil critical thinking
about Aboriginal content in all students, the DKP echoes the goal of PAR, which generally is to improving human welfare and creating change (Murray & Ozanne, 2001).

Participatory Action Research (PAR) consists of three integrated components, “research, education and action” (Gardner, 2004, p.53). By engaging in systematic data collection using surveys and one-on-one interviews and the corresponding analysis (research), the DKP members gathered both quantitative and qualitative data in Central Option (knowledge) and then used that data and the analysis directly and immediately within their work in Central Option and in the broader ITE program (action). After sharing the results and analyzing together with the team, members then used it to adjust their teaching during that program cycle. For instance, survey results from September and February both influenced programming which took place before April, and led to further questions and research that continued on into a second program cycle, which is outside of the scope of this dissertation (McTaggart, 1991).

For Billies, Francisco, Krueger, and Linville (2010) the “action” component of PAR is essential in keeping co-researchers engaged in the research, and can take many forms, including “community meetings, academic conference presentations, protests, publications, policy briefs, photo exhibits, strikes, or performances” (p. 282). For our team, the PAR process has ignited an interest in academic research and publications, has seen us work together to disseminate the research at OISE through professional development presentations, and has resulted in many co-presentations at academic and professional conferences.

PAR calls for the researcher to be a “facilitator of a community process of inquiry” (Gardner, 2004, p. 52) a position which aligned well with my current position as Project Manager of the DKP. My role within the group was to schedule meetings, develop and edit drafts of research tools based on the feedback in our meetings, compile and share quantitative and
qualitative data, transcribe interviews and analyze transcripts, and write the results into research papers. I thus became a facilitator of a community process of inquiry. As the research facilitator I was interested in “perspectives, rather than the truth per se, and in giving a credible account of how participants in the project view themselves and their experiences” (Zuber-Skerritt, 2011, p.81). This is reflected in chapter four, where I write about the development of the Aboriginal content focus in Central Option, rather than the results from the teacher candidates. In their article which documents the current “trends and patterns” in PAR, Billies, Francisco, Krueger and Linville (2010) explore the importance of dynamics between the lead researcher and the community participants, including accounting for power dynamics. They argue that: “Negotiating mutual vulnerability, disclosure, the responsibility researchers have to one another, the confidentiality of information shared and data gathered and the continuation of the relationship after the termination of the project must be built into the process” (p. 283).While still sensitive, the power dynamics of our team were perhaps more evenly distributed than PAR projects conducted with vulnerable communities. Our team consisted of education professionals, and academics, all of whom had many more years of teaching experience than I did. Our relationship extended beyond the research, and thus I had to set clear boundaries of what I would include in the research and its products. Countless personal emails and interactions some with sensitive material were not considered in this project. My access to these encounters, and my control over the final writing products did give me relative power within the group, which I ultimately cast as my responsibility. Perhaps I had most power in relation to my colleague John, who identifies as Indigenous, and was similarly completing his doctorate. To account for this dynamic I attempted to include him on his own terms in the research, meeting him for our interview in a setting he was comfortable and familiar with, engaging in a conversation which he
directed, and asking him (and the other participants quoted in chapter four) to confirm and edit the excerpts from their interviews that I included. Indeed, each of the three participants whose words make up chapter four had the chance to read and approve the excerpts and the interpretations I made. They were also invited to read the entire chapter to ensure I captured our common understandings. In these ways, I used participant validation of team members to carry out triangulation and achieve vigour (Zuber-Skerritt, 2011). Chapter four is also my way of getting “out of the way and out of the position of authority… to shut up so that co-researchers can speak” (Billies, Francisco, Krueger & Linville, 2010, p. 284).

Zuber-Skerritt (2011) emphasizes the role of the researcher/facilitator who begins to “better understand (the group’s) situation in collaborative action and inquiry to help improve or change the social situation for the better” (p.77-78). Our team has worked together toward our common goal of giving more prominence to the training of teachers with respect to Aboriginal education. Our PAR work and its results have given us important information on the OISE program, teacher candidates who enter it, and their learning throughout the program. This has helped us to

resist the oppressive situations even when we are unable to overthrow the entire structure, to collectively nurture ourselves and protect others and insist on recognition, while demanding change from those able to enact it around us. Each participatory action project determines the actions that will satisfy its longing and objectives for change and share the extensive labor that the group has participated in to produce the research. (Billies, 2010, p. 282-283)

The results of our work have continued to inform the work at OISE, and bolster our efforts to work with administration of the program. We continue to advocate for more time within the new
Masters of Teaching program to focus on teacher candidate willingness and readiness to bring Aboriginal content into their teaching practice.

The process of PAR is a “systematically evolving, living process changing both the researcher and the situations in which he or she acts” (Carr & Kemmis (1986) cited in McTaggart, 1991, p. 181). Our research project truly changed our way of thinking and practicing our teaching, and as Zuber-Skerritt (2011) predicted promoted the transformation of our entire PAR team including myself. One of the purposes of PAR is to contribute to the understanding of the theory behind what our group is undertaking for each member (Zuber-Skerritt, 2011). A member of the team approached me in mid-2015 saying that while she had not been previously a supporter of theory and research in teaching, believing it to be too far removed from actual classroom experience, this project had changed her mind. She now continues to push our team’s work forward. The research took on a life of its own beyond this thesis. It has an impact on the pedagogies that members of our team enact today across OISE and in other teaching we are involved in.

3.2 Research as Ceremony

The first manuscript (chapter four) approaches Central Option from a different angle than the next two manuscripts, which led me to choose another methodology to frame the process of gathering information. Wherein the second two manuscripts collected anonymous data from the teacher candidates in order to reflect on which strategies of teaching in Central Option were effective in increasing their willingness and readiness to incorporate Aboriginal content into their teaching, the first looks at Central Option as a whole. It documents how the Option came to have the Aboriginal focus, and how that focus developed over time. To do this, I personally
interviewed three instructors who shaped that focus over its lifespan. I have strong working relationships and personal friendships with these instructors which set the tone for each particular interview. These circumstances necessitated a methodology which would account for and ultimately respect these relationships. Our conversations only briefly focused on what we could change or build upon for the coming years, as just before the interviews were conducted, we found out that the Aboriginal focus in Central had been cancelled by the administration of the ITE program. Instead, we spent time reflecting on how the Aboriginal focus had begun and how and why it had developed over time.

PAR methodology acknowledges the “experience, knowledge and expertise” of co-researchers (Billies et. al, 2010, p. 279). Wilson’s *Research Is Ceremony* (2008) is compatible with this view. It outlines a methodology based on “simply the building of more relations” (Wilson, 2008, p.79) between people, knowledge and ideas, while acknowledging the existing relationships the researcher already holds. This is based on a concept that Wilson calls relationality, or the notion that reality is made up of relationships (p.7). His methodology allows for whatever strategies of inquiry will reveal and build the relationships related to research (Wilson, 2008, p.39). It will be explored in more depth in chapter four.

Based on my relationships with the participants for the third manuscript, I decided to conduct one-on-one interviews, in spaces where our relationships had developed. These spaces also reflected the work we had done together. One person invited me into their office where we had connected on issues of curriculum before. Another spoke with me in her office, car, and in the hallways, whenever we could find time in between our meetings with others in the institution. This process captured our collaborative relationship and our busy time together. The last participant invited me to his house, and we spoke over tea and snacks, which was
reminiscent of our first working meeting together, where we spent more time getting to know one another, setting the tone for our ensuing relationship.

3.3 Appreciative Inquiry

One of our stated intentions when entering into this research was to engage in an inquiry which celebrated the successes of the work we had all accomplished together. We also recognized that to understand the work in Central Option, it was impossible to examine it piece by piece, but rather, we had to look at the effort as a whole. The first manuscript (chapter four) makes brief mention of Appreciative Inquiry (AI), a framework developed by Cooperrider and colleagues which seeks out and highlights what an organization is doing well (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987). Watkins, Mohr and Kelly (2011) summarize AI as “a collaborative and highly participative, system wide approach to seeking, identifying and enhancing the ‘life-giving forces’ that are present when a system is performing optimally in human, economic and organizational terms” (p.22). The first step to conducting AI is to focus on the positive of an organization and allow that to shape the direction and questions that follow (Fifolt & Lander, 2013; Watkins, Mohr & Kelly, 2011). AI contributed to the vision I had of this project because I had a profound admiration for the brave work which was being done in Central Option, a tiny fraction of which I had contributed, especially given the limited resources that were available to help build Aboriginal infusion into Central. I also was inspired by the story of two instructors who began by, as you will see, knowing very little about Aboriginal education. Once they began to realize the scope of injustice they felt compelled by responsibility to learn more and bring their learnings to their teaching at OISE. Finally, as already established as common in Participatory Action Research, my co-researchers were also my friends and as I negotiated the
project I had a vested interest in maintaining boundaries which respected my friendships in order to allow us to continue to do good and productive work together. AI is a building approach in that it “nourishes academic communities through the mutual celebration of what is good and life-giving in the present followed by the generative, co-creation of a vision for an even better future” (Kadi-Hanifi, Dagman, Peters, Snell, Tutton, & Wright, 2014, p. 586). This is not to say that there was no room to name weaknesses in the program, which you will see identified in chapter four. However, the tone of positivity did drive my questioning and I believe as a result my co-researchers and participants were supportive of the project, and happy to open up about their experiences and work.

Research in Appreciative Inquiry becomes a “process of sharing stories about the positive history of the situation (Watkins, Mohr & Kelly, 2011, p. 112). That positive focus serves to “engage, enthuse, energise and enhance learning communities” (Kadi-Hanifi, Dagman, Peters, Snell, Tutton, & Wright, 2014, p.584). Our PAR work resembled Appreciative Inquiry in that we engaged in an “honest and thorough self-evaluation” that focused on the strengths of our work (Fifolt & Lander, 2013, p.19). In chapter four this positive focus of AI helped me to set the tone for the interviews and frame the questions I asked my three colleagues involved in Central Option.

Certain aspects of AI did not fit with this project. My use of it in the research design was therefore limited. As it has developed to be used largely in organizational settings, AI seeks to improve profits, alongside people and the planet (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005), the first of which did not apply to our work. AI utilizes the 4-D model, which represents four stages of the inquiry process Discovery, Dream, Design, and Destiny (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005). Members of our DKP team have used this 4-D model in the past, for instance, when we met
during the winter of 2013 to find direction for the future of our website. However as mentioned earlier, we knew from early on in this project that our timeline was limited, specifically that the B.Ed. program which housed Central Option was coming to a close, so we did not think it useful to engage in future visioning. Instead we needed to collect data immediately and quickly adapt it to the work we were doing, (documented in chapters five and six). Our research was much more integrated into our daily work, flowed organically, and emerged from conversations and individual impetus. We also felt a need to record (while our team was still assembled) all that had been accomplished in hopes that it would benefit others. While part of the interviews did include “an exploration of our hopes and dreams for the future” (Watkins, Mohr & Kelly, 2011, p. 118) our main focus was the here and now which is why PAR was the primary methodology which guided this work.

3.4 Research Participants

The co-creators of the project in the research team include both Indigenous and Settler professors, instructors, and graduate students at OISE. Instructors have also been included in the work of the project through efforts to provide space for collaborative development and learning, space which challenges and deconstructs the cultural hegemony that assumes that administration will be entirely responsible for creating a program in an institution.

In chapter four, the interview participants are three instructors from Central Option. They were selected because they were the main instructors involved in creating and teaching to the Aboriginal focus in Central Option. The two lead instructors are both Settler women, who have worked in the education system prior to being hired to instruct in the ITE program. Both have strong commitments to social justice education, and both began to realize the importance of
including Aboriginal perspectives in their teaching after some transformative experience with Indigenous peoples and communities. The third instructor was newly hired to Central Option’s teaching cadre. He first began in the Option through presentations alongside myself under the banner of the Deepening Knowledge Project. In the last year of Aboriginal infusion as an official focus, he was hired as the School and Society course instructor, which was the course within the B.Ed. program which focussed on the intersection between the two, and informally became a site to explore issues of social justice and education. He is Mi’kmaq from Shubenacadie First Nation on the east coast. The stories of these three instructors and their connection to Aboriginal peoples and communities are explained further within chapter four.

In chapters five and six the research participants were the 2012-2013 class of Central Option teacher candidates. The Central Option cohort trains teacher candidates for teaching at the Primary/Junior level and when they graduate they are qualified to teach grades K to 6. These teacher candidates were placed in Central Option based on a number of considerations, and not necessarily because of an interest in Aboriginal Education. It should be noted that successful applicants to the consecutive ITE program (excluding the Technological Studies program) must have had an undergraduate degree from a university.

In terms of identity, the teacher candidate population of OISE consists of mainly Settler and Settler-Diasporic peoples (Cannon, 2011). During the years of the Aboriginal focus there was no effort on the part of OISE to have all Aboriginal teacher candidates enrol in Central, perhaps because it was recognized that Aboriginal teacher candidates might want to be trained in specializations not covered in the Option. In 2012-2013, one teacher candidate in Central self-identified as having Métis ancestry, but the assumption on the part of the instructors was that the rest of the candidates were Settlers. To reflect these realities, this project focused its exploration
on the roles non-Aboriginal teacher candidates can respectfully occupy in the process of teaching Aboriginal content.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

In 2012-2013, I was very visible in Central Option. I gave presentations as part of the Deepening Knowledge Project, and acted as a marker on one of the main assignments related to the Aboriginal infusion, the Aboriginal Inquiry project. As such, it was supposed by the PAR team that people may not be as open or honest with me as a researcher. We therefore, hired graduate students to conduct the one-on-one interviews with the five teacher candidates who came forward and volunteered to participate in that process. Excerpts from these interviews mostly did not make the final cut of this thesis document. Space considerations were a factor in this decision, but I largely made this choice because the interviews did not provide the same rich testimony that the surveys did. Those who came forward to be interviewed all had an enthusiasm for teaching Aboriginal content, while the surveys captured a much wider range of experiences from excitement to anxiety, confusion and even indifference.

For the interviews I conducted with the instructors, ethical considerations differed. There are only three participants for the chapter four manuscript on the Aboriginal focus in Central Option. Their efforts are well known within our team, and within the Initial Teacher Education Program at OISE. When proposing the project to them, I told them about the potential risks outright. I also told them about my intention to avoid criticism of them personally, and vet all quotations from their interviews by them prior to sharing with my supervisor. When I decided on a draft of the paper, I immediately sent the three of them their quotations which I had decided to include. I gave them an opportunity to edit them, and determine whether or not they felt
comfortable with me sharing these quotations with others. I then asked them if they felt their name should be hidden by a pseudonym. All remained positive about having their name associated with the paper. After I had received edits from all three, I sent the entire paper to my supervisor (who also had relationships with the three participants). He screened the paper for, in part, anything that could compromise the privacy of the participants. Once he did this, we sent a draft of the paper to each participant for feedback on how they were portrayed, and for their approval to go forward with the work. Our process was crucial, in that it ensured that our working relationships and friendships were maintained, but also that the participants had a chance to triangulate my findings and confirm that the paper presented the truth as they saw it, and in a way with which they were comfortable in sharing with others interested in this research and their story.

3.6 Procedure

3.6.1 Preliminary Phase

As mentioned previously, the phases of this research project (See Table 2 - Appendix B) began after I had been employed with the DKP for more than a year. As such I had already built relationships with team members and potential participants by the time the project began in 2012-2013. At this time, our team was aware from previous instruction of teacher candidates across OISE’s programs that almost all teacher candidates claimed very little knowledge of Aboriginal histories and experiences, and that some resisted the topics surrounding Aboriginal communities (Mashford-Pringle and Nardozi, 2013).

Our team had secured some funding from OISE’s Inquiry into Practice program based on our research proposal to explore teacher candidate willingness and readiness to take up
Aboriginal content in their teaching. After being accepted into the Ph.D. program, I drafted an ethics proposal on behalf of the DKP research team to study the willingness and readiness of teacher candidates within Central Option to take up Aboriginal content. Together the DKP team, including the lead Aboriginal infusion instructor (Nancy Steele), crafted the research tools (survey one found in Appendix C and interview guides found in Appendix D). At this time, Nancy Steele and her colleagues had already developed and were implementing strategies which incorporated Aboriginal topics into their program. These included a presentation from myself and John Doran on Aboriginal histories, worldviews and perspectives; a retreat to the Toronto Islands with community members and Elders to hear stories of the area; a requirement to use a picture book with a First Nations, Métis, or Inuit theme in their practicum placement; a workshop run by First Nations teacher and scholar Pamela Toulouse; and many more specifically targeted activities.

3.6.2 Phase One

In September 2012, I introduced the purpose and procedure of the research project to teacher candidates in one of their classes. With the help of their instructors, I then distributed the information letter that our PAR team had developed via the class online platform (Appendix E). Surveys were then distributed which included both closed and open ended questions, and resulted in both quantitative and qualitative results.

The first survey was distributed to all teacher candidates present one day in September, at which time participants indicated their consent by checking a box on the survey. Subsequent surveys were administered in class, and so participants included all those teacher candidates who were present on the day of the surveys. Any candidates not present on that first day were given
the opportunity to consent on each subsequent survey. Candidates were instructed to return their surveys blank if they did not wish to participate. The box for returns was placed so that I could not see to whom each survey belonged. Follow-up surveys were distributed in February and April (See Appendix C), again to candidates in class that day. After I collected the surveys after each of the three distributions, I noted that none came back blank and concluded that no teacher candidates had chosen to opt out. The number of surveys completed each time thus depended on how many candidates were present in class on the days they were distributed.

In the fall of 2012, a research assistant went to Central Option to explain that participants for the one-on-one interview were being recruited. Five candidates came forward to the assistant. Each participated in two one-on-one interviews, one in December and one in April or May. Interview participants were asked to sign consent forms. To maintain anonymity, the research assistant transcribed the interviews and gave the transcriptions, free of any identifying information, to myself and to the PAR team to analyze.

3.6.3 Phase Two

Data analysis of the results by PAR team members began in October 2013, soon after the first survey was collected, so that Central instructors could get a strong sense of their teacher candidates’ background and stance on Aboriginal education and adjust the program and strategies used within it accordingly. Part of the data collected in the surveys was quantitative, so I created corresponding charts that have been included in chapters five and six. Qualitative answers were analyzed alongside these results, as well as alongside the transcripts from the five interviews. Dr. Restoule’s analysis of the transcripts provided triangulation.
After my preliminary analysis, our research team met to discuss the results, and think through next steps with Central Option. The first set of surveys revealed three concerns voiced by teacher candidates regarding the incorporation of Aboriginal content in the work. The team reframed these themes as questions to ask of the teacher candidates as a way to tackle the reticence head-on. The questions are:

- Why should I prioritize Aboriginal history, issues and perspectives when there are many social justice issues that the students in my classes have?
- How do I fit in these Aboriginal topics when there is so little time?
- Should I start to teach about these things even if I feel I don’t know enough?

These questions were shared with the teacher candidates. A number of them began their own projects within the class to collect feedback on their peers based on them. The lead instructor of Central Option’s guidance also led to additional questions on the second and third surveys.

### 3.6.4 Phase Three

Motivated by a desire to share what we were learning, I began writing the results into publishable papers and sending in abstracts to conferences. I wrote manuscript one (chapter five) entitled *Deepening Knowledge to Inspire Action: Including Aboriginal Perspectives in Teaching Practice* which was then edited by the team as per the guidelines of PAR. A version was submitted to OISE’s Inquiry into Practice program in August of 2013. The leaders of that initiative kindly gave us permission to submit an expanded version for publication. It was then
accepted to the *in education* journal in 2013. I wrote the second manuscript in preparation for our team’s conference presentation at the OTF/OADE education conference at York University in February 2014. It is entitled “*Teacher Candidate Willingness to incorporate Indigenous Content into Teaching Practice*.” It has since been expanded to include a more in-depth section on PAR in anticipation of it being submitted to a peer-reviewed journal.

### 3.6.5 Phase Four

In late winter 2014, I formulated the idea for the manuscript in chapter four. I subsequently wrote and submitted the necessary amendments to the ethics proposal. That manuscript was conceptualized as a way to understand the instructors’ perspectives on fostering willingness and readiness in teacher candidates. Part of my aim was to probe where their willingness to teach Aboriginal content came from. More about the paper and its scope and purpose was discussed in the descriptions of the manuscripts in chapter one.

The approach of chapter four was proposed to three instructors in Central via an introductory email and all agreed to be interviewed. The interviews were conducted in May 2014 and transcribed that following summer. They were then analyzed. That analysis was put aside until the winter when work commenced on writing the third manuscript (chapter four).

### 3.7 Chapter Overview

This chapter introduced the three methodological frameworks of this thesis that influenced the research: Participatory Action Research, Research as Ceremony and to a lesser extent Appreciative Inquiry. I then outlined the different phases of the research and summarized

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7 It was subsequently published by them in their Spring 2014 edition.
that process in a table included in Appendix B entitled “Phases of the Research Project.” Each of
the following three chapters consists of one of the manuscripts which I have described here, and
more fully in chapter one.
CHAPTER 4

EXPLORING RELATIONSHIPS WHILE INFUSING ABORIGINAL CONTENT INTO TEACHER EDUCATION

4.0 Abstract

Wilson's *Research Is Ceremony* (2008) inspired our approach of examining the relationships activated when engaging in a process of infusing Aboriginal perspectives throughout one teacher education cohort, called Central Option, located at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto (OISE/UT). In 2009 Central Option began to incorporate an Aboriginal focus into its curriculum, along with its other focuses on drama and conflict resolution. Here we look at the relationships between Central Option and the Institute, the instructors in Central to one another (and to the material), between Indigenous and Western content and pedagogical methods that have been enacted in Central, between the students and the instructors, between Central and Indigenous peoples and communities and within the student community, and the significance of these relationships to the Aboriginal content infusion. Examining these relationships gives rise to a full picture of the strengths, weaknesses and challenges that emerged with respect to the infusion of Aboriginal histories, perspectives and current events into Central. We share this approach which has been helpful to our work and hope it provides insight to others involved in bringing Aboriginal content into existing programs and inspires them to examine relationships that are developing and changing.

4.1 Introduction

In 2008, a group of Indigenous and Settler professors, teacher education instructors and graduate students came together at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) located at the University of Toronto, around a common interest in Aboriginal content in teacher
education. Under the guidance of Dr. Jean-Paul Restoule and Dr. Kathy Broad, this group formed Deepening Knowledge, Enhancing Instruction (later known as the Deepening Knowledge Project). The Deepening Knowledge Project (DKP) consists of both Indigenous and Settler professors, instructors and graduate students at OISE, all of whom are to varying degrees involved in related teaching and research projects (see Author & Author, 2014). Under the banner of the DKP, many different initiatives began, including a successful online repository of teacher resources and a series of presentations across the Bachelor of Education program (and now the Master of Teaching program) at OISE.

One founding DKP member, a retired teacher and current instructor in the B.Ed. program, saw an opportunity in early DKP discussions and acted upon it. Inspired by her growing knowledge about the Aboriginal histories, perspectives and current stories missing from the curriculum, Nancy Steele began a personal journey to learn more about these topics and bring diverse Indigenous perspectives to her teacher candidates through instruction, assignments, and special events. As a result of the success of these efforts in 2009 and 2010, in the autumn of 2010, Aboriginal education became a stated focus of the “Central Option”, one of the professional learning communities in OISE’s B.Ed. program. The Central Option educates teacher candidates training to work at the Primary and Junior levels.

From that autumn to the spring of 2014, Aboriginal education continued to be one focus of Central Option, along with drama and conflict resolution. Over that time period, how that focus was expressed changed and deepened. Other instructors hired to Central also came together to support this work by incorporating related content and strategies into their own teaching. When the lead author was initially hired as the Project Manager of the Deepening Knowledge Project in the fall of 2011, she too was pulled into contributing to the journey of the Option.
In 2014, OISEmandated that Central Option cease having Aboriginal Education as one of its stated foci. Leadership replaced our efforts with a mandate to infuse such content throughout the entire B.Ed. program. While teacher candidates and Central Option instructors expressed sadness at this development, the announcement also gave rise to reflective conversations concerning what had been accomplished. The interviews conducted for this research occurred in the midst of that cancellation. We felt an urgent desire to learn more about the journey those involved with Central Option had been on together, and wanted to honour the relationships we had developed with one another. The purpose of this study is to document how Central Option came to have and develop the Aboriginal infusion aspect of its curriculum and to gain insight from the instructors into the content and pedagogies used in order to learn from their experiences, inform our teaching practice going forward, and hopefully inform the efforts of others working to bring Indigenous perspectives to teacher education.

4.2 Related Literature

From their specific focus on the Canadian and World Studies curriculum, which includes geography, history, civics, economics, politics and law, Godlewska, Moore and Bednasek (2010) trace the insufficient or outdated knowledge of Aboriginal histories and current perspectives held by many postsecondary students they meet to the inadequate representation of Aboriginal histories and perspectives in the Ontario curriculum:

Through continued silence on these issues, Ontario schools are complicit in perpetuating this self-serving ignorance and maintaining the injustices of Canadian history as a living reality for Aboriginal People today (p.419).
They argue that there are cases, such as the representation of the meaning behind the *Royal Proclamation of 1763*, where curriculum is based on out-dated legal and historical understandings of Indigenous-Settler relations and that “overwhelmingly, the message from the curriculum is that the lives of Aboriginal Peoples are appropriate for elementary or middle school coverage when they are relegated to the past” (Godlewska, Moore & Bednasek, 2010, p. 425). Many of those instructing in teacher education across Canada see teacher education as a place where the process of “profoundly and purposive wilful ignorance” (Godlewska, Moore & Bednasek, 2010, p.419) on the part of Canadians towards Aboriginal peoples and issues, can be interrupted.

Our work is informed by teacher education professors and instructors who are engaged in the process of bringing Indigenous content to their curriculum, specifically aimed to reach Settlers on this land (den Heyer, 2009; Cherubini, Hodson, Manley-Casimir, & Muir, 2010; Vetter and Blimkie, 2011; Sanford, Williams, Hopper & McGregor, 2012; Korteweg, Fiddler, Bissell, Primavesi, Clarke & Moon, 2014). From Brock to Lakehead in the province of Ontario, Indigenous and Settler instructors are coming together and creating innovative programming. This included the “Barrie Site” associated with York University, where mostly Settler teacher candidates were brought together in a cohort where Indigenous content and pedagogy were infused throughout the entire program (Vetter & Blimkie, 2011). In the “Indigenizing Perspectives and Practices in Education” course at Lakehead University, instructors conceptualize the development of teacher candidates using a circle model which relates individual candidates to four dimensions (*Awareness, Engagement, Responsive Practice, Advocate & Ally*) with respect to their developing teacher identity and understanding of
Indigenous perspectives, an attempt to move teachers towards a “new teacher identity for reconciliation” (Korteweg, Fiddler, Bissell, Primavesi, Clarke & Moon, 2014, p.34).

Postsecondary educators in other fields are also in the process of examining their teaching practice for ways that it can be decolonized and indigenized (Oberg, Blades, & Thom, 2007; Iseke-Barnes, 2008; Kulnieks, Longboat & Young, 2014; Pete, Schneider, & O’Reilly, 2013). We have similarly learned from their efforts. Pete, Schneider, and O’Reilly (2013) each reflect on what decolonizing and indigenizing mean to them in their personal teaching practice: for Pete this means “resistance and persistence: resistance to the colonizing tendency to erase First Nations peoples; and doing my part to support the persistence of Indigenous peoples and their ways of knowing” (p.103); for Schneider, the process includes decolonizing herself, the classroom, the content she teaches, and the discipline she is a part of; for O’Reilly, the journey to decolonize her teaching practice leads to the question “how do I create courses which reflect the territory in which I live and work?” (p. 104).

Current literature reveals the difficulty of encouraging Settler teacher candidates, especially White teacher candidates, to acknowledge their privilege and to grapple with feelings of discomfort as race, Indigenous content and perspectives are explored and Indigenous-Settler relations are laid bare (Solomona, Portelli, Daniel, & Campbell, 2005; Aveling, 2006; Tupper, 2011). Block (2013), who teaches about difference in courses on equity and multiculturalism, writes of the importance of establishing a community where teacher candidates feel safe in order to explore the “relationships between their subject positions and the subject positions of others” (p.58). In attempting to indigenize and decolonize their work with teacher candidates at Lakehead University, Korteweg et al. (2014) argue for the importance of time and institutional flexibility in order to support the successful provision of such programs and highlight the
importance of “first-person experiences” for teacher candidates within Indigenous settings or with Indigenous peoples (p. 34).

4.3 Context

The Deepening Knowledge Project is also attempting to decolonize and indigenize our work with teacher candidates at OISE. The DKP began in 2008 and brought together Indigenous and Settler professors, instructors and graduate students through the shared goal of improving enrolment of Indigenous peoples in the Initial Teacher Education program. Realizing that a consistent advocacy for Indigenous content was missing in the program, they began to strategize about how best to go about that work. Nancy Steele was a lead instructor of Central Option at the time. She was asked to join the DKP because one of its creators Dr. Kathy Broad was aware of her commitment to teaching social justice issues. As we will see from the interviews, at early DKP meetings it was put forward that a cohort that focused on learning about Aboriginal topics was a strategy that some members of the project wanted to pursue. Since Nancy was a lead instructor of Central Option, an Option based at OISE which focused on training Primary/Junior teachers, she decided that she was going to begin teaching these perspectives. Her work grew and by 2010 Central Option came to have Aboriginal infusion as one of its stated focuses.

The work began as limited information sharing. It eventually grew into a variety of strategies meant to inspire each class of mainly Settler teacher candidates to bring Aboriginal content into their practicum, and ultimately their future teaching practice. Nancy and her co-lead instructor Mary Reid began bringing in guest speakers and creating assignments based around researching and teaching about Indigenous issues. They encouraged the exploration of Indigenous pedagogies by making a trip to the Toronto Islands with the students and an Elder,
infusing the day with teachings and related curriculum. The interviews clearly revealed that this work was done through the building of relationships. And so this paper will explore the genesis and development of Central Option through the lens of relationships.

As the site of this research, Central Option resembles a postsecondary educational cohort. With an enrolment which ranged from 60 to 70 teacher candidates each year, it was decidedly larger than the definition used in the literature, which put the maximum number of students in a cohort at 25 (Maher, 2005). When postsecondary students learn together in the cohort model, Teitel (1997) found that support and connection among students is fostered; conversations deepen in particular those about sensitive issues such as race; interpersonal relationships change; power dynamics shift between faculty and students; and program planning and decision-making dynamics are altered. For our work in Central, there was a clear benefit when the relationships fostered in a cohort create a safe space to have discussions around race and related issues of colonialism. Learning in cohorts also increases “the sense of interpersonal interdependence” (Teitel, 1997, p. 71), which can be interpreted as a strengthening of relationships between the students enrolled. Indeed in Maher’s (2005) study, as the year progressed students began to describe one another in language that referred to family and team work.

The literature also revealed drawbacks to the cohort model. Difficulties can arise in cohort learning in the form of the emergence of cliques and the lack of flexibility in course choices (Lei, Gorelick, Short, Smallwood, & Wright-Porter, 2011). It is also common for students to fall into set roles within the classroom dynamic, (Teital, 1997; Mahar, 2005).
4.4 Methodology

The framework of this study was influenced by Wilson’s *Research Is Ceremony* (2008). According to Wilson (2008), the methodology for such a study “is simply the building of more relations” (p.79) with people, knowledge and ideas, while acknowledging the existing relationships the researcher already holds. To do so, a variety of strategies of inquiry may be used (Wilson, 2008, p.39). For this study, three members of the DKP who are instructors in Central Option agreed to be interviewed about their efforts to infuse content on colonialism, Aboriginal perspectives, histories, current events and Aboriginal-Settler relations into the curriculum, as well as about their own personal journeys in relation to Aboriginal peoples and communities.

One of the foundational beliefs in *Research Is Ceremony* (2008) is in relationality, or that relationships are reality (p. 7), and this framework guided the collection and analysis of interview and observational data. This study is grounded in the relationships that have been developed between the researchers and the individual instructors, and the relationships each of us have to Central Option and the material taught within it, relationships we are ultimately accountable to (Wilson, 2008, p.7). The Research is Ceremony framework allowed for both the pre-existing relationships between participants and researchers to be honoured in the process. It also allowed for data analysis which centers the various relationships at work in Central. After conducting the interviews and completing the transcriptions, I as the lead author began analyzing them for themes and created related codes. After completing this process for all three interviews, I began to map out these codes and as I widened my perspective I saw that, not only did the interviews reflect my relationships with the individuals interviewed, but that from the transcripts emerged a
picture of the infusion of Aboriginal content as a web of relationships between the people, ideas, institutions and communities involved. My observations from planning sessions around Central activities attended by DKP members, as well as from experiences in the Central were also taken into account as this web was being realized.

One of our stated intentions when entering into this research was to engage in an inquiry which celebrated the successes of the work we had all accomplished together. We also recognized that to understand the work in Central Option, it was impossible to examine it piece by piece. Rather, we had to look at the effort as a whole. For these reasons, our work resembles “Appreciative Inquiry” a collective inquiry framework first developed by Cooperrider and colleagues in the mid-1980s, which recognizes what an organization is doing well (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987). Appreciative Inquiry seeks out “the best of what is in order to imagine what could be” (Bushe, 2013, p. 41). However, the work we have been engaged in around this study (and our two previous studies around the work in Central Option [see Author & Author, 2014]) most resembles Participatory Action Research (PAR), which consists of three integrated components, “research, education and action” (Gardner, 2004, p.53). Our work evaluated strategies implemented in Central Option designed to increase teacher candidate willingness and readiness to incorporate Aboriginal content into their teaching. DKP members engaged in systematic data collection and reflection (research), which then produced for us a look into the effectiveness of the approaches being taken to the work (knowledge) and directly and immediately influenced how that work continued to unfold (action). Our study emerges from this collaborative context.

4.5 Results

What follows is an attempt to paint a picture of the relationships that were being enacted
prior to the Aboriginal focus being cancelled, and to explore the significance of those relationships to the development of the focus. These relationships are between: Central Option and OISE; the instructors in Central to one another and to the material; Indigenous and Western content and pedagogical methods that have been enacted in Central; the students and the instructors, Central and Indigenous peoples and communities; within the student community; and between the instructors and OISE.

*Between Central Option and OISE*

The Aboriginal focus in Central Option emerged from the vision of one of its co-coordinators, Nancy Steele, who was inspired by her membership in the Deepening Knowledge Project and a lifelong commitment to teaching for social justice at the elementary level. As with other Options at OISE, the coordinators and instructors were largely free to direct the content and assignments in Central Option according to their strengths and interests, as long as they aligned with the mandated course outlines, and the “Learner Document.” This allowed Nancy and her colleagues to create the Aboriginal focus relatively independently from the wider institution.

During the lifespan of that focus, Central Option began to connect with the larger OISE community in order to extend the learning of enrolled teacher candidates. From the beginning, Nancy had the support of ITE Director, Dr. Broad. Dr. Jean-Paul Restoule, an Associate Professor of Aboriginal Education at OISE, was consulted on selected assignments and curriculum that Central instructors used. If an event held by the Indigenous Education Network at OISE was applicable to the students, the entire Option would attend as part of instructional time. When OISE began affiliations with indigenous Elders, Nancy built relationships with them.

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8 The Learner Document was a centrally developed document which “indicates a set of capacities to be developed over the course of the Initial Teacher Education Program.” [http://www.oise.utoronto.ca/ite/BEducation/](http://www.oise.utoronto.ca/ite/BEducation/)
and invited them to participate in the Island Day (which will be detailed later on) and to open circles and participate during other special events. One persistent issue was the low number of Indigenous instructors hired to teach in the wider B.Ed. program by OISE. Our research has highlighted the effectiveness of learning from First Voice perspectives (Nardozi, Restoule, Broad, Steele & James, 2014), and the limited presence of indigenous instructors, guest speakers and elder participation restricted the growth of the Aboriginal focus in Central.

At the beginning of the life of the Aboriginal infusion, Central Option had strong support from Dr. Broad, then Academic Director of Initial Teacher Education. Dr. Broad encouraged the work of the Option, helped Nancy and the DKP find creative ways to fund their activities, and attended events held by Central, when she was available. After Dr. Broad left that role, the relationship between Central Option and the institution changed and this presented challenges to the development of the Aboriginal focus. Around this time, the ITE program became slated for closure, to be replaced by the MT program, and this shift in focus within the institution could be felt in the Option. There was some consternation on the part of the lead instructors and members of the DKP (including the lead author) when the normal allowances for guest speakers was not enough to bring recognized Elders from outside the university into the Option, and accommodation was not made. In particular, our team was told that what was enough for other guest speakers should be enough for Elders. Many of the guest speakers who are invited OISE are entrenched in the education system, and collect salaries which come with other additions like benefits and vacation time. If the same was true for most Elders who were invited in, offering them the same honorarium would be appropriate. We know, however, that most Elders have no other affiliation with the education system. Elders carry with them important knowledges that should be highly valued by the institution. They also disproportionately to other members of our
society carry the burden of colonization and oppression in their lifetimes, and may rely on such honorariums to support the good work they do, themselves, and perhaps family members as well. Teacher candidates repeatedly highlighted their perception that Elders were important to their own understanding of teaching Aboriginal topics. Their knowledges also should be valued by an institution, in part by ensuring that the amount Elders ask in return for their services is met.

For the last three years of Central’s stated Aboriginal education focus, OISE named Aboriginal Education one of its top priorities under Dean Julia O’Sullivan. At the same time, the ITE program, which housed Central Option, was slated for closure and financial and personnel resources began to be directed elsewhere. This complex context was the backdrop with which Central Option operated during this period. The Aboriginal Education priority seemed to manifest itself more in the graduate section and research efforts of the University. Under this priority the Dean appointed a Special Advisor on Aboriginal Education. Despite efforts on the part of the authors to provide information and work with her and the Aboriginal Advisory committee no mention was made regarding the Deepening Knowledge Project in the official statement released to the OISE community on October 4th, 2012, nor was there any mention in a speech to the OISE spring Alumni reunion in 2013 which stated “I’m disappointed in how slowly our institutions are making changes but what is hopeful is the number of allies who understand the necessity of this being taught. Today’s teacher candidates are hungry for information on First Nations history and issues and we must provide the tools.” The Aboriginal focus in Central Option was in many ways ground-breaking for OISE. If this relationship was stronger, it is likely that Central Option would have had the ability to expand its work.

_The instructors in Central Option to one another, and to the material_
The Aboriginal infusion component of Central Option was initiated by the leadership of co-coordinator Nancy Steele, who I was able to interview for this research. The other participants were Mary Reid, Central Option’s co-coordinator since 2008, and John Doran, who began his affiliation with Central Option in 2012 through conducting Deepening Knowledge Project presentations, and in September 2013 became the instructor of the School and Society course for the cohort. Together, Nancy, Mary, and John became the three instructors directly involved with the infusion of Aboriginal content with consultation from Dr. Restoule and myself on occasion. Nancy and Mary have been coordinators together since the beginning of the Aboriginal infusion efforts, and worked together to expand the infusion each year. Mary explained:

It was Nancy that took on leadership, I just kind of supported her as much as I could. And every year we delved deeper and deeper, and I saw Nancy get more passionate about the FNMI infusion and Indigenous ways.

Mary traces her belief in the importance of Aboriginal infusion to a transformative relationship she and her husband formed while working at a school board north of the Greater Toronto Area. As Mary explains they built a very close relationship with one particular person of Saugeen Nation up north, we still keep in touch with him, he was hired to the board by my partner and because of that relationship, that becomes so much more powerful …. It was my first time going to a pow wow for example, first time being invited to festivities, and really learning the First Nations culture in an authentic way, not from a book, not from a website.

Mary continues to seek more knowledge on Indigenous-Settler issues and identifies herself as a Settler. During our interview she consistently highlighted the importance of recognizing that Canadians live on Indigenous land.
John is Mi’kmaq from Shubenacadie First Nation, which is located in Nova Scotia, Canada. In late 1960s he was taken by the government from his home and adopted by an Amish family in Massachusetts. He connects strongly with both identities. His teaching is infused with his lived experiences and knowledge from both societies.

Nancy’s entire career as an elementary school teacher has been characterized by a strong commitment to social justice and conflict resolution. She told me about her work as an equity representative at the Toronto District School Board. When she was a teacher she would enrol in after-school workshops offered by her school board on racism, sexism and classism. It was not until she was confronted after delivering a presentation at a conference on her work and the work of her students on Holocaust education that Aboriginal issues appeared on her radar. Nancy explained:

At the end of the presentation where we talked about teaching grade seven and eight students about the Holocaust, two Aboriginal women who were sitting in the front row put their hands up. I could tell they were unhappy. They asked, “Why is no one teaching our history?”…My reaction was what are they talking about? …This is so terrible, this Holocaust how can you complain, right? I knew nothing…. But since then, I have remembered these women.

After this experience, Nancy’s understanding of colonialism and genocide on Turtle Island grew. She began exploring the work of Indigenous author Sherman Alexie and screening the Alanis Obomsawin documentary “Kanehsatake 270 Years of Resistance” with her grade seven students. After she was hired as a teacher education instructor at OISE, she was asked to join the Deepening Knowledge Project because of Academic Director Dr. Broad’s knowledge of Nancy’s commitment to social justice education.
Nancy and Mary have a strong professional relationship and friendship marked by co-operation and understanding. Their friendship, which extended to me when I first began working with the Option in 2011 and to John after he came on in 2013, was a huge strength to the focus. Their rapport allowed for open and frank discussion about controversial topics, while we all engaged in constant reflection and collaboration. It was not uncommon for us to have conversations where we talked through what content the teacher candidates needed to deepen their understanding, or discussed the results of the research which we were then engaged in. John’s presence and friendship added a new dimension of understanding and relationship regarding Indigenous nations and identities for all of us. His involvement in the team gave our work meaning by making the topics we were teaching immediate and real. He took time to explain to us his story about being a part of the adoption scoop in the late 1960s when he was apprehended from Nova Scotia and adopted by an Amish family in Massachusetts. He frequently shares with us his understandings related to both his Mi’kmaq and adopted Amish identities and has introduced us to community members with whom he has relationships.

Our relationships were also significant to the focus because they caused the instructors to recognize each other’s strengths and build upon them to create strategies for Central. For instance, based on Nancy’s knowledge in methods of conflict resolution and John’s knowledge of circles and Indigenous modalities of healing and justice, when conflict emerged within the teacher candidate community or between TCs and instructors, Nancy and John facilitated community circles to work towards reconciliation. In winter 2013, Nancy recognized that John and I were following the Idle No More movement closely on Twitter and in Indigenous media. She subsequently invited us in twice to update the teacher candidates on events and talk them through the context the movement was emerging from.
Between Indigenous and Western content and pedagogical methods in Central Option.

Central instructors constantly reflected on the Aboriginal infusion occurring in the Option, using teacher candidate feedback and the research of the DKP as a guide (Author et. al, 2014). Nancy was a central member of the DKP research team which looked into which strategies the teaching team employed in Central were increasing teacher candidate willingness and readiness to incorporate Aboriginal content into their curriculum. During the first years of Aboriginal infusion in Central, the instructors realized that their initial efforts were not necessarily countering the racist attitudes that candidates might have entered the Option with. Their ideas of what content should be taught then began to evolve. Mary shared the following revelation:

Six years ago, I think it was six years ago, when Nancy and I did our first survey, … I remember reading one survey result, where one TC … said, “why should we pay extra time to a group that doesn’t have to pay taxes?” …This was the end of the year, so obviously we didn’t do our job.

As a result, Nancy and Mary continued to increase the amount of Indigenous content in Central, often weaving it together with the other focuses of drama and conflict resolution. This meant increased focus on Aboriginal perspectives regarding land, colonialism, and spirituality. Nancy in particular felt it was important to have a strong emphasis on history so that teacher candidates could learn about injustice and know the roots of present day racism and stereotypes. Through the guest speakers they invited in and events and retreats they held, Nancy and Mary also highlighted the importance of Indigenous knowledges shared by Indigenous peoples. During these events, they explicitly facilitated conversations with guests about how teacher candidates could then bring this knowledge into their classroom without being appropriative. The variety of
strategies, assignments, and guests Nancy and Mary incorporated into the curriculum of Central Option will be explained throughout this paper.

One way the Aboriginal infusion manifested in Central was through instructional time dedicated to learning foundational material such as terminology (Aboriginal, First Nations, Métis, and Inuit), the significance of the Royal Proclamation of 1763, the meaning and significance of the Guswentah (Two-Row Wampum), and mainly First Nations perspectives on other historical and current events, grounded in the understandings which emerge from the territory on which we teach, that of the Dish with One Spoon treaty. This teaching emerged from John’s perspectives as a Mi’kmaq adoptee, and from my perspective as a Settler on this land. The aforementioned material is delivered across the B.Ed. program at OISE by John and myself, but by the final year of infusion, Central candidates were receiving six hours of instruction from us while other candidates were receiving at most three hours.

In their work on decolonizing pre-service teacher education, Phillips and Whatman (2007) argue that “what (Settler teacher candidates) already ‘know’ will impact on how new information is received and interpreted” (p.2). Our presentation in Central aimed to do more than deliver information. We also prompted students to reflect on their own identities and openly questioned taken-for-granted colonial narratives about the Nation of Canada. In their teacher education program in the University of Queensland, Phillips and Whatman write about how they spend a significant amount of time having candidates examine their own identities. Other scholars have called for a similar approach such as Strong-Wilson (2007) who says white TCs (and we add to this diasporic Settler candidates) need “to be voluntary (that is, in some sense, autobiographically) involved in critically re-examining their own stories” (p.116). In Central Option, much of the work of exploring privilege was explicitly done in the School and Society
course which examines the socio-political structures and outcomes of education. The instructors also added a variety of different kinds of Indigenous content in hopes that different mediums will connect with different teacher candidates. Teacher candidates were required to read “Touching Spirit Bear” and see the play “Solo” by Jerry Brody, for instance, which engaged those who learn through literature and drama.

The relationship between Indigenous and Western perspectives and pedagogies is significant in that, where these knowledges conflict, discord can arise, and the instructors were challenged to debrief and address that discord as best they could. Nancy for instance, taught a lesson on Creation Stories, in which she facilitated the analysis of the underlying values of the Genesis story and the Creation story described by Thomas King in *The Truth About Stories:*

What I’m hoping to do is to show them the different understandings of the place of humans in creation that are suggested by Genesis and various Aboriginal creation stories: the difference between being given dominion over the rest of creation and being just part of an ongoing creation that may need protection from human greed. I end by reading a piece from the Thomas King story of the woman who fell from the sky. In that story Thomas King makes that point really clearly, and at one point he asks, what would have happened if we had a creation story in which the creator god didn’t throw the two humans, who had made an understandable mistake, out into a howling wilderness to suffer and die? What if we had a god who put us here with all the other beings and helped us all create a beautiful garden where we all still live? I could see the faces of the people who are very invested in the Genesis story…become horrified as I was reading the story. I could see this was seen by them as challenging and maybe even being disrespectful of their strongly held beliefs. The discussions that follow are fascinating. Some people
question my right to read that story. Some suggest I am biased against the Judeo/Christian story. They want to know what will happen if they will be teaching children for whom the Genesis story is sacred. I explain yet again that my job is to complicate their thinking, and that will be their job as teachers. And so we talk about this, and what they are feeling. I suspect that for some this may be a paradigm shifting moment but for others maybe not.

This close analysis of the underlying assumptions of one Indigenous story and one from a Western religion challenged many teacher candidates and led them to ask uncomfortable questions of the material and of themselves. As students learn more about this as well as the oppression Indigenous peoples have faced and continue to face on this land and come to discover their own relationship of complicity in the project of the Canadian nation state, they often experience negative emotions and a need for healing arises.

To address conflict in Central the instructors attempted to break out of Western methods of classroom management, but often the limitations of the institution got in the way. If conflict arose within the Central TC community, John and Nancy attempted to hear everyone through circle. John describes how the large class sizes determined by Western assumptions about education can be a challenge to that pedagogical practice:

We are talking about a class of almost 80 people, just way too many people to have everyone. So even when we broke it up into two, that’s still 40 people in a circle, it was just a lot of people to talk to.

Despite the hurdles of time and class size, John and Nancy committed to circle process each year, recognizing that far from being an add-on, healing was actually crucial to the work done in Central.
The students and the instructors

In our previous research with the teacher candidates of Central Option, we have found that First Voice testimony has a large impact on teacher candidate willingness and readiness to incorporate Indigenous content into their teaching practice (Nardozi, Restoule, Broad, Steele & James, 2014). During the interviews for this study it became clear that the relationship between John and the teacher candidates, especially in the last year of the Aboriginal focus when John taught the year-long School and Society course, was crucial to teacher candidate learning and had an observable impact on the instruction teacher candidates did during their practicum.

Throughout his teaching, John relates the material to his personal experiences and those of his family. When John teaches, he does so in a way which highlights the responsibility all Settlers have, and unapologetically centers Indigenous oppression on this land. There is something additional about his approach, however, that keeps the students engaged, and inspires them to teach Aboriginal education. John not only makes Aboriginal perspectives real for the students through his stories, but also approaches the material with a sense of inclusion and hope. John spoke to me about his perspective on how to make it so the TCs are not defensive when covering controversial material:

You can get angry, but you can’t show your anger at all. You have to realize that it’s not going to help anything, that people pick up on things like that pretty quickly; it’s hard to hide it when you feel it, so you have to go somewhere pretty quickly and say, we’re trying to, rather than just squish my anger down which everyone will see anyway, try to think “ok, we’re here to try to help these people understand something. Maybe they’re not going to get everything right now, but perhaps they’ll think about it a year from
Mary felt John’s compassion for his students and his presence in the class was a huge strength of Central’s infusion efforts, and led many students to undergo authentic transformation which in turn inspired them to take up Aboriginal content. She explained:

I firmly believe that their transformative learning experiences were from an authentic voice, just like how I had that transformative turning point; that turning point is when you actually sit down and you build a relationship with a person who has been a survivor of residential schools for example, who has been a victim of so many horrific events because of their identity, right? So, that’s who I believe, that’s my truth, and [John is] just such a compassionate person as well.

It thus became clear that John’s addition to the instructors team was a significant strength to the Aboriginal focus in how his relationship with students engaged them and enhanced their commitment to Aboriginal perspectives.

Other instructors who were hired to teach classes for Central Option were not necessarily hired by OISE in accordance with any experience living or teaching Aboriginal perspectives, which revealed weakness in the administrative commitment to Aboriginal priorities, and at times caused weakness in the delivery of the Aboriginal infusion. After learning of that focus in Central, some of the instructors did attempt to incorporate Aboriginal perspectives, even if it was an entirely new endeavour for them. Surveys over two years of Central Option revealed that while teacher candidates did not necessarily highlight those instructors who taught Aboriginal education well, they became quite concerned when they felt there was a mistake made. For these instructors this represented the first step on a journey to incorporate Aboriginal content, but some teacher candidates expressed frustration at these missteps, perhaps demonstrating their rising
consciousness regarding Aboriginal issues.

The students to the material

The teacher candidates who form the Central Option community each year do not necessarily have a relationship or even an interest in Aboriginal education prior to entering the program. While this is common in Canadian society, it constantly presents challenges for instructors. A survey we distributed in September 2013 revealed that just over one-third of Central candidates ranked Central Option as their first choice of cohort to be placed in when entering OISE. It was ranked either second or third by the remainder of the class. Teacher candidates placed in Central may have found other features of Central appealing to them, for instance its focus on the Primary/Junior grade level, its location on the downtown campus (unlike some other cohorts which are housed in schools across the Greater Toronto Area), or its other focuses of drama and conflict resolution.

Godlewska, Moore and Bednasek (2010) argue that “Ontario’s education system is a primary instrument in ensuring that colonialism remains unchallenged” since in their undergraduate classes of “mostly relatively well-educated young Ontarians, (students) knew almost nothing about Aboriginal Peoples in Canada” (p.418). Their observation is absolutely true not just for Central Option students, but for the majority of B.Ed. students at OISE (Mashford-Pringle & Nardozi, 2013). While a handful of students shared that they had taken courses in Aboriginal topics in their undergraduate programs or had some personal relationship with Aboriginal communities or prior knowledge of Aboriginal-Settler issues, the vast majority of teacher candidates told us that they had very little knowledge of Indigenous histories and contemporary issues (Author et al., 2014). Over the lifespan of the Aboriginal education
infusion, a handful of students self-identified as either First Nations or Métis; however, it should be noted that there was no effort on the part of the administration to place all Aboriginal teacher candidates in Central. Indeed, data collected by the Initial Teacher Education program indicates that 14 self-identified Aboriginal teacher candidates enrolled in the program in 2012-2013. These candidates may have wanted to choose other cohorts either because they were interested in teaching at the Junior/Intermediate or Intermediate/Senior levels or in the technology program, wanted a cohort based in a satellite location closer to home, or because they did not need or perhaps want the Aboriginal focus for themselves.

Because of the complexity of the various relationships that teacher candidates within Central held with Indigenous knowledges and communities, a delicate balance had to be struck with respect to the content explored. For some candidates who did not already feel strongly about teaching this material, the content needed to change their minds, to educate them as much as possible within a limited timeframe, and inspire them to learn more on their own after they had completed the program. Instructors also heard from a different, albeit much smaller group of candidates each year who were bored with content with which they were already familiar. Finally, there were those who resisted learning the material because they felt that it was unimportant to their education or because they held racist stereotypes against Indigenous peoples. At times, this diversity of perspectives within the Option became both a strength and a weakness. Candidates in a cohort like Central often develop interpersonal relationships which help create safety around conversations regarding sensitive topics such as race (Teitel, 1997). This in turn can precipitate significant learning for TCs. We also heard from TCs that the diversity of the starting points and levels of receptiveness to the material can hinder the work in
that it may hold other TCs back from learning. Instructors were always engaged in reflecting on student feedback and adjusting curriculum to move group learning forward.

Surveys distributed to teacher candidates and one-on-one interviews revealed that over one program cycle, Central Option teacher candidate willingness and readiness to teach Aboriginal content did increase overall (Nardozi, Restoule, Broad, Steele & James, 2014). That publication points to the DKP workshop, the Toronto Island trip, assignments that required the use of an Aboriginal story book and an Aboriginal lesson plan, and Indigenous instructors and guest speakers in the Option as powerful experiences that increased teacher candidate knowledge of Aboriginal content and overall increased their desire to teach that content (Nardozi et al., 2014). However, here we focus on the perceptions of the teacher candidates’ growth by the three instructors interviewed.

For Nancy, using a variety of different teaching strategies in Central Option is crucial to reaching teacher candidates:

As with all teaching, you catch some people with some particular strategies and others with others, so when you look at our teacher candidates, there are some who really need to have the kinds of readings that are common in School and Society, and that’s where they really do their best thinking and discussions around those readings are really important. There are those for whom those readings are absolutely inaccessible and they come to their huge understandings when they’re actually in a drama and forced to experience something.

For these students, and to demonstrate to the whole group teaching geared to the Primary/Junior level, Nancy facilitated lessons which employed a variety of pedagogies throughout the year that centered on Indigenous topics. One which explores the children’s book Shi-shi-etko by Nicola I.
Campbell has teacher candidates embody learning about the loss of identity that came with residential school. Nancy explained the activity to me as follows:

I asked them to put who they were, memories that were important to them from their childhood, on slips of paper. I had them each decorate a paper bag and put their memories into it. Then I then asked them to bring the bags up and give them to me. I told them that I would be keeping them. In that moment, I could see horror on their faces and I knew that there’d been a bit of an understanding about what happens when our identity is taken from us. In our debrief we talked about how they felt when I asked for their memories. I asked why they had done what I told them to do and what they felt would have happened if they hadn’t been obedient. I tried to show them how they might use this to help their students understand, even in a small way, the betrayal and loss caused by residential schools.

These strategies with their diversity of approaches to get this material across to teacher candidates demonstrated lessons which candidates could bring into their future classrooms, which was a strength of the approach to Aboriginal infusion Nancy and Mary developed.

John felt another key strength of Central Option’s Aboriginal focus which had a direct impact on the teacher candidate’s relationship to the material was the period of time over which students could deepen their relationship to the ideas presented:

I could build relationships with people, which made a big difference, people said that too over time that it felt like they could think about things and ask more questions, and we could learn more in-depth than they could otherwise, or sometimes things came up that they were going to ask anyway, or wanted to know about without them asking, so we could get more into things, and I think you can of course spread it out over some time
there’s more response right, so people can digest things, and they’re more apt to remember them too, that’s what almost all the final papers were saying, how they remembered much more because they had time and we talked about things a lot more.

Aboriginal perspectives on history and current events have been totally absent from the education of the vast majority of teacher candidates. So when they are confronted with the information, they often told us they felt overwhelmed when their learning challenged the Canadian narratives they took for granted. John and I are always surprised when we meet a group for a second time and some are anxious to hear the same information again. After our presentation, some instructors in other cohorts have shared with us that they take time to debrief with candidates; however, unlike Central, these cohorts lack sustained engagement with the material.

We have found that the time that Central spends on Aboriginal material directly translates into hours TCs spend in their own classroom teaching Aboriginal topics. In the last year of the Aboriginal Infusion, a survey was administered to Central Option teacher candidates, and to candidates in another Option at OISE which trained teachers for the Primary/Junior level and had a similar enrollment. It asked how many hours they had spent teaching Aboriginal content over their two practicum placements. Fifteen teacher candidates in the latter Option who had received the three hour Deepening Knowledge Project presentation reported teaching 42.5 hours (48 candidates from that same Option reported teaching no Aboriginal content at all), while all 53 Central Option candidates who responded reported teaching 531 hours (with 5 not responding to the survey).

The assignments related to Aboriginal infusion that were a part of Central Option’s curriculum had a strong influence on teacher candidates’ relationships with Aboriginal content,
specifically, with their desire to bring that content into their classroom. The Aboriginal topic inquiry project, which Nancy and Mary developed after meeting and learning from instructors from York University’s Barrie Option, was the largest of these assignments. It asked TCs to explore the research on a question related to Aboriginal topics in their teaching which was of interest to them. According to Mary, both the written component and the class presentations where students shared their research

solidifies, its sharing, it gets them to get into the research. They get into the research and they think, “Oh I never thought that we have academic research evidence that supports that if we don’t teach it, then this is going to go on the wayside.

John felt heartened by the shift he perceived in teacher candidates over the course of the academic year, and the ripple effect they could potentially have in the relationships they hold:

I saw people change their minds, and people told me they did…. A lot of people said they had never really thought about First Nations people more than in passing. A few people said that they had negative stereotypes about First Nations people learned from their families. And a lot of these were new immigrants. And that the class helped change their way of thinking, quite a few said that, and that they were even starting to talk with their families, and they were surprised at the resistance their families have (laughs) so yes, but think of it, if all of these people are continuing to talk with their families, think of the potential change that can affect. And they themselves, now, as they go out to teach.

One way this change is being felt is through the amount of hours teacher candidates spend teaching this material while in the program, as highlighted previously. Another outcome from the increased amount of time teacher candidates spend learning about these topics and being

99
encouraged to teach these topics is an increase in their confidence in doing so. Mary told me that in the last year of the infusion:

> We [saw] a lot of the TCs graduating with feeling confident and feeling that … this was a must, a priority, whereas in previous years, they were probably getting a good understanding, but not knowing how to do it, so this year … I had 22 students I had to observe, I would say at least 75% of them were so excited to show me what they were doing for Aboriginal infusion. Whether it was visual arts, whether it was social studies, even math, you know going outside, getting connected with so many aspects of the culture, FNMI culture, they were really excited.

From this it is clear that the sustained engagement allows a relationship to develop between teacher candidates and the material, which for some results in greater understanding and even passion about the topics.

*Within the student community*

Many instructors at OISE put special efforts into the process of creating a supportive learning community with their TCs, which also serves as a model of community building TCs can use with their future students. Relationships are also encouraged so that a safe space is created where ideally, candidates can express themselves without fear. The sharing of food is one conscious way the instructors of Central Option foster community. At significant points in the year, such as the last day before practicum, the social committee organized a potluck or ordered food, and John made loaves of bannock to share.

Another strategy Nancy initiated were the two retreats on the Toronto Islands, one to begin the year in September, and the other at the end of classes in April. That land, which used to
be a peninsula, has long held significance for the Nations whose land Settler Torontonians occupy, and TCs learned about that history during the first outing in September. These retreats began with a smudge, and then Central TCs engaged in a variety of multidisciplinary activities interacting with each other and with the land. First Nation community members including John were invited to give teachings throughout the day. According to John, it is that Friday in September that really jumpstarts the community building in Central:

It makes an enormous difference in them; it changes them the next day. Nancy’s idea is to, I think, build some sense of camaraderie and togetherness, make a community right? And that day, when we are out there and people are working together on the sandcastles from just a picture, they do an absolutely tremendous job.

John also feels the change in setting and the energy of being outside is especially important, “I think the outside environment is great, just they love sitting on the rocks, on the rock jetty there.”

A number of Indigenous pedagogies naturally emerge during the retreats based on the outside setting and the activities, with John for instance sharing that he had observed storytelling, the land acting as teacher, and a naturally emerging pedagogy of apprenticeship between the candidates.

The Option and Indigenous peoples and communities

While the focus on Aboriginal content was initiated by Settler educators, Nancy and Mary recognized the importance of relationship with Indigenous peoples to teacher candidate learning, as highlighted earlier. As Settlers, they also recognized the importance of listening to and taking direction from Indigenous peoples and communities with respect to what content should be taught. From the very beginning of the Aboriginal content infusion in Central, Dr. Restoule of
Dokis First Nation had a connection with the Option. As time passed and the infusion developed, more and diverse connections formed with Indigenous peoples and communities. In the second year of infusion, the DKP presentations began, with Algonquin scholar Dr. Angela Mashford-Pringle the first year, and later John who became a fixture in Central. Guest speakers throughout the infusion’s lifespan included Grand Chief Stan Louttit of the Mushkegowuk people who spoke about Treaty Nine, Sharon Clarke and Wade Smoke who demonstrated and taught traditional dances to the TCs, John Croulch who spoke about his personal journey as an Indigenous person, and multiple visits from Susan Blight and Jamaias DaCosta, cohosts of CIUT radio program *Indigenous Waves*, who spoke on current events. In the last year of the infusion, John was hired to teach the School and Society course. His presence as an educator and a Mi’kmaq person made a noticeable difference as we heard earlier. Our research has shown that Indigenous guest speakers and Elders were frequently mentioned by teacher candidates in surveys and interviews as having an important impact on their learning, and candidates often requested that more community members be invited into the Option (Nardozi, Restoule, Broad, Steele & James, 2014). These individuals made a great self-reported impact on the teacher candidates’ willingness and readiness to take up Aboriginal content in their teaching (Nardozi et al., 2014). This impact combined with the problem of lack of funds highlights the need for more Indigenous instructors in OISE’s teacher education program.

Thought was given on how to build relationships between teacher candidates in Central and Indigenous communities outside of the University. Nancy developed a relationship with staff at the First Nations School of Toronto elementary school, and another elementary school with a high enrolment of Indigenous students in Toronto. As a result, every year some teacher candidates were assigned practicum placements at those sites. One year, teacher candidates were
asked to visit an Aboriginal event or organization and reflect on the experience as an assignment, but lack of space for that assignment in Central’s framework meant that it did not continue past that initial year. The idea of a service project where teacher candidates would volunteer within Indigenous communities was discussed but never realized before the infusion was cancelled.

Nancy, Mary, John and I often expressed a desire to have more guest speakers and build deeper relations with Aboriginal communities. A lack of funding from OISE provided a significant challenge to that vision. Money for guest speakers in Central was found in either the limited DKP budget or the Aboriginal Infusion budget given to Nancy in her role as OISE Infusion lead, but those events had the stipulation that they had to be offered to all teacher candidates across the program and thus could not be held during regular class hours when instructors could make Central Option attendance mandatory. As the lunch hour seemed to be the time where we could attract the largest audience, we were limited to 50 minutes for most activities. And again, the lack of self-identified Indigenous instructors hired to the B.Ed. program at OISE meant that the instructors in Central were not able to pull from a larger pool of experience or expertise within teacher education at the institution.

In the last year of the infusion, Nancy formed a relationship with the principal of a remote First Nation community in Northern Ontario. The principal and her colleague flew to Toronto to speak to Central Option candidates about working in their school, and then conducted on-site interviews, eventually hiring two teacher candidates.

*Relationship between the instructors and OISE*

The relationship between the three instructors and OISE varied depending on the particular instructor. When asked about her relationship with OISE, Mary reflected on how the
environment at OISE encouraged her to bring thinking on social justice issues to the forefront of her practice:

I say it from my own personal experience, especially in a principals’ role because you are putting out fires in so many different areas right? And coming here and doing research in (social justice), and hanging out with people like you, and having to teach about it, and infuse it, it really becomes who you are.

John felt positively about the overall growth that has happened within the University of Toronto with respect to Aboriginal content, since his time spent in his Master’s degree:

UofT has come a long way. …When I was taking my Masters… 23 years ago, it was not a friendly place, the teachers were not receptive towards anything to do with Native studies; there were no Native classes, no Native teachers. … There was a very small group of First Nations students, so we all stuck together as we could…. They didn’t take us seriously; they wouldn’t let me use Mi’kmaq for my language requirement, which we all had a language requirement in those days, even though I was doing native-white relations in the Maritimes. ….They said, there’s no way of testing it, you can’t do that.

While he has witnessed change began to occur at the university, he expressed concern regarding concrete commitment from higher levels of the institution to Aboriginal education at OISE. John felt that a lack of support held Central Option back from its full potential with regards to its commitment to Aboriginal content. OISE has had Aboriginal Education as one of its primary priorities since 2010, but for John how that commitment is expressed has been unclear:

What is the commitment? Could they define it? And then, how are they going to do it? … I haven’t observed a commitment…people like Nancy, and Mary, yourself, Jean-Paul…are the ones who are doing it.
As a Ph.D. student, he also had great concerns around the commitment to First Nations students within the institution. “If we’re committed to First Nations people, (there are) things that we, everyone needs. What about the funding? That’s a very real part of getting through the program.”

4.6 The Present

OISE is now in a state of rapid transition. In 2014-2015, Central was no longer allowed to have Aboriginal infusion as a particular focus. Instead, leaders in the B.Ed. program decided it should be one of many focuses that must be present in all Options across the entire B.Ed. program, and Nancy was asked to write an assignment highlighting Aboriginal content that all elementary-level teacher candidates had to complete. It was exciting to hear the feedback of the teacher candidates who had completed the assignment prior to participating in the Deepening Knowledge Project presentations, and to see how the lessons learned with regards to Aboriginal infusion in Central had percolated into other parts of the B.Ed. program. However, in Central Option, the amount of time dedicated to Aboriginal content was scaled back. Without the official label on Central Option, the instructors felt less able to justify such an extended focus.

In 2015, the B.Ed. program will cease to exist. In its place, teacher candidates may enrol in an MA in Child Study or the Masters of Teaching program, where all elementary teacher candidates enrolled will have to take a full course which will combine Social Studies and Aboriginal Education. As this article went to press, the placement of Aboriginal Education in the secondary program was being negotiated. As this change unfolds, Mary had strong feelings about the infrastructure and capacity that needs to be in place to ensure that Aboriginal content be delivered effectively:

We need to build capacity in our instructors. If it’s not there in the instructors, then they
are not going to have the confidence or the knowledge base to infuse that, and I’ve taught in a variety of Options, and it’s not happening as strongly as it is in Central…. We need to give them the materials, the knowledge and the confidence to be able to work with their student teachers. I don’t know how that’s going to happen, but it takes time and money.

4.7 Significance of the Study

This research details one of the efforts the Deepening Knowledge Project has taken to embed Aboriginal content into curriculum at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education and adds another layer of analysis to the already existing literature on Central Option (Author et. al, 2014; Authors, in press). It is our hope that this research assists others seeking to examine their own efforts to bring Aboriginal content into existing teacher education programs to examine the relationships that are developing and changing. This study provides insight from instructors into curriculum and their own motivations, which can be useful during this period of transition from having a particular Option embedded with Indigenous content to embedding that content throughout the entirety of OISE’s teacher preparation programs. It also has the potential to inform similar efforts to embed Aboriginal content into postsecondary education across Canada and other global contexts where this work is being undertaken, including inspiring others to analyze the various relationships at work within their efforts and to foster the relationships that lead to restoring right relations among Indigenous peoples and Canadians new and old.
CHAPTER 5

DEEPENING KNOWLEDGE TO INSPIRE ACTION: INCLUDING ABORIGINAL PERSPECTIVES IN TEACHING PRACTICE

5.0 Introduction

Many beginning and experienced teachers lack knowledge of Indigenous histories and worldviews that would allow them to develop culturally relevant and responsive pedagogies for students who identify as First Nations, Inuit, or Métis, and to assist all students in understanding Indigenous knowledges and perspectives (Dion, 2007; Dion, Johnston, & Rice, 2010). In 2008, a working group of Teacher Education faculty and staff came together based on their shared commitment to infuse Aboriginal education throughout all components of the Initial Teacher Education (ITE) program at OISE/UT. Since then, the group, known as the Deepening Knowledge Project, has developed and delivered various initiatives in ITE such as program-wide workshops on First Nations, Métis, and Inuit histories and current experiences (see Mashford-Pringle & Nardozi, 2013), and a popular online repository of teaching resources that address Aboriginal topics. Since 2009, team members have also worked closely with the instructors and students in Central Option, a cohort of approximately 70 elementary teacher candidates (TCs) at OISE/UT with a specific mandate to provide targeted instruction with respect to Aboriginal content. In 2012-2013, members of the Project received a small research grant as part of OISE’s Inquiry Into Practice initiative to gather data around this work with teacher candidates. Our research team consisted of two faculty members, the Director of the

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9 A condensed version of this manuscript was featured in Inquiry into Practice: Learning and Teaching Global Matters in Local Classrooms. (2014). Edited by David Montemurro, Mira Gambhir, Mark Evans and Kathryn Broad.

10 This version of this manuscript was published in in education 19(3). Available at http://ineducation.ca/ineducation/article/view/140/623

11 http://www.oise.utoronto.ca/deepeningknowledge

107
Secondary B.Ed. program, one graduate student, and one of the instructional coordinators of Central Option, all of whom are members of the Deepening Knowledge Project. Our main research question was: "Which strategies used within Central Option are most powerful in increasing teacher candidates’ willingness and readiness to incorporate Aboriginal knowledges and pedagogies into their classroom practice?"

In the short term, our objectives were to ready Central Option TCs to incorporate their increasing awareness and understanding of Aboriginal issues and perspectives in classrooms through focused instruction, and to identify which instruction and pedagogical strategies, according to them, had the greatest positive impact on their willingness and readiness to teach this material. In the long term, our objective was to disseminate these identified strategies throughout the ITE program, with the ultimate objective to enhance the presence of Aboriginal histories, perspectives, experiences, and cultures in classrooms.

5.1 Relevant Literature

Our study is located within the context of teacher education programs at universities across Canada, many of which have begun to document and analyze their initiatives created to bring meaningful instruction in Aboriginal Education to their teacher candidates (Finney & Orr, 1995; Dion, 2009; den Heyer, 2009; Tanaka, 2009; Cherubini, Hodson, Manley-Casimir, & Muir, 2010; Vetter & Blimkie, 2011; Mashford-Pringle & Nardozi, 2013). These studies explore initiatives at so-called mainstream institutions, and analyze their impacts in the short term on teacher candidates and/or programming. These initiatives all describe isolated interventions, which fall short of permeating throughout entire preservice teacher education programs. Despite constant change and so-called innovation in teacher education in Canada, preservice teacher
education programs continue to echo the European model of education, which is built upon neoliberal ideals of schooling (Sanford, Williams, Hopper, & McGregor, 2012). These neoliberal foundations set the stage for colonizing spaces that are counter to Indigenous worldviews in that they value “linear over cyclical progression, competition over collaboration, dualism over complexity, and product over process” and indeed, disadvantage not just Indigenous learners but rather fail to “accommodate the learning needs of many students” (Sanford et al., 2012, p. 20).

Shahjahan (2011) notes that in Britain, the United States, and Canada, the entire profession of education is represented in policy as in need of civilizing, evident in colonial discourses that paint it as savage and/or backward, and suggestions that it would benefit from Western/scientific reasoning to improve educational practices. In these three contexts, the increase in emphasis on so-called “evidence-based” educational policy and practices perpetuates colonized power relationships through the entrenchment of evidence, data, and learning outcomes defined by Western European cultural assumptions (Shahjahan, 2011, p. 200). These colonizing discourses are certainly present within the Ontario context.

Instructors at the University of Victoria’s teacher education program are also on a journey to move away from neoliberal discourses and decolonize their offerings. Within the teacher education program, some instructors have taken steps towards adopting an Indigenous framework specifically based upon Lil’wat conceptions and ideals (Sanford et al., 2012). Instead of fully eliminating Eurocentric thought and modes of operation within their program, they have instead embraced what they see as a more inclusive framework:

Indigenous education draws on an organic metaphor for learning that includes diversity as an asset, creating spaces to value and nurture multiple forms of knowing and ways of
being in the world. As such, Indigenous education would embrace Eurocentrism as another form of knowing rather than the form of knowing. (Sanford et al., 2012, p. 22)

This change began tentatively with a course entitled “Learning and Teaching in an Indigenous World” led by Lil’wat scholar Lorna Williams. The course has had many iterations\(^{12}\), which include the participation and guidance of Indigenous wisdom keepers in a setting guided by Lil’wat principles of learning and community. The experience of this course has resulted in the University of Victoria’s teacher education program instituting numerous other courses throughout the program that have an Indigenous focus: the development of inquiry-based courses, different grading procedures to encourage cooperation and community in some offerings, and an option for an alternative practicum. Many of these new initiatives are built on the foundation of the Lil’wat principles which encourage self-directed learning, community building, and a holistic worldview (Sanford et al., 2012, p. 23). Sanford et al. (2012) argue that this indicates a dramatic change in the culture of the entire program at the University of Victoria noting that,

Shifts can be seen and felt in the way the program is offered, the ways in which students’ contributions to the program have been recognized and valued, and the ways in which Indigenous ways of knowing have become integral to the overall program. (p. 25)

The experience at the University of Victoria indicates that a particular catalyst, in this case the Learning and Teaching in an Indigenous World course can have widespread impact, despite beginning as an individual and discrete strategy.

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\(^{12}\) One such iteration was the “Earth Fibres” course which was documented in Tanaka (2009).
5.2 Teacher Candidate Identity and Resistance

In Ontario, there exists a fairly stable demographic of teacher education students, made up of mainly white, heterosexual, middle class women, with some increase in the number of minority students (Solomona, Portelli, Daniel, & Campbell, 2005), resulting from our University’s location in downtown Toronto and OISE’s efforts to increase diversity in population through targeted initiatives such as equity questions on the admission application. Like other mainstream teacher education programs across the country, many teacher candidates enter our program ignorant of their social privilege and the existence of White supremacy (Solomona et al., 2005; Schick & St. Denis, 2005). Lack of awareness of their privilege, and the assumption on the part of White and/or Canadian teacher candidates that they have a neutral culture or no culture at all can lead to problematic assumptions regarding their Aboriginal students, which serves to reify colonizing discourses in their approach to teacher education:

The equating of good with white permits education students to think that they are going to learn of the other, to learn how they can be helpers, to discover how to incorporate practices of the dominant society. This is the assumption of superiority that whiteness permits: what we have and who we are is what the world needs, whether it wants it or not. (Schick & St. Denis, 2005, p. 308)

Whiteness is then connected to notions of respectability, and so to be considered a respectable citizen or teacher, one must take up the normalized attributes, values, and beliefs of White society (Fellows & Razack, 1998). These beliefs can also cause teachers and teacher candidates to view their role in teaching Aboriginal content as assisting their Aboriginal students to define their own culture (Schick & St. Denis, 2005). Cannon (2012) reminds us that colonialism is not only something in which Indigenous peoples are involved, but also a reality in which settlers are
implicated, arguing that within Initial Teacher Education, curriculum should be present that creates encounters between non-Indigenous peoples and histories of settler colonialism (Cannon, 2012). For non-Indigenous teacher candidates this means it is necessary for them to explore their relationship with Indigenous peoples and the history and present reality of colonialism, whether they hold a settler or settler-diasporic identity (Cannon, 2012). This includes thinking through “matters of restitution, their own decolonization, and transforming their complicity in ongoing dispossession” (Cannon, 2012, p. 22).

Members of our research team have witnessed teacher candidate resistance to Aboriginal content during in-class presentations across the ITE program when teacher candidates learn about the history and present oppression of Indigenous peoples on this land. The resistances felt throughout this presentation process seem to be typical of attempts to discuss race and racism with mostly non-Aboriginal students in a teacher education setting (Aveling, 2006). Aveling (2006) recognizes that conversations about race (and we extend this to the colonized history and present of Aboriginal peoples in our society) are very hard conversations to have with teacher candidates because “exploring ‘race’ and racism with White students goes to the very heart of our socially constructed identities” (Aveling, 2006, p. 264).

In the past, that resistance has taken many forms. Whether teacher candidates are White, or whether they have an identity tied into a diasporic settler community (which is often true in our program [Cannon, 2012]), candidates from across the program will argue that their families work hard and deserve their success, for instance, and that Aboriginal people just need to stop being lazy in order to achieve the same degree of integration. Spoken resistances such as this most often reflect a misunderstanding of the colonial foundations of Canada, and reveal a lack of
awareness on the part of teacher candidates of their own social privilege (Schick & St. Denis, 2005, p. 300).

Many authors argue that what ultimately stands in the way of teacher candidates taking up Aboriginal content in their classrooms is their identity, which includes the investments that non-Aboriginal teachers have in the Canadian state (Kaomea, 2005; Dion, 2009; Kanu, 2011). Teacher education programs are heavily invested in shaping the identity of a teacher, and most often this occurs in ways that support the existence of the Canadian state and reinforce national identities. One site noted in Waldorf’s (2012) study of the OISE’s teacher education curriculum in the Secondary Consecutive program was the School and Society course, where issues of social justice are most likely to be addressed in our university’s ITE program. Although the course varies depending on the perspectives and research interests of the particular instructors who teach it across the program, Waldorf’s (2012) study of course outlines and associated readings found that the most prevalent discourse related to settler colonialism and Indigeneity across the program was “that the nation state is a good and necessary vehicle for addressing social inequalities” (p. 65). OISE’s program is thus not exempt from colonizing discourses that deny Indigenous histories and sovereignty. Waldorf (2012) also noted that a core theme in both the secondary program’s Teacher Education Seminar course and the Psychological Foundations of Learning and Development course is “the development of “good” or “expert” teachers, which her review found is an “underlying logic of teacher education pedagogies more generally” (p. 102). These discourses are not unique to OISE, but rather are present in teacher education in general, where multiple investments in the identity of teacher education exist. Donald (2009) argues:

When we consider that so much of teacher education is predicated on the need for the individual who wants to be a teacher to conform to predetermined identity roles
that suit institutional needs, demonstrate normalized competence in these contexts, and unconsciously conflate teacher thinking with teacher identity, we begin to understand the intense postcultural dynamics that are invested in the creation of a teacher. (p. 29)

These identity roles and discourses around teaching play out into teacher practice in the classroom, influencing teachers as they navigate their roles and responsibilities in relation to their students. In her work observing teachers plan and deliver stories about Indigenous peoples in their classrooms, Dion (2009) identified three “discourses of professionalism” which she argues are key components of a “complex grid of ideas about what (is) required by teachers as professionals and what they, in wanting to be good teachers, are invested in” (p. 177). These discourses are teaching well, pastoral care, and citizenship education. Teaching well includes “questions about engaging student attention by ensuring the relevance of context, meeting curriculum expectations, and providing students with opportunities to develop their skills and master new vocabulary” (Dion, 2009, p. 93). Pastoral care includes a desire to take care of their students, and their emotions in the midst of teaching about oppression, how they could “maintain order and… ask questions [students] would be able to answer” (Dion, 2009, p. 93). And finally citizenship education was displayed by the history teachers in the study who felt it was their responsibility to nurture good citizens (Dion, 2009, p. 93). Even if they are exposed to Aboriginal histories and current events, any change that might come to their practice as a result may be mediated by these discourses, and other identity markers (Kanu, 2011).

Another phenomenon that Dion (2009) observed in her work was the existence of what she terms the “Perfect Stranger” (p. 179) identity, where she observed non-Aboriginal teachers who claimed with ease that they knew nothing about Indigenous people, and had absolutely no
relationship with them (p.179). This position, she argues, is supported by the fear of controversy and of offending and challenging the dominant narrative of what Canada is (Dion, 2009, p.179).

Because of these problematic identities, when teachers bring Indigenous content into their classes, the way they frame the content is often problematic (Dion, 2009; Kanu, 2011; Kaomea, 2005). Kanu (2011) found that the teachers in her study, rather than critically examining colonial past and present in this nation, couched this material in a framework of multiculturalism, which many Indigenous peoples and their allies argue is a vehicle for further assimilation (St. Denis & Schick, 2003; Wilmot, 2005; Kanu, 2011). Kanu (2011) also documented a lack of confidence in teachers to address Indigenous subject matter in class, with teacher candidates worried about “the right” to teach the material as non-Aboriginal teachers (p.180). Teachers in Kanu’s study strongly felt that strengthening professional efficacy was needed to increase their confidence and their ability to teach the material, along with being able to access classroom-ready resources. Teachers also cited perceived professional vulnerability and the lack of time as to why they did not take up the material (Kanu, 2011).

Without recognition of their privilege and the role of White supremacist and colonial assumptions in the creation of their own identities and their view of students, teacher candidates are ultimately poised to recreate those discourses in their future classrooms.

**5.3 Stages of the Project**

This project unfolded within the greater context of the ongoing work of the Deepening Knowledge Project. Our initial question was based on our desire to know what instructional strategies employed within Initial Teacher Education were most effective at inspiring teacher candidates to take up Aboriginal content when teaching their own classes. We were aware from
previous instruction of teacher candidates across our program that almost all teacher candidates claimed very little knowledge of Aboriginal histories and experiences, and that some resisted the topics surrounding Aboriginal communities (Mashford-Pringle & Nardozi, 2013). In the initial survey, we accounted for those experiences. During this time, the team was led by Central Option Instructional Leader Nancy Steele, who developed strategies to incorporate Aboriginal topics into her program. These topics included the following: a presentation from team members Angela Nardozi and John Doran on Aboriginal histories, worldviews, and perspectives; a retreat to the Toronto Islands with community members and Elders to hear stories of the area; a requirement to use a picture book with a First Nations, Métis, or Inuit theme in their practicum placement; a major inquiry assignment into teaching Aboriginal content, the results of which were shared by teacher candidates with their classmates; a workshop run by First Nations teacher and scholar Pamela Toulouse; the use of Pamela Toulouse’s (2011) text Achieving Aboriginal Student Success: A Guide for K to 8 Classrooms in Central Option; and many more specifically targeted activities.

5.4 Data Collection and Analysis

Our team collected data from the Central Option teacher candidates through three surveys, one administered at the beginning of the program, and one administered at the end of each of the two practicums. Surveys were administered in class; participants included all those teacher candidates who were present on the day of the surveys. Data collected was both closed and open ended.

The first set of surveys revealed three concerns voiced by teacher candidates regarding the incorporation of Aboriginal content in the work. The team reframed these themes as
questions to ask of the teacher candidates as a way to tackle the reticence head-on. The questions were as follows:

- Why should I prioritize Aboriginal history, issues, and perspectives when there are many social justice issues that the students in my classes have?
- How do I fit in these Aboriginal topics when there is so little time?
- Should I start to teach about these things even if I feel I don’t know enough?

These questions reflect in part the findings of Kanu (2011) and Kaomea (2005) who observed that teacher candidates framed the teaching of Indigenous issues in a greater context of multiculturalism and of Dion (2009) regarding the “Perfect Stranger” identity position. The concerns also reveal a lack of confidence in teaching Indigenous content, similarly observed in the work of Kanu (2011).

In addition to the surveys, five teacher candidates were recruited for two rounds of one-on-one interviews with a research assistant. The questions used in the interviews were open ended. Interviews were coded separately by three members of the research team, and afterwards codes were synthesized together in order to triangulate the analysis.

5.5 Challenges

Our five interview participants were chosen because their survey responses expressed a range of perceptions of their own readiness to incorporate this material. All five reported that they felt incorporating Aboriginal content into their future classrooms was important. We explicitly sought the input of participants who reported on the survey that this content was unimportant, but none came forward for the interviews. Future research must find creative ways to explore the views of those who uphold status quo positions.
5.6 Impact

Based on the surveys that were collected, the research team witnessed a shift in the self-reported knowledge of both histories and contemporary issues regarding Aboriginal peoples and communities (these self-perceptions, however, were not verified by formal testing) (see shaded boxes below). See Tables 1 and 2 below for a summary of the closed-ended responses.
Table 1. Knowledge of Aboriginal Histories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Viewpoint on personal knowledge of Aboriginal histories</th>
<th>Percentage of participants who share this viewpoint</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I have studied these histories carefully and have an extensive knowledge of the histories of Aboriginal peoples of Canada</td>
<td>Entry: 4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have fairly extensive knowledge of the histories of Aboriginal peoples in Canada.</td>
<td>Entry: 10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have some knowledge of the histories of Aboriginal peoples in Canada.</td>
<td>Entry: 58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have little knowledge of these histories.</td>
<td>Entry: 28%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

13 Tables 1, 2 and 3 are shown here in the form they appeared in “Inquiry into Practice: Learning and Teaching Global Matters in Local Classrooms” 2014.
Table 2. Knowledge of Current Aboriginal Issues

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Viewpoint on personal knowledge of current Aboriginal issues</th>
<th>Percentage of participants who share this viewpoint</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I have extensive knowledge of the current issues and events involving Aboriginal peoples of Canada.</td>
<td>Entry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have fairly extensive knowledge of the current issues and events involving Aboriginal peoples in Canada.</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have some knowledge of the current issues and events involving Aboriginal peoples in Canada.</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have little knowledge of these current issues and events.</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

By the end of the year, there was a major shift in self-perceived readiness to incorporate Aboriginal histories and content into future practice, from what the teacher candidates self-reported in the beginning of the year (see Table 3 below). Teachers were asked “How ready do you feel to incorporate Aboriginal content in your curriculum at this time?”
Table 3. Self-Perceived Readiness to Teach Aboriginal Content

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self-perceived readiness</th>
<th>Percentage of participants who share this viewpoint</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Entry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very ready</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ready</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat ready</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not ready</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.7 Implications and Practical Applications

Findings

From both the interview data and the qualitative responses on the surveys emerged the following four findings:

1. We see a need in Teacher Education for extensive instruction around the histories and current experiences of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people.

2. Teacher candidates report a need for demonstrations of what teaching this material looks like.

3. The perspective that Aboriginal content is only for Aboriginal students presents challenges for teacher candidate willingness and readiness.

4. First Voice testimony has a high impact on Teacher Candidate learning. We will discuss each in turn.
We see a need in Teacher Education for extensive instruction around the histories and current experiences of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people. Upon entry to the program, the majority of teacher candidates reported having some or little knowledge of histories and current experiences of Aboriginal peoples and communities. The following two quotations from teacher candidates are representative of the comments registered on surveys at the beginning of the year: “I don’t know enough at all. I want to have a sound, confident knowledge base in order for me to teach this curriculum respectfully” (S8, survey, September 2012), and “Really want to incorporate it, but am afraid of stereotyping or offending people with Aboriginal background” (S53, survey, September 2012). These comments highlight the fear expressed by many teacher candidates of offending Aboriginal peoples and continuing cycles of misrepresentation through their teaching. Some teacher candidates were inspired by their self-perceived lack of knowledge to learn more and to pass the information on to their students: “I feel that it is shameful that I am Canadian and yet know practically nothing. I want to be the change” (S42, survey, September 2012).

Many of those surveyed mentioned that they found the overview presentation by Doran and Nardozi helpful in increasing their knowledge and showing them what they did not know. When in their practicum placements, teacher candidates sometimes felt support from their associate teachers and sometimes felt resistance from them when proposing lessons that included Aboriginal content. Teacher candidates reported that very few associate teachers expressed confidence in teaching this material, and so teacher candidates often took the lead in designing and delivering these lessons. The above observations have implications for school boards, who

\(^{14}\) Respondents are anonymized, and we have identified responses used codes. Codes which begin with S indicate the quotation came from a written survey and codes which begin with P indicate the response was given during a one-on-one interview
may, upon close examination, find that the majority of their teachers also lack the knowledge and confidence to teach Aboriginal content to their students (Dion, Johnston, & Rice, 2010).

**The teacher candidates report a need for demonstrations of what teaching this material looks like.** While the self-reported knowledge level of teacher candidates increased as the program progressed, teacher candidates still expressed a desire to see concrete examples of what the teaching of Aboriginal content in the classroom looked like in practice. Some commented that since they had never witnessed any of their teachers offer appropriate and thorough lessons about Aboriginal histories or communities throughout their years in school, they could not picture or begin to imagine what these lessons would look like in their own classrooms. Some teacher candidates became comfortable with their lack of “expert knowledge” and took on the role of learner alongside their students. “You start learning about those things with your class. If you don’t know enough then that is a wonderful opportunity to learn with your class and to show your class that as a teacher, you’re not an expert; you are part of the learning community and you make that collaborative event with your student; you make your classroom stronger” (P3, interview, April 2013). Others built comfort over time by using resources shared with them by their instructors: “The Deepening Knowledge website was a great resource, and by following their recommendations for texts and lessons, I got over my nervousness” (P2, interview, April 2013).15

**The perspective that Aboriginal content is only for Aboriginal students presents challenges for teacher candidate willingness and readiness.** Comments on surveys suggested that

15 The Deepening Knowledge Project has mounted a repository of teacher resources related to Aboriginal topics on the internet. It can be accessed at [www.oise.utoronto.ca/deepeningknowledge](http://www.oise.utoronto.ca/deepeningknowledge)
continued work with teacher candidates is required to build understanding of the workings of colonization that have had a formative impact on Canada’s founding and development and continue to evolve in the relationship between Aboriginal people and all Canadians today. This work would have to be accompanied by an examination of privilege and of implication in settler colonialism (Cannon, 2012). In the following survey comments from teacher candidates, it is evident that they did not perceive the foundational nature of Aboriginal issues on this land, nor of the intersections between different social-justice issues. “Aboriginal content is important but I feel like there are also many other equally important topics I would need to communicate to my students (e.g. Environment sustainability, etc.)” (S25, survey, September 2012), “Although I value the importance of Aboriginal content, I would feel that all students need to become aware of this content as well as others that represent themselves. Therefore, I would seek to find a balance between Aboriginal and other cultural content” (S19, survey, September 2012), and “I feel it’s important not to over-emphasize any particular culture, even if they are marginalized.” (S37, survey, September 2012)

By the end of the year, some teacher candidates were able to tie their identity and their understanding of their relationship to Aboriginal communities and colonization together with their vision for their future teaching practice.

In terms of my identity as a teacher, I am part of the dominant culture. I’ve benefited directly from the colonization of North America, which has resulted in the suffering and disintegration of the First Peoples to inhabit Turtle Island. I can act as an ally in terms of educating my future students to be anti-racist and anti-colonialist in how they see and engage with the world, both inside and outside of the classroom. (P2, interview, May 2013)
Teacher candidates who had a deeper understanding coming into the program, or who developed such an understanding of these topics as a result of the curriculum, felt that they and their peers would benefit from more explicit discussion in class around the concepts of colonialism, racism, decolonization and appropriation.

**First Voice testimony has a high impact on Teacher Candidate learning.** Survey respondents and interview participants repeatedly mentioned the impact Indigenous guest speakers and Elders had on their learning. Teacher candidates consistently asked to hear from a variety of Indigenous community members, so that diverse voices were represented in their learning and teaching. While they stated that they had learned from their non-Indigenous instructors at OISE, one interview participant commented that “I think I’d benefit more from the authentic (voice) of the Elder associated here at OISE” (P5, interview, December 2012). Interview and survey comments about Elders like this one made it clear that OISE as an institution was seen by teacher candidates as an authority in verifying the “authenticity” of Elders. This may be especially true for teacher candidates who do not have a relationship with Aboriginal communities outside of the program, who are likely in the majority. As a result, our institution and other mainstream institutions have a responsibility to recognize that Indigenous communities have their own protocols of recognizing Elders, and should take direction from Indigenous communities when appointing or consulting. A concern that has emerged from this study and the accompanying work is how we can continue to include Indigenous voices without being a burden on Indigenous communities who are in the process of revitalizing their own practices (Simpson, 2011). One obvious way is to ensure that more Indigenous faculty and staff are employed at OISE, and other ITE programs, specifically in the teacher education program.
5.8 Conclusion

Many implications have arisen from this study for our own work and for Initial Teacher Education programs across Canada. It is clear that the majority of candidates entering into a B.Ed. program in mainstream institutions have little knowledge of Aboriginal content, and if they recognize the importance of including this material in their future curriculum, they still lack the confidence to enact it. With targeted instruction, an emphasis on First Nations' voice and perspective, and an exploration of teacher candidate identity, self-perceived knowledge and confidence levels can rise, and teacher candidates may leave the program with an increased willingness and readiness to include Aboriginal content into their future teaching. Special attention, however, must be paid to the exploration of teacher candidate identity and its intersections with settler colonialism, as this is often a site of resistance. Future studies should strive to dialogue with teacher candidates who continue to resist Aboriginal content throughout their program, in order to gain insight into their perceptions and attitudes and work towards strategies to engage them in this work.
CHAPTER 6

DEEPENING KNOWLEDGE: EXPLORING TEACHER CANDIDATE WILLINGNESS TO INCORPORATE ABORIGINAL CONTENT IN FUTURE TEACHING

6.0 Abstract

The Deepening Knowledge Project at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education has been working to bring Indigenous content to the Initial Teacher Education and Master of Teaching Program at our university since 2008. In 2012, we began Participatory Action Research with one cohort of 70 teacher candidates to gauge their willingness and readiness to incorporate Indigenous content into their curriculum. Instructors of the cohort used a variety of strategies to infuse Indigenous content throughout the program. The research specifically on willingness has revealed a variety of Settler teacher candidate attitudes towards Indigenous content in the classroom, including some deep misunderstandings and underestimations of Indigenous Nationhood. Our research, including interviews and surveys, found 1. Teacher candidates see institutional limitations to including Aboriginal content in their work; 2. Teacher candidates expressed discomfort in their ability to teach Aboriginal content; 3. Teacher candidates’ responses reveal a limited view of Aboriginal topics; and 4. An activist view of Aboriginal topics seems to be correlated with willingness to give Aboriginal content prominence in teaching.

6.1 Project Overview

For the 2012-2013 academic year, our team of researchers was granted a small amount of money from OISE’s Inquiry Into Practice fund to conduct a Participatory Action Research (PAR) project regarding our work with teacher candidates in the area of Aboriginal Education.

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16 This manuscript will be submitted to an international journal.
Our project explored teacher candidate willingness and readiness to teach Indigenous content, specifically, Aboriginal peoples’ histories, cultures and perspectives on current events in both the two practicums required to complete their program and in their teaching after graduating from the program. The study was conducted within OISE’s Central Option, a professional learning community, or “cohort” of approximately 70 teacher candidates. The Option has an explicit focus on promoting Aboriginal Education with teacher candidates, as well as a focus on conflict resolution and arts and drama in teaching.

**Conducting Participatory Action Research**

Our Participatory Action Research team consisted of two professors at OISE, one instructor in Central Option, one administrator of the Initial Teacher Education (ITE) program, and two Ph.D. students at OISE. All are members of OISE’s Deepening Knowledge Project, whose goal is to infuse Aboriginal content throughout all components of the Initial Teacher Education and Master of Teaching (MT) Program at OISE in order to inspire all teacher candidates to deepen their understanding of Aboriginal topics and bring this content into their classrooms. Our ultimate goal is to attract more Indigenous teacher candidates to both programs by creating spaces where their histories, ways of knowing and current experiences are present and respected. At the moment, this infusion takes the form of a series of presentations across the program on the invitation of individual instructors, special events such as a lunchtime seminar series and optional talks with guest speakers, and the curating of our website, which is a repository of teaching resources related to Aboriginal content.\(^\text{17}\).

Our collective commitment to explore questions around how our teaching can improve teacher candidate willingness and readiness to incorporate content about Indigenous perspectives

\(^{17}\) http://www.oise.utoronto.ca/deepeningknowledge
into teaching practice has led to a research process grounded in the three components of PAR: “research, education and action” (Gardner, 2004, p.53). This research carried out “by particular people on their own work, to help them improve what they do, including how they work with and for others” as Carr and Kemmis stated (as cited in McTaggart, 1991, p. 181). Together, our group has formulated the questions and created the tools which have been central to this research. After data was gathered, we sat together to debrief about what it meant for our teaching.

As the research progressed, the lead instructor of Central Option, a member of our research team, took on a crucial role. Our collaboration occurred both in formal research meetings, but also in informal ways which grew naturally out of the strong trust and friendship within the research team. The trust we developed paved the way for her real participation and investment in the research which ultimately had an impact on her teaching practice and instruction in Central Option more generally. After reviewing and learning from the results, she demonstrated flexibility in her own curriculum and teaching, and invited us all to brainstorm immediate additions and changes to teaching strategies and content to respond to newly gathered survey data. At times, this instructor guided our questioning and found opportunities where other data could be gathered. In turn, her action in the classroom led to new questioning and new research opportunities (McTaggart, 1991). The results of the research also inspired reflection on the presentations given by Doran and Nardozi, and continues to impact the content and delivery methods of work they do across the ITE, and now, the MT program where they continue to be invited to deliver a foundational presentation on Aboriginal histories and contemporary worldviews, as well as subject specific presentations in classes such as Social Studies, Science, and Special Education. Our process was truly one that was, as Carr and Kemmis imagined,
“systematically evolving, living process changing both the researcher(s) and the situations in which he or she acts” (as cited in McTaggart, 1991, p. 181).

This research highlights the potential momentum of such multidimensional teams and reminds us to value the contributions of all team members from the Initial Teacher Education unit whose extensive experience in classrooms at the elementary and secondary level enrich and inform the practice of research on teaching. This commitment on behalf of all members of the research team, but especially on behalf of those whose teaching was directly affected demonstrates truly “authentic participation: It is research through which people work towards the improvement of their own practices” (McTaggart, 1991, p. 174-175).

6.2 Relevant Literature

Authors exploring Settler teachers’ relationships with Indigenous content often argue that what ultimately stands in the way of them taking up Indigenous content in their classrooms are their identities, which include the investments that non-Indigenous teachers have in the Canadian state (Kaomea, 2005; Dion 2009; Kanu, 2011). (For a further exploration of the identity investments of Settler teachers and teacher candidates, please see Nardozi, Restoule, Broad, Steele, and James, 2014).

Settler Teachers and Transformation Experiences

Throughout the literature, there is indication that if Settler teachers feel compelled to take up Indigenous content in their classroom beyond the baseline curriculum, they have often had some personal transformational experience. In Learning About Walking in Beauty, the authors define transformational experiences as “those that alter the paradigm by which the individual operates,
evaluates, and make decisions” (CRRF, 2002, p. 22). Both Kanu (2011) and Zurzolo (2007) observed the key role of the transformational experience, with Kanu (2011) finding that many of the teachers whom she worked with in her study credited some such experience as to why they wanted to incorporate Indigenous understandings and content in their curriculum. While the teachers in Zurzolo’s (2007) study “resisted the idea that they had actually had a particular transformational experience” (p. 97), her analysis of the transcripts revealed that every participant in her study had indeed mentioned one, whether it be from their childhood or adult life.

If a transformational experience is crucial for non-Indigenous teachers to take up Indigenous content in their work, is it possible for teacher education programs to facilitate such an experience for most if not all teacher candidates? In her thesis entitled “Transforming perspectives: The immersion of student teachers in Indigenous ways of knowing” Tanaka (2009) documents the experience of teacher candidates and Indigenous wisdom keepers in the “Earth Fibres” course at the University of Victoria, one of the iterations of the “Learning and Teaching in an Indigenous World” course. By creating a course which was totally facilitated by Indigenous wisdom keepers, and whose curriculum and activities were in line with the Lil’wat principles of teaching and coming together (Sanford et al., 2012), Tanaka (2009) found that teacher candidates developed a deeper respect for Indigenous ways of knowing and built confidence in teaching Indigenous content. The teacher candidates in her study, who were in their final term of their university program, reported feeling unprepared to “deal with emotional issues in the classroom” and “to teach Aboriginal students as well as Aboriginal content” prior to beginning the course (Tanaka, 2009, p. 113). By the end of the course, they had developed an emerging understanding of who Indigenous communities are as well as a greater understanding of their own relationship
to Indigenous peoples. Comments also indicate that teacher candidates gained a greater sense of what they could and could not teach (Tanaka, 2009, p. 182) as well as an understanding that the land that they and the University occupy are colonized spaces (Tanaka, 2009, p. 174). Like the title of her thesis suggests, through this one course, participating Settler teacher candidates seemed to have a transformational experience with respect to Indigenous content.

6.3 Transformation through Decolonization

What is the overlap between transformational experiences and the process of decolonization? Is a transformational experience which inspires a teacher to take up Indigenous content beyond the standard curriculum part of a process of decolonization? Donald (2009) states that “resisting the temptation to frame Indigenousness in isolated and exclusionary ways is the first step towards decolonization” (p. 39), but definitions of decolonization seem to vary between Indigenous scholars.

Before exploring the various strategies to bring about decolonization that educators are attempting in their classrooms, we will first define colonization. Gage (1991) identifies the following seven pillars of colonialism which emphasize the processes of land expropriation and the erasure of culture: (1) Grabbing the Land; (2) Growing (crops) for Europe; (3) Developing Europe; (4) Consuming Colonially (as opposed to developing industries in the colonies); (5) Hatching Hierarchies; (6) Killing Cultures; and (7) Exploiting the Land (p. 13-14). Upon these pillars stand the physical impact of colonization on human bodies, but also the behavioural, emotional, and spiritual impacts that are noted by other scholars. Fanon (1963), Battiste (2000) and Ng (2012) have identified that colonization is often manifested in bodies and minds, and can impact processes of thinking and modes of behaviour. Ng (2012) argues that colonization is
“condensed in our emotional and physical beings” becoming “patterns of behaviour” (p. 351).

These manifestations have been described at times as cognitive imperialism (Battiste, 2000) and Occidentosis or western-stuckness (Ahmad, 2003). In *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, Memmi (1965) reminds us that these colonial scripts do not just impact the colonized, but are prescribed for the colonizer as well.

Colonization processes are accompanied by racist ideology, and the process of “othering”, that is, of making the colonized seem savage and in need of help from the “civilized” colonizer (McConaghy, 2000). This allows for the justification of the dehumanization of the colonized other. As Sartre (1965) summarizes “colonialism denies human rights to human beings whom it has subdued by violence, and keeps them by force in a state of misery and ignorance that Marx would rightly call a subhuman condition” (Sartre appearing in Memmi, 1965, p. xxiv).

As educators, we are interested in the ways in which individuals and classroom communities can engage in a decolonization process. Graveline (1998) calls upon the work of Blaut (1993) to define and explain decolonization as a process having two parts:

First, it is necessary to resurrect one’s own history and to find out how it has contributed to the history of the world. Second it is necessary to rewrite colonial history to show how it has led to poverty rather than progress. (p. 37)

This process must include a reconceptualization of relationship to land as Settler peoples come to understand “the differential terms on which it is occupied (so) to become aware of the colonial project that is taking place around us” (Lawrence and Dua, 2005, p. 126). Ng (2012) identifies four elements to decolonization: “resistance, questioning, reclamation, and transformation (from negative to positive and from margin to centre)” (p. 360). These elements are present in Laenui’s (2000) analysis of the processes of colonization and decolonization, which draws heavily from
his experience with the Hawaiian context. Laenui (2000) outlines five “distinct phases of a people’s decolonization”: rediscovery and discovery, that is “rediscovering one’s history and recovering one’s culture, language, and identity, and so on” (p.153); mourning, “a time when a people are able to lament their victimization” (p.154); dreaming, the “most crucial” stage for decolonization according to Laenui, dreaming must not be cut short or rushed as it is the stage where “colonized people are able to explore their own cultures, experience their own aspirations for their future, and consider their own structures of government and social order to encompass and express their hopes” (p. 155); collective commitment “to a single direction in which the society must move” (p. 157); and action that is “not a reactive but a proactive step taken based on consensus of the people” (p. 158). Laenui (2000) notes that in reality, “we often see combinations of these social changes” and that stages are often revisited numerous times in the process (p. 159). Here we will explore some methods of decolonization which have been used mainly with Settler teachers and students.

Noting that transformational experiences and decolonization can go hand in hand, educators have begun to document the pedagogical approaches they use in order to facilitate a decolonization process with teachers and teacher candidates. A professor at York University in Toronto, Dion (2009) suggests that participating in her File of Uncertainties project is a transformational experience for some teachers who take her class. In completing the project she argues that the teachers participate in a “decolonizing practice – challenging the ahistorical memories of Canada’s colonial past” because “(the project) offers a way to challenge the hegemony of Western regimes of knowledge and representation” (Dion, 2009, p. 182). For the assignment, teachers are asked to
Draw together stories and images from their past with contemporary work by Aboriginal artists and, through juxtaposition, speak to their understanding of themselves in relationship with Aboriginal people. (Dion, 2009, p. 180)

Through positioning artifacts from their own lives beside these works, the teachers then witness to their own inscription. It is a process that supports a reworking of the normalized frames of understanding themselves as perfect strangers to Aboriginal people. (Dion, 2009, p.183)

In addition to looking at counternarratives of history and how dominance is crafted through difference in their course for teacher candidates at the University of Regina, St. Denis and Schick (2003) have included a major assignment which is similar to Dion’s in that it forces teacher candidates to turn their focus to their own identity. They describe it as an autobiography, in which (teacher candidates) are asked to engage in reflective social and political self-analysis. Employing information from their own histories, students are expected to write a reflective and analytical essay-and not a chronological report-that incorporates a minimum of 10 course readings. They are encouraged to comment on their own social production, exploring how their own families achieved and are achieving what is commonly understood as respectability. (St. Denis & Schick, 2003, p. 60)

The two assignments both ask teacher candidates to think through their identities on paper, whether through the written word, or through the use of artistic and found objects. Their direction to question the common sense notion of respectability is reminiscent of Ng’s (2012) analysis of Gramsci’s notion of common sense as well as Fellows and Razack’s (1998) understanding of respectability’s relationship to Whiteness. In the following examples, diverse
modalities within a classroom setting are used in an attempt to bring out a process of
decolonization.

In teaching School and Society classes in the Initial Teacher Education program at OISE,
Cannon’s (2012) aim is “to foster a collective responsibility for our complicity in social
inequality, and to work toward changing this” (p. 26). He writes:

With respect to finding common ground, I start my course with a “step exercise”
developed by Logan et al. (1991). The goal is to introduce the concept of privilege
and oppression and its effects on all individuals, to foster a better sense about the
complexity of individual identities, and to make transformative use of developing
empathy. (Cannon, 2012, p. 26)

From this exercise, Cannon (2012) argues that teacher candidates are able to see the complexity
that comes along with their own identity, how it is most likely that they at once embody different
elements of victim and oppressor. Once they are able to see this, he then pursues the work of
revealing “the violence engendered in privileged ways of knowing—through real or perceived
whiteness, heterosexuality, Christianity, colonization, class status, and/or physical and mental
ability” (Cannon, 2012, p. 26).

Stemming from a belief that colonization impacts the whole self, including mind, body,
spirit, Ng (2012) argues that for decolonization to occur, two critical acts are engaged: “deep
reflection and some form of embodied mindfulness practice that (re)integrates body, mind and
spirit” (p. 360). In the last years of her life Ng, a professor at the Ontario Institute for Studies in
Education, used the Chinese practice of Qi Gong in her classes, which promotes wellness but
also mindfulness and detachment. Ng (2012) argued that it was crucial for decolonization that we
Examine our patterns of behaviour objectively, without attachment, in order to determine whether and how to change. This requires that we be reflexively critical, that we be open to examining the integrity of our being without guilt and judgement.

(p. 352)

Ng (2012) termed practices which incorporated mindfulness and that engaged the whole body *Embodied Learning*, which she classified as an integrative embodied critical pedagogy.

At the University of British Columbia, Butterwick and Selman (2012) have explored the use of embodied theatre practices within the teacher education program. In their classes, teacher candidates participate in a variety of theatre processes such as creating tableau, exercises involving candidate’s bodies as intelligent clay which not only engage those giving the performance but also engage what they identify as the “implicated audience” (Butterwick & Selman, 2012, p. 66). While the “implicated audience” may not be acting in a particular scene, when watching the performance the authors argue that audiences can tap into some unconscious thinking about the practice and how it reflects on their own thinking, behaviour and teaching practice (Butterwick & Selman, 2012, p. 66). Some students in their classes commented that these processes “helped to visualize elements of their discussion” (Butterwick & Selman, 2012, p. 65). Ultimately, the embodied theatre practice can bring about experiences and shifts that are “felt in the body, often before intellectual interpretation” (Butterwick & Selman, 2012, p. 66).

Both Butterwick and Selman (2012) and Ng (2012) warn of the sometimes uncomfortable emotions, memories and stories these pedagogies may trigger. To anticipate and channel these emerging experiences, Butterwick and Selman (2012) explain how they mount their pedagogy of embodied theatre processes within …
pedagogical and ethical frames or containers so fear and other triggered emotions can be explored in such a way that participants are not stuck but rather guided to a safe place, informed by self-determination. (p. 67-68)

By making oppressive practices visible, their use of embodied processes of theater in their teacher education classrooms “offer great potential to interrupt such forms of violence and to contribute to decolonization” (Butterwick & Selman, 2012, p. 63).

6.4 Strategies in Central Option

A variety of pedagogical and content strategies were used within Central Option in order to familiarize teacher candidates with Aboriginal histories, cultures and perspectives on current events. On the surveys, teacher candidates were asked to indicate all strategies used in the cohort that they felt contributed to their knowledge of Aboriginal content. What follows is a description of selected strategies, followed by the percentage of teacher candidates who selected them. The academic year began with a trip to the Toronto Island with two invited Indigenous community members. These guests facilitated an opening and closing circle, as well as workshops on the land throughout the day (72%). Members of the Deepening Knowledge Project were invited to deliver a three hour workshop at the beginning of the year on Aboriginal histories, ways of knowing, and current experiences (89%). Scholar and educator Dr. Pamela Toulouse was invited to OISE to give a half-day workshop on Indigenous pedagogies in the classroom to both teacher candidates and instructors (64%). Requirements for some assignments included the incorporation of Aboriginal content, encouraging teacher candidates to teach such content in their practicum placements, including a social studies lesson plan using an Aboriginal source (80%) and an inquiry project (79%). Teacher candidates were also encouraged to communicate on the OISE
platform “Pepper” on an OISE-wide board entitled “Aboriginal Education.” Teacher candidates posted questions for instructors and DKP members, and shared resources (55%). They were reminded to use the Deepening Knowledge Project website throughout the year in the creation and delivery of lesson plans (43% - Midpoint Survey, 41% - Closing Survey).

Teacher candidates also told us that Indigenous guest speakers invited into Central Option made an impact on their learning (45%). For instance, Susan Blight and Jamaias DaCosta from Indigenous Waves, a University of Toronto radio program, spent two hours with the Option and participated in a Q&A about topics such as Idle No More, Indigenous sovereignty and self-determination, and the role that Settler teacher candidates can and should play in these movements. Based on survey comments, this event, while short in length, made an impact.

6.5 Data Collection and Analysis

Data was collected from Central Option teacher candidates over the 2012-2013 academic year. All teacher candidates were invited by the research team to participate in three surveys which were administered in class. The first was completed at the beginning of the program in September 2012, the second in February 2013, and the third at the end of the program in April 2013. Survey questions were both multiple choice and open ended. We also asked teacher candidates to participate in one-on-one interviews with a research assistant, and five volunteers came forward. Questions in the interview were open ended. Interviews were coded separately by three members of the research team, and afterwards codes were synthesized together.

Results:

The in-class surveys indicated that over the three surveys, overall teacher candidate willingness to incorporate Aboriginal content into their teaching practice increased. Teacher candidates were
asked to indicate their willingness to include Aboriginal content in their future teaching (that is, after they had graduated from the ITE program) on all three surveys (See Table 2). They were asked about their willingness to teach Aboriginal content during their practicum only on the first two surveys, because by the final survey, they had completed their practicum requirements (See Table 1). Each teacher candidate present on the day of the surveys completed a survey, no blanks were returned.

**Table 1: Willingness in Practicum Teaching**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Willingness to teach Aboriginal content in practicum teaching</th>
<th>Percentage of participants who share this viewpoint</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I would give it prominence in my own teaching, integrating Aboriginal content into all aspects of the curriculum because it is an important topic.</td>
<td>Entry: 9% Midpoint: 21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would welcome the opportunity to include it in my teaching, integrating Aboriginal content into areas of curriculum beyond what is specified in the curriculum documents.</td>
<td>Entry: 76% Midpoint: 76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would be willing to include it in my teaching if my school required it.</td>
<td>Entry: 15% Midpoint: 3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would teach the topic only as outlined in the Ontario Curriculum documents.</td>
<td>Entry: 0% Midpoint: 0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 indicates that overall willingness to teach Aboriginal content in the practicum placement increased from the Entry to the Midpoint survey (administered in February, just prior to practicum two). By the Midpoint survey the percentage of teacher candidate respondents who would give Aboriginal content prominence in their own teaching increased from 9% on the entry survey to 21%. At the same time, willingness to include Aboriginal content only if their practicum school required it decreased from 15% on the entry survey to 3% on the midpoint.
Table 2: Willingness in Future Teaching

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Willingness to teach Aboriginal content in future teaching</th>
<th>Entry</th>
<th>Midpoint</th>
<th>Closing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I would give it prominence in my own teaching, integrating Aboriginal content into all aspects of the curriculum because it is an important topic.</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would welcome the opportunity to include it in my teaching, integrating Aboriginal content into areas of curriculum beyond what is specified in the curriculum documents.</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would be willing to include it in my teaching if my school required it.</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would teach the topic only as outlined in the Ontario Curriculum documents.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A similar trend to Table 1 is seen in Table 2 which looks at willingness and future teaching beyond OISE. From the entry survey to the midpoint survey, more respondents are willing to give Aboriginal content prominence in their future teaching (37% compared to 16% on the entry). By the closing survey, the majority of respondents indicate that they would welcome the opportunity to include Aboriginal content in future teaching (76%). Also by the closing survey, the percentage of those that feel they would give Aboriginal content prominence in their future teaching has decreased to 24%.

What is responsible for this decline? First, the composition of the participant group changed. On the first survey, 67 teacher candidates submitted completed surveys. By the second and third survey, this number had declined to 53 and 51 participants respectively. Second, the surveys suggest growing perceived constraints on TC contributions to curriculum and their time. This will be discussed below under theme number one.

The open ended question “why did you answer this way?” was asked after both the question on willingness to include Aboriginal content in practicum teaching and willingness to include Aboriginal content in future teaching. From these responses, four themes emerged: 1. the teacher candidates see institutional limitations on including Aboriginal content in their work; 2. teacher
candidates expressed discomfort in their ability to teach Aboriginal content; 3. teacher candidate responses reveal a limited view of Aboriginal topics; and 4. an activist view of Aboriginal topics, seems to be correlated with willingness to give Aboriginal content prominence in teaching.

The teacher candidates see institutional limitations to including Aboriginal content in their work.

Survey responses indicate that teacher candidates experienced limitations to teaching Aboriginal content in their practicum and foresee them in their future teaching as well. There was some indication on the surveys that teacher candidates wanted to feel secure that those supervising them would accept them teaching Aboriginal content. On the entry survey, one candidate indicated being less willing to incorporate Aboriginal content in her practicum than in future teaching, writing “I would [be] happy to incorporate it in my teaching once I had the knowledge, but would not do so without first speaking with the school and my advisor.” On the midpoint survey, the same candidate increased self-reported willingness but stated “it is my experience that not all Associate Teachers are welcoming to [Aboriginal content].” Another told us that s/he wanted to prioritize Aboriginal history and current events but that it is “difficult to do in practicum when you’re on somebody else’s turf.” Other respondents also explicitly indicated their impression that their Associate Teacher (their practicum supervisor) did not feel Aboriginal topics fit into their program, or did not necessarily see the importance of such material. In some cases the resistance of Associate Teachers prevented the teacher candidate from teaching Aboriginal content in class.

This suggests growing awareness of institutional barriers. On the open ended portion of the surveys, some participants indicated that after teaching in schools, they felt that the chaos of
the school day did not allow time to give Aboriginal teaching prominence. One welcomed the opportunity to include Aboriginal content in future teaching on the Entry, and indicated that they would give it prominence in the Midpoint survey indicating to me that their willingness to teach it and their self-perceived readiness had both increased since the start of the program. On the final survey, however, the same candidate indicated that they would welcome the opportunity (that is, went down a degree), and wrote that “Sometimes there are disruptions in the day. Nothing ever goes the way it’s supposed to.” Another agreed about welcoming the opportunity also indicating “I think because time is always crunched I won’t be able to weave it into ALL aspects, (but I) plan to integrate as much as possible.”

Some candidates indicated that they would strive to give Aboriginal content prominence in their teaching once they have their own classroom. Indeed, there is some indication that teacher candidates feel more willing to include perceived controversial information in their teaching when they are securely employed, preferring not to challenge the status quo when they are training and are subject to the evaluation of their supervising teachers, and looking for references from other staff such as principals and other administrators.

Other teacher candidates indicated that they felt limited by the curriculum in their ability to teach Aboriginal content. For instance, despite recognizing in the Entry survey that “I haven’t learned about Aboriginal peoples until university, and I hope my students don’t have that same experience!” one particular candidate was hard pressed to find room in the curriculum to make way for Aboriginal content. When asked whether or not s/he incorporated any Aboriginal content or pedagogies into second practicum teaching, the candidate responded “no, I did not…into any of my teaching because I wasn’t able to fit it in with school subjects (e.g. math and language). I
didn’t know how to make it fit in with what I was teaching.” Others similarly felt that the content they were required to teach offered them no opportunity to pursue Aboriginal issues.

**Teacher Candidates expressed discomfort in their ability to teach Aboriginal content.**

This theme appeared frequently in teacher candidate responses. Many expressed their belief that they did not know enough about Aboriginal histories, current issues and events to give them prominence in their classroom both at the beginning and end of the year. That is, they felt unwilling because they perceived themselves to be unready, explaining in open ended comments that they had “not enough knowledge yet” or “I need to learn more”. This suggests that candidates were seeking an undefined confidence or comfort level, with one writing “once I become more comfortable I may begin to give it more prominence.”

Despite having multiple hours of instruction and required assignments on Aboriginal education, on the exit survey, candidates told us “I still don’t know very much and I am still confused about what I am [am not]) allowed to speak of;” that they had “fear of not being respectful and not knowing enough;” and insisted “I am so grateful for what I have learned but I needed to learn more.” These statements indicate a general feeling on the part of a number of candidates that they do not have enough knowledge, but also indicate a pervasive fear of not being respectful, or offending a group of people (whom most never name).

Some candidates told us that the material they learned in the year inspired them to continue learning about Aboriginal histories and current communities after leaving the program. Others grew to accept their lack of confidence and said they were comfortable teaching while “not knowing”. On the Closing survey, one candidate, for instance, indicated that s/he would “welcome the opportunity” to incorporate Aboriginal content saying “I can’t make it prominence
(sic)...I don’t know enough, but I will certainly try” and another indicated “I feel that even though I don’t feel very ready – this is important content to share.” Others blamed the ITE program for not giving them enough knowledge to be able to teach Aboriginal content, and did not make an indication that they would seek out more training or information.

Another group of candidates told us they felt encouraged and prepared by the techniques they had learned in Central Option; for example, one said, “from what I’ve learned so far about incorporating Aboriginal people’s histories, there are a lot of easy and practical ways to do so.” This candidate may have been referring to strategies such as introducing a picture book from an Indigenous author and on Indigenous subject matter, bringing in Indigenous perspectives (perhaps via video or with a guest speaker) on topics already being covered, and incorporating the variety of basic lesson plans they were exposed to throughout the year in Central. The Aboriginal Inquiry Project that candidates are assigned by Central Option instructors rates consistently high in terms of increasing teacher candidate knowledge, and some candidates shared with us that completing the assignment had an impact on their willingness to teach Aboriginal content. One candidate told us, “After completing the Aboriginal Inquiry Project, I’ve learned the variety of ways Aboriginal content can be integrated into the curriculum. It doesn’t have to be taught as a separate subject.”

**Teacher candidate responses reveal that a limited view of Aboriginal topics impacts their willingness to teach Aboriginal content.**

Entry surveys revealed some preconceived notions of Aboriginal peoples and perspectives held by teacher candidates when entering into the program. The notions can be connected to a limited vision of what Aboriginal content is and its applicability to teaching in schools. Some comments,
for instance, indicated that Aboriginal pedagogies were valued only for their utility to their future classrooms. On the entry survey, one respondent commented “I’m willing to try anything that might be useful.” Another commented “I think a lot of the traditions are well suited to P/J classrooms” and another said “I think there’s a lot of wisdom that is presented through aboriginal rituals/traditions that is accessible to young kids because of the rituals.” Still another wrote “I hope at by the end of OISE I can properly integrate the concepts. I firstly would like to implement their sense of community and connectedness with nature and more importantly, everything.” While these teacher candidates indicate some willingness to incorporate Aboriginal content into their teaching, that willingness is problematic if it only stems from the motivation of appropriating pedagogies and ways of knowing to benefit Settler students. Their expressed views are also limited because they do not consider educating students with content that explores the relationship between Indigenous and Settler peoples, including histories and current events.

At the end of the year, writing about the fear of offending Aboriginal peoples and of appropriation was common on surveys. One teacher candidate told us: “As I learn more about Aboriginal content, I started to think how sensitive this topic is.” Having become aware of the challenges in incorporating Aboriginal content, this same candidate still welcomed the opportunity to incorporate Aboriginal content, rather than just give it prominence “because it is such a difficult and sensitive topic.”

Many teacher candidates also gave arguments against incorporating a greater amount of Aboriginal content in their curriculum based in what can be seen as the logics of multiculturalism. On his/her closing survey, one candidate argued that s/he would welcome the opportunity to incorporate Aboriginal content in future teaching rather than merely give it prominence “because I will always use the culture of my students to first and foremost be
represented; that being said, I would also balance that with FNMI content.” On the Exit survey, one candidate wrote “[Aboriginal content] is important, but there are other cultures that I would need to expose my students to as well.” Another candidate indicated s/he would “welcome the opportunity” and wrote “I don’t feel it is realistic to think I can include it in everything, especially when there are so many perspectives to consider. I want my students to be able to have a good enough understanding that they can draw on this perspective when making multiple understandings…” These statements cast Aboriginal peoples as another special interest group, or equate their place in the history and current nation of Canada to that of various immigrant groups, erasing their particular histories and connection to land and their desire to reinstate their national sovereignty. The comments also reveal some candidates see only the “cultural” components of Aboriginal content and not the overlap with subjects such as history, social studies, mathematics and science or the opportunities to examine present and past social justice issues related to Aboriginal communities in the classroom.

Those who cast Aboriginal content as just another social justice issue wrote that they would either seek to “balance” Aboriginal issues with other social justice issues, or that another social justice issue was more important to them, and would take precedence in their future classroom. By seeing Aboriginal content as just another ‘ism’, Aboriginal content is again relegated to the margins, rather than seen as histories and perspectives foundational to all of Canada.

Some candidates told us that they felt an evolution in their knowledge as the year progressed, which in turn had various effects on their willingness. One candidate mentioned “I feel I know a lot more than I did but also know a lot more about what NOT to teach which makes it intimidating.”
Finally, on their surveys, some teacher candidate comments betrayed a limited view of Aboriginal topics, in that they acknowledged the existence of Aboriginal peoples as only a ‘historical’ topic. Regarding why they were willing to include this topic in their teaching, many teachers shared their feeling that the “history” was important to include, giving no mention to other topics, especially current events. In our experience, many students at our presentations in elementary and high schools still conceptualize Aboriginal peoples as living in the past, and associate them with stereotypical images such as tipis, Sioux headdresses, and hunting. The limited view of teacher candidates is thus worrying.

An activist political view of Aboriginal topics seems to be correlated with willingness to give Aboriginal content prominence in teaching.

Of the teacher candidates who indicated that they would give Aboriginal content prominence in their teaching, all cited reasons which can be classified as activist. One candidate, for instance stated s/he would give Aboriginal content prominence writing, “We are at a crises and have been for a while. As a settler I have a responsibility to be an ally.” A handful of these responses directly addressed issues of land and settler colonialism. Teacher candidates indicated they would give it prominence writing “To honour the people whose land we are living on. Because I believe it is SO important!” and “we are standing/sitting on colonize land. – it is ESSENTIAL to infuse content” and “because of the land I am on.” Another wrote about the important role that Indigenous –Settler relations have in discussions around identity,

“Being a teacher in Canada, I want to insure that I can represent an unbiased version of Aboriginal peoples history, culture, identity and their importance in
Canadian society. I hope the longer I teach the more comfortable and competent I will feel teaching my students about this vital aspect of the Canadian identity.”

Some respondents provided answers of this nature from the very first survey, while others only recorded activist understandings on the Closing Survey. These comments indicate that transformation with respect to Aboriginal topics can occur within and over the course of a teacher education program, and that with a reflexive and multifaceted approach, all such programs have the potential to bring about this change in candidates who have not yet developed these sensibilities.

Not all teacher candidates who expressed political support for Aboriginal content declared they would give these topics prominence in their teaching. For instance, one teacher candidate who indicated welcoming the opportunity to include Aboriginal content in teaching said it was because “modelling inclusivity, equity, and diversity within the classroom influences young students to become agents of social change in a holistic manner.” Another said “I think that it is hugely relevant for students, especially living in Canada. We all share a country; we should know about each other.”

This observed relationship between activist responses and willingness to give Aboriginal content prominence in classroom teaching indicate that political understandings of First Nations issues, concerns, their rights and history, paired with a deep understanding of identity especially with respect to Settler Colonialism is crucial to maximize teacher candidate willingness. Such understandings may clarify what sorts of Aboriginal content to teach in classrooms, and why that content is important to all students. Without this understanding, Aboriginal studies is seen as just another subject that may or may not be relevant to students in the class.
6.6 Final thoughts

There remain gaps in our understandings both of willingness and how we can effectively measure it. A large group of teacher candidates indicated they would at least “welcome the opportunity” to include Aboriginal topics in their practicum and classroom teaching, but in the comment section did not indicate why they chose this answer instead of giving it prominence. These teacher candidates gave a general sense that they felt this material was important or did not give any further justification for their answer. This includes the respondent mentioned above who indicated on the last survey that s/he “would welcome the opportunity” and further explained “I think that it is hugely relevant for students, especially living in Canada. We all share a country; we should know about each other.”

There was also a selective silence of some candidates. On the last two surveys, none of the teacher candidates who indicated they would be willing to include Aboriginal content in their teaching only if their school required it, or only teach it as outlined in the Ontario Curriculum documents answered the follow up question “Why did you answer this way?” As a result we have little insight into their reasoning. A variety of reasons might contribute to this, including not feeling comfortable to share their views, perhaps lack of time (this was the last section of the survey) or perhaps candidates felt reluctant to explore their own reasoning.

Of note is that over all three surveys, only one teacher candidate explicitly supported giving Aboriginal content prominence in future teaching to benefit First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students, stating “I realize that the current education system disadvantages FNMI youth and thus it is important to prioritize FNMI history and current events.” Given that Toronto has one of the largest populations of Indigenous peoples in the country, and that various studies and examples
in real life practice have tied Aboriginal student success to representation in the curriculum (Toulouse, 2006; Morin, 2004), we should place greater emphasis on meeting the needs of this urban Aboriginal population, especially since that argument was only picked up on by one candidate. This also despite the fact that the Central Option instructors, while stressing the importance of this content for all Canadian students, did specific teaching on Aboriginal student success, including featuring a half-day workshop with scholar and educator Dr. Pamela Toulouse who explicitly addressed strategies that would be effective to teach Aboriginal students.

The results of our study point to the importance of exploring issues of identity and Settler colonialism with teacher candidates, along with direct instruction of Aboriginal histories, cultures and current perspectives. Instructors should not shy away from discussing political perspectives with respect to this content, including issues around land and sovereignty, as comments reveal these perspectives often bolster teacher candidates to give Aboriginal content prominence in their future teaching. One teacher candidate said in the first survey: “I think there is a huge benefit in incorporating Aboriginal teachings. I want to be a good teacher who follows safe and effective approaches 😊.” Clearly when the will is there, student teachers seek guidance to come to a place of taking up the responsibility, safely and effectively. Modelling and also practising these approaches is very important. Teacher candidates tell us that they want more guidance regarding teaching Aboriginal content, in order for them to feel more willing and ready to teach Aboriginal content in their classrooms. They want clear instruction, and even anecdotally suggest that they would like to practice this teaching in front of their peers to build confidence.

Taken together, the data show that teacher candidate willingness to incorporate Aboriginal content into their teaching practice is complex. Teacher candidates hold a variety of
concerns with respect to this material, and respond to a variety of different strategies designed to encourage their interest and contribute to their knowledge. While enrolled in initial teacher education, many candidates are concerned about how students, parents and their Associate Teachers will react to what candidates perceive to be risky material. Candidates are also concerned they may make “mistakes” and continue to “offend” Aboriginal peoples and communities. One presentation during the initial teacher education program may spark interest and even emotionally move teacher candidates, but it is not enough to ensure that new teachers will feel enough comfort to actually bring this material into their classrooms. Given the past purposeful suppression of Aboriginal perspectives about the histories and current realities on this land, the current oppressions faced by Indigenous peoples in Canada, and the foundational nature of issues of colonialism to other oppressions taking place on this land, teacher education programs in Ontario and across Canada have a responsibility to incorporate multiple opportunities for in depth learning about these issues and about Settler colonialism. Providing extended guidance in the form of resources, lesson plans, and modeled teaching of this content will help to bridge the gap between the curriculum devoid of these perspectives that most teacher candidates learned while they were in elementary and secondary school and the curriculum that we envision and hope will quickly be incorporated into present and future classrooms.
CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

“This is not an aboriginal problem,” he said. “This is a Canadian problem. Because at the same time that aboriginal people were being demeaned in the schools and their culture and language were being taken away from them and they were being told that they were inferior, they were pagans, that they were heathens and savages and that they were unworthy of being respected — that very same message was being given to the non-aboriginal children in the public schools as well.” – Justice Murray Sinclair

7.0 Introduction

As I begin to bring this thesis to a close, I am struck with a feeling that my own personal journey has come full circle. On June 11, 2008, just a few short weeks before I was to first visit the First Nation community in Treaty Three territory that set me on this journey, I found myself on Parliament Hill while on a lunch break from my job as a tour guide for elementary school students. When I arrived, I was surrounded by residential school survivors and their families. Many held signs and wore t-shirts pronouncing how far they had travelled to be there that day. I also saw government employees dressed in suits and ID badges arrive together in groups to witness the event. Silence quickly descended when the Prime Minister began to read the historic Statement of apology to former students of Indian Residential Schools. In that moment, I felt an overwhelming emotional energy which directed me forward with renewed purpose. I realize now that that would be the first time of many when I would feel the need to witness and the need to tell those I know what I had seen. Almost seven years later, on June 3, 2015, a quick extension of my travel plans allowed me to be in Ottawa again. This time I was able to participate in the Walk for Reconciliation, one of the events which closed the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. In between these two events, my life has completely changed. I went from seldom thinking about

Aboriginal communities to reading, listening, and consuming any information I could on a daily basis. I can now imagine no other field in which I would like to work.

As I embark on this closing chapter, I am writing with great hope because of the changes in awareness and attitude that I am seeing around me. To mark the end of the process, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission released its “Calls to Action” and already they have had an impact on our work and the work of others at OISE. The document calls for teacher-training to be a central site of change, and one that should respond to its other calls to create better curriculum about Aboriginal topics, educate all students to a greater degree about Residential schools and instil in them empathy (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). At the same time, Initial Teacher Education at OISE, the site of this research, is going through a period of dramatic change. As of September 2015, OISE no longer offers entrance to one-year B.Ed. candidates, formerly the largest B.Ed. program in the country. Instead, the institution now certifies teachers primarily through the Masters of Teaching program, which will constitute twenty months of almost continuous classes and practicum placements. The MT program will be subject to the updated accreditation guidelines of the Ontario College of Teachers, which feature an expanded section on what teacher education programs must prepare teachers for (and strategies for how they might do it) with respect to “First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Perspectives, Cultures, Histories and Ways of Knowing” (Ontario College of Teachers, 2014). The confluence of new programming and new obligations around Aboriginal topics has resulted in renewed interest in the work contained in this Ph.D. thesis research. I am glad that as our research has become available those to whom it may be useful are showing interest in these findings. Writing in 2010, Godlewska, Moore, and Bednasek argue that “the principal problem in Aboriginal education in Canada is the education of Canadians” and “while education may not be the source
of ignorance, it is now perpetuating it.” (p.417). I believe this is still mostly true, but we are making positive inroads.

7.1 Central Option after the study

This study has taken a comprehensive look at Central Option, with a focus in two of the manuscripts on the 2012-2013 academic year. Aboriginal infusion occurred in 2013-2014, and our Participatory Action Research team continued to distribute surveys and conduct interviews in order to reflect on and deepen the infusion. In September 2014, the administration eliminated special “infusion” designations from the different Options for the last year of the B.Ed. program. Instead, instructors were asked to incorporate all of the former infusions into their curriculum. Along with the Aboriginal focus, this included a focus on technology, a focus on environmental education, and a focus on inner city students.

When this occurred, Nancy took the initiative to advocate for and create an assignment that all elementary B.Ed. teacher candidates would be required to complete. The lessons learned in Central Option were thus given the opportunity to spread to other areas of the program. The assignment included two parts: the first required each candidate to watch the first ten minutes of each of the four episodes of the 8th Fire documentary series produced by the CBC19, and then choose one episode to watch in full. Candidates then had to answer a series of reflective questions on the documentary and post their questions about the documentary online so that John and I could address them in our presentation. It was directed that this was to take place just before we were scheduled to come in and do our introductory presentation. The second part of

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19 [http://www.cbc.ca/8thfire/]
the lesson asked candidates to create a lesson plan or unit that they could use in their practicum placement around a text-based resource.

By requiring TCs to watch 8th Fire prior to our meeting them, John and I noticed a marked difference in the knowledge of the teacher candidates and in the depth of their questions during our time together. We also found that there was much less outright negative resistance to the information we presented both in class and recorded on the evaluations. Nancy gathered informal data showing that teacher candidates in a comparative Option which had been given the assignment reported that they taught almost exactly double the hours of Aboriginal content in their practicum placements than they had the year before (84 versus 42.5). We felt this result was promising. We concluded that TCs need repeated exposure to Aboriginal histories and current events from multiple sources to grow their confidence in the knowledge and inspire them to teach it in their curriculum. However, Nancy shared with me in a follow up conversation that her impression was that, beyond the required assignment, instructors in many other Options had not further explored Aboriginal perspectives because people did not have a strong passion for the work (Nancy Steele, personal communication, April 20, 2015).

Because Central Option lost the official label of “Aboriginal infusion” Nancy and Mary thought long and hard about what they could retain with respect to Aboriginal information in the Option, and what they felt they could no longer justify. Most of the activities related to Aboriginal infusion, such as the two days on the Toronto Islands, guest speakers, and the picture book assignment, did continue. One big change was to the Aboriginal Inquiry project. It was felt since there was no longer an Aboriginal infusion label, the coordinators could not justify having the Aboriginal Inquiry as the official capstone project of the Option. Instead, it was replaced by
an assignment to complete a “Current Events” unit, within which there needed to be at least one lesson on Aboriginal perspectives on whatever event was being highlighted.

In some ways, the incorporation of Aboriginal content, while unofficial, continued to deepen in the final year of Central Option as Nancy, Mary and John continued to strive for new and effective ways to promote teacher candidate willingness and readiness to bring that content into their future teaching. Upon learning that a current MT student Aliesha Arndt had experience leading groups of Settler and Indigenous peoples in an embodied drama about colonization, residential schools and intergenerational trauma, Nancy made space for the workshop in her program. After seeing the powerful reactions of those who participated, Aliesha, Nancy and I developed a program through which we trained ten teacher candidates to facilitate the exercise for their future students. By the end of the experience, we all have become very excited about the power of embodied theatre processes to bring about decolonization and transformation, which for me was inspired by the work of Butterwick and Selman (2012).

At the end of 2014-2015, the year when B.Ed. cohorts did not have special themes, John, Nancy and I reflected together on what had been accomplished and what changed for the worse. Nancy had done a count and found that despite the fact that there were fewer Central Option TCs than there had been the year before, they had self-reported completing more teaching hours on Aboriginal content than the last year of the official infusion (620 versus 531). She felt this had to do with the change in assignments to the Current Events unit, which situated Aboriginal perspectives within a relevant context, or perhaps made the unit more palatable to Associate Teachers when candidates proposed their curriculum. Nancy shared that she felt conflicted on whether it was better to have an Aboriginal infusion Option or whether it was better to spread that infusion throughout the program, as had been done with elementary teacher candidates in
2014-2015. She ultimately concluded that there are pros and cons to both approaches (Nancy Steele, personal communication, April 20, 2016). Labelling it with Aboriginal infusion gave teacher candidates the permission to claim that they had that focus during their teaching training which further justified encouraging the use of Aboriginal perspectives in all areas. Having only one Option with such a focus, however, meant that Aboriginal perspectives were not seen as curriculum that was important for all teacher candidates to learn in depth. I believe that what I have witnessed, especially in the last year of the B.Ed. program where all elementary candidates were required to complete the Aboriginal infusion assignment, has shown that having a hub of innovation and intensive learning alongside required components across the entire program is an effective model.

Reflecting back, Nancy also told me that over the course of the Aboriginal infusion in Central, never did even a quarter of the Option’s population enrol because of the Aboriginal infusion. She concluded that, “you can’t assume people want to learn Aboriginal infusion, they don’t know what they want until they are in it. People aren’t looking for this. So you do the work presuming that they should know it” (Nancy Steele, personal communication, April 20, 2015).

7.2 Conclusions Reached, Lessons Learned

Perhaps the most overarching conclusion reached in this Ph.D. research was documented in chapter four, where it was shown that relationships are an important medium through which the work to further Aboriginal education is accomplished. That chapter explored a variety of relationships at play as Aboriginal infusion was incorporated into Central Option. Having instructors embedded within the program who came to their passion for teaching about Aboriginal issues organically was an important factor that contributed to the momentum of the
work. These instructors go with the flow as the institution changes, and continue to identify places where together we can advocate for Aboriginal education in the MT program.

In chapter five, the primary source of data shifted from the instructors to the enrolled teacher candidates. Chapter five focused more on how teacher candidates grew in their self-perceived readiness to bring Aboriginal histories and current issues into their teaching practice over a year in Central Option. Here we learned about the low amounts of prior instruction most teacher candidates have when they enter teacher education around the histories and current experiences of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people. We also learned about their need for demonstrations and role playing of what teaching this material looks like, and the positive impact of hearing the stories and perspectives of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit community members in the classroom. An important revelation which emerged was not only the enthusiasm to learn from Elders, but also the view of many teacher candidates that those who OISE selected to participate in the program were accepted as “authentic”. This realization highlighted the responsibility that OISE and other institutions have to take their direction from communities when making these decisions, which further points to the importance of fostering authentic relationships with Aboriginal communities.

Chapter six focused on Central teacher candidates’ self-reported willingness to teach this material. Here teacher candidates told us about their discomfort teaching topics related to Aboriginal perspectives and communities and the corresponding discomfort they sometimes found in the practicing teachers who supervised their practicum placements. We also found that candidates were not always willing to give Aboriginal content prominence in their classroom, and that this reluctance was often connected to perceived barriers in the education system, or to a limited view of Aboriginal education as just teaching aspects of different Aboriginal cultures,
and particularly important for the learning of Aboriginal students. Our interviews and surveys showed us that those teacher candidates who held a broader view of what “Aboriginal content” could consist of or an explicitly activist view were most interested in giving that material more time in their future teaching.

7.3 Limitations of the Project

The research contained in this thesis has obvious limitations in its scope. It is confined to one Bachelor of Education program, at one institution, in one urban context, and specifically unfolded within one professional learning community. More than half of Central Option students did not select the Option as their first choice at OISE year to year, and of those that did select the Option, it is probable that they had a multitude of reasons. That fact plus the results of this research show that those who participated definitely did not begin their training with an overwhelming inclination for teaching Aboriginal content.

This study is also limited in that I only interviewed the three main professors who were involved with Aboriginal education in Central Option. Chapter four may have benefitted from speaking to additional instructors; especially those who attempted to teach Aboriginal education but who the teacher candidates ultimately felt did not do an effective job in their implementation, or those who taught in the Option who chose not to teach Aboriginal education, to probe their reasoning. This may have helped me to gain deeper insight into Central Option as a whole and perhaps into other areas of the institution.

The data that I collected was also limited by the views of the interview participants. Even though the graduate student member of our PAR team who was tasked with recruiting participants explicitly invited candidates who were uncomfortable with Aboriginal content in
their practice as well as those who did not believe it was important to their future teaching to participate, our five interview participants seemed positive about incorporating Aboriginal content into their teaching to some degree by the first interview. The interviews did not draw out the same rich responses as were gathered on the surveys. It would have been interesting to have in-depth conversations with those whose minds had changed drastically with regard to Aboriginal content over the year in Central Option. In that particular cohort in 2012-2013, we knew based on comments and questions in class and comments made on the surveys that there were students who did not see the importance or relevance of Aboriginal content at the beginning, and some even at the end of the year. As I reread the surveys, I also noted that there were those participants (whose identities were obscured by codes) who participated at first but then did not fill out follow up surveys, or who left blanks where before they expressed negative resistance. I always wondered what lay beyond their silence.

If I were to restart this study, I would encourage our PAR team to find a more effective and ethical way to have the interviewer reach these individuals. Gathering these diverse perspectives may have been achieved if the study were expanded to include a team of graduate students, perhaps who are also doing their research on aspects of the program, who interview as many teacher candidates in Central Option who are willing to participate, in order to include a wider variety of perspectives including the experiences of those who were less than keen. Breadth may also be tapped into by having an instructor assign class time towards the beginning and end of the school year to write an anonymous reflective journal entry, asking TCs to express honestly their state of mind when entering Central Option, and how they think their attitudes regarding Aboriginal education changed over the course of the year. That would mean that in-depth participation would be built into class time, and completely anonymous (rather than an
after-school meeting with a graduate student face-to-face) which may mean more people would want to participate and feel free to express their concerns without fear of judgment by the interviewer.

7.4 Future Possibilities of Research

This research only looked at the Central Option, which was a Primary/Junior Option. Future research should examine how to increase teacher candidate willingness and readiness among teacher candidates at higher levels of education where material begins to get more focused, especially in Intermediate/Senior teacher education where almost all teaching is discipline based. Indeed, in the spring of 2014, John Doran and I were invited to present at N’gwii Kendaasmin (We’ll Learn and Teach Together): Drawing on Indigenous Knowledges to Transform Teaching and Learning in Mathematics and Science held at UofT’s Institute of Child Study. We also viewed other presentations there which highlighted the many connections between all forms of mathematics and Indigenous ways of knowing. A similar PAR study which encouraged teacher candidates in disciplines not always immediately associated with Indigenous content, such as math and sciences, to take up Aboriginal perspectives in their future teaching would be an exciting extension of this work.

OISE’s newly expanded MT program provides a number of opportunities to conduct research at OISE. For instance, being longer in duration, the MT program offers more hours of practicum placements for teacher candidates. The expanded length affords more time to study how information which is taught in the program translates into practicum teaching, and it would be useful to learn how self-reported willingness and readiness to teach Aboriginal content in class actually translates into teaching while out in the field and get feedback on how they deal
with racism in their classrooms. A study such as this might be carried out through examining the teaching of an assignment required across the program, in order to have a common experience to compare. Indeed, all accredited teacher education programs in Ontario have had to extend their programs and this has created a need for research into the subsequent changes that have been made to teacher education.

In light of this change to programming at OISE, a full analysis of the entire program’s efforts with respect to Aboriginal education is in order. A researcher could document these efforts with respect to the expansion of the following relevant documents. One, the Ontario College of Teacher accreditation guidelines on Aboriginal topics which have come along with the longer duration of teacher education programs in Ontario under these new guidelines. Two, the Dean’s Accord on Indigenous Education from the Association of Canadian Deans of Education which has laid out a strong vision and framework for Indigenous content in teacher education to which signatories committed to aspire (ACDE, 2010). And three, the TRC’s Calls to Action, some of which speak directly to the responsibilities of education and teacher education in the aftermath of Residential School. This would necessarily include a specific look at the effectiveness of the new Social Studies and Aboriginal Education course which will be mandatory for all those MT students training to teach at the Primary/Junior level beginning in September 2015.

Another exciting opportunity to expand this research could involve a side-by-side cohort study. It may be beneficial to track the willingness and readiness to teach Aboriginal content in two professional learning communities one which has programming with an increased focus on Aboriginal content and one has minimal intervention, such as the one assignment Nancy designed for the other Elementary Options. A comparative analysis of faculties of education in
order to study their programmatic offerings with regards to Aboriginal content might also be useful to aid in our efforts to learn from one another. I believe that the close of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the subsequently released Calls to Action are a perfect opportunity for all teacher education programs to examine their programs to see if including Indigenous instructors and content has been and can be a priority. There is now also an exciting opportunity to study how these Calls to Action are translated and implemented by these various programs over the next few years.

7.5 Implications

Over the course of the Deepening Knowledge Project, we have seen instructors outside of Central Option and our project members deepen their programmatic offerings of Aboriginal content; however, the majority of instructors have not taken up the subject independently (or use the resources we have offered) as we had hoped. Of those who do take it up, we have also not seen it become integrated to the extent that it was in Central Option. I believe that this is strong justification for professional development on Aboriginal topics at faculties of education and school boards (People for Education, 2015). Practicing instructors and teachers need strong experiences within Aboriginal settings and encounters with their perspectives in order to be brought on board. They must see themselves as the epicenter for the new learning called for in the Truth and Reconciliation commission to take place. Perhaps one of the most important findings that has come out of this research was the impact that teacher candidates told us that Indigenous peoples in the classroom had on their learning. From John’s involvement in Central Option to various guest speakers and Elders, candidates appreciated learning from a variety of voices, and appreciated forming relationships, however momentary. The presence of Indigenous
community members made the perspectives real for them, and reinforced the material and perspectives Settler instructors shared. For some, it was their first time listening to Indigenous people speak about their perspectives on these issues. The big implication that follows from this for other teacher education programs, schools, and school boards is the importance of including Indigenous community members in their institutions in a sustainable way. Real inclusion means developing long term relationships of trust. It also means hiring Indigenous educators to teach a variety of courses in teacher education (not just the “Aboriginal Education” course) and in all levels of schooling. Indigenous educators have a lot to share with us. They need to be central collaborators and decision makers as we shape programs and offerings into the future. We also need to respect that Indigenous educators and Elders are needed by their own communities and may be too busy to meet the needs of largely Settler teacher education programs. This is the delicate balance that education must navigate along with Indigenous peoples in the coming years.

Our research also highlighted the almost complete lack of accurate knowledge that teacher candidates bring with them as they enter teacher education. We cannot even assume that those who are passionate about other social justice issues are educated on the subject of Indigenous-Settler relations. Teacher education programs must include a significant amount of teaching in this area as a mandatory part of their program if it is not already included. Whether this training occurs in a specific course on teacher education or infused throughout a program as it was in Central Option is up to each faculty.

The lack of knowledge and confidence with respect to Aboriginal content has huge implications for practicing teachers. The reality of the landscape in Ontario at the moment is that the vast majority of teacher candidates are not finding teaching positions immediately upon graduation (Dubinski, 2015; Newcomb, 2014). No matter how many teacher candidates are
educated to critically analyze Aboriginal content, the reality is that they will not fully permeate into the system for years. School boards need to make a concerted effort to deliver effective professional development in this area for practicing teachers. These efforts must be directed by Indigenous colleagues and as this research has found, give practical examples of what teaching this material looks like.

In order for consciousness-raising to take hold, teacher candidates must be required to practice teaching Aboriginal content during their teacher education program, for we have learned in this research that if it is not, many will be stifled in their efforts by their fear. So many teacher candidates told us that they were able to overcome their fear while completing a mandatory assignment to read one picture book with Aboriginal content, or deliver one short lesson plan. We must recognize the fear of these educators, but also encourage them to address this fear and not let it turn into paralysis.

From the perceptions of Aboriginal content this research has uncovered it has become clear that any policy that is created must be explicit in that the inclusion of Aboriginal content in curriculum is not just for Aboriginal students, but for all students who, by virtue of living on Indigenous territory, are part of the Indigenous-Settler relationship and implicated in ongoing colonization. This policy must also explicitly call for curriculum beyond “cultural education” and instead take a more issues based approach. An issues based approach would lay out historical and contemporary perspectives on a variety of issues in politics, law, philosophy, history, and an expanding number of other subjects. If these initiatives are not made, this research has shown that many will continue on with a very narrow view of what Aboriginal content is and for whom it is meant to educate.
Finally, teacher education programs must have initiatives to provide professional development to instructors. As Mary pointed out in chapter four, in order for this work to be taken up more broadly, instructors need to feel confident teaching this area, and the majority do not. We also learned this from our early work in the Deepening Knowledge Project. One of the first actions of the DKP was to hire Dr. Nicole Bell to develop a set of lessons that fit into the pre-existing courses in the B.Ed. program. Not many instructors took up these lessons, and in anonymous surveys they told us about their fears of not being able to answer teacher candidate questions, of not being able to facilitate discussion on the topic properly, and of not knowing enough in general to teach it. Faculties and school boards must learn from this feedback and provide the corresponding training.

7.6 Final Thoughts

As this thesis comes to a close, I circle back to the words of Justice Murray Sinclair which opened this chapter. Justice Sinclair points to the full implication of the education system in Canada, not just in the horrible treatment of Indigenous children, but in the total miseducation of generations of Canadians. Now is not the time to step back and wonder who will do this work to change the trajectory of education. Now is the time to recognize what good work is already being done, and quickly rearrange resources at educational institutions to build upon that work. I am heartened by the thought that more and more Canadians are being exposed to Aboriginal perspectives and the truth of colonization. I am optimistic when I think of the over four thousand five hundred teacher candidates I have met over the past four years, and of their mostly positive reactions to our Deepening Knowledge Project workshop. There is still more work to be done.
Still I see colleagues who, with good intentions, feel it is better to back away from opportunities to include more Indigenous content in our program for fear of offending. While thinking about our methods is important, the way forward can no longer be a choice between doing something offensive and doing nothing at all. Instead, teacher educators, and teacher education programs must find a third way forward, one that deepens relationships with Indigenous colleagues and local Indigenous communities, and includes them in consultation so that the path to not offending becomes clear.

Aboriginal content is not just for the benefit of Aboriginal people. It was not Aboriginal people who created residential schools for instance, and educated themselves to think they were savages. (Aboriginal peoples have, however, reclaimed the subject of residential schools for teacher education.) It was Canadians, and by not recognizing our role in this history, we Settlers are currently repeating our past mistakes, as can be evidenced by the treatment of Indigenous families by the child welfare system in this country and of the persistent racism that exists. The repetition of the residential school system was taken up by the late Indigenous scholar Patricia Monture and is perhaps most notably documented in the Maclean’s cover story that declared in the spring of 2015 that Canada’s racism problem is worse than that of our neighbour to the south (Gilmore, 2015).

It is my hope that the findings in this thesis can give some insight into teacher candidate willingness and readiness to take up Aboriginal content in their teaching practice. Perhaps it may be useful to others who deliver training, whether it be to in-service teachers, practicing teachers, or other members of the public and private sectors who have a hand in education in this country, not just of teachers but of students at all levels.
At the conclusion of this research I feel very fortunate for the exciting work that has been completed, and two aspects of that in particular. The first is having such a wonderful Participatory Action Research team. These colleagues, Jean-Paul Restoule, Kathy Broad, Nancy Steele, John Doran, Usha James, Brendan Burrows and Mary Reid have been instrumental in carrying out this project, and their participation has precipitated the second thing that I am truly grateful for, that is, the change and growth that occurred while the research and writing of this thesis was unfolding. Having the enthusiastic participation and passion of these team members present moved the research in new directions and made the results literally have an immediate impact on programming. In finishing this Ph.D. I am not now sitting here waiting for these results to take effect. They already have, and that gives me great hope.
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aboriginal biology teachers. (M.Ed., University of Alberta (Canada)). ProQuest Dissertations and Theses.

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Ng, R. (2012). Decolonizing teaching and learning through embodied learning: Toward an


Content in a Teacher Education Program. In H. Jahnke, S. Styres, S. Lilley, & D. Zinga (Eds.), *Contested Spaces: Theory, Practice, and New Directions in Indigenous Education*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.


### Table 1

**Title: Aboriginal Postsecondary Programs in Ontario – Teaching-Related**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Program</th>
<th>Type of Accreditation</th>
<th>Institution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal Adult Education</td>
<td>B.Ed.</td>
<td>Brock University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal Adult Education</td>
<td>Certificate</td>
<td>Brock University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal Teacher Education Program</td>
<td>B.Ed.</td>
<td>Nipissing University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal Teacher Education Program</td>
<td>B.Ed.</td>
<td>Brock University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal Teacher Education Program</td>
<td>Certificate</td>
<td>Queen’s (with Kenjgewin Teg)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal Teacher Education Program</td>
<td>Certificate</td>
<td>University of Ottawa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal Teacher Education Program</td>
<td>Diploma</td>
<td>Seven Generations (with Queen’s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Childhood Education</td>
<td>Diploma</td>
<td>Anishnabek E.I; Oshki-Pimache-O-Win (with Cambrian); Six Nations Polytechnic (with Niagara)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Classroom Assistant Diploma Program</td>
<td>Diploma</td>
<td>Nipissing University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Language Instructors Program</td>
<td>Certificate</td>
<td>Lakehead University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Language Instructors’ Diploma Program</td>
<td>Diploma</td>
<td>Lakehead University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Teacher Education Program</td>
<td>Certificate</td>
<td>Brock University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Teacher Education Program</td>
<td>B.A./B.Ed. – Indigenous Learning</td>
<td>Lakehead University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principals of First Nations Schools – 6 weeks</td>
<td></td>
<td>Six Nations Polytechnic and Seven Generations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Assistant</td>
<td>Certificate</td>
<td>Northern College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher of AnishnaaBemwin as a Second Language Program</td>
<td>Certificate</td>
<td>Nipissing University</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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I updated this chart with the permission of Naokwegijig-Corbiere (2007, p.59-60), and it will be appearing my contribution to a forthcoming book chapter whose primary author is Dr. Frank Deer.
## Appendix B

### PHASES OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Specifics</th>
<th>Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preliminary Phase</td>
<td>Secured ethical consideration</td>
<td>Submitted proposal to interview teacher candidates and distribute surveys to Central Option.</td>
<td>Summer 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Initial writing on the Deepening Knowledge Project</td>
<td>A paper documenting the origins and the development of the DKP was co-authored by Angela, Kathy and Jean-Paul, and presented at CSSE Spring 2012.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase 1</td>
<td>Distributed Year One surveys and conducted interviews</td>
<td>Three surveys went out during year one, in September, February and April. Five interview participants were recruited, each participating in two one-on-one interviews with research assistants since the primary investigator also instructed in the cohort. Information letters were shared with teacher candidates and consent was granted on the surveys by checking a box. Interview participants were also asked to sign consent forms.</td>
<td>September 2012 - April 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase 2</td>
<td>Analyze data, record results, distribute information from year one</td>
<td>Quantitative results from the surveys were gathered and analyzed alongside the qualitative responses on surveys. Interview transcripts were analyzed by Angela and Jean-Paul’s analysis provided triangulation.</td>
<td>October 2012 - February 2014</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Paper entitled Deepening Knowledge to Inspire Action: Including Aboriginal Perspectives in Teaching Practice was accepted to inEducation journal (2013). Focus was on teacher candidate readiness.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Instructor interviews</td>
<td>Interviews with Nancy, Mary and John Doran were recorded to get a sense of strategies used in the Option, and the development of the Option</td>
<td>April 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Continued work on paper two</td>
<td>Paper two was finalized, and submitted to Dr. Restoule for editing.</td>
<td>March 2014 - June 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Interview analysis</td>
<td>Instructor interviews were analyzed and the results were interpreted.</td>
<td>Winter 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Paper three</td>
<td>Results were written into paper 3, and edited.</td>
<td>February - March 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Final draft.</td>
<td>Beginning and conclusion chapters written and submitted to Dr. Restoule for editing. Final draft of entire thesis assembled and submitted to committee September 1, 2015.</td>
<td>June - September 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Publication</td>
<td>Publication sought for chapters four and six.</td>
<td>September 2015</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix C

SURVEYS DISTRIBUTED TO TEACHER CANDIDATES IN CENTRAL OPTION

Inquiry into Practice – Entry Survey

What was the name of your first pet/first teacher __________________

What month were you born in? ______________________
(This will be used for tracking purposes only)

☐ By checking this box, I indicate that I’ve received the info letter, my questions have been answered and I consent to begin.

At this point in time, how would you describe the knowledge you have of the histories of Aboriginal peoples in Canada.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Choice</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I have studied these histories carefully and have an extensive knowledge of the histories of Aboriginal peoples of Canada.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have fairly extensive knowledge of the histories of Aboriginal peoples in Canada.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have some knowledge of the histories of Aboriginal peoples in Canada.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have little knowledge of these histories.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At this point in time, how would you describe the knowledge you have of the current issues and events involving Aboriginal peoples in Canada.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Choice</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I have extensive knowledge of the current issues and events involving Aboriginal peoples of Canada.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have fairly extensive knowledge of the current issues and events involving Aboriginal peoples in Canada.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have some knowledge of the current issues and events involving Aboriginal peoples.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have little knowledge of these current issues and events.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How did you acquire knowledge of the histories, issues and current events involving Aboriginal peoples? Please select all that apply.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Home</th>
<th>Elementary School</th>
<th>Secondary School</th>
<th>University/College courses</th>
<th>Classes at OISE</th>
<th>The Media</th>
<th>Private Study e.g. reading</th>
<th>Other ________________________________________________________________</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

How ready do you feel to incorporate Aboriginal content in your curriculum?
Very ready
Ready
Somewhat ready
Not ready

Why did you choose the answer you did?

What tools do you feel would make you more ready to teach this material?

Which of the following statements best describes your view of including Aboriginal peoples’ histories, current issues and events in the PRACTICUM TEACHING you will do this year? Please select one of the following:

I would give it prominence in my own teaching, integrating Aboriginal content into all aspects of the curriculum because it is an important topic.
I would welcome the opportunity to include it in my teaching, integrating Aboriginal content into areas of curriculum beyond what is specified in the curriculum documents.
I would be willing to include it in my teaching if my school required it.
I would teach the topic only as outlined in the Ontario Curriculum documents.
Other ________________________________

Why did you answer this way?

Which of the following statements best describes your view of including Aboriginal peoples’ histories, current issues and events in your future teaching career BEYOND OISE? Please select one of the following:

I would give it prominence in my own teaching, integrating Aboriginal content into all aspects of the curriculum because it is an important topic.
I would welcome the opportunity to include it in my teaching, integrating Aboriginal content into areas of curriculum beyond what is specified in the curriculum documents.
I would be willing to include it in my teaching if my school required it.
I would teach the topic only as outlined in the Ontario Curriculum documents.
Other ________________________________

Why did you answer this way?
Inquiry into Practice – Midpoint Survey

What was the name of your first pet/first teacher ____________________

What month were you born in? ________________________________
(This will be used for tracking purposes only)

☐ By checking this box, I indicate that I’ve received the info letter, my questions have been answered and I consent to begin.

At this point in time, how would you describe the knowledge you have of the histories of Aboriginal peoples in Canada.

| I have studied these histories carefully and have an extensive knowledge of the histories of Aboriginal peoples of Canada. |
| I have fairly extensive knowledge of the histories of Aboriginal peoples in Canada. |
| I have some knowledge of the histories of Aboriginal peoples in Canada. |
| I have little knowledge of these histories. |

At this point in time, how would you describe the knowledge you have of the current issues and events involving Aboriginal peoples in Canada.

| I have extensive knowledge of the current issues and events involving Aboriginal peoples of Canada. |
| I have fairly extensive knowledge of the current issues and events involving Aboriginal peoples in Canada. |
| I have some knowledge of the current issues and events involving Aboriginal peoples. |
| I have little knowledge of these current issues and events. |

What particular strategies used in Central Option or at OISE so far have contributed to your knowledge?

- Island Retreat
- First Voice perspective
- Seminar(s) by John Doran and Angela Nardozi
- Work in subject courses (Please name): ____________________________
- Information in TES
- Inquiry Project
- Pamela Toulouse Workshop
- Deepening Knowledge Project website
- Lesson plan in social studies with required Aboriginal source
- Being required to use a storybook with First Nations, Metis, Inuit story/characters
- Other ____________________________________________________________
- Other ____________________________________________________________
How ready do you feel to incorporate Aboriginal content in your curriculum at this time?

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very ready</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ready</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat ready</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not ready</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Why did you choose the answer you did?

What tools do you feel would make you more ready to teach this material?

Have there been any experiences at OISE which you felt have been detrimental to your learning in the area of Aboriginal histories, cultures, current experiences and pedagogies?

Where do you go to find information and resources to use in your practicum regarding Aboriginal histories, cultures, current experiences and pedagogies?
Which of the following statements best describes your view of including Aboriginal peoples’ histories, current issues and events in the PRACTICUM TEACHING you will do this year? Please select one of the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I would give it prominence in my own teaching, integrating Aboriginal content into all aspects of the curriculum because it is an important topic.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would welcome the opportunity to include it in my teaching, integrating Aboriginal content into areas of curriculum beyond what is specified in the curriculum documents.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would be willing to include it in my teaching if my school required it.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would teach the topic only as outlined in the Ontario Curriculum documents.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other ___________________________</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Why did you answer this way?

Which of the following statements best describes your view of including Aboriginal peoples’ histories, current issues and events in your future teaching career BEYOND OISE? Please select one of the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I would give it prominence in my own teaching, integrating Aboriginal content into all aspects of the curriculum because it is an important topic.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would welcome the opportunity to include it in my teaching, integrating Aboriginal content into areas of curriculum beyond what is specified in the curriculum documents.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would be willing to include it in my teaching if my school required it.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would teach the topic only as outlined in the Ontario Curriculum documents.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other ___________________________</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Why did you answer this way?
Inquiry into Practice – Closing Survey

What was the name of your first pet/first teacher __________________
What month were you born in? ______________________
(This will be used for tracking purposes only)

☐ By checking this box, I indicate that I’ve received the info letter, my questions have been answered and I consent to begin.

At this point in time, how would you describe the knowledge you have of the histories of Aboriginal peoples in Canada.

| I have studied these histories carefully and have an extensive knowledge of the histories of Aboriginal peoples of Canada. |
| I have fairly extensive knowledge of the histories of Aboriginal peoples in Canada. |
| I have some knowledge of the histories of Aboriginal peoples in Canada. |
| I have little knowledge of these histories. |

At this point in time, how would you describe the knowledge you have of the current issues and events involving Aboriginal peoples in Canada.

| I have extensive knowledge of the current issues and events involving Aboriginal peoples of Canada. |
| I have fairly extensive knowledge of the current issues and events involving Aboriginal peoples in Canada. |
| I have some knowledge of the current issues and events involving Aboriginal peoples. |
| I have little knowledge of these current issues and events. |

Since the last survey (date: Monday Feb 11, 2013), which particular strategies used in Central Option or at OISE have contributed to your knowledge?

| Opportunities to teach this topic in practicum |
| Information posted on Pepper about Idle no More and other concerns |
| Lesson plan for social studies with required Aboriginal source |
| Aboriginal vs European World Views explored in Social Studies through toy theatre |
| School and Society class with Jennifer Dreaver |
| Work in subject courses (Please name): ____________________________________________ |
| Deepening Knowledge Project website |
| First Voice perspective (leanings/teachings from Indigenous peoples in person, clips etc). |
| Other ___________________________________________________________________ |
| Other ___________________________________________________________________ |

In your second practicum, did you incorporate Aboriginal content or pedagogies into any of your teaching? Why or why not?
What did you do?

What was the impact on you and your teaching practice? What was the impact on your students?

What would you do the same way next time? What would you do differently the next time?

How ready do you feel to incorporate Aboriginal content in your curriculum at this time?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very ready</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ready</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat ready</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not ready</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Why did you choose the answer you did?

What tools do you feel would make you more ready to teach this material that you did not receive this year at OISE?

Now that you are leaving OISE where would you go for resources? (OISE’s Deepening Knowledge Website, First Nations House, Spadina Library, Native Canadian Centre etc.)

Which of the following statements best describes your view of including Aboriginal peoples’ histories, current issues and events in your future teaching career BEYOND OISE? Please select one of the following:

| I would give it prominence in my own teaching, integrating Aboriginal content into all aspects of the curriculum because it is an important topic. |
| I would welcome the opportunity to include it in my teaching, integrating Aboriginal content into areas of curriculum beyond what is specified in the curriculum documents. |
| I would be willing to include it in my teaching if my school required it. |
| I would teach the topic only as outlined in the Ontario Curriculum documents. |
| Other __________________________________________________________ |

Why did you answer this way?
Appendix D

SURVEYS DISTRIBUTED TO TEACHER CANDIDATES IN CENTRAL OPTION
Interview guide - Inquiry into Practice

Interview Guide: Interview 1

How would you describe your level of knowledge about the histories and current events involving Aboriginal peoples in Canada AT THE BEGINNING of the program, and where did you knowledge come from?

Do you feel that your level of knowledge changed since you began the program? In what ways? What do you think has caused these changes?

In terms of the instruction you are given in Central Option about Aboriginal Education - “What’s working well and what isn’t?”

During instruction about Aboriginal Education in Central Option – ie day at the Toronto Island, lessons given by John and Angela – how did you feel when learning information that was new to you?

Why did you feel that way?

Has your sense of readiness to incorporate Aboriginal content in your curriculum changed from the beginning of the program?

If so, how, and what has influenced/brought about these changes?

What else might make you feel more ready to teach this material?

What aspects, lessons, or experiences in Central Option have contributed to your teaching of Aboriginal content in your classroom?

What Aboriginal content did you include in your practicum teaching?

Can you describe that experience?

Did you feel supported by your Associate Teacher in this work?

What was the response of the students in your classroom, and in what ways did that influence your views on incorporating Aboriginal content in the classroom? And on the ways in which you can teach Aboriginal content in the classroom?

At this time, what are your answers to the three questions below:

Why should I prioritize Aboriginal history, issues and perspectives when there are many social justice issues that the students in my classes have?

How do I fit in these Aboriginal topics when there is so little time?
Should I start to teach about these things even if I feel I don’t know enough?

Interview guide – follow up - Inquiry into Practice

Interview Guide: Interview 2

Now that you are at the end of the B.Ed. program, how would you describe your level of knowledge about the histories and current events involving Aboriginal peoples in Canada?

Do you feel that your level of knowledge changed since January? In what ways? What has caused these changes?

Since January, do you feel more ready to incorporate Aboriginal content in your curriculum?

If so, how, and what has influenced/brought about these changes?

Now that the program is coming to a close, what is missing from the program which might have made you feel more ready to teach this material?

Was anything this year detrimental to your willingness or readiness to incorporate Aboriginal content in your curriculum?

What aspects, lessons, or experiences in Central Option have contributed to your teaching of Aboriginal content in your classroom?

What Aboriginal content did you include in your second practicum teaching?

Can you describe that experience?

Did you feel supported by your Associate Teacher in this work?

What was the response of the students in your classroom, and in what ways did that influence your views on incorporating Aboriginal content in the classroom? And on the ways in which you can teach Aboriginal content in the classroom?

At this time, what are your answers to the three questions below:

Ask, how would you respond to a teacher who says Q1?

Why should I prioritize Aboriginal history, issues and perspectives when there are many social justice issues that the students in my classes have?

How would you respond to a teacher who says Q2?

How do I fit in these Aboriginal topics when there is so little time?

How would you respond to a teacher who says Q3?

Should I start to teach about these things even if I feel I don’t know enough?
Appendix E

INFORMATION LETTER TO CENTRAL OPTION STUDENTS

Deepening Knowledge to Inspire Action: Exploring strategies that increase teacher candidates willingness and readiness to incorporate knowledge of Aboriginal issues, perspectives, histories and experiences into their teaching practice.

September 4th, 2012

Dear Teacher Candidates,

This year, Dr. Jean-Paul Restoule, and co-investigators Angela Nardozi, Nancy Steele and Usha James would like to track the impact of the infusion of Aboriginal histories, perspectives, cultures and experiences into the Central Option. Specifically, we would like to identify what particular teaching and content strategies in the Central Option have most influenced teacher candidate willingness and readiness to engage with Aboriginal topics in their own teaching.

This project will benefit individual participants as they will be given the opportunity to reflect on their practice and their attitudes towards Aboriginal Education. It will also benefit participants in that the results of the surveys and interviews will be shared with instructors of the Central Option who will be able to then adjust their program. The study will benefit the OISE/UT community in that it will reveal effective strategies for increasing willingness and readiness to teach Aboriginal Education among teacher candidates, which will then be shared to other instructors in the Initial Teacher Education program to use in their cohorts. In the sense that the project will inform practices in increasing capacity to teach Aboriginal Education with teacher candidates, could potentially have ripples effects into the teaching community. It also addresses a lack of scholarly literature looking at how teacher candidates teach both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children about First peoples histories, cultures, perspectives and experiences. There are no known or anticipated risks in participating in this research.

The study will consist of an entry survey to be conducted in September 2012 and an exit survey conducted in April 2013, each taking approximately 10 minutes. In addition, we would like to tape a series of two recorded interviews of twenty minutes each with three to six teacher candidates from Central Option. Co-investigator Angela Nardozi will be conducting these interviews, and the identity of the participants will not be shared with Central instructors including Nancy Steele. Your decision to participate or not in the project has no impact, positive or negative, on your final grade. All information, including recorded interviews will be stored under lock and key and will be discarded seven years after
the study is complete. Course instructors will not have access to any information that identifies you personally. If you have further questions about the study or are interested in participating please email Angela at angela.nardozi@gmail.com.

You do not have to answer any questions that make you uncomfortable and you can withdraw your recorded interview at any time prior to the drafting of the final report in about a year’s time. If you choose to withdraw, you will not suffer any consequences, academic or otherwise. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in research, please contact the Office of Research Ethics, ethics.review@utoronto.ca or 416-946-3273.

Please keep a copy of this letter for your records

Sincerely,

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