Crossing the cultural gap:
The incorporation of Indigenous pedagogies and content into the urban classroom by non-Indigenous educators

By

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A research paper submitted in conformity with the requirements
For the degree of Master of Teaching
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Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto

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Abstract

Within the past decade there has been a national effort to educate Canadians on Indigenous history and their presence in the 21st century. Supplemental curricula have been published in many provinces to provide strategies and suggested content to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators. In Ontario, however, the enactment of the curricula in the urban classroom remains a challenge for many. This study explored non-Indigenous educators’ best practices and experiences of incorporating Indigenous content and pedagogies into their urban classrooms. The study consisted of semi-structured qualitative interviews with three non-Indigenous elementary teachers in the Toronto region. Findings suggested that these non-Indigenous educators’ comfort with and awareness of local Indigenous communities resulted in a higher incorporation of Indigenous content and pedagogies in their classrooms. This study also suggested educator self-identification as a non-Indigenous person as a successful best practice for creating a cultural bridge between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities. Further, the influence of Indigenous community connections on non-Indigenous teachers’ practice was vital for the participants’ authenticated success and a contemporary framing of Indigenous content. This study was conducted with the intent of providing non-Indigenous educators with the tools and confidence necessary to cross the cultural gap between Indigenous and settler communities.

Keywords: Indigenous content, urban schools, cross-cultural, non-Indigenous educators, Indigenous pedagogies
Acknowledgements

This major research paper would not have been possible without the incredible support group that cheered me along every step of the way. Thank you family for demonstrating unfailing love when I could not attend gatherings or was unreachable during the stressful times, and for the continual and greatly appreciated prayers. Thank-you to my editors Rachel, Sam, and Trevor, you showed enthusiasm for all of my hard work and demonstrated your dedication to my success through your sacrifice of time in your very busy lives. Thank you Ashlen for knowing when to give a supportive hug or pull me to the gym to get my brain focused again. Thank you cohort 252 for answering all of my questions, challenging me in my thinking, and laughing away our troubles as a school family. Thank you Lee, for not only spending hours meticulously editing my work, fleshing out my convoluted ideas, or refocusing me back on my initial goal, but also for modeling how a professor who is truly dedicated to their students’ well-being and success can create a welcoming and safe class environment.

Finally, thank you Trevor for being the most supportive and understanding partner during these past two years. From showing me how to back-up my computer on an external hard drive to exploring the city together to give my mind a break to constantly reminding me of why I am doing this, I am so thankful for all of your efforts to help me achieve my dreams.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.0 Research Context

Over the past decade, the government of Canada has been attempting to reconcile its colonial past between the Indigenous peoples and the settlers, with education at the forefront of change (Abele, 2006; Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). Beginning in 2007 with the publication of *Ontario’s First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework*, “Ontario and [Indigenous] leaders [have begun to] recognize the importance of education in improving lifelong opportunities for First Nation, Métis, and Inuit children and youth” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 5). Parliament further acknowledged the need for a revision of the curriculum with the proposed bill in 2013 entitled “Working Together for First Nations Students” (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, 2013). The proposed bill outlined the importance of First Nations’ sovereignty over their education systems accompanied by guidance from the province. Sovereignty in their schools would allow the Indigenous community to infuse the curriculum with Indigenous traditions and culture that make the learning relevant and authentic to their peoples. This approach of actively incorporating Indigenous perspectives into the classroom has flooded off the reserves and is beginning to trickle into the urban schools. However, non-Indigenous educators have reported feeling ill prepared or incompetent in relation to the incorporation of Indigenous content and pedagogies (Higgins, Madden, & Korteweg, 2013; Madden, 2015); there is also a reported lack of structure and support supplied by provincial ministries of education for this purpose (Battiste, 2013). The “school-aged [Indigenous] population is growing and is estimated at 40 percent (compared with 25 percent for Canadians)” thus the need for properly equipped educators, especially non-Indigenous, is subsequently growing (Toulouse, 2008). As consequence, the enactment of
Indigenous content and pedagogies in the classroom can cause tension amongst administration, educators, and students as they each navigate these new expectations (Beckford, Jacobs, Williams, & Nahdee, 2010).

In an educative bulletin released by the Ontario Ministry of Education, Toulouse (2008) asserted that “an educational environment that honours the culture, language and world view of the [Indigenous] student is critical” for national development (p. 1). Indigenous peoples were as much a part of founding this country as the French and the English, if not more, and although the French language is a requirement in Ontario schools until Grade 9, there is no designated level of Indigenous knowledge. Teachers today are given the choice to include or exclude Indigenous perspectives from their lesson designs and many have chosen the latter. Non-Indigenous educators in particular reportedly shy from infusing their lessons with Indigenous content and pedagogies, admitting that they lack the knowledge or confidence to do so (Kanu, 2011; Madden, 2015). The demand for a cultural bridge between Indigenous and non-Indigenous content is growing. This needed fusion of worldviews and approaches to education has created a new challenge for educators to inform themselves and their students from a holistic, culturally comprehensive and respectful viewpoint.

1.1 Research Problem

With the release of the curriculum documents *First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Connections for Grades 1-8 and Kindergarten Program* (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2014a) and *First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Connections for Grades 9-12* (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2014b), educators in Ontario at all levels are now invited to incorporate Indigenous pedagogies and subject matter into their classes. Although these documents provide strategies and suggest resources, enacting such curricula in the classroom has been found to be challenging for many
non-Indigenous teachers (Doige, 1999; Madden, 2015). *First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Connections* (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2014a, 2014b) does not outline new pedagogical approaches to the school-mandated subjects from an Indigenous perspective, but rather the document implies specific areas where Indigenous content *might* be incorporated. In the introductory pages of the document, the Ontario Ministry of Education (2014a) defines the document’s purpose as an optional supplemental resource to the mandated curriculum:

This *Scope and Sequence* resource document is designed to assist teachers with incorporating First Nations, Métis, and Inuit perspectives into the classroom by highlighting where there are opportunities for students to explore themes, ideas, and topics related to Aboriginal peoples in Canada in every subject area from Kindergarten to Grade 8. (p. 4)

While possible topics are suggested, there is little guidance for teachers about what Indigenous pedagogies look like and how they can be enacted in the classroom. Additionally, there is no urgency or mandated voice for the incorporation of Indigenous content and pedagogies. For instance, when addressing the grade 8 geography expectations, the authors of the *Scope and Sequence* document openly state that there are “no overall or specific expectations explicitly [addressing] First Nations, Métis, and Inuit connections” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2014a, p. 80). *First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Connections* (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2014a, 2014b) is a consolidation of suggested areas for the incorporation of Indigenous content and pedagogies throughout the Ontario curricula. Without specified requirements and supplemental explanations and supports, these suggestions may result in the creation of a loophole for educators to bypass incorporating Indigenous content and pedagogies into the classroom.

In a nation that claims it is on the road to reconciliation (Harper, 2008), there remains a
disconnect between the expectations and realities in the classroom (Godlewska et al., 2010). Some non-Indigenous teachers have reported a lack of proper instruction or support with incorporating Indigenous content and pedagogies and are therefore struggling to find a way to engage not just their Indigenous and non-Indigenous students, but themselves as well (Cherubini & Hodson, 2008; Madden, 2015).

Moving beyond curriculum integration, there is a demand for the construction of a cultural bridge between Indigenous communities and urban school centres. Cree education scholar Ermine (2007) highlights the cultural importance of incorporating Indigenous content into the classroom, stating the need for a convergence between these worldviews: “[s]hifting our perspectives to recognize that the Indigenous-West encounter is about thought worlds may also remind us that frameworks or paradigms are required to reconcile these solitudes” (p. 201). The compartmentalization of Western and Indigenous pedagogies needs to be broken in the classroom to enable holistic learning. A style of pedagogy that models the building and use of a cultural bridge between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities is the new era of education in Ontario.

While there has been some research (Battiste, 2013; Beckford, Jacobs, Williams, & Nahdee, 2010; Cherubini, 2008; Doige, 1999; Madden, 2015) on the problems associated with non-Indigenous teachers using Indigenous curricula and pedagogies, there has been minimal research on the best practices of non-Indigenous teachers who are reportedly successful in this work and striving for construction of the cross-cultural bridge described above. In order to move forward into reconciliation as a nation, the successes of Canadian non-Indigenous educators enacting Indigenous pedagogies and incorporating Indigenous content must be discovered, shared, and implemented on a provincial and national scale.
1.2 Purpose of the Study

With the new *First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Connections* curriculum (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2014a, 2014b) in mind, the goal of my research was to explore the experiences and best practices of non-Indigenous elementary teachers in Ontario who have chosen to provide their students with a decolonized education that incorporates Indigenous content and pedagogies. For the purposes of the study, I explored this topic by interviewing a sample of non-Indigenous urban elementary school teachers in the Toronto District School Board about: their reported failures and successes surrounding the enactment of Indigenous pedagogies; their perception of student engagement; their reported use of Indigenous pedagogies and content in their classrooms; as well as supports and barriers for doing this work in their schools.

The research was conducted in effort to reveal practices that reportedly resulted in student engagement and deeper understanding of First Nation, Metis, and Inuit (FNMI) peoples’ place on this land both in the past and present. In addition, I aimed to discover the barriers that hinder non-Indigenous teachers from incorporating Indigenous pedagogies and content into the classroom. By identifying the barriers, I was then able to suggest strategies to overcome them and confidently fuse Indigenous and Western teaching methods. Through the exploration of different settler teachers’ approaches to Indigenous content, this research outlined successful strategies for incorporating Indigenous pedagogies and perspectives, thereby potentially enabling non-Indigenous educators to implement and grow confidence in their teaching of Indigenous content.

1.3 Research Questions

The central research question guiding the study was: what are the experiences and best practices of non-Indigenous elementary teachers in Toronto as they integrate Indigenous content
and pedagogies into their urban classrooms? To further develop my study, the following acted as sub-questions:

- What did the non-Indigenous educators perceive as the most appropriate teaching methods for lessons discussing Indigenous content?
- What resources and supports did the non-Indigenous educators find most useful when incorporating Indigenous pedagogies and content into their lessons?
  - What further supports are necessary to enable non-Indigenous educators to feel prepared and confident in their teaching of Indigenous content and pedagogies?
- How do the non-Indigenous teachers perceive their students’ reactions to Indigenous content in lessons?
- What barriers do non-Indigenous teachers perceive to enacting their lessons with Indigenous content?

1.4 Reflexive Positioning Statement

As a settler with heritage dating back to English, Irish and German communities, I grew up on Chippewa territory and later moved to the Mississaugas of New Credit First Nation territory. Educating myself about Indigenous histories, Canadian history, and Canadian education, I have become concerned that K-12 educators across Ontario are unknowingly perpetuating an imbalance in respect and acknowledgement towards Indigenous pedagogies and content through their current pedagogical practices. In a study of environmental education that integrated Indigenous perspectives, Root (2010), who also identifies as a settler, argued the need for a shift in the environmental sector of education and reinforced my concerns about non-Indigenous educators’ fears and anxieties around incorporating Indigenous content and
pedagogies. Her work inspired my specific focus on non-Indigenous educators’ experiences and best practices while incorporating Indigenous content and pedagogies into urban classrooms.

The topic of my research for the past five years has been focused on rediscovering, or rather decolonizing, the Eurocentric approach to Canadian national identity. As a settler on this land, I have embarked on many journeys to gain a greater understanding of Canada’s history. Traveling from Prince Edward Island to British Columbia, and absorbing the diverse culture of each region, I have seen the effects of colonization paired with the beauty of the people affected by these dominant powers. Furthermore, my educational career has led me to appreciate and discover more about traditional FNMI cultures as I majored in North American Studies during my undergraduate degree, focusing on the Indigenous narrative within the nation. My goal as a middle school educator is to provide my students with a holistic account of history that not only decolonizes their perceptions of Canada, but also creates a foundation for the school year that welcomes truth, trust, and relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities. At the forefront of this research is my aspiration to continue my journey of becoming a stronger ally to Indigenous peoples.

1.5 Preview of the Whole

To respond to the research questions, I will conduct a qualitative research study using purposive sampling to interview three non-Indigenous elementary teachers in the Toronto District School Board about their instructional strategies for meaningfully incorporating Indigenous content and pedagogies into their urban classrooms. In Chapter Two, I will review the literature in the areas of educator preparation for teaching Indigenous pedagogies and content, non-Indigenous educators’ comfort with Indigenous cultures, self-identification as a tool in urban classrooms, supports from administration and Ontario institutions for integrating
Indigenous content and pedagogies, barriers to this integration, and successful approaches to creating cultural bridges between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities. Following, in Chapter Three, I will elaborate on the research design and justify my decision to implement a qualitative approach with semi-structured interviews in relation to Indigenous cultures. In Chapter Four, I will report my research findings and discuss their significance in light of the existing research literature. Finally, in Chapter Five, I will identify the implications of the research findings for my own teacher identity and practice, and for the educational research community more broadly. I will conclude the paper by articulating a series of questions raised by the research findings, and by pointing to areas for future research.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.0 Introduction to the Chapter

In this chapter I review the literature in the areas of teacher education, non-Indigenous educators’ cultural awareness, the importance of self-identification, administrative and institutional supports, barriers to infused teaching, and successful examples of Indigenous incorporation. More specifically, I review themes related to crossing the cultural barrier between Indigenous and non-Indigenous ways of knowing in the urban classroom. I start by reviewing the literature in the area of teacher preparation for incorporating Indigenous content and I consider the appearance of colonial biases in the mandated curriculum. I then progress to discuss findings on the importance of the non-Indigenous educator’s cultural position when addressing Indigenous perspectives and content. Next, I consider the supports, or lack thereof, from the Ministry, educational institutions, and administration. From there, I review findings on the barriers impeding successful incorporation of Indigenous and Western pedagogies. I then put into conversation the successful practices of educators in mathematics, language arts, and science who have incorporated Indigenous content and pedagogies. Finally, I discuss the cross-contextual possibilities of incorporating Indigenous perspectives and content, which leads to my suggestion that further research is necessary.

2.1 Preparing the Non-Indigenous Teacher

The Canadian government has done a great job,
Of not letting the people know about anything they did to us.
Teachers are really lacking that knowledge.
It’s really heavy when people start to learn the real history.
Take that and run with it; try to help us.
Or run away and just deny it; say, “It happened a long time ago”.
(Madden, Higgins & Korteweg, 2013, p. 235)

Educating settler Canadians on Indigenous content is becoming more and more relevant
in a Canada that plans to move forward with the Indigenous-settler relationship: “[r]ecent decades have seen the rising of a vital, multifaceted politics in Canada, focused on the future relations between [Indigenous] peoples and the Canadian state” (Abele, 2006, p. 565). Presently, Indigenous communities are often ostracized, marginalized, and ignored due to a misconception of their cultures that was reinforced through the very system that attempted to destroy it (Root, 2010). The Eurocentric approach mandated in the Ontario curricula may risk accomplishing the opposite of what is outlined in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (1982): the protection given to Indigenous cultures within Canada in an effort to preserve the multicultural heritage of the country’s citizens. Madden, Higgins, and Korteweg’s (2013) findings from a study of 44 comprehensive sharing circles that were recorded in poetic transcription to honour Indigenous ways of story-telling coincides with Root’s (2010) argument that the Canadian education system contradicts what is stated in the Charter. Indigenous cultures have not been protected, but rather ignored. Thus, in twenty-first century Canada, the need for a revitalization of the way in which education is taught is necessary in order to reestablish the promise of the Charter. As Madden et al.’s (2013) participant quoted in the section epigraph, educators are beginning to be taught about the Canadian government’s unprecedented actions on the Indigenous Peoples, and it is in the hands of the education system to clarify that understanding.

Currently, Canadian pre-service teacher education programs are finding methods to incorporate Indigenous content and ways of knowing into their programs. The University of Windsor’s Bachelor of Education program has restructured their requirements to include a practice-teaching placement in an Indigenous school before graduation (Beckford, Jacobs, Williams, & Nadee, 2010). From conducting interviews with members of the Walpole Island Heritage Center, Beckford et al. (2010) found that by having pre-service educators experience a
practicum block at the Walpole Island School, the pre-service teachers could then utilize Indigenous ways of knowing in their teaching. Specifically, they were able “to teach children to see the natural world in contexts other than purely economic terms and to temper the overwhelming anthropocentric analysis of Western cultures and societies” (p. 246). A transcultural experience similar to that experienced by participants in Beckford et al.’s study may allow for pre-service teachers to see the relevance and importance of Indigenous content and incorporate them into urban classrooms. However, Beckford et al. also caution educators:

> Aboriginal perspectives should be seamlessly infused into instructional practices rather than treated as special or something extra. In other words, [Indigenous] perspectives should be upheld in the classroom on a daily basis so that they become part of the teacher’s repertoire. (p. 247)

In order to achieve this infusion, non-Indigenous educators should become aware of their pedagogical style. A repertoire that incorporates Indigenous perspectives and content on a daily basis would require daily practice, and a societal awareness on the part of the educator.

### 2.1.1 The non-Indigenous educator’s cultural role.

The educator’s position in a classroom has significant implications that should be considered when speaking on Indigenous topics or incorporating Indigenous perspectives. Bomberry (2013) and Madden, Higgins, and Korteweg (2013) found that non-Indigenous educators’ critical awareness of their cultural position within the Indigenous communities that the participants taught in was important for successful incorporation. When interviewing Haudenosaunee parents about their perceptions of their child’s non-Indigenous teacher, Bomberry (2013) emphasized the Haudenosaunee participants’ voiced concerns such as: “respect has to be earned” and “white teachers and other teachers sometimes assume or demand respect
just because of their position” and also non-Indigenous teachers “always try to be culturally appropriate or sensitive” which is not always applicable (p. 260). These parents’ views speak to the importance of community respect earned by non-Indigenous educators and a necessary humility in relation to elder knowledge. An excerpt from Madden et al.’s (2013) poetic transcription explains this point further: “[t]he significance of the teachings is enormous. / What we do is equal to their curriculum. / They have it in their minds what they want done. / We just don’t fit into it” (p. 233). Capturing the voice of urban Canadian elders, these non-Indigenous researchers found a separation between the interviewed community members and the school community. Assuming respect and educational authority reportedly created resentment on both sides that did not progress the students’ learning in an enriching and culturally reaffirming manner. Importance is then suggested to rest on the non-Indigenous educator’s ability to recognize their cultural role in the urban classroom.

In their conclusions from a research project spanning 12 schools in New South Wales, Australia, Harrison and Greenfield (2011) found a similar importance placed on Indigenous community approval by elders for non-Indigenous educators. To be respected as an educator by the Indigenous community, Harrison and Greenfield found that their participants first had to demonstrate respect to the Indigenous community. This respect stemmed from the participants’ consensus that: “[s]tudents are not learning Aboriginal views or perspectives, rather they are learning about their non-Aboriginal teacher’s perspective on Aboriginal Australia. They are learning their teacher’s meta-narrative about Aboriginal people” (Harrison & Greenfield, 2011, p. 70; original emphasis). Although this study was conducted in Australia, the metanarrative coincides with Canada’s relationship betwixt its Indigenous and settler populations. To teach the new curriculum expectations, earn the respect of Indigenous community elders, and authentically
teach Indigenous perspectives and content, non-Indigenous educators should first position themselves within the land. MacPherson’s (2010) participatory action research on intercultural decision making paired university educators with pre-service teachers and found the importance of an adaptation to place: “teaching is at heart an art, not a science, and… effective teaching involves creativity and the ability to respond to the lived experience and context of distinctive learners, classrooms, and communities” (p. 283). Given that all Canadian classrooms are situated on Indigenous land, Canadian educators should not just consider, but adapt their teaching to honour this placement with a cultural awareness of how their position shapes their students’ understandings.

2.1.2 Reframing pedagogy: Decolonization of the educator.

Whether Indigenous or non-Indigenous, the importance of self-identification in an Indigenized classroom is critical to the whole learning community’s success (Bissell & Korteweg, 2016; Cherubini, Niemczyk, Hodson & McGean, 2010). Sharing with their students who they are and why they care has been found to create an open and safe relationship between the student and teacher that demonstrates their investment in the success of their students (Bissell & Korteweg, 2016). A critical part of this caring is a dedication to finding applicable Indigenous resources that can be used to provide an authentic footing for their Indigenized classroom.

Researchers (Blood, 2010; Kanu, 2011; Korteweg, Gonzalez & Guillet, 2009; MacPherson, 2010; Wiltse, Johnston, & Yang, 2014) have concluded that in light of the lack of curricula resources, non-Indigenous educators need to take the initiative to locate their own Indigenous resources through professional development, literature, and relationship-building with Indigenous community members. From their observations of three non-Indigenous educators from elementary and university classrooms, Korteweg, Gonzalez, and Guillet (2009)
found the importance of “[seeking] out and [experiencing] Indigenous ‘counter-stories’ that challenge their… foundational touchstones inherently, incrementally and revealingly” (p. 347). Spending time with an elder, or an Indigenous person who has an intergenerational story of colonization is suggested as one way to help decolonize the non-Indigenous educator’s perception of history and potentially erase any stereotypical labels they may place on Indigenous peoples (Kanu, 2011). Non-Indigenous, specifically white, educators have the responsibility to remove their ‘whiteness’ from their pedagogical practices as much as possible by developing an awareness of their own culture and those around them (Rivière, 2008). For example, by reading Indigenous texts with an open willingness to their class, two participants in Wiltse, Johnston, and Yang’s (2014) inquiry group study reported success in “[moving] away from the well-established pedagogical practices” and instead focusing on the experiences of Indigenous peoples in Canada (p. 264). Similarly, Korteweg et al. (2009) found that engagement with Indigenous texts outside of the curricula inspired their two non-Indigenous educators to be “challenged and enlightened by the Indigenous perspectives” (p. 344). This acquisition of knowledge and humility towards their position within Indigenous pedagogies and content can result in educators feeling a higher degree of confidence in their teaching practice.

With an evolving knowledge of Indigenous perspectives, pedagogies and content, non-Indigenous educators can have a basis to facilitate critical conversations with their students that address cultural issues. MacPherson’s (2010) participatory action research study on the facilitation of critical conversations within intercultural situations draws on the importance of both outside sources and relinquishing superiority. MacPherson (2010) found that “[t]he teachers didn’t position themselves as experts in the cultures of their students; instead, they turned to alternative resources—students, community, books, multimedia—to enrich the cultural
knowledge and life of schools” (p. 277). Learning alongside their students and drawing on expert knowledge outside of the classroom allowed the participants to create authentic learning experiences for themselves and their students. This style of teaching is transferrable to the Indigenized classroom, as found by Blood (2010) in a study of biology teachers’ incorporation of Indigenous perspectives: “teachers and students [can] engage collaboratively in the implementation of Aboriginal perspectives… teachers do not need to be the expert all the time” (p. 100). Identifying themselves as a learner with the students, non-Indigenous educators release the expectation to be the sole knowledge keeper and therefore create a collaborative environment where authentic learning can take place.

2.2 Shortcomings of the Ministry, Educational Institutions, and Administration

Regardless of an educator’s efforts to incorporate Indigenous pedagogies and content, the education system has been found to cause significant barriers to incorporation. Cherubini and Hodson’s (2008) critical examination of recently published Ontario Ministry of Education policy documents and initiatives recognizes the flaw of incorporating Indigenous content and knowledges in all levels of the Ontario curricula. They claim that the framework for educators to follow on the topic of Indigenous content incorporation “defines student academic success in Eurocentric terms that quantifies knowledge acquisition and literacy development by criterion and norm-referenced test scores” (p. 13). It can be suggested that there is an inherent valorization of Western pedagogies and ideologies of linear progression over Indigenous approaches to education, even in the curricula designed to allot educative space for Indigenous content. For example, according to Kim’s (2015) hermeneutic content analysis of the Ontario science curricula, “an average of 1.8% of each grade’s curricula [is] devoted to [Indigenous]-related content and less than 5% of the content of all curricula across all grade levels [is] related to
[Indigenous] topics” (p. 12). Following the findings of Cherubini and Hodson’s study (2008), as well as Kim’s (2015) analysis of the curriculum, Ontario’s government-mandated curriculum inadequately represents authentic Indigenous perspectives and ways of knowing in subject expectations.

These resources that lack substantial support for non-Indigenous educators create a shortcoming for teachers who are exposed to Indigenous content and further “[suggest] the presence of embedded salient colonial ideas within the Ontario curriculum, which in turn… [create] a stereotype of [Indigenous] knowledge as antiquated” (Kim, 2015, p. 20). Following the governmental shift to incorporate Indigenous perspectives and content, Canadian teachers often experience Indigenous content through pre-service courses, professional development days, or daily encounters. The pressure and even self-motivation to then include Indigenous content and pedagogies into their teaching practices is undercut by the lack of curricula support, as they do not describe themselves as being adequately equipped with resources (Bissell & Korteweg, 2016; Blood, 2010; Harrison & Greenfield, 2011). Blood’s exploratory case study specifically revealed this frustration when participants described that they had “limited professional development opportunities and those that were attended were reported as being not very informative and disappointing” (p. 97). The government, pre-service institutions, and administration are conceivably failing to uphold the standards of Indigenous perspective and content incorporation into Canadian classrooms by not providing the professional support necessary for their educators. Bissell and Korteweg (2016) have noted this dissonance in the government’s expectations and follow through as well, calling for “an approach to developing policies and curriculum that recognizes the foundational relationship of Canada, Indigenous, and non-Indigenous peoples, and exploring the histories of these relationships and forging new ones in
order to allow all treaty peoples to walk forward with a shared future” (p. 18). The motive behind incorporating Indigenous perspectives and content into the curriculum is to enlighten a nation on its past in order to move into the future together, however there is a need for more intentional movement.

Professional development can help teachers navigate cultural differences in their classrooms and build a better report with the surrounding communities (Bickmore & Parker, 2014; Blood, 2010; MacPherson, 2010; Wiltse & Yang, 2014). Bickmore and Parker’s (2014) qualitative research study on four teachers utilizing conflict dialogue pedagogies in their classrooms concluded that professional development actually encouraged the participants to take “the risk to conduct lessons that invited students to discern, articulate, and reflect upon contrasting perspectives and to practice skills and strategies for peaceful, inclusive, and constructive discussion of such issues” (p. 326). Facilitating a conversation where multiple perspectives are heard and compared is an ability that requires strategic steps – steps that can be learned in professional development courses. Blood (2010), MacPherson (2010), and Wiltse and Yang (2014) encourage educators to seek out professional development and resources outside of the beaten Eurocentric path and discover the tools to facilitate critical conversations.

However, a large barrier to this incorporation as Blood (2010) points out in her discussion, is unsupportive administration. In order for non-Indigenous educators to effectively incorporate Indigenous perspectives into their classrooms, there needs to be “greater administrative support by helping to establish a consistent and shared school vision regarding [Indigenous] perspectives integration” (p. 100). Part of this vision would incorporate a conscious effort to acquire more resources, schedule professional development days, and have community outreach to elders. Community outreach especially was of top priority in Harrison
and Greenfield’s (2011) recommendations following their study. Their participant action list voiced the concerns of their non-Indigenous teacher participants as “most teachers reported on the difficulties of building relationships with their community” (p. 72). Educators are aware of the benefit community ties have with classroom learning, however there needs to be a unified effort from teachers and administration to pursue those connections.

2.2.1 Further challenges facing non-Indigenous educators.

This sub-section will discuss the barriers non-Indigenous teachers face that reach beyond administrative authority. During a sharing circle in Madden, Higgins, and Korteweg’s (2013) study, an elder said: “[t]he one thing about our way, it’s a lifetime of learning” (p. 230). Although non-Indigenous educators can begin their learning journey about Indigenous knowledges, perspectives and pedagogies, there will be multiple barriers in their way impeding an easy route to success. Lack of acceptance from elders, consistency in schools, resources, and student interest have posed significant setbacks in non-Indigenous educators’ efforts to bring Indigenous perspectives into their classrooms (Bickmore & Parker, 2014; Blood, 2010; Harrison & Greenfield, 2011; Madden et al., 2013; Wiltse, Johnston & Yang, 2014).

Acceptance by local Indigenous communities as afore mentioned, is integral to success in the classroom, however Harrison and Greenfield’s (2011) study revealed that not all communities are eager to provide that relationship. Participating elders were concerned that Indigenous content taught by non-Indigenous educators would perpetuate stereotypes of Indigenous peoples (Harrison & Greenfield, 2011). Additionally, Madden et al.’s (2013) study recorded that Indigenous leaders felt that non-Indigenous teachers needed permission from the Indigenous community in which they taught to discuss the culture and, further, that their teaching certification did not properly prepare the teacher with the necessary “skill-set” for incorporating
Indigenous content. Inadequacy perceived by members of the Indigenous community is a major barrier to forming a reciprocal relationship that would enhance the classroom. Elders also mentioned that non-Indigenous educators often “missed the point…how do you write down spiritual connection to Great Spirit” (Madden et al., 2013, p. 231)? The Eurocentric bias that non-Indigenous educators bring into the classroom from their own education is a barrier not only to their own teaching, but also to obtaining respect from local Indigenous communities (Harrison & Greenfield, 2011; Madden et al., 2013).

Another barrier is a lack of interest on behalf of non-Indigenous students. Blood (2010) and Wiltse, Johnston, and Yang (2014) observed that their non-Indigenous participant educators felt previous frustration and disenchantment from their students after introducing Indigenous knowledges and perspectives. When Blood’s (2010) participant Rebecca was describing her attempts to infuse her teachings with Indigenous perspectives, her students became defiant: “[t]hese are the best students in the school and as soon as I presented this they were absolutely indignant” (p. 83). The students emphasized the fact that they did not have the opportunity to incorporate their own backgrounds, so why should they incorporate someone else’s? Rebecca further noted that “[t]hey never lost that feeling of why do those people get special treatment in this course and I can’t research my own culture” (Blood, 2010, p. 84). Similarly, Wiltse et al.’s (2014) participants noted that in previous classroom discussions, their students were disengaged with Indigenous content. One participant, Terry, recalled negative student remarks such as: “[i]t is the same thing and same thing again… It is the same sort of question, here we are, it is in the past, let’s get over it. Can’t they just drop it?” Wiltse et al. (2014) suggest that in these cases, there was “a less than meaningful approach to introducing [Indigenous] content and views to students,” perhaps stemming from the educator’s lack of authentic knowledge on the subject of
Indigenous peoples (pp. 273-274). Although Rebecca and Terry had the proper intention of Indigenous content incorporation into their teaching, all of the previously listed barriers contributed to their students’ sense of disenchantment with Indigenous perspectives, content and pedagogies. Deciding to incorporate Indigenous perspectives and knowledges is the first step, moving forward as allies to rectify the educational system and relational strategies is the next (Bissell & Korteweg, 2016; Madden et al., 2013). Thus, although non-Indigenous educators may face barriers from the Ministry, in their teacher education, from their administration and the communities that they are trying to partner with as well as students in their classes, resilience in building a cross-cultural bridge is necessary in order to successfully incorporate Indigenous content and pedagogies into the classroom.

2.3 Successful Practices for Incorporating Indigenous Perspectives

A means to foster the non-Indigenous/Indigenous relationship is to build a pedagogical bridge between cultures. Inquiry based learning and place-based learning are growing phenomena in the Kindergarten to Grade 8 education community (Scully, 2012; Sloan, 2013). Ironically, Indigenous traditions predate these trends: self-discovery, education through participation, and holistic approaches are at the basis of Indigenous ways of life (Chartrand, 2012; Davidson-Hunt & O’Flaherty, 2007; Madden, 2015). The incorporation of Indigenous pedagogies into the urban classroom is therefore not an abstract idea or a drastic change. Rather, the fusion of pedagogies would be a reframing of already present practices.

Acknowledging the difficulty of incorporating Anishinaabe perspectives into a Western education system, Absolon (2009) suggests that educators focus on the relationships between the individual and others, including other than humans. In her study of the incorporation of Anishinaabe pedagogy into Winnipeg classrooms, Chartrand (2012) proffers the term *life-world*
to represent the pedagogical approach of Indigenous perspectives to learning, encompassing both the relationship with the land and the students’ world. Educators, similar to elders, often focus on building relationships with their students in order to discover which methods of learning best suit the individual’s needs (Christen, 2014). In her study analyzing successes of and barriers to Indigenous knowledge incorporation into mandated mathematics curriculum, Sterenberg (2013) observed her participant, Bryony, fuse the relationship with the land and her students’ Westernized beliefs into mathematics to create a unit that equally addressed both ways of knowing. Bryony’s reasoning beyond Ministry recommendation for incorporating knowledge from the local Blackfoot community was that “if students relate mathematics to their place, then they will experience mathematics as relevant” (p. 30). Place, which in this case study was the 1971 constructed Majorville Medicine Wheel monument, gave all of her students a common place to start from that exposed the students to Indigenous ways of knowing while incorporating Western mathematical concepts. By creating two learning centres, inviting a governmental official, and co-creating the unit with a Blackfoot elder, Bryony created the opportunity for her students to “relate mathematics to their place” (p. 30).

Children’s literature also holds the potential to successfully incorporate Indigenous perspectives and content into the Western education system (Doige, 1999; Kanu, 2011; Korteweg, Gonzalez & Guillet, 2009; Wiltse & Yang, 2014). Kanu (2011) found positive learning outcomes of implementing story-telling techniques in the classroom through a study conducted in two western Canadian public schools located in urban areas. Kanu concluded that by incorporating Indigenous pedagogies such as story telling, sharing/talking circles, and Indigenous cultural experiences such as local Pow Wows, Indigenous and non-Indigenous students became more engaged in the topic. Korteweg, Gonzalez and Guillet (2009) recommend
the strategy of incorporating Indigenous children’s literature into the urban classroom. They assert that picture books allow for a deeper understanding of the topic being portrayed:

Indeed, Indigenous children’s literature may offer not only polyphonic forms of narrative codes and visual devices, but also through their arts-based representations, push at educators’ conventional understandings of the environment or land. Thus, picture books can afford openings for dialogue about teachers’ and students’ environmental formations – their ways of being and relating to the land and its people – in relation to Indigenous peoples, territory issues and living together on the land. (p. 332)

Korteweg et al. note the cross-curricular potential of using Indigenous children’s literature that discusses environmental issues. They also highlight the importance of the educator learning alongside the students as the visual and polyphonic forms have the potential to create deep understanding and relation in the reader. Further, once the participant educators found their own moment of connection and understanding in the picture books, they felt more equipped to “teach [their] children to live well as treaty partners and co-inhabitants on the land” (p. 345). This cross-curricular Indigenized approach to language arts left Korteweg et al. recommending non-Indigenous educators to begin immersing themselves in Indigenous children’s literature. Wiltse, Johnston and Yang’s (2014) conclusions coincide with this finding, namely that “[r]eading Canadian literature can broaden the Eurocentric canon of school literature and address the diverse needs and interests of [Indigenous], immigrant, and mainstream students” (p. 275). Thus, it can be suggested that providing students with the opportunity to see and hear about a different culture through the study of Indigenous literature can create a space for all students to see themselves in the curriculum.

The incorporation of Indigenous perspectives and ways of knowing into the mandated
science curricula comes with a strong heed to non-Indigenous educators. As found by Kim (2015) in a critical analysis of the science curricula, Indigenous knowledges and technologies are presented as an alternative strategy to Western medicine and science. The result of language is a conveyed “uncertainty regarding the legitimacy of Indigenous knowledges and technologies” by the writers of the curriculum (p. 17). To combat this bias, Kim suggests emphasizing the importance of comparison between the two knowledges, as well as elaborating on the context in which they are followed. More specifically, Korteweg et al. (2009) and Beckford, Linton, Williams and Nahdee (2010) suggest the success of using Indigenous ways of knowing about the land and sciences through an environmental science approach. Focusing on the honoured relationship between Indigenous peoples and the land, as well as present day issues with Indigenous knowledges at the forefront of change, both studies emphasize the importance of incorporating Indigenous pedagogies at a young age in order to encourage students to see multiple perspectives and their own role in environmental sustainability (Beckford et al., 2010; Korteweg et al., 2009).

2.4 Conclusion

In this literature review I looked at research on the depth of Indigenous education for pre-service teachers, the potential perpetuation of colonial ideals in the classroom, and suggested practices of pedagogical fusion between Indigenous and non-Indigenous methodologies. This review clarified the extent to which attention has been paid in regards to education on Indigenous pedagogies and content. It also raised questions about the degree of success pre-service education on Indigenous content holds in the classroom and pointed to the need for further research in the areas of cultural convergence in the education environment. In light of this, the purpose of my research was to learn how non-Indigenous educators can gain confidence in
enacting Indigenous pedagogies so that the methodologies performed result in a culturally holistic and aware learning environment, one where the Indigenous—non-Indigenous cultural bridge is crossed every day.
Chapter 3: Research Methodology

3.0 Introduction to the Chapter

In this chapter, I identify the research methodology used in this study. I begin by discussing my chosen research approach and subsequent procedures, and I elaborate on the justification for selecting the identified methods. I then describe the instruments of data collection in regards to my specific purpose and research questions, and provide examples used in my study. To introduce my participants, I review all of the methodological decisions that I made for their selection and participation. In this section I also outline the sampling criteria, sampling procedures, and provide participant biographies. Next, I discuss my data analysis procedures. Subsequently, I highlight the potential ethical risks associated with my selected methodology and suggest ways to mitigate the ethical concerns for my study’s purpose. In conclusion, I address the limitations and strengths of my chosen methodological approach and summarize the rationale for each methodological decision.

3.1 Research Approach and Procedures

This study used a qualitative research study approach to generate data on the experiences and best practices of non-Indigenous elementary teachers in the Toronto District School Board who chose to provide their students with a decolonized education that incorporates Indigenous perspectives. By reviewing relevant literature and existing research, I developed a strong foundation for my study. To gather the data, I conducted three semi-structured interviews where I met with my participants and guided them through my interview protocol. The qualitative research study structure is most appropriate for my study because of the nature of its intentions.

As part of its origins, qualitative research methods were indirectly created during the efforts to discover the driving force behind societal issues that were perpetuated by “absolute
anachronism of the dominant views of the period on culture and race” (Cooley, 2013, p. 249). In discovering and analyzing how a society is formed and how it evolves, researchers who use qualitative methods are able to collect data that stretches beyond closed-ended responses. In the 21st century, qualitative studies are defined as studies that focus on human experiences, and participants’ reflections on those experiences, “[relying] on the participants to offer in-depth responses to questions about how they have constructed or understood their experience” (Jackson II, Drummond, & Camara, 2007, pp. 22-23). The structure of qualitative research therefore allows for a more authentic conversation to occur between the researcher and the participant that can lead to valuable data.

Contrastingly, quantitative research studies are structured not to facilitate conversations, but to obtain raw statistical data most commonly in numerical form (Jackson & Verberg, 2007). This approach has also been noted to confine the participant’s experience to “a set of finite questions to elicit categorized, forced-choice responses with little room for open-ended replies to questions” (Jackson II et al., 2007, p. 23). Thus, for conversations addressing issues surrounding social phenomena, where discussion and elaboration of experience are encouraged, the qualitative approach is the most applicable approach (Guba & Lincoln, 2004).

My study specifically focuses on the social phenomenon of the potential perpetuation of colonization by non-Indigenous educators in the Toronto region. The purpose of my study is to discover concrete examples of positive decolonization strategies for the implementation of the Ontario curriculum from the analysis of non-Indigenous educators’ experiences and best practices. By facilitating conversations with a level of trust and respect for the participant, I collected rich data that I then analyzed to find potential answers to the social phenomenon of colonized education (Kral, 2014; Maxwell, 2005). The topic of my study stretched beyond the
capabilities of quantitative research and rather more appropriately corresponded with the qualitative approach.

3.2 Instruments of Data Collection

Within qualitative research there are three main data collection strategies that are implemented: in-depth interviews, focus-group interviews, and participant observation (Jackson & Verberg, 2007). Overlap can occur between these strategies for a wider breadth of data and can also include the collection of “oral histories, secondary data sources… and any number of sources that provide cues as to the experience of respondents” (Jackson & Verberg, 2007, p. 164). Within the interview strategies, there is a further breakdown in regards to the structure of the interview. Three types of qualitative interviews can take place: structured, semi-structured and unstructured. All three strategies are successful in collecting data, however some are more suited for certain topics and purposes than others. For instance, structured interviews are advantageous when there is a specific set of questions that must be answered for the inquiry purpose (Bernard & Ryan, 2010). Semi-structured interviews are beneficial when researching marginalized groups who have been historically silenced (Bernard & Ryan, 2010). Finally, unstructured interviews are useful for capturing cultural norms first-hand (Bernard & Ryan, 2010).

For my study, I implemented the semi-structured style that allows for more fluidity during the interview process, giving the space and opportunity for participants to describe their experiences “in their own words” (Esterberg, 2002, p. 87). Differing from structured interviews, semi-structured interviews follow a pre-planned interview guide that brings the participant through similar, if not identical questions (Bernard & Ryan, 2010). This slight diversification allows for the interviews to follow a more organic conversation that is led by the interviewee and
guided by the interviewer (Esterberg, 2002). Kral (2014) asserts that allowing the interviewee to elaborate on some questions more than others gives the participant a sense of co-investigation and a sharing of power throughout the interview process.

Co-ownership is a fundamental aspect of Indigenous communities and is thus an exemplary choice of data collection for my study (Kral, 2014). As I introduced questions that directly addressed Indigenous culture, it was important that I followed the participant’s reactions accordingly and maintained a safe space by respecting their stories and emotions. By creating a safe and open space with my attitude and body language, the conversations flowed to unexpected places where authentic data beyond my initial scope was obtained (Brinkmann, 2014; Flick, 2007). Thus, my prepared interview guide initialized the conversations, but I was flexible with the direction that the interview followed.

Each interview was divided into four sections. The first began the conversation with background information about the participant. The second section addressed the experiences that the participant had with Indigenous content and pedagogies in the classroom. The third section discussed the beliefs and values of the participant, and the fourth addressed the barriers and supports surrounding their teaching efforts. Finally, the interview concluded with suggested next steps for teachers. Examples of questions include:

- Was there a time when you identified yourself to your students in relation to Indigenous peoples?
- Can you walk me through a lesson design that incorporates Indigenous content?
- What do you believe students can gain from participating with Indigenous content and pedagogies from a decolonized approach?

3.3 Participants
Interviewing an entire population to research a specific issue is nearly impossible, leading qualitative researchers to utilize sampling techniques. Collecting data from a “carefully drawn sample not only makes the task possible, it often produces more accurate results” (Bouma & Ling, 2004, p. 112). Therefore, although my sample was small, the data I retrieved was rich in content and guided my research in highlighting reported best practices. The following sections outline the criteria used to select the participants, the sampling procedures used to recruit them, and the rationale surrounding my methodological choices for recruiting my participants.

3.3.1 Sampling criteria.

The participants were chosen based on the following criteria:

1. Teachers self-identify as non-Indigenous elementary educators.
2. Teachers have taught in the Toronto District School Board for at least four years.
3. Teachers currently teach within the range of grades 4-8.
4. Teachers have incorporated Indigenous content and pedagogies into their classrooms.

The selected criteria for participants were determined with the purpose of this study in mind: non-Indigenous educators’ incorporation of Indigenous content and pedagogies into urban classrooms. Teachers were required to identify as non-Indigenous educators in order to show the possibility of cultural incorporation from an outsider’s perspective. The educators were also required to have a minimum of four years teaching experience so that they could comment on the potential differences in lessons pertaining to Indigenous content before and after the release of the consolidated Ontario curricula (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2014a, 2014b). Grades 4-8 encompass a large portion of Canadian history within the curricula, and are thus a foundational time for students to be exposed to Indigenous cultures and pedagogies. To note the engagement and success of educators incorporating their lessons with Indigenous content and pedagogies, it
was vital that they would have previously created and implemented the lessons themselves.

3.3.2 Participant Recruitment.

The sample group acts as “an accurate reflection of the whole” and thus must be chosen strategically (Bouma & Ling, 2004, p. 112). Two main sampling procedures encompass the various possible methods: non-random sampling and random sampling (Bouma & Ling, 2004). Non-random sampling does not focus on engaging a variety of people units, but rather focuses on the particular group at hand (Jackson & Verberg, 2007). Also known as non-probability sampling, non-random sampling can be carried out in the form of quota samples, convenience samples, and snowball sampling (Jackson & Verberg, 2007). The scope is often limited in non-random sampling and does not provide data that is representative of a large population (Bouma & Ling, 2004). However, the purpose is directive and the data retrieved is rich, labeling non-random sampling as an important approach within qualitative research (Jackson & Verberg, 2007).

Similarly, random sampling is also further categorized. Random sampling, or probability sampling, is classified into the following approaches: simple random sampling, systemic sampling, stratified sampling, and multi-stage area sampling (Jackson & Verberg, 2007). All of these strategies allow for the data to be more comprehensive and span a larger community base than non-random sampling because they employ probability sampling that designates representation from multiple units (Jackson & Verberg, 2007). However, for the purposes of my research, random sampling is less applicable than the non-random sampling.

Non-random sampling, specifically a combination of convenience and snowballing techniques, has been applied to my research study. Along with my specific criteria for my participants, I faced the barrier of limited resources with which to locate them. By implementing
the snowball technique, I was able to network from the connections that I already had in the educational community to specific end points of non-Indigenous grades 4-8 teachers in the Toronto District School Board through referrals and nominations (Bouma & Ling, 2004). Convenience sampling was also useful within my current professional position as I am a part of a community of teacher colleagues and mentor teachers. Convenience sampling allowed me to utilize my previous connections from professional development conferences, university courses, and volunteering within the education system in Toronto (Jackson & Verberg, 2007). Combining these two methods, my participants comprised a sample that was compiled with a greater ease than random sampling but still spoke to the specificity and importance of my research purpose.

### 3.3.3 Participant Biographies

All three of my participants were passionate in their endeavors to incorporate Indigenous content and pedagogies into their urban elementary classrooms. They each emphasized the importance of this study as they identified their experienced need for further research on successful practices for non-Indigenous educators incorporating Indigenous content and pedagogies.

**Rachel** identifies as a non-Indigenous female of Western European decent. She has been teaching in the Toronto District School Board for over 15 years with a few years experience teaching abroad in Asia. Rachel taught grades kindergarten through to grade 5 over her years of instruction, teaching both homerooms and core French. Rachel is currently teaching in an elementary classroom in a school situated within a high socio-economic neighbourhood. Rachel’s drive to incorporate Indigenous content and pedagogies into her classes stems from her family’s Jewish roots. Rachel has found a cultural connection between her relatives’ experiences during the Holocaust and the treatment of Indigenous peoples on this land.
To bring knowledge to her younger students, Rachel often teaches Indigenous stories and worldviews through artistic expressions and culturally authentic field trips. As a non-Indigenous educator with no initial relationships with Indigenous community members, Rachel has pursued beneficial relationships with Indigenous communities.

Kevin has also taught in the Toronto District School Board for over 15 years, with the incorporation of a few years in other Canadian provinces. He has taught grades 7 and 8 as a homeroom teacher and is currently instructing within the home school program at a high socio-economic status school.

Kevin identifies as a white, “privileged” Western European male. Kevin found his inspiration for incorporating Indigenous content and pedagogies into his urban classroom through his personal experiences teaching Indigenous students on fly-in reserves in Ontario’s far north. Reportedly seeing the Indigenous peoples’ lack of privilege to live a comfortable life free to express their culture, Kevin was significantly impacted by their stories. Kevin is passionate about the emphasis that the Indigenous elders in his fly-in communities placed on the power of voice. Kevin uses this respect of voice along with his stories to engage his students in investigating Indigenous voices and hearing their histories. Kevin is a strong resource for his non-Indigenous colleagues and is valued by the community he teaches in for his first-hand experiences and passion for change. If Kevin could, he would ensure that every Canadian history textbook was re-written with Indigenous voices at the forefront.

Melissa identifies herself as a woman on a journey to discovering her heritage. Critically aware of her position on Turtle Island, Melissa has started the process of discovering her ancestors’ indigeneity on Canadian and American soil to better understand her role in her local Toronto community. Melissa’s previous interactions with Indigenous community members
across different periods of her life have placed a deeply imbedded importance and respect towards Indigenous traditions in her heart. This emphasis has surfaced in her teaching as she has invited Indigenous community elders and colleagues into her class to share their knowledge and inspire her urban students to see the importance of Indigenous traditions in their contemporary context.

Melissa has been teaching for over 10 years in the Toronto District School Board at the elementary level, instructing in all subjects except French. Melissa currently works in a low socio-economic status school in a middle school classroom and is using Indigenous worldviews to create a cooperative environment for her and her colleagues. Melissa is a leader in her school board in incorporating Indigenous content and pedagogies into her teaching as she brings in speakers and knowledge keepers wherever possible in order to authenticate her students’ learning experiences.

3.4 Data Analysis

Data analysis within a qualitative interview study is usually a process of “chunking experiences into recordable units” (Bernard & Ryan, 2010, p. 5). Consequently, the role of the researcher is to apply a creative and intuitive lens to the data collected in order to discover themes, patterns and meaning (Esterberg, 2002). Data analysis however, can occur from various viewpoints. Jackson II, Drummond and Camara (2010) outline a continuum of data analysis approaches, lineally placing discourse, narrative, and conversational analyses. On one end of the continuum, discourse analysis interprets “what was said” and on the other end, conversational analysis discusses “how something was said” (Jackson II et al., 2010, p. 24). These analytical approaches allow the researcher to explore the meaning behind their participants’ responses and create themes that answer the overarching research question (Jackson II et. al, 2010).
For my research study, I used the spectrum outlined by Jackson II, Drummond, and Camara (2010) to analyse my interview transcripts. I looked at each transcript separately, identifying themes within pre-identified categories. These categories directly related to my research question and subquestions, which were used as the interpretive tools for this process. This specific approach provided insight into the participants’ interpretations of the Indigenized classroom experiences, exploring the possibility of their successful practices creating a new cultural bridge between communities.

Benefitting from both of these approaches, I then chose specific data elements to inform my coding method such as a specific word, phrase, or emotion (Bernard & Ryan, 2010). The transcription of my interviews brought me to an intimate level with my data that informed my findings (Guba & Lincoln, 2004). Drawing from the collected data and my previous understanding of the social phenomenon, I began the meaning-making process to designate specific themes and group the data (Bernard & Ryan, 2010b). Furthermore, I took into consideration the null data, the avoided or not discussed topics, that occurred during conversations with my participants to ensure all aspects of the interview were analysed.

3.5 Ethical Review Procedures

Qualitative research studies delve into social phenomena that involve people and their interactions with the world. Since there is an inclusion of people within a social context, controversial topics have the ability to harm the participants and others (Esterberg, 2002). Awareness towards the research area’s code of ethics is thus vital to the study and must be considered during all stages. Confidentiality and consent are two large areas that affect all qualitative research because they protect the participants involved from public exposure (Esterberg, 2002). For the researcher, confidentiality of the participants is vital to the integrity of
the study due to the probability that the public would discard the research if the responses became identifiable (Jackson & Verberg, 2007). Therefore, for both parties involved, extra care should be taken to ensure the confidentiality of the participant.

Another area where ethical dilemmas can arise is in the consent procedure. At any moment in the study the participant should feel able to refuse a question or end the interview (Jackson & Verberg, 2007). Depending on the nature of the research, consent can drastically change throughout the study period with the evolution of the context, participants, and setting (Esterberg, 2002). Intricate attention must be placed on the entirety of the research study to ensure that participants are aware of the terms to which they have agreed (Jackson & Verberg, 2007). To further the sense of safety within the participants, researchers must take deliberate actions to protect the collected data, informing the participants how this protection will be carried out and informing them of potential changes (Guba & Lincoln, 2004). The risks associated with the participation in the study are also a necessary topic of open communication. Communication with the participant on methodological changes should remain open throughout the research process (Esterberg, 2002).

During this study I applied detailed attention to all of the research procedures. Before commencing the interview, I referred to the letter of consent (see Appendix A), outlining my participants’ rights and participant expectations. To validate the confidentiality of my participants I met with them in an area that was off of the property of their employment. I applied pseudonyms to each participant that were used throughout the research process; I also removed any identifying characteristics in the written report. Participants were informed on multiple occasions of their ability to refuse a question or stop the interview. All data collected was placed on a password-protected computer and will be destroyed after five years.
Additionally, there were no known risks involved by partaking in this study, however participants were given the opportunity to review the transcripts of their interview to retract or clarify any statements.

Furthermore, for this specific study, I applied Indigenous standards for research gathering. Outlined by Guba and Lincoln (2004), in accordance with the *Values and Ethics: Guidelines for Ethical Conduct in Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander Health Research* (2003), I ensured that all of my participants felt a sense of respect, reciprocity, equality, responsibility, survival and protection, and spirit and integrity throughout the interview. Although my participants identified as non-Indigenous educators, to exemplify decolonized education I incorporated this supplementary awareness to the data collection process. I accomplished this goal by fostering “trust, respect, and genuineness” throughout the entirety of the interviews (Kral, 2014, p. 143).

### 3.6 Methodological Limitations and Strengths

Jackson and Verberg (2007) highlight the need for qualitative research stating that it “has obvious strengths in the areas of validity and in the ability to probe in depth the human experience” (p. 182). Quantitative research is criticized for stripping the data from the context that it was derived from, whereas qualitative research is praised for its ability to represent the study’s origins (Guba & Lincoln, 2004). Qualitative research thus provides in-depth contextual information that provides the opportunity for elaboration on the phenomena under study (Guba & Lincoln, 2004).

The qualitative approach also allows for an authentic relationship to be made between the interviewer and interviewee that not only provides context, but also elaborates on the participant’s experience in a way not possible in a quantitative study (Kral, 2014). The resulting
practice of self-reflexivity by the interviewee can also allow them to develop their understandings of themselves in terms of their pedagogical decisions (Geerinck, Masschelein & Simons, 2010). These strengths are suited to the purpose of my study as I am interested in the experiences and successful practices of my participants that resulted in a high level of student engagement and understanding on topics surround Indigenous cultures and pedagogies. This success requires in-depth reflexive practice by the participant that I discovered through the interview process.

This study was subject to the constraints associated with qualitative interview research. Due to the ethical parameters allowed for this particular study, the scope was minute in size and could therefore not be representative of a whole community. Teachers were the sole group of interviewees, with parents and students falling outside of the research domain. This aspect limited my study because I could not collect first-hand data on the students’ reactions to Indigenous content through surveys, interviews, or observations. However, the elaboration provided by the students’ teachers provided me with informed observations on the students’ reactions. Since an aspect of my research was aimed to improve confidence in non-Indigenous teachers, this data was beneficial in analyzing the level of confidence the educator had in engaging their students. One integral aspect of a qualitative research study is the ability for the teacher to make meaning of their own pedagogical experiences (Geerinck et al., 2010). These findings enlightened the participant on decision-making behind their own actions and provided a strong marker for other educators in the field.

3.7 Conclusion

In this chapter I discussed the research methodology behind my study. I began by identifying the differences and similarities between qualitative and quantitative research, noting
the qualitative approach as the most applicable for my specific purpose. Next, I discussed the instrument of my data collection: semi-structured interviews. Through the analysis of current literature, I justified my data collection choice by highlighting the ability for semi-structured interviews to reap rich data. I also noted the crucial component of trust within the interviewer-interviewee relationship to honour the participants and Indigenous worldviews. I then outlined the criteria used to select my participants. I defined the sampling procedures of snowballing and convenience sampling, noting their usefulness given the nature of this study. For the participant biographies, I introduced each participant under a pseudonym and described their relevancy to my study and teaching background in a non-identifying way. After addressing the data analysis, I considered the ethical risks associated with qualitative research studies and described the steps taken to mitigate these risks for my study. Additionally, I specifically pointed to Indigenous worldviews that coincide with the nature of my study and were honoured throughout the interview process. Finally, I discussed the limitations and strengths of the methodological approach taken for this research, emphasizing the benefit of conversational data collection and the insightful perspective of teacher participants. In the following chapter, I will explain how I analyzed my data and drew connecting themes across the individual interview transcripts, revealing my research findings.
Chapter Four: Research Findings

4.0 Introduction to the Chapter

In the previous chapters I introduced my topic: the incorporation of Indigenous pedagogies and content by non-Indigenous elementary educators, setting the context of its relevancy in a socially progressing Canada (Madden, Higgins, & Korteweg, 2013). I also reviewed the extant literature on teacher education for incorporating Indigenous pedagogies and content, the importance of self-identification as a non-Indigenous educator, the lack of resources provided for educators in this area, additional barriers that prevent Indigenous incorporation, and finally, successful practices of incorporation. I then introduced my qualitative methodology in Chapter Three, noting its relevance to my particular study and introduced my non-Indigenous participants: middle-aged, white elementary teachers actively practicing in the Toronto District School Board. In this chapter I will discuss my findings and draw quintessential connections to the literature previously analyzed. In what follows, the identified themes are organized into the following sections:

1. Non-Indigenous Educator’s Comfort and Backgrounds with Indigenous Pedagogies and Content
2. Self-identification as a Means to Connecting Cultures
3. Overcoming Lack of Resources through Community Connections
4. Representing Indigenous Peoples as Contemporary Peoples

Each theme will be elaborated on below, supported with participant responses and relevant literature. The conclusion section will consolidate my findings and introduce the importance of this research for the academic community.
4.1 Non-Indigenous Educators’ Comfort and Backgrounds with Indigenous Pedagogies and Content

Teachers’ degree of comfort and previous experiences with Indigenous peoples was the largest influence on whether the participants included Indigenous pedagogies and content into their teaching practice. I found that all three participants experienced significant cultural exchanges with Indigenous communities and as a result, took special care to incorporate the voice of Indigenous peoples into their classroom. Through teaching Indigenous students on a reserve, sustaining personal encounters outside of their teacher role, and seeking connections in their local community, these participants created symbiotic relationships with Indigenous communities. For all three educators, their time spent learning about Indigenous peoples led to life-changing perceptions of Indigenous cultures and inspired the participants to become major advocates in their field.

Kevin’s comfort with Indigenous content and pedagogies came from teaching on two reserves in northern Ontario over a period of two years. The content that Kevin emphasized was Indigenous peoples’ significant role in Canadian history. When asked about the influence that his time teaching Indigenous students within their own community had on his teaching in an urban setting, he responded that “[t]hey have affected everything I have done ever since… because I see how important education is, and how important voice is, and that what we take for granted can be literally pulled out from under you.” Kevin’s experience on reserves shaped his teaching practice as he saw how Indigenous voices have been silenced and was moved to enlighten urban students on the truth of the past and present. Investing his time and effort into teaching Indigenous students and understanding their culture allowed Kevin to become more comfortable in addressing Indigenous content and pedagogies.
Melissa also shaped her teaching through an Indigenous lens due to her background of relationship building with Indigenous peoples. Similar to Kevin, her encounters with the Indigenous community inspired Melissa to bring Indigenous perspectives and voice into her classroom. As an advocate for the incorporation of Indigenous perspectives in Ontario schools, Melissa embarked on an educational journey to better equip herself with an understanding of Indigenous ways of knowing. Through her professional development course, Melissa learned to address the incorporation of Indigenous pedagogies and content, as well as the decolonization of the educator. Melissa demonstrated decolonization – the reversal of colonization through knowledge building (Scully, 2012) – when she described the outcome of her enrollment in the course: “[i]t’s shifted my entire way of understanding my own history as I’m learning about Indigenous histories, particularly in Canada… and pedagogies and ways of learning and teaching.” Both Kevin and Melissa each reported a major worldview shift as a result of their exposure to indigeneity; their minds were open to a way of living that they were not previously aware of. Consequently, their teaching practice reflected their experiences, and with authentic relationships, they felt they were able to incorporate their knowledge into their daily teachings.

Following the trend expressed by Kevin and Melissa, Rachel also experienced a shift in worldview through her pursuit of relationships with the Indigenous community. When Rachel was assigned Grade 3 homeroom, she discovered when reviewing the curriculum that her knowledge went as far as pilgrims and *Little House on the Prairie* (Wilder, 1932-1943) as representations of settler and Indigenous ways of life. After this minor epiphany, she embarked on a self-enlightenment journey so that she could more comprehensively teach her students about colonization and Indigenous peoples’ experiences in what is now Canada. Rachel kept a keen eye out for updates and opportunities from the Ontario Ministry of Education, she brought her
class to explore local art museums that were either entirely Indigenous or featured a significant exhibit on Indigenous art, and she made connections with local Indigenous community centres for resource-sharing and cultural experiences. Through years of knowledge gathering and first-hand experiences in the Indigenous community centres and at events, Rachel acknowledged that she was still, and forever will be, learning about Indigenous ways of knowing. However, with her experiences, she felt comfortable enough to begin authentically incorporating Indigenous perspectives, content, and worldviews into her classroom.

All three participants had a personal foundation of Indigenous content and perspectives that they encountered first hand and infused into their classrooms. Their decision to make space in their teaching for Indigenous content speaks to MacPherson’s (2010) suggestion for non-Indigenous educators to step into Indigenous communities and form relationships. MacPherson’s (2010) study emphasized the importance of place through a pairing of university educators with pre-service teachers in the field, incorporating the distinctive elements of the community into their teaching practice. Similarly, my participants pursued knowledge from their immediate environment to give themselves a foundation from which to teach their students. This acute awareness of Indigenous peoples’ place on the land gave these participants a cultural footing from which they could begin to incorporate Indigenous pedagogies and content as non-Indigenous educators. However, alongside their awareness of Indigenous cultures, the participants voiced a fear of cultural appropriation from their position as settlers.

4.2 Self-identification as a Means of Connecting Cultures

The choice to self-identify as settlers in front of their students has helped these non-Indigenous educators relieve their fear of appropriating Indigenous cultures and has reportedly opened communication on Indigenous content and perspectives. After developing a sense of
comfort with Indigenous content and pedagogies, the participants still faced the challenge of creating authentic connections in the classroom between cultures. Due to their cultural position as non-Indigenous educators, the participants were aware of their potential to teach Indigenous content and pedagogies through a settler lens. To mitigate this risk, the participants proposed self-identification as a means to remove themselves as experts in the class and learn alongside their students. In doing so, they also found that students became engaged and discovered similarities across cultures.

Curious about their reasons for self-identifying, I asked my participants to articulate a time when they did so and describe the inspiration behind their declaration of positionality to their students. The participants responded with similar comments, noting two important components: first, they had to be aware of their own cultural background before addressing another, and second, they had to position themselves as learners, not experts. In front of their students, all three participants reportedly identified their own cultural backgrounds followed by a connection between their culture and Indigenous cultures. Kevin noted his settler relationship as being from an “Irish background… Canadian born… a regular white, privileged male.” Through his self-identification Kevin exposed some of the barriers he had relating to the Indigenous communities as he was born into the settler side of the domain that was very privileged. Due to this realization, Kevin was able to “bait [his] students with [his] experiences” from teaching on the reserves as an outsider to the community, and as a result, he opened up dialogue in the classroom where he and his students could learn.

Melissa found commonality with Indigenous communities through her journey to discover her ancestry, similar to many Indigenous peoples separated from their families. Melissa was “not sure where [she was] originally indigenous to” with a mixed heritage from numerous
continents: “[South American] for several generations and then Italian, Dutch, and… Polish.”

This confusion of her peoples’ history of place and ownership created a bridge between Melissa’s worldview and her understanding of Indigenous communities. In response to my question on self-identification, Melissa noted, “I’ve come to understand that is my responsibility to figure out what my worldview is and where it comes from so that I can confidently know where I stand in relation to indigeneity.” In order to be able to teach about Indigenous communities and worldviews, Melissa was aware of the vital need for her own self-awareness of her family and her people. This search for identity showed her willingness to learn and created the potential for a collaborative environment in her classroom.

Rachel also connected Indigenous peoples’ history with her own heritage, relating the genocide of Jewish people in World War II to the Canadian government’s actions towards Indigenous peoples. Rachel explained the evolution of her self-reflexive teaching to the teaching of Indigenous cultures in the following recount:

Earlier in the year I read to them Hana’s Suitcase [by Karen Levine] and talked about… [cuts off]. I’m Jewish so we talked about the Holocaust… and the kids were so wrapped up in it. We dramatized it and presented it to the parents, talking about what can happen to a person, what has happened to a people that are deemed just different. So then a couple months later when we started talking about Indigenous perspectives, I was sort of able to tie it back to that. You know this didn’t just happen to the Jewish people, this happened to many other groups.

Beginning with her family’s own experiences with cultural genocide and expulsion from society, Rachel opened up communication and dialogue about marginalized people groups in an authentic and modern way. Having developed an understanding and respect for the consequences of
marginalization, Rachel’s students were prepared to talk about cultural genocide on their own land. Thus, through understanding their own heritage and cultural stake in Canada, the participants could make authentic connections that not only enhanced their own understandings, but also invited their students to learn about Indigenous cultures alongside them.

The participants directly pointed to students’ level of engagement and curiosity about Indigenous perspectives and content once the foreground of cultural association was created. They endeavored to channel this curiosity into the inquiry model due to its success in facilitating student-led research. This instructional strategy reportedly allowed for their students to make their own connections and experience a new understanding of Indigenous peoples’ marginalization. In the view of all participants, the specific demographic of Toronto classrooms allowed for this type of student-led learning because students could relate their own experiences to marginalized communities. Kevin described his students’ reaction to Indigenous perspectives in relation to the demographic of his class: “I think that… because some of their own people were marginalized either in the past or in the present, that they felt this sense of outrage that somebody’s voice would be taken away from them.” Kevin was able to use his experience on the reserves up north to identify his own positionality and explain the Indigenous communities’ way of life to students in a way that they were able to relate to. Further, by noticing the gap in Canadian history resources and bridging it with his own cultural experiences, Kevin reported being able to open his students’ eyes to a more authentic account of Canada’s confederation and present situation. Melissa and Rachel followed a similar trend of student engagement through cultural connections, resulting in comparable student understanding. Melissa described her students as “always receptive” to Indigenous perspectives, while Rachel said her class was “very curious, very engaged” even when discussing challenging topics such as genocide. Each
participant noted the importance of self-identification in order to avoid cultural appropriation as much as possible. Through this self-identification, the participants addressed their fear of re-colonization caused by their pedagogy and worked to create a safe space for their students to engage with Indigenous cultures and pedagogies.

Kevin, Melissa and Rachel’s responses that highlighted the importance of self-identification and cultural awareness directly aligned with the literature. In Blood’s (2010) study of the issues and challenges faced by non-Indigenous biology teachers, he concluded that in order for teachers to be successful in incorporating Indigenous perspectives, they need to understand that “teachers do not need to be the expert all the time” (p. 100). All three of my participants experienced a relinquishing of the ‘expert’ title on Indigenous content, which created an opportunity for co-learning in the classroom between educator and student. Through an invitation to learn together, non-Indigenous educators can avoid the risk of teaching their own biases by solely relying on themselves as content purveyors. Harrison and Greenfield’s (2011) study of the relationship between an Indigenous Australian community and the participant classroom teachers highlighted the importance of gaining the respect of the local Indigenous peoples before attempting to teach Indigenous content and pedagogies. With this relationship, teachers can help themselves avoid teaching their “meta-narrative about Aboriginal people” (Harrison & Greenfield, 2011, p. 70; original emphasis). Utilizing their relationships with the community and releasing their role as expert in the classroom, the participants were reportedly able to address their fear of cultural appropriation, create a safe space for learning, and engage their students in inquiry-driven projects. Further, their connections with the local Indigenous communities resulted in a large support system in overcoming the resource barriers to
incorporating Indigenous perspectives and content into the urban classroom. Further successful strategies in overcoming resource barriers will be discussed in the following section.

4.3 Overcoming Lack of Resources through Community Connections

Due to a reported lack of support from Ontario’s Ministry of Education and void of Indigenous perspectives in their teacher preparation courses, my participants found the most support by reaching out to local Indigenous communities. All three participants attended teachers college before September 2015 when the Ministry released the new supplemental curriculum documents for incorporating Indigenous content (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2015a, 2015b). Thus, as mentioned in the first section of this chapter, participant confidence in incorporating Indigenous content and perspectives stemmed not from Ministry support, but rather from relationships and community connections that further allowed them to find resources to support their teaching.

Each participant named one related document from the Ministry that was either lacking substance or was seen by a limited number of staff where they teach. Kevin received an infographic from the Elementary Teachers Federation of Ontario that was designed to help teachers incorporate Indigenous pedagogies into the classroom; however, he only received one. He posted the information in the staff room but did not report on any significant response from the staff. Rachel received an e-mail regarding a chest for rent by the Hudson’s Bay Company for $100 that included pictures, beaver pelts, blankets, and artifacts. Although Rachel incorporated the chest into her teaching to give students a tactile experience with Indigenous objects, she found that the paintings were “always [shown] from the perspective of the Europeans.” Melissa took initiative to enlighten her colleagues on effective ways to incorporate Indigenous perspectives into the classroom using the Ministry’s (2015a) document, *First Nations, Métis and Inuit Connections*
Grades 1-8 and Kindergarten Program Scope. Unfortunately, after much planning with a colleague to create a workshop for their staff, the professional development day was canceled and their work was never given the opportunity to be featured again. Through all three interviews, the participants’ frustrations with the Ministry and lack of support for their efforts became evident. Although the Ministry has made significant changes to its requirements of teachers and curriculum expectations, this information was found to be not easily accessible by the participants.

The largest area of need identified by my participants was professional development on authentic Indigenous perspectives in historical and present day situations. Rachel explained this lack in the curriculum and Ministry resources during her description of one of her best practices with incorporating Indigenous perspectives:

[The students] had to give their perspective on [their chosen] event and it was extremely challenging because we had a really hard time finding a written record of Indigenous perspectives. We [had] to infer and guess at what their feelings would have been about it…there was no written [accounts]… nothing we could find that would [talk about] this. Although the students and Rachel rose to the challenge and did their best, Rachel identified the struggle that they had in obtaining authentic Indigenous voices. Rachel supplemented this void by bringing her students to local museums featuring Indigenous art and to community Pow Wows, and also by reading novels written by Indigenous authors. By reaching out to local and national Indigenous communities and resources, Rachel was able to bridge the gap between her urban students’ understanding of Indigenous peoples as historical figures, and their active role in present day Canada.
Melissa similarly used her connections with Indigenous communities to supplement her Indigenous content incorporation. She brought in her Ojibwe colleague to teach beading, invited an Indigenous elder (nation not specified) to speak to the entire school on environmental stewardship, and researched Indigenous resources. However, Melissa faced a second challenge that was not imposed on Rachel’s class: financial strain from administration. In describing barriers that she has encountered while incorporating Indigenous content and perspectives, Melissa emphasized the lack of finances allocated to bringing in Indigenous resources and community speakers. Her Ojibwe friend who instructed the class on beading could not be paid by Melissa’s administration: “[s]he would just do it, and I’d give her gas money or something but that’s not okay to not have… there should… it shouldn’t be so difficult… if you say on one hand we need to be incorporating Indigenous content into our school, then it shouldn’t be so ambiguous.” Melissa was only able to bring these knowledge keepers into the school due to her strong personal relationship with them and her willingness to use her own finances. Struggling to find her words during this response, it was evident that Melissa was frustrated by the system and longing for a support from the Ministry that stretched beyond new curriculum expectations.

Following the pattern of self-directed resource location, Kevin relied on his personal experiences and various relationships across the country with both Indigenous peoples and those teaching on reserves. Kevin resorted to these resources outside of Ministry provision because he felt that the Ministry was not fulfilling the requirements necessary to successfully incorporate Indigenous perspectives. Kevin voiced this concern when responding to my question on his access to Indigenous resources: “[w]ell, non-existent first of all, which is more a pity… there should be some real effort put into the Ministry or school boards to put in a lot more of the content because it simply doesn’t exist.” Filling this need in the curriculum, Kevin not only
supplemented his lessons with his experiences up north and his connections across the country, but he provided his knowledge to other classes as well. This knowledge-sharing was beneficial to the school community, as he was seen as “one of the people who lived on a reserve” and could talk about his first-hand experience. Regardless of his ability to bring a small light to Indigenous lifestyles on reserves, Kevin continued to emphasize that there needs to be a “real effort” by the Ministry to provide substantial support to all teachers, not just those with access to resources. Having a non-Indigenous person supplement for the lack of Indigenous voice is not a desirable solution to the problem, as Kevin noted in his call for further effort. Authentic Indigenous voice given on a first-hand encounter would have been the most beneficial experience for students, but due to the barrier of accessibility to Indigenous communities, Kevin shared his experiences.

The participants’ frustration with the lack of support and their drive to find resources of their own coincides with recent literature. Both Cherubini and Hodson’s (2002) and Kim’s (2015) analyses of Ontario’s curricula concluded that the Ministry documents did not give sufficient support to fully address Indigenous content and perspectives. As mentioned specifically by Kevin, there needs to be more explicit Indigenous content in the curricula because currently, it appears to be “non-existent”. Beyond the curriculum, as experienced by Melissa, professional development days are also lacking. Blood’s (2010) case study of Biology teachers’ incorporation of Indigenous pedagogies highlighted the shortcomings of professional development as Blood’s participants described them “as being not very informative and disappointing” (p. 97).

My participants’ suggestions for greater development by the Ministry, and their seeking of outside sources, converges with the previously discussed literature and directly points to the lack of Indigenous content and perspectives in the curriculum that require further attention. In the
following section, I will outline some of the successful practices of my participants as they incorporated Indigenous perspectives and content into their daily practices regardless of the challenges they faced.

4.4 Representing Indigenous Peoples as Contemporary Peoples

During the interviews, all three participants articulated the need to frame Indigenous content and perspectives in a present context in order to make students aware of the issues today and inspire them to take action. Rachel, Melissa and Kevin all reported that they strive to show the continued relevance of Indigenous knowledges today. Rachel and Melissa both began their school year by structuring their classes on the Seven Grandfather Teachings of the Anishinaabe community. These teachings are part of the Anishinaabe worldview that honours nibwaakaawin (wisdom), zaagi’idiwin (love), minaadendamowin (respect), aakode’ewin (bravery), gwayakwaadiziwin (honesty), dabaadendiziwin (humility) and dewewin (truth). Rachel and Melissa aligned these teachings with the monthly character traits highlighted by the Toronto District School Board – which functions partially on Anishinaabe traditional lands – in order to demonstrate the continuity and alignment of values between the worldviews. Melissa specifically led her class in discussing the similarities and differences between the two value sets, noting that “[t]he major difference is that the Seven Teachings are interconnected and that they’re not separated.” The interconnectedness of the Seven Grandfather Teachings, in contrast with the compartmentalized character traits promoted by the Toronto District School Board, allowed Melissa to address multiple values at once in her classroom. Rachel demonstrated this by creating an art piece on the teachings with her students that hung in the class. The students wrote a reflective piece after Rachel’s instruction on its meaning, giving the students a foundational knowledge of the teachings, and allowing Rachel to refer back to the values “whenever there
[was] a behavioural issue.” With this more interconnected approach to character education through the Seven Grandfather Teachings, students were reportedly able to discover the cultural connections for themselves. When Melissa was describing her best teaching practices, she highlighted this vital fluidity of Indigenous incorporation, stating: “[my students] can make connections because [the Indigenous teachings are] not isolated or compartmentalized.”

Mirroring the holistic pedagogical approach of Indigenous pedagogies, Melissa and Rachel worked to provide the space and context for their students to bridge the cultural gaps between Indigenous peoples and themselves. Thus, using local teachings, Rachel and Melissa created relevance for what students may have seen as traditions of the past, and brought them into their current school setting.

Additionally, the participants incorporated community circles and talking sticks into their teaching practice to reflect the importance placed on speech and respect in many Indigenous cultures (Schumacher, 2014). Schumacher (2014) and Wolf and Rickard (2003) credit the Woodland Native American Tribes as the creators of the community circle tradition, one that is “[s]teeped in symbolic ritual…establishes a communication style that supports respect through the passing of a talking piece—any symbolic object, such as a feather or a talking stick—from one person to the next” (Schumacher, 2014, p. 2). Interestingly enough, the participants did not specify an Indigenous community that inspired their use of the community circle or talking stick, but rather spread the tradition over multiple Indigenous communities. Following my interview question on their incorporation of talking sticks and community circles, the three educators identified these as valuable tools in the classroom to foster respect and community. Rachel underlined that the community circle was used for “discussing important things” as all of her students would come down onto the carpet, form a circle, and respectfully partake in the
discussion. She pointed to the usefulness of her rain stick as the talking stick, because it both quieted the class down and caused excitement when students were able to hold it to speak. Melissa associated the community circle with the Canadian government’s structure, “[emphasizing] why it’s important to have consensus building as opposed to majority rules.” Kevin used the community circle as a way to tie in his experience up north, stressing the intense importance that elders placed on speech, and the expectation for his students to do the same. For Kevin, the community circle was for “teaching the power of words,” a lesson for any time period, especially in the present digital age. The Indigenous tradition of information sharing through talking sticks and community circles offered an opportunity for these non-Indigenous educators to implement a traditional Indigenous teaching in a present context. Situating their students in the urban classroom and infusing a tradition of the land, the participants invited their students to form connections between their cultures and that of their place, identifying Indigenous peoples not as part of the past, but rather part of their reality.

Taking their students’ understanding of the present context of Indigenous peoples, the participants brought their teachings further by pointing to the students’ own potential to change the future. The sense of urgency for change was articulated in each interview and framed Indigenous issues as topics of the present that need to be acted upon. Labeling the situation as a generational burden of all settler Canadians, the participants advocated for change through their teaching and empowerment of their students. In her description of the students’ reaction to Indigenous content and perspectives, Rachel spoke directly to her class’s responsibility to take action: “I told them: ‘[y]ou’re the first… you know your parents were never taught this in school… your parents never did a land acknowledgement… your parents aren’t… …you’re the generation that is having this chance to make this huge difference.’” Explaining to her students
that they are the first generation to be exposed to Indigenous content and perspectives as part of the Ontario curriculum, Rachel sought to empower her students to be knowledge sharers of Indigenous topics to their parents and others around them. Melissa also addressed this invitation through her discussion of why she chose to incorporate Indigenous content and perspectives. She asserted, “[A]ll students need to learn about the relationship in Canada,” and argued that it is the educator’s duty to ensure that these messages are passed on. Kevin took his duty to share knowledge seriously as a non-Indigenous educator who lived on a reserve in hope that “the next generation can do something about what [educators] are teaching.” The generational pressure placed on students by these participants stemmed from their passion to enlighten their classes on Indigenous topics that the students’ parents, and the teachers themselves, never had the opportunity to hear about as children.

According to relevant research, the strategies that the participants described can set their students up for success in understanding Indigenous worldviews and spurring positive change (Beckford, Williams & Nahdee, 2010; Chartrand, 2012; Kanu 2011; Kim 2015; Korteweg, Gonzalez & Guillet, 2009; Sterenberg, 2013). Melissa’s decision to place Eurocentric and Indigenous worldviews into conversation with each other follows Kim’s (2015) suggestion of fostering understanding through comparison. Kim’s study on the representation of Indigenous perspectives in the Ontario science curricula noted the lack of Indigenous content and urged teachers to fill this gap by comparing Indigenous and Eurocentric approaches to safeguarding the environment. Structuring her class on the Seven Grandfather Teachings and discovering with her students the divergence of the teachings from the school board’s character traits, Melissa prepared her students to understand multiple perspectives and ways of knowing that may enable them to approach a subject from multiple points of view. Furthermore, my participants’ choice to
feature sharing circles in their classes was a strategy that was also highlighted in Kanu’s (2011) study on the incorporation of Indigenous perspectives into school curricula. Kanu found that student engagement increased after participating in community circles due to a deeper understanding of the cultural significance. Exemplifying the potential of the Seven Grandfather teachings, community circles, and talking sticks to improve student engagement and awareness on Indigenous topics in the present, Melissa, Rachel and Kevin demonstrated a commitment to their students’ learning and empowerment for the future.

4.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I discussed my research findings from my three interviews and placed them into conversation with relevant literature reviewed in Chapter Two. I outlined the influence of my non-Indigenous educators’ comfort and background with Indigenous content and pedagogies on their choice to incorporate multiple perspectives. I then emphasized their views on the importance of teacher self-identification as a way to bridge the gap between Indigenous and Eurocentric worldviews. Through self-identification as settlers, the participants were able to better align themselves with their local Indigenous communities, creating support for overcoming the challenges of incorporating Indigenous content by reportedly building relationships that extended into the classroom. And lastly, I discussed the reported significance of framing Indigenous content and perspectives as present topics in relation to the relevant literature, and spoke to the participants’ emphasis on the need for students to create change. These findings responded to my research question by pointing to feasible means to create a bridge over the cultural gap between non-Indigenous educators and Indigenous content. In the following section, I will explain the importance and relevance of these findings to the
Kindergarten to Grade 8 teacher community and propose specific actions to help narrow the cultural gap between non-Indigenous educators and Indigenous content.
Chapter Five: Conclusion

5.0 Chapter Introduction

To answer my research question – what are the experiences and best practices of non-Indigenous elementary teachers in Toronto as they incorporate Indigenous content and pedagogies into their urban classrooms? – I conducted a qualitative research study that used semi-structured interviews to hear the experiences of three non-Indigenous teachers at the junior level in the Toronto District School Board. From these interviews, I placed my findings in conversation with the extant literature and discussed four prominent themes: non-Indigenous educators’ comfort and backgrounds with Indigenous pedagogies and content, self-identification as a means of connecting cultures, overcoming lack of resources through community connections, and representing Indigenous peoples in a contemporary context. In this chapter I will bring forward my key findings and suggest their significance, noting their potential implications on the educational community as well as my own professional practice. I will then make recommendations to address the implications, offer areas for further research, and provide concluding comments about the research project.

5.1 Overview of Key Findings and Their Significance

After analyzing the data from my qualitative interview study, I found that my non-Indigenous participants were able to identify barriers that complicated their incorporation of Indigenous content and issues in their classrooms, as well as the successes they experienced during this incorporation.

A significant finding was the relationship between the educator’s level of comfort with Indigenous content and their subsequent reported choice to incorporate Indigenous content and multiple perspectives into their daily teaching. All three participants reported on the inspiring
effect that their cultural exchanges with Indigenous community members had on their teaching. Identifying experiential knowledge as the key reported instigator for educators to incorporate Indigenous content and pedagogies into the classroom, my participants’ experiences add to the existing research that there is an inherent need for authentic interactions with Indigenous community members (Harrison & Greenfield, 2011; MacPherson, 2010). This is significant because it highlights the need for more education on Indigenous content and pedagogies for non-Indigenous educators, and the importance of community partnerships.

Building off of personal experiences, the participants emphasized self-identification in relation to Indigenous peoples as a significant part of their teaching. By aligning themselves with their own heritage separate from those of Indigenous communities, my participants were reportedly able to mitigate the potential of appropriating Indigenous cultures and step out of the role of expert in the classroom. Relieving the pressure for non-Indigenous teachers to be experts on Indigenous content and pedagogies is significant because it can help alleviate the fear of appropriating Indigenous cultures as non-Indigenous educators.

In these efforts to enrich their understandings as learners of Indigenous content and pedagogies, the participants expressed their need to reach beyond the Ontario curriculum for support. Having not reportedly received instruction on how to incorporate Indigenous content and pedagogies into their practice during their teacher preparation programs, the participants emphasized the importance of bringing their education up to date with relevant professional development (PD) days that address Indigenous perspectives and content in the contemporary context of Toronto today. Identifying a specific area for improvement aligns with the educational research on Indigenous content incorporation and significantly adds the specification of where
and how the content should be framed: Indigenized education courses in both pre-service and post-certification settings.

The non-Indigenous educators reported a perceived potential to bridge the cultural gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous content by placing emphasis on contemporary Indigenous practices. By introducing their urban middle school classrooms to Indigenous practices and traditions such as the Anishinaabe Seven Grandfather Teachings, community circles, and talking sticks, my participants were reportedly able to bring Indigenous content and issues into their daily teachings in ways that they perceived as meaningful and authentic. This is significant because with a modern educational context, non-Indigenous educators can make Indigenous experiences more relatable to the students, inspiring empathy and the creation of cultural bridges.

These key findings lead me to discuss the potential implications in the educational community and my practice as a teacher-researcher in the next section.

5.2 Implications

In this section I will discuss how my findings can apply both to the educational community at large and also to my own practice as a non-Indigenous educator. I will specifically address the environment surrounding Indigenous and non-Indigenous educator training, Indigenous students, the Indigenous tools educators incorporate into their classrooms, and non-monocultural classrooms. Non-monocultural classrooms are spaces where the community is composed of more than one culture, which, in the context of my research findings, provides the opportunity for cultural connections between Indigenous and non-Indigenous experiences in Canada. Then, I will address the narrow implications that my study presents for my own teaching practice and beliefs.
5.2.1 Broad implications: The educational community.

Following the release of the supplemental curriculum documents for incorporating Indigenous content into the classroom (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2014a, 2014b), my participants reported a sense of unpreparedness in teaching the expectations as non-Indigenous people. Similarly, current and future Ontario educators may also feel limited in their preparation. Melissa, Rachel and Kevin voiced that their biggest barrier to incorporating Indigenous content and pedagogies was accessible resources. This feeling of being unsupported in teaching endeavors could stretch beyond my participants and onto both non-Indigenous and Indigenous teachers in Ontario. Ontario elementary teachers may feel that they do not have sufficient access to resources in order to address the supplemental curricula (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2014a, 2014b). Teachers may perceive that inadequate emphasis is placed on instructional professional development days; budgets for bringing in visiting elders, buying Indigenous texts, and class excursions to local Indigenous sites; or school-wide initiatives that value Indigenous traditions. Teachers, as Melissa reportedly experienced, may also not receive substantial support from their administration to incorporate Indigenous content and pedagogies. These teachers may not respond with the resilience that Melissa demonstrated and may instead push valuable Indigenous issues to the side as a result of insufficient support from administration.

Expanding beyond my participants’ reported lack of resources available for non-Indigenous educators in the Toronto District School Board, addressing Indigenous content and issues can be a struggle not only for the educators, but for Indigenous students as well. Kevin noted in his interview that an Indigenous student that he previously taught was “very engaged in pretty much everything at the [urban] school.” Kevin did not elaborate on the student’s participation in specific discussions on Indigenous content. His comment however led me to
think on the influence that Indigenous students have in the classroom on community discussions regarding Indigenous content and pedagogies. It may be that, in effort to fill the resource gap, non-Indigenous educators call upon their Indigenous students to provide insight when discussing Indigenous topics. This strategy could inspire feelings of alienation and otherness in Indigenous students, as they might feel singled out in front of their peers. Additionally, Indigenous students may not be closely connected with their Indigenous community and thus might not have an Indigenous statement that has been vetted by a community Elder or Knowledge Keeper to add to classroom discussions. Utilizing Indigenous students’ experiences and knowledge in front of their classmates may ostracize these students from their non-Indigenous peers. In addition, there may be a loss of learning opportunities where the class works together to pursue Indigenous voices and create community bonds. All three of my participants highlighted the opportunity for student growth through discovering Indigenous voices. The potential misplacement of cultural authority on Indigenous students, in what might at first appear to be a resourceful tactic, may in fact hinder the entire class’s connection with the authentic exploration of Indigenous content and issues.

Mainstream ideas also pose a threat to authentic learning experiences due to the potential misconception of their traditional uses. For example, my participants were very precise in using the Anishinaabe Seven Grandfather Teachings as a connection to their specific, local community. The activities and artifacts they mentioned, such as the community circle and talking stick, however, were not associated with a specific Indigenous community or nation. Thus, Indigenous traditions such as the community circle and talking stick may have been absorbed into mainstream teaching practice, losing their specificity of place and becoming a tool of the settler instead of a symbol of partnership with the local Indigenous communities. There may also be a
tendency on the part of non-Indigenous educators bringing mainstream Indigenous practices into the classroom due to a sense of security in the popularity of the practice in their educational community rather than a passing on of knowledge from the local Indigenous community to the urban classroom.

Indigenous and non-Indigenous teachers in southern Ontario, especially Toronto, could experience greater rewards by following authentic incorporation of Indigenous worldviews such as the Anishinaabe Seven Grandfather Teachings. This framework might not be used prominently because teachers may not view it as a popular teaching tool in comparison to those strategies mentioned above. However, by bringing the focus of their instruction back to the local context, as reportedly demonstrated by Melissa and Rachel, educators in Ontario may discover that their students can find cultural connections through their own lived experiences to the Indigenous communities around them. Specifically in the diverse environment of a Toronto classroom, students may be able to associate their culture’s marginalization with that of their local Indigenous communities. Non-monocultural classes could therefore allow for an easier facilitation of discussions that address Indigenous issues due to the cultural understandings of their diverse student populations.

These broad implications have led me to reflect on, and reframe, my own pedagogies and beliefs about the education system that I will outline in the following section.

5.2.2 Narrow implications: My professional identity and practice.

Researching how to effectively incorporate Indigenous content and issues into urban classrooms as a non-Indigenous teacher over the past two years has taught me the value of carefully considering and striving to remove barriers. Resources are oftentimes limited for teachers. I believe that it is the educator’s role to do everything reasonable within their power to
provide an authentic and holistic education for each child, including opening their students’ minds to Indigenous communities and their rightful place in society. Educating our students to be good citizens involves enlightening students on the context of this land, a land that Indigenous peoples have had, and continue to have, a foundational effect on.

To do this, I will need to break the common misconception surrounding Indigenous content and issues as something of the past and bring them into the present. As a teacher-researcher, I will apply my finding of the importance of locally based Indigenous community practices and structure my classes in the TDSB on the Anishinaabe Seven Grandfather Teachings for moral and character development. I will work alongside my students, positioning myself as a settler on this largely unceded land and acknowledging my role in allyship as I embark on decolonizing my teaching. I will also bring the diverse cultures of my students into class discussions in effort to create cross-cultural connections between their communities and those of Indigenous peoples. To strengthen the educational community in which I am positioned, I will share my resources and experiences with my colleagues and bring Indigenous community elders into the class to create deeper relationships with local bands that will keep me, and my class, relevant and up-to-date with issues and events surrounding the local Indigenous communities.

I believe the purpose of schooling is to prepare students to be respectful and compassionate citizens who can understand multiple worldviews and associate them with their own perceptions. By bringing Indigenous content and perspectives into urban classrooms, students can develop their understanding of marginalized cultures, making connections to their own, as well as develop empathy and respect for Indigenous peoples. Resource equity between schools will remain a challenge as the allocation of funds varies between administrations. I will
therefore be an advocate for incorporating Indigenous content and issues at a board-wide level and remain current on opportunities for more funding and resource development.

5.3 Recommendations

In this section I will suggest recommendations within the Ontario context to improve the process of incorporating Indigenous content and issues into urban classrooms by all educators.

To begin moving forward with incorporating Indigenous content and issues into urban classrooms, teachers’ continuing educational needs should be addressed. In 2014, the Ontario Ministry of Education released *First Nations, Métis, and Inuit connections: Scope and sequence of expectations* (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2014a, 2014b) as a supplemental document to the Ontario curriculum. I suggest two steps of action to supplement this release. First, the Ministry needs to provide a general instruction for non-Indigenous and Indigenous educators from Kindergarten to Grade 12 on how to properly implement the document in the classroom beyond the report itself. Second, the Ministry should create supplemental content for non-Indigenous educators who graduated from Ontario teacher preparation courses prior to 2014. These teachers did not have the opportunity to address the new document in a teacher education course under the supervision of an instructor and might not feel confident with the new expectations. Additionally, some Indigenous educators may not have the specific content knowledge expected from the curriculum. Over the next two years, the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT) could work with their partner institutions to build off of their current additional qualification (AQ) course for First Nations, Métis and Inuit Studies that is tailored towards teaching Indigenous students, and mold the content and instruction to meet the needs of all students. The enhanced AQ could address non-Indigenous students’ reactions and tendencies
when discussing Indigenous content and pedagogies in the urban classroom and provide suggestions for educators to facilitate discussion and support in understanding.

Addressing the specific needs of their teachers, administrators in the Toronto District School Board should place an importance on funding Indigenous content initiatives such as school assemblies, class trips, library resources, and professional development days. By providing their staff with the resources necessary to gain a sense of comfort with the content, administrators can enact their supportive role and provide constructive professional development days that directly address the incorporation of Indigenous content and issues into their specific school setting. Resources such as the KAIROS Canada “Blanket Exercise”, co-developed among the Aboriginal Rights Coalition, Indigenous elders and teachers, should be implemented with the staff to educate them on “the history most Canadians are never taught” (KAIROS Canada, 2016). By seeking out PD workshops that are relevant to Toronto’s specific location on the Huron-Wendat, Seneca and Mississaugas of the New Credit Indigenous Peoples’ land, administrators can immediately begin to provide teachers with the foundation and confidence to pursue educational relationships and grow their understanding of Indigenous content and pedagogies.

Addressing the reported need for more administrative support, I recommend that TDSB administrators bring Indigenous worldviews, such as the Anishinaabe Seven Grandfather Teachings, into the school community. Starting in September of 2017, I suggest that TDSB junior and middle schools should transition their focus on monthly character development traits to an Indigenous framework that allows wisdom, love, respect, bravery, honesty, humility, and truth to be addressed fluidly. By enacting the importance of Indigenous traditions on this land, teachers may feel more supported in their own initiatives to incorporate Indigenous content and enact strategies from relevant PD days.
With the scaffolding of the new curricula (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2014a, 2014b) and prospective professional development days, teachers should also take it upon themselves to create relationships with their local Indigenous communities. Whether they follow Rachel’s lead and visit Indigenous community centres, Indigenous art museums, and exhibits; model Melissa’s example of inviting Indigenous elders into the school for assemblies; or spend time on reserves as Kevin did, educators should build a bridge between their school and their local Indigenous communities. Engagement in developing authentic relationships with local Indigenous communities should begin as soon as possible while PD days and AQ courses are created to fill the void by reaching out to the Native Canadian Centre of Toronto or the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres in the Toronto area.

These recommendations are made with the intention of suggesting ways to bridge the cultural gap between not only non-Indigenous educators and Indigenous content, but also the urban classroom and an Indigenous presence. The next section will address potential studies and research that would grow the literature around my topic even further.

5.4 Areas for Further Research

My research was conducted over the course of two years with three participating interviewees. The potential for this inquiry question – non-Indigenous educators’ experiences and best practices incorporating Indigenous content and pedagogies into the urban classroom – stretches beyond my limited scope and provides the opportunity for classrooms across Ontario to engage both educators and students at a deeper level where true understanding of the Canadian culture can be reached. My qualitative interview study addressed non-Indigenous educators’ thoughts and perceptions on the incorporation of Indigenous content and pedagogies, silencing the experiences of their students. Educational researchers should thus delve into the reactions,
understandings, and inquiries of non-Indigenous students as they are taught Indigenous content through Indigenous pedagogies for the first time. With their gathered information, suggestions could be made towards the most effective educational strategies when discussing Indigenous content and pedagogies. This strategy of liberating students’ voices can further be applied to other ethnicities that feel ostracized in the classroom and yet have a strong history on Canadian and Torontonian soil, such as Chinese students (Holland, 2007). There is thus a call for further time to be spent researching the cross-cultural applications of pedagogy infusion that has the potential to reach beyond all settler/non-settler relationships.

Yet, I still wonder how teachers working under administration that decides to allocate funds elsewhere in their school can bring necessary resources into their classrooms without drawing from their own resources. Once this barrier is overcome, I am curious as to the possibility for an Indigenous elder to observe a teacher in their urban classroom and mentor, with the intention of validating after revision, the non-Indigenous educator’s incorporation of Indigenous content and pedagogies.

5.5 Concluding Comments

Non-Indigenous educators who are endeavoring to implement the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s (2015) recommended actions on incorporating Indigenous content and pedagogies into Canada’s education system are in need of concrete stepping-stones to continue their journey. Providing educators with the successful examples of colleagues in their own regions, teachers in the Toronto District School Board can continue growing TDSB’s relationship with the local Indigenous communities. With a strong relationship, barriers can be broken and students can hear the silenced side of the conversation – enlightening themselves and potentially affecting the older generation.
My hope is that non-Indigenous educators in the TDSB can come together and develop successful strategies and community relationships for incorporating Indigenous content and issues into their teaching. Taking my position in this movement, I will continue my teacher-researcher role and actively pursue information, relationships, and experiences that can connect my students to the vital Indigenous presence in this region. In conclusion, I extend the invitation to every settler teacher, regardless of how your people came to be on this land, to take up your position as an educator in Ontario schools and beyond, and work to build the bridge that spans the cultural gap.
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Appendix A: Letter of Consent

Dear ________________________,

My name is Sarah Parker and I am a student in the Master of Teaching (MT) program at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto (OISE/UT). A component of this degree program involves conducting a small-scale qualitative research study. As a non-Indigenous pre-service teacher, my research will focus on the experiences and best practices of non-Indigenous TDSB grade 4-8 teachers who have integrated Indigenous teaching practices and/or content into their teaching. I think that your knowledge and experience will provide insights into this topic.

Your participation in this research will involve one roughly 60-75 minute interview, which will be transcribed and audio-recorded. I would be grateful if you would allow me to interview you at a place and time convenient for you, outside of school time. The contents of this interview will be used for my research project, which will include a final paper and informal presentations to my classmates. I may also present my research findings via conference presentations and/or through publication. You will be assigned a pseudonym to maintain your anonymity and I will not use your name or any other content that might identify you in my written work, oral presentations, or publications. This information will remain confidential. Any information that identifies your school or students will also be excluded.

The interview data will be stored on my password-protected computer and the only person who will have access to the research data will be my course instructor. You are free to change your mind about your participation at any time, and to withdraw even after you have consented to participate. You may also choose to decline to answer any specific question during the interview. I will destroy the audio recording after the paper has been presented and/or published, which may take up to a maximum of five years after the data has been collected. There are no known risks to participation.

Please sign this consent form, if you agree to be interviewed. The second copy is for your records. I am very grateful for your participation.

Sincerely,

Sarah Parker

MT Program Contact:
Dr. Angela Macdonald-Vemic, Assistant Professor – Teaching Stream
Consent Form

I acknowledge that the topic of this interview has been explained to me and that any questions that I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I can withdraw from this research study at any time without penalty.

I have read the letter provided to me by Sarah Parker and agree to participate in an interview for the purposes described. I agree to have the interview audio-recorded.

Signature: ______________________________________

Name: (printed) ______________________________________

Date: ______________________________________
Appendix B: Interview Protocol/Questions

Hi, __________, thank you for taking the time out of your busy schedule to meet with me and take part in my research study. As I mentioned in our email exchange, my name is Sarah Parker and I am a first year student in the Masters of Teaching program at OISE. My research is focused on exploring experiences and best practices of non-Indigenous TDSB grade 4-8 teachers who have integrated Indigenous teaching practices and/or content into their teaching. I am hoping to find successful strategies for overcoming some of the hesitancies teachers feel when incorporating Indigenous content and/or teaching strategies into their lesson designs in effort to enable present and future teachers in their practice. This interview will be divided into four sections, starting with background information about yourself, followed by experiences you have had integrating Indigenous content in the classroom, a look at some of the obstacles surrounding your teaching efforts, and next steps for teachers. The interview will take place for 60-75 minutes and will consist of approximately 20 questions. If at any time you do not want to answer a question or you would like to stop the interview, you may choose to do so. Is there anything that you would like clarification on before we start?

The recording will begin now, please start your name for my records.

Section A- Background information

1. How many years have you been teaching in Ontario?
   a. Have you ever taught outside of Ontario?
   b. If so, where?
2. What subject(s) and grade(s) do you currently teach? Have you taught any of them previously?

3. Can you please describe the neighbourhood that your current school is located in (i.e. socioeconomic status, diversity, accessibility)?
   a. Do you feel that your class represents this demographic?
   b. If so, to what extent?
   c. If not, what factor is missing?

4. Do you currently teach self-identified Indigenous students?
   a. Have you in the past?
   b. (If yes) What did you perceive to be their level of engagement in your classroom?

5. As you know, my research focuses on non-Indigenous educators enacting Indigenous content and pedagogies in the classroom. You self-identified as a non-Indigenous person. Can you briefly elaborate on this identity?
   a. Have you had any significant or sustained interactions with Indigenous peoples outside of your teaching career?
   b. If yes, can you describe this? (when, where, what who)

6. How would you define Indigenous curricular content?
   a. How about Indigenous pedagogy?

Section B- Teacher practices of incorporating Indigenous teaching strategies and/or content

7. Can you walk me through a recent lesson where you incorporated Indigenous teaching strategies and/or content?
a. Have you ever used Indigenous content or teaching strategies to help facilitate a cross-curricular activity? Please describe your inspiration behind your approach.

b. Did you have activities where an Indigenous side of the story was expressed and analysed?

c. Did you draw on any Indigenous resources such as the Teachings of the Seven Grandfathers or the Medicine Wheel during your teaching?

d. Did you incorporate Indigenous traditions into the classroom such as a talking stick or a community circle?

e. What did you perceive to be your non-Indigenous students’ level of engagement and understanding with the lesson?

f. (If applicable) What did you perceive to be your Indigenous students’ level of engagement and understanding with the lesson?

g. What would you identify as the most successful components of the lesson design?

h. What would you do differently in the lesson, if anything at all?

8. Was there a time when you identified your own positionality (i.e. as a non-Indigenous person) to your students in relation to Indigenous content?
   a. What inspired this moment?
   b. How did your students react?

   a. (If yes) Did this document affect your approach to teaching Indigenous content in any way? How so?
Section C - Beliefs and values of the educator

10. What prompted you to incorporate Indigenous teaching strategies and/or content into your classroom?

11. What do you believe students can gain from participating with Indigenous teaching strategies and/or content?

12. Research has shown that some educators view incorporating Indigenous strategies and/or content as an ‘extra’ or something to be done once Ministry expectations are satisfied. What is your take on this mindset?
   a. What do you think might account for this mindset? Please elaborate.

Section D - Barriers, supports and next steps

13. Have you encountered any barriers to your teaching that incorporates Indigenous content?
   a. Are there any specific strategies that you would have liked to incorporate but could not due to administrative regulations?

14. What resources did you find most useful when creating your Indigenized lesson designs?

15. Could you theorize on some further supports that would be beneficial for non-Indigenous educators incorporating this content?

16. What advice do you have for beginning teachers for incorporating Indigenous teaching strategies and/or content in an engaging manner?

17. What goals do you have as a non-Indigenous educator for your future and present classes for incorporating Indigenous teaching strategies and/or content?

18. Do you have any final thoughts?

Section E - Gratitude from the researcher
The interview is now over. I sincerely thank you for your time and valued responses. I particularly appreciate your insight into the incorporation of Indigenous teaching strategies and/or content and as a non-Indigenous educator. Do you have any more questions for me?