Deconstructing a Nunavut educators experience: My personal journey towards decolonial praxis

by

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ABSTRACT

Nunavut has committed to the implementation of a bilingual educational strategy. A contemporary legacy of colonialism in Nunavut, however, has complicated the implementation of a bilingual educational strategy contributing to important concerns about the presence of Inuit culture and languages. To disrupt my relationship to a contemporary legacy of colonialism, I ask how I may begin the process of decolonizing my experiences with cultural inclusion policy and language as a white male settler teacher? Applying a poststructuralist perspective that couples autoethnography and deconstruction I interrogate my subjectivity as a white male settler teacher. Several journal entries provide the basis for my analysis that through persistent questioning depart from familiar interpretation to produce openings regarding what could be happening and what could be. To conclude, I discuss both the implications and limitations of my analysis in relation to responsibility, emerging epistemology, and the potential to transition from reflection to action.
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract

Acknowledgements

Table of Contents

**Chapter One: Introduction**

  - Researcher positionality
  - My research question
  - The decolonizing approach
    - Decolonial praxis

**Chapter Two: Literature Review and Conceptual Framework**

  - Language of Instruction and educational policy
    - Martin report
    - Berger report
    - Foundation documents
    - Nunavut Education Act
      - The Qulliq model
      - The Immersion model
      - The Dual Language model
  - Criticisms
    - An assumption about language
    - Bilingual schooling
    - Hesitations regarding graduation requirements
    - Local control
    - Qallunaat educators
      - Cultural relevancy
      - Eurocentricism
      - Reconciliation
Chapter One

Introduction

Negotiations pertaining to the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement began in 1976 between the Inuit and the Government of Canada and as King (2012) explains culminated in the signing of the agreement in 1993, which “six years later, on April 1, 1999” resulted in the “new territory of Nunavut” (p. 259). While the creation of Nunavut, which translates to mean “Our Land”, was praised on behalf of the Prime Minister of Canada, King (2012) explains further how the agreement “of course” required the “abrogation of all Aboriginal rights”, particularly Inuit rights to the land (p 259). The excerpt below captures this abrogation of Inuit rights to the land:

Inuit hereby: cede, release and surrender to her Majesty The Queen in Right of Canada, all their aboriginal claims, rights, title and interests, if any, in and to lands and waters anywhere within Canada and adjacent offshore areas within the sovereignty or jurisdiction of Canada; and agree on their behalf, and on behalf of their heirs, descendants and successors not to assert any cause of action, action for declaration, claim or demand of whatever kind or nature which they ever had, now have or may hereafter have against her Majesty The Queen in Right of Canada or any province, the government of any territory or any person based on any aboriginal claims, rights, title or interests in and to lands and waters. (Nunavut Land Claims Agreement, 1993, Article 2.7.1)

Hicks and White (2000) conclude that although Inuit rights to the lands and waters were surrendered, they were granted an “array of constitutionally protected rights and benefits that the Inuit of Nunavut will exercise and enjoy in perpetuity” (p. 33). One of these protected rights and benefits concentrated on devising a revised educational strategy designed for and by the Inuit of Nunavut. With “the absence of any other curriculum”, however, as Saul (2008) argues, “in its
first years, Nunavut found itself obliged” to develop a reliance on a Canadian model, particularly “on that of Alberta” (p. 289). As Saul (2008) argues further, a Canadian model and that of Alberta is “based on largely urban assumptions” and when “applied” in Nunavut education becomes “largely irrelevant” (p. 289). In response, the education debate has continued to endure and has been largely predicated on a unique and influential piece of legislation entitled the Bathurst Mandate.

The Bathurst Mandate made “Nunavut the first jurisdiction in Canada” to connect the “official recognition of Indigenous and settler languages with specific measures to protect an Indigenous language” (Timpson, 2009, p. 160). Principally, it marked Inuktitut as the official Nunavut language and the “working language of the Government” with an objective to reach a “fully functional bilingual society in Inuktitut and English” by 2020 (Government of Nunavut, 1999, p. 7). The objective to reach a fully functional bilingual society has been deterred, however, since Inuktitut remains largely subordinate to English, which “predominates as the language of instruction, governance, and commercial exchange” (Timpson, 2009, p. 162). As a result, important concerns have been raised regarding language of instruction and how bilingualism and schooling can “confront the hidden standards” of “cultural and linguistic imperialism” (Battiste, 2013, p. 29). In an endeavour to confront the hidden standards of cultural and linguistic imperialism I will introduce my thesis by presenting my researcher positionality, my research question, and the decolonizing approach that I will be taking.

**Researcher positionality**

As I consider my researcher positionality, Butler (2005) indicates how “telling a story about oneself is not the same as giving an account of oneself”, which attends to the social conditions that I have emerged from and have been shaped by (p. 12). To begin an account of
myself that reflects how what “I came to think and what I think is infused throughout”, I will briefly detail my history (Hook, 2015, p. 983). Born in Toronto, Ontario, Canada to parents with English and Scottish ancestry I have lived primarily on Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee homelands. I am a settler and I have continued to benefit from settler colonialism. It is an acute desire for the land and an accompanying elemental devotion to claim a “new home and source of capital” that settler colonialism differs “from other forms of colonialism” (Tuck & Yang, 2012, p. 5). As a “structure not an event”, Wolfe (2006) explains how “settler colonialism destroys to replace” resulting in the dissolution of “native title into alienable individual freeholds, native citizenship, child abduction, religious conversion”, and the “resocialization in total institutions” (p. 388).

While all settlers are responsible for colluding with historical and contemporary processes of dissolution, Snelgrove, Kaur Dhamoon, and Corntassel (2014) argue that “not all settlers are created equal” (p. 6). Indeed, Snelgrove et al. (2014) argue further how “differentiations” regarding race, gender, and class intersect in “multiple ways, privileging in multiple ways” having multiple implications on settlers and their identities (p. 6). For instance, I am a white, male, university educated teacher, and I am also able bodied and heterosexual, which have and continue to produce decidedly advantaged circumstances in my life. Considering the advantaged circumstances in my life and the “profound epistemic, ontological, and cosmological violence” that is “reasserted each day” against Indigenous peoples does not contribute to a sense of pride, but rather a sense of frustration and guilt (Tuck & Yang, 2012, p. 5).

If a sense of frustration and guilt is to become “at all transformative” it “must be accompanied by thought and practice attentive to their respective sources” and be “guided by accountability and respect, care and renewal”, and “urgency and insurgency” (Snelgrove et al.,
Engaging in such thought and practice requires what Sykes (2014) describes as particular types of “imaginations” capable of unsettling “practices of empire” (p. 4). It is in the direction of such imaginations and such unsettling that I will be blending “my passionate journey” and “my heart journey” with my “academic and political journeying” (Sykes, 2014, p. 5). As an educator in a small primarily Inuit community in Nunavut I live the topic that I will be researching. To determine how to “work from, yet against, my privileged positions” as an educator in a small primarily Inuit community in Nunavut I am resolved, then, to utilize a pedagogy of positionality (Sykes, 2014, p. 5).

A pedagogy of positionality involves “recognizing and critiquing” how I occupy privileged positions, how I position others, and why I believe what I do about myself, others, and my surroundings (Kumashiro, 2000, p. 37). This, Kincheloe (2003) explains, can serve to uncover “inherited dogmas”, preconceptions, and enable me to see myself “in relation to the world” around me. As I endeavour to uncover my own preconceptions I am guided by a quote from Michel Foucault given during an interview, which suggests that “people know what they do; they frequently know why they do what they do; but they do not know what they do does” (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1983, p. 187). This quote thereby suggests the importance of affronting intentions, decisions, and also what happens in a form of activism that is capable of agitating what Cannon (2012) refers to as the “institutional normality of things” (p. 33).

**My research question**

My research question centres on how I may begin the process of decolonizing my experiences with language and cultural inclusion policy as a white male settler teacher? To begin the process of decolonizing my experiences I will endeavour to identify and engage colonizing structures, biases, and stereotypes embedded within language and cultural inclusion policy as a
white male settler teacher. This endeavour represents what will become an ongoing and consistent interrogation of colonizing structures, biases, and stereotypes to enable an invaluable disassembling of my actions and thoughts. Such a disassembling will contribute to an awareness of and subsequent critique of the binaries that regulate my thoughts and actions towards the contradictory, the unfamiliar, and the uncomfortable. It is towards the contradictory, the unfamiliar, and the uncomfortable that I will query what is said, what is not, what is implied, what is assumed, who is speaking, who is left out or silenced, and how certain narratives might be constrained. As I do so, I will consistently query for the potential to transform my personal “philosophy, pedagogy, and practice” so to nurture Inuit “knowledge, dignity, identity, and integrity” (Battiste, 2013, p. 66).

The decolonizing approach

As Battiste (2013) indicates, a decolonizing approach to research design should have a “respect” for “pluralities, multiplicities, and diversities” (p. 107). In response, I have chosen to predicate my research design on a poststructuralist perspective to provide a respect for pluralities, multiplicities, and diversities and a potential to contribute to “an other thinking” (Mignolo, 2000, p. 68). From a poststructuralist perspective, an other thinking “is not intended to dominate and to humiliate”, but is “a way of thinking that is universally marginal, fragmentary, and unachieved” (Mignolo, 2000, p. 68). It is also about identifying opportunities for an epistemic alternative that is capable of troubling the domains of acceptable thought that disguise themselves whilst claiming a “singular or total” truth (Battiste, 2013, p. 107). An epistemic alternative, rather than trying to tell a singular or total truth, can “change the terms, not just the content of the conversation” (Mignolo, 2000, p. 70).
To change the terms, not just the content of the conversation is to engage various “strategies” and “struggles” that may enable the decolonization of the “powerful Eurocentric assumptions” that permeate education (Battiste, 2013, p. 107). For Battiste (2013), the “process of unpacking” the recitals of “difference in curriculum and pedagogy”, how “cultural racism” provides “justification for the status quo”, and how to advocate “for Indigenous knowledge as a legitimate education topic”, is required to enable the decolonization of Eurocentric assumptions (p. 107). The process of unpacking that I will engage consists of a combination of reflection and action towards what Alfred (2009) refers to as a “decolonial praxis” (p. 140).

**Decolonial praxis.** Alfred (2009) asks what form of decolonial praxis is required to “subvert the interplay between structure and subjectivity that sustain colonial relations” (p. 140)? In an attempt to subvert the interplay between structure and subjectivity I will be coupling autoethnography with deconstruction to problematize the colonial relations present between the school and my subject position as an educator in Nunavut. Specifically, autoethnography and deconstruction will be used to engage in deconstructive readings of several journal entries that I wrote during my first years as an educator in Nunavut. As I engage in deconstructive readings of several journal entries I have sought to interrogate the politics of knowing that reside within institutional curriculum and related hierarchies.

For Mignolo (2000), when deconstructing decisions about the politics of knowing occurs where “Western metaphysics” intersect the multitude of other principles “governing modes of thinking” the potential to decolonize emerges (p. 326). In particular, the potential to decolonize emerges in the form different ways of knowing. As Mignolo (2000) explains, different ways of knowing are necessary to not only “undo the subalternatization of knowledge”, but to also “look for ways of thinking beyond the categories” that have come to prevail (p. 326). Such categories,
however, cannot be overcome from within. In response, the “borders between transforming received global designs into local projects” become paramount to any attempt aimed to confront and resist hegemony (Mignolo, 2000, p. 327). The Inuit struggle for bilingual schooling and language rights represents one of the borders wherein local projects and local histories confront and resist hegemony. It is within the relationship between bilingual schooling and language rights that I situate myself and the proposed study.
Chapter Two

Literature review and conceptual framework

Education in Nunavut and the struggle for language rights is embedded in a desire to “promote and preserve” Inuktitut despite an educational legacy that was responsible for bringing it to “near death” (Alyward, 2010, p. 297). Such a legacy is important to remember when investigating the relationship between bilingual schooling and language rights, which continue to be contested in the present. In what follows, I will discuss this relationship by concentrating on language of instruction and educational policy, both elements of education in the territory that have resulted in a myriad of criticism. After discussing the elements of education in the territory that have received criticism, I will present the characteristics of the underlying paradigms before transitioning to discuss why I will be engaging a poststructuralist perspective. Engaging a poststructuralist perspective, I will argue, enables a variety of different opportunities, not only in the form of “methodological choices, but choices about resistance and allegiance to the hegemony of Eurocentric thought” (Strega, 2005, p. 199). Such choices, I will argue further, can disturb Eurocentric thought by both capturing and troubling the complexity and contradiction attendant to my experiences as a white male settler teacher.

Language of instruction and educational policy

Language of instruction and educational policy have endured a variety of alterations since Nunavut was established in 1999. After initially discussing the language of instruction debate by centring on two reports that can be referred to as the Martin report and the Berger report, I will discuss educational policy with a concentration on the foundation documents and the Nunavut Education Act. Both reports, the foundation documents, and the Nunavut Education Act, together represent essential contributions to education in the territory largely determining the what, why,
and how. These essential contributions are routinely referenced and used to inform decisions about education in the territory.

**Martin report.** Shortly following the creation of Nunavut, Ian Martin was commissioned to write a report that would “examine the language of instruction” and the “potential” for a new bilingual education system (Timpson, 2009, p. 168) Martin (2000) in his report explained how Nunavut “inherited” a bilingual education system from the Northwest Territories that centred on an early exit transitional model (p. 5). This early exit transitional model meant that when children were “beginning to feel comfortable in school and in writing their own language” they would be “mainstreamed” into “English and required to learn mathematics, social studies, science, and all other subjects in a language other than their strongest one” (p. 5). After children were mainstreamed their own language would cease to be “supported, cherished, developed, and valued” (Martin, 2000, p. 5).

Garcia (2009) discusses how those “who speak a language” that is unsupported are “encouraged to abandon that language and instead take up only the dominant language” (p. 51). In keeping with subtractive approaches to bilingualism, those who speak a language that is unsupported will inevitably be rendered monolingual, in essence “subtracting the possibility of their bilingualism” (Garcia, 2009, p. 52). Subtractive approaches to bilingualism were further problematized by Martin (2000) as they relate to Nunavut:

- They do not help Inuit students learn either language, English or Inuktitut, at a high level of bilingualism;

- Contribute to the marginalization of Inuit traditional knowledge, which is principally expressed in Inuit language;
- Prevent a cultural negotiation between Inuit People and Canadians on a level playing field of mutual respect and knowledge;

- Cut young people off from their Inuit heritage and prevents them from passing on this heritage to their own children;

- Reinforce the cultural gap between Inuit communities and schools, and set schools apart as foreign institutions, and finally;

- Deny the linguistic human rights of Inuit People (p. 6).

While there is the prospect whenever “two languages are in contact, that one of the languages will be replaced by the other”, Martin (2000) inquires about the implication of this beyond the school and for Inuit communities in Nunavut (p. 13). Since the school is itself an institution of Western origin and conceptualization, Martin (2000) answers with skepticism regarding whether or not the school will be able to “resist” this troubling reality, suggesting instead that the school is likely to become an “active agent in language shift” inevitably replacing the “home and community language with another” (p. 13). Language shift reflects “differences” in the “value” and “status” that will be “conferred on each of the two languages” and may lead to the loss of the home and community language (Garcia, 2009, p. 80).

An acknowledgement of the differences in the value and status of languages has lead to increased international pressure and legislation aimed at protecting not only languages, but also culture and identity. One particular piece of legislation directed at protecting languages and culture and identity was the Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights signed in 1996 in Barcelona, Spain on behalf of UNESCO. As the Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights made clear, “language communities have the right to decide to what extent their language is to be
present, as a vehicular language and as an object of study, at all levels of education within their territory: preschool, primary, secondary, technical and vocational, university, and adult education” (p. 10). Martin (2000) referenced this right and made the argument that “a weak model”, such as the one being utilized at that moment, did “not respect the linguistic human rights of students and communities” and certainly did not respect Inuit autonomy nor their capacity to decide to what extent the Inuit language is present (p. 22). Despite writing only recently after the signing of the Bathurst Mandate, which sought to advance the linguistic human rights of students and communities in ways that would respect Inuit autonomy, the argument against a weak model as an impediment to linguistic and cognitive ability requires significant attention.

For Martin (2000), there was an “opportunity” that “should not be missed” to depart from narrow and harmful conceptualizations to provide “a concrete positive path toward Inuit language, afforded by the creation of Nunavut” (p. 25). In response, Martin (2000) emboldened Nunavut authorities to put into place a framework that would “promote high levels of bilingualism and biliteracy” (p. 41). The proposed framework took an additive approach and centred on advancing bilingualism and biliteracy by “insisting” that the “two languages be functionally compartmentalized” (Garcia, 2009, p. 116).

Referred to as the “Qulliq model” the additive approach consisted of initially teaching Inuktitut as the first of two languages in a “head start” program before Kindergarten (Martin, 2000, p. 41). In the Qulliq model, Inuktitut would be taught exclusively from Kindergarten to Grade 3, then from Grades 4 to 6 English would only be introduced as a subject, and then from Grade 7 onwards some subjects would be taught in Inuktitut and others in English. Martin (2000) argued that this represented a “true maintenance model” because Inuktitut would be the main
language of instruction for the first eight years of schooling and then taught alongside English throughout the later grades (p. 49).

A true maintenance model, Martin (2000) argued further, is the “main solution to the transition problem” for the simple reason that “there is no more transition” since “both languages are valued for fluency and for literacy” (p. 54). Both languages would thereby “work together to build a house of language and thinking skills” (Martin, 2000, p. 49). Garcia (2009) discusses how the potential for “maintenance bilingual education” can materialize in settings wherein ethnolinguistic groups might have a “certain measure of agency” and a desire to oppose sociolinguistic norms (p. 231). Maintenance bilingual education is thus suitable in settings wherein ethnolinguistic groups value their home language yet also feel it is important that their children become “proficient in the dominant language of society” (Garcia, 2009, p. 232). As a result, there is always a sort of balance, though not necessarily equal, between the home language and the dominant language of society. To provide balance that was equitable Martin (2000) explained that the “sound developmental educational philosophy” would need to be supplemented with “clear guidelines for curriculum” and materials and “bilingual teachers” with adequate “teacher preparation” (p. 54).

Berger report. Several years later, Thomas Berger was requested to write a report that would assist in achieving “conciliation between the Government of Nunavut, Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated, and the Government of Canada” regarding the failure of “negotiations over the renewal” of the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement implementation (Timpson, 2009, p. 169). Berger (2006) in his report made connections between the failure of negotiations, the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement stipulation for government employment to reflect the population of Inuit in the territory, and an adequate number of “qualified Inuit” who are “truly
competent in Inuktitut” and English (p. iv). This was attributed to poor Inuit training and poor bilingual education. As Pelly (2014) argues, the result was a “circular problem” insofar as a low ratio of Inuit teachers directly affects the quality of bilingual education contributing to graduates who are unqualified for public service (p. 62).

As Berger (2006) explained, just when Inuit students begin to master Inuktitut they are required to start over and “find themselves behind” having difficulty with a foreign curriculum predicated on English (p. v). When Inuit students “advance into higher grades” they not only endure an “institutional rejection” of Inuktitut, but also a “demonstration of their personal incapacity”, which “reinforces the colonial message of inferiority” as the “curriculum becomes more dependent on reading and books” and “on a capacity in English that they simply do not have” (Berger, 2006, p. v). For Bainbridge (2007), such an institutional rejection results in young people “voting with their feet on the relevance of their schools” and thus “dropping out” (p. 763).

Relevance is hindered, Berger (2006) argued, simply because the entire “education system” was “not one that was set up for a people speaking Inuktitut”, but English (p. vi). Inuktitut cannot be left, in the words of Berger (2006), “to fend for itself as an Aboriginal language for only private use” against English, which is easily consumed at the level of teacher instruction, media, and culture in general (p. vi). In response, Timpson (2009) describes how the proposed solution embraced “a language strategy that took account of the Indigenous and settler languages that were most prominent in the territory” (p. 170). Such a strategy, however, required a “robust and effective system of bilingual education (Berger, 2006, p. 30). The proposed system concentrated on the development of the “first and second language skills” on behalf of Inuit People “by the time they complete their schooling” in ways that would enable them to “maintain
their identity and their culture, and at the same time be equipped to enter governmental or private
sector employment” (Berger, 2006, p. 30).

What Berger (2006) specifically proposed centred on “language nests” (p. 31). As Garcia
(2009) explains, language nests originated from the New Zealand Maori as a means to “reverse
the language shift” that they had previously endured towards “regenerating” their “heritage
language” through a process of “immersion revitalization” (p. 247). A process of immersion
revitalization would function within a program that includes a daycare component, an elementary
and secondary component, and a component that goes beyond into adult literacy and basic
education programs. A fundamental objective of the program would be the development of a
new generation of Inuit teachers. Until this new generation of Inuit teachers materialized,
however, Berger (2006) stressed the importance of accessing adults and elders “in every
community who speak Inuktitut well” (p. 32). These adults and elders would not only be asked to
share their knowledge of the Inuktitut language, but would also be asked to share a variety of
other skills to ensure that “life on the land would not be forgotten” (Berger, 2006, p. 32). Doing
so, it was hoped, would establish a framework that could affirm identity, improve achievement,
and strengthen language practices.

As Timpson (2009) suggests, the framework “clearly” captured an attempt to “rethink the
idea of bilingualism” and to “embrace” both the “Indigenous and settler languages that were
most prominent in the territory” (p. 170). For its implementation, however, the framework
needed a significant increase in federal funding specifically to “develop the levels of teacher
training and curriculum resources necessary” (Timpson, 2009, p. 170). Although the Federal
Government set up a working group to review the recommendations, it refused to “inject
additional target funds into Nunavut over and above those allocated through territorial formula
financing” (Timpson, 2009, p. 171). It was not until legal action was taken against the Federal Government on behalf of Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated, the group that oversees the implementation of Nunavut Land Claims Agreement, that any money was received. Specifically, Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated claimed that underfunding was directly responsible for what was deemed an educational failure since “Inuit only make up about half of the government workforce” (“Ottawa pays Nunavut Inuit $255m in settlement”, 2015, p. 1). While “$1 billion in damages” was demanded, which it was argued could have been earned by Inuit People if they had their fair “share of government jobs”, on May 4, 2015, a settlement was finally reached for “$255 million” in reparations to be paid promptly (“Ottawa pays Nunavut Inuit $255m in settlement”, 2015, p. 1).

Although the settlement was heralded a success, the majority of the $256 million was slated to be placed in a “fund to provide Inuit with necessary job skills” through training programs, but is “not to be used to upgrade” the overall education system considered to be the responsibility of the territorial government (“Ottawa pays Nunavut Inuit $255m in settlement”, 2015, p. 1). This did not sit well amongst all members of the territorial government who voiced serious concerns several days later upon learning from Minister Leona Aglukkaq that the Conservative Government was ratifying an agreement for a “$2.7 million language promotion fund” wherein “$1.625 million is for the French language and $1.1 million for the Inuit language” (Offices of the Languages Commissioner of Nunavut, 2015, p. 1). Languages Commissioner Sandra Inutiq made apparent her concerns that the “funds for Inuit language have stayed the same” for nearly a decade and that “more equitable funding for the Inuit language” in Nunavut is required (Offices of the Languages Commissioner of Nunavut, 2015, p. 1).
Fully supporting Sandra Inutiq, James Etoolook, the Vice President of Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated, added that promoting Inuktitut is essential and a “cornerstone in keeping our language strong” and it is “unacceptable that such inadequate and inequitable resources continue to be allocated to Nunavut” (Offices of the Languages Commissioner of Nunavut, 2015, p. 1). The “federal government has a direct responsibility to redress the Inuit language situation” Sandra Inutiq argued, due to “their role in assimilation policies of the past” (Offices of the Languages Commissioner of Nunavut, 2015, p. 1). Shortly afterwards in an article published by Nunatsiaq Online, she was quoted encouraging others with similar feelings regarding the “larger objectives of keeping Inuit language vital” to write to their member of parliament (Rohner, 2015, p. 1).

**Foundation documents.** In 2007 the first of six foundation documents entitled Inuit Qaujimajatugangit: Education Framework for Nunavut Curriculum (2007) was published. Underlying Inuit Qaujimajatugangit: Education Framework for Nunavut Curriculum (2007), which McGregor (2013) describes as a “landmark document”, is an important philosophical approach to education in Nunavut (p. 100). Such a philosophical approach is not aimed at a “return to the past, but a ground of education in the strengths of the Inuit” and Inuit ways of knowing to successfully negotiate the world of today (Nunavut Department of Education, 2007, p. 20). Inuit philosophy consisting of “beliefs, laws, principles, values, skills, knowledge, and attitudes”, would be detailed further a year later when two more foundation documents were released, including Inuglugijaittuq: Foundation for Inclusive Education in Nunavut Schools (2008), and Ilitaunnikuliriniq: Foundations for Dynamic Assessment as Learning in Nunavut Schools (2008) (p. 20).
Nunavut Education Act. Passed in 2008, the Nunavut Education Act demonstrated a commitment to reflect Inuit philosophy and demanded that education in Nunavut “account for linguistic, cultural, and local relevance to Inuit” (McGregor, 2013, p. 100). The Nunavut Education Act would become the “first provincial or territorial education legislation that strongly represents the educational vision of an Indigenous population in the history of Canada”, and contained specific stipulations for control of education in Nunavut by Inuit People (McGregor, 2013, p. 100). One of its stipulations was that a district education authority in each community consisting of appointed members would “decide which of English or French will be used with the Inuit language as a language of instruction for the schools under its jurisdiction and shall from the options set out in the regulations, choose the bilingual education model or models that will be followed in delivering the education program” (Nunavut Education Act, 2008, s. 24). A district education authority is able to choose its model from three possible options, which include the Qulliq, Immersion, and Bilingual models presented below.

**The Qulliq model.** Similar to the one proposed by Ian Martin, the Qulliq model is and has been identified as the “one likely to meet the needs of most Nunavut communities where Inuktitut is the first language of the community” (Nunavut Department of Education, 2012, p. 35). In the Qulliq model Inuktitut is supported “as the main language of instruction” until Grade 3 before English is gradually integrated in Grades 4 to 6, then reaching an even split in the later grades (p. 35).

**The Immersion model.** Recommended for “communities that have experienced profound language loss” is the Immersion model (Nunavut Department of Education, 2012, p. 35). Reversing this loss is the objective of the Immersion model with the “majority of instruction”
being in Inuktitut throughout the elementary grades before gradually moving to an even split with English in later grades (p. 35).

**The Dual Language model.** Intended for “communities who have a large base”, the Dual Language model integrates Inuktitut and English language speakers into classrooms so that both languages are used for instruction (Nunavut Department of Education, 2012, p. 35). It is suggested that most of the day be taught in Inuktitut until Grade 6 and then gradually shift to an even split in the later grades.

**Criticism**

Criticism of education in Nunavut has been abundant and raises important concerns about the relationship between language rights and bilingual schooling. The criticism is interrelated and functions to uncover an assumption about language, to largely condemn the direction of bilingual schooling, to inform hesitations regarding graduation requirements, and to consider opportunities for local control. After briefly discussing each of criticisms, I will move to discuss another significant area of commentary, which concentrates on Qallunaat educators. Qallunaat educators, which in Inuktitut means “white man” or “European”, is a common theme and area of commentary since Qallunaat educators are deemed essential due to the “challenge” to both train and retrain a “sufficient number of Inuit educators, administrators, and support staff” (McGregor, 2010, p. 5). In response, this theme is regularly discussed in relation to educational practice, educational policy, and Inuit sovereignty, reflecting an ongoing negotiation between different ways of knowing and the struggle on behalf of Inuit People for linguistic and cultural preservation.

**An assumption about language.** There is an assumption about language that as Makoni and Pennycook (2005) explain results in the “privileging of supposedly expert” and “scientific
linguistic knowledge over everyday understandings of language” (p. 146). In particular, this assumption about language is that Inuktitut is the mother tongue of all young people in territory. While Inuktitut could indeed be deemed the mother tongue for some young people in the territory, such a belief diminishes how languages might vary from community to community, how certain languages might be used and intertwined within different homes, and is premised on what Garcia (2009) refers to as “monolingual norms” (p. 56). Languages from the perspective of monolingual norms assume a distinction and separation that they are learned linearly, and that children as emergent bilinguals are akin to “two monolinguals” (Garcia, 2009, p. 57). In Nunavut, children as emergent bilinguals are arguably akin to two monolinguals since both instruction and organization ensure a process wherein speaking practices undergo a lengthy period of near complete abandon at the expense of others, only to reverse several years later. An alternative conception, however, is that speaking practices can and do develop together not in opposition or competition and that when allowed to, are indeed acquired simultaneously.

**Bilingual schooling.** The general direction of bilingual schooling is arguably flexible to “respond to bilingual contexts that do not fit easily into existing paradigms” and allow for adaptation (Creese & Blackledge, 2010, p. 106). Despite this general direction, “today in Nunavut” Inuktitut is typically the language of instruction from Kindergarten through to Grades 3 or 4, and then “in Grades 4 and 5 Inuktitut is abandoned as a language of instruction” when children “are introduced to English” (Pelly, 2014, p. 63). Although the capacity of this to meet the Bathurst Mandate objective of achieving a fully functional bilingualism with Inuktitut and English by 2020 is regularly scrutinized, the desire and demand for bilingualism has not diminished. If this desire is to be fulfilled, however, Alyward (2010) is adamant that early exit transitional models be abandoned because the “preservation of English language standards” only
further contributes to “cultural and linguistic marginalization” (p. 297). For Alyward (2010), early exit transitional models render the first language as a mere “bridge” to the “dominant language, and once English is learned, the bridge is then burned” (p. 298). While every model will inevitably have its limitations, opinions continue to be shared and contested regarding what type of model and strategies for implementation are required.

**Hesitations regarding graduation requirements.** The hesitations regarding graduation requirements are arguably predicated on an inability to recognize assessment as a “political act”, for as Garcia (2009) explains, “testing is not neutral” since it will always reflect the expectations, assumptions, and worldviews that are tied to particular “ideological agendas” (p. 367). “Every assessment is an assessment of language”, Garcia (2009) explains further, which excludes students whose language practices differ from what is considered dominant (p. 370). In Nunavut, nearly all of the subject areas in the higher grades are taught and assessed in English including math, science, social studies, health, and physical education. English proficiency is therefore prioritized. For Berger (2007), such proficiency is prioritized further by a “high stakes high school English exam created and graded in Alberta” that was not designed by, for, or with Inuit students (p. 6). Successfully completing this high school English exam is necessary to graduate and risks placing an ability in English as the standard, rendering an ability in Inuktitut as both irrelevant and secondary to receiving a diploma. As a result, a discrepancy between the “monolingualism” of testing and the “intended bilingualism of the classroom”, school, and community becomes apparent (Garcia, 2009, p. 367).

**Local control.** McGregor (2012) explains how “since at least 2002, Inuit outside the Department of Education have said that their level of local control, and consequently their capacity to shape the education system was higher prior to the creation of Nunavut” (p. 163).
This is because Inuit People were able to participate on regional boards, which enabled opportunities insofar as the access to training and administrative support is concerned. Regional boards, however, have been replaced by district education authorities consisting of elected individuals. District education authorities have “no supervisory authority and no authority to fire staff”, but are “allocated a budget largely based on student population” or rather attendance that can be spent on “school supplies” and “cultural activities” (McGregor, 2012, p. 163). Although each community can create its own locally developed units, they are required to meet the department standards for curriculum. Furthermore, as McGregor (2012) explains, the capacity to create locally developed units is “severely limited in practice by the lack of access” to funding that “regionalized or combined efforts” enabled (p. 163). Previously, combined efforts had enabled “shared outcomes in areas like book publishing, training initiatives, and developing study units” (McGregor, 2012, p. 163). Without shared outcomes these areas are vastly hindered, which further contributes to significant variations across communities insofar as educational programming and related materials are concerned.

**Qallunaat educators.** The characteristics of education in the territory cannot be disassociated from the presence of Qallunaat educators, which embody what Dion (2009) refers to as the “perfect stranger” characterization (p. 179). As Higgins, Madden, and Korteweg (2015) argue, the perfect stranger characterization is confirmed whenever Qallunaat educators deny the “role that whiteness plays in shaping” their lives as well as having “claims of knowing little to nothing” about Inuit People and culture (p. 251). Often, as Higgins et al. (2015) argue further, this informs an unawareness of their “personal ethnicity and ancestry” and how “their race” and their whiteness determine “their lenses onto the world” (p. 258). For Frankenberg (1993), “whiteness is a location of structural advantage” and “privilege”, it is the “place from which
white people” consider themselves, “others, and society”, and it “refers to a set of cultural practices that are usually unmarked and unnamed” (p. 1). When whiteness frames the cultural practices and understandings of white teachers it allows Western ways of knowing “coupled with false notions of universality” and “meritocracy” to become “centred” (Higgins et al., 2015, p. 269).

Not only do white teachers continue to comprise the majority of teachers in the territory, but educational scholarship has been conducted primarily on their behalf. In response, the voices of Inuit People are largely absent from educational scholarship, which necessitates a cyclical pattern insofar as settlers are both identifying and endeavouring to resolve perceived patterns. As Tuck and Yang (2012) explain, settlers “are not immigrants” who are “beholden” to the “laws and epistemologies of the lands they migrate to” (p. 6). Rather, as Tuck and Yang (2012) explain further, “settlers become the law” thereby “supplanting” any and all preceding laws and epistemologies (p. 7).

Tuck and Yang (2012) refer to “moves to innocence” to discuss the tendency on behalf of settlers to ascertain “mercy or relief” in response to the “relentlessness of settler guilt” (p. 9). Moves to innocence consist of strategies that concentrate on “rescuing a settler future” that is “accountable to settlers” when it should be “accountable to Indigenous sovereignty” (Tuck & Yang, 2012, p. 35). While strategies can include claiming ancestral affinity, the inclusion of Indigenous content, and assuming solidarity with Indigenous peoples, they can also include commentaries that both authorize and legitimize settler worldviews. Together, cultural relevancy, Eurocentricism, reconciliation, and the interrelated arguments and issues, are representative of such commentaries.
**Cultural relevancy.** The expressed need for cultural relevancy has centred on criticising education in the territory whilst also endeavouring to identify strategies for improvement. For instance, Alyward (2009) applied an inductive category process to multiple survey responses on behalf of Qallunaat educators to discuss how related arguments can be divided to include an “adherence to Alberta curricula and examinations”, the presence of “family”, and “student engagement” (p. 83). These Qallunaat educators believed that students drop out of school to pursue different career direction and that this could be curbed if a unique Grade 12 qualification was to be created. While a unique Grade 12 credential aimed to disseminate traditional knowledge could be specialized within the territory to raise the “graduation rate and to improve access to employment”, it would likely “not meet the accepted Canadian national standard” (Alyward, 2009, p. 84). In response, a concern regarding the compatibility and inclusion of traditional knowledge with formal schooling has been raised.

One particular area of concern was the relationship between parental partnerships and formal schooling. Indeed, insufficient parental partnerships were identified as a barrier to upholding school practices and policies. Rather than rethinking school practices and policies, parents alone have been blamed for the low academic achievement of their children. Another reason provided for low academic achievement was attributed to biculturalism. Biculturalism, Alward (2009) explains, reflects the relationship between “culturally relevant learning” that would occur beyond that of the dominant culture of the schools (p. 86). Discussed as a negative and hindrance to success, the proposed solution to biculturalism is the provision of culturally relevant life skills programming within schools. Although the proposed solution promotes “cultural transmission” through the provision of culturally relevant life skills, there is a contradiction insofar as an accompanying concentration on improving English proficiency
engenders “cultural assimilation and imperialism” (Battiste, 1984, p. 1). The contradiction is founded on an assumption regarding the benignity of English proficiency, rather than literacy as a “social concept more reflective of culture and context than of the levels of formal instruction” that are typically measured (Battiste, 1984, p. 2).

In a later study, Alyward (2010) interviewed five Southern and five Inuit teachers before conducting a discourse analysis regarding perceptions of the bilingual language system and literacy, finding that the “survival of Inuit languages” was a priority (p. 303). The survival of Inuit languages meant ensuring their presence in the classrooms and communities. Doing so would require the emergence of leaders in the communities to provide the knowledge necessary for Inuktitut to be renewed within both the school and the home. Ensuring that Inuktitut could be renewed within both the school and the home was hindered, however, by a perceived inability on behalf of students to appreciate the need to learn Inuktitut. In response, there was a perceived need to not only convince students about the value of their culture and identity, but to also improve the quality of instruction. Specifically, the quality of the “Nunavut teacher education program” was questioned for being below that of other “Canadian university bachelor of education programs” (Alyward, 2010, p. 308). The Nunavut teacher education program is designed for graduates from Nunavut schools to attend and become qualified to teach in Nunavut schools. Individuals who have completed it are not numerous enough to fulfil the desire for teachers from Nunavut to adapt and deliver the curriculum.

Beyond the teachers themselves, a demand for applicable curriculum materials was determined by Berger and Epp (2005) after interviewing twenty “educators in nine schools in five communities” (p. 4). Of these educators, “only one participant was Inuit”, which Berger and Epp (2005) explain is predictable since the researcher spent “too little time” to “allow trust to
build” between him and other potential Inuit participants (p. 4). The participants involved argued for “relevant resources in English”, but they “noted an even greater lack of Inuktitut resources” (Berger & Epp, 2005, p. 6). A lack of relevant resources places the onus on those teaching to translate and make adaptations to whatever is available to them.

A final area of interest discussed by Berger and Epp (2005) is the desire for an “orientation to culture and inservicing to help Southern teachers understand their students and teach them effectively” (p. 8). Without such an orientation and inservicing Southern teachers essentially guarantee that “misunderstandings and frustrations will occur” and as a result it is “students who suffer the consequences” (Berger & Epp, 2005, p. 10). Alyward (2009) takes this further to state that such misunderstandings and frustrations function to reaffirm “constructions of difference as deficit” (p. 87). In response, Alyward (2009) argues that “Nunavut educators” and their “professional and personal demands”, despite their cultural or ethnic backgrounds, should not be ignored since “they are key to creating a positive learning environment and planning educational change” (p. 88). The “explanations and theorizations” of Nunavut educators in regards to their professional and personal demands, Alyward (2010) argues again, are essential not only to “consider education” in its contemporary form, but to also conceptualize a system that is “truly equitable” (p. 318).

**Eurocentricism.** Dismissive of Indigenous knowledge and languages, Eurocentrism functions to maintain and perpetuate the English language and a variety of “racist practices and attitudes” (Smith, 2012, p. 9). There is a historical and contemporary relationship with the school that diminishes Indigenous knowledge and languages and advances the English language. Indeed, the school advances Eurocentric thought to omit, ignore, and exclude other ways of knowing whilst promoting a life in Eurocentric contexts complete with entertainment, books, and
values that devalue Indigenous contexts. For Berger (2006), education in Nunavut is not only premised on Eurocentric thought, but this thought remains omnipresent in what are referred to as “Qallunaat schools” since they are “patterned after and retain most characteristics” of schools in the Canadian South (p. 9).

Education in the territory together with Qallunaat schools graduate “few” students and contribute to assimilation by disseminating “EuroCanadian norms with dire consequences” (Berger, 2006, p. 9). Berger (2007) argues that education in Nunavut is immersed with EuroCanadian norms, which despite “important changes” in the form of “hiring” greater numbers of “Inuit teachers at the primary and junior levels, the use of Inuktitut in the early grades, and the development of new curriculum” maintains this process of assimilation (p. 2). While the advancement of curriculum enmeshed in Inuit culture and language has been prioritized, the Office of the Auditor General of Canada (2013) has indicated that the “pace of developing teaching resources” in the form of books and manuals “has been slow” (p. 15). In response the Office of the Auditor General of Canada (2013) recommended that the:

Department of Education should reassess its plans for developing the remainder of the required teaching resources, in the required languages, and should determine what adjustments are to be made and when. It should also consider other options, such as adapting resources from other jurisdictions for use in the Nunavut education system. (p. 16)

Adapting resources from other jurisdictions raises important concerns about reaffirming a dependence on a fundamentally Western curriculum, resources, and teaching methods, which are further compounded and embodied by “Qallunaat teachers” who “still comprise the majority of teachers in Nunavut”, especially in the higher grade levels (Berger, 2007, p. 2). Berger (2009)
conducted “ethnographic interviews” with a large number of community members and in a combination of “observation”, staff room “interactions” with teachers, and field notes, to investigate the role of Qallunaat teachers and “Inuit wishes for schooling” (p. 58). As a prior teacher in the territory, Berger (2009) returned to the community and also participated in two “school improvement meetings” (p. 58).

From the school improvement meetings in particular, Berger (2009) argues that “many examples of Eurocentric beliefs” were evident including recommendations on behalf of Southern educators to use only “English as the language of instruction, starting in Kindergarten, so that students could better compete” and really learn English (p. 59). This instance in one of the school improvement meetings is referred to as an example of Southern educators misunderstanding the linguistic context. The other aspect of such misunderstanding on behalf of some “Qallunaat school staff” was that “all of the children were fully bilingual”, which in response “Inuit community members expressed dismay” and “fear” at how “shallow” their understanding is (Berger, 2009, p. 60). Qallunaat school staff also shared feelings about young people being unable to “succeed at school because of the deficiencies in their home culture”, which included a judgment of Inuit parents and their conception of time (Berger, 2009, p. 61).

Berger (2009) presents a meeting with high school instructors and a superintendent about the direction of schooling, which meant “seven white males discussing the future of Inuit education” (p. 63). After explaining how “positions of authority today are held mostly by Qallunaat”, Berger (2009) cautions that if the “bureaucracy remains white, we should not expect it to rush in and dismantle Eurocentric hegemony” (p. 63). Eurocentric hegemony is “embedded” in the “educational system” and within “Qallunaat educators” who, Berger (2009) cautions further often are “unaware” of their role in perpetuating it (p. 65). Having been “marinated in
Eurocentric thought” themselves, Qallunaat educators must embrace the difficult task of “identifying and combating it” (Berger, 2009, p. 65). While undoubtedly difficult, Berger (2009) advocates for developing an understanding of the “colonial past”, the “continuing inequality”, and learning to view “culture” as “one of many” (p. 65).

**Reconciliation.** For Coulthard (2014), reconciliation cannot be separated from a “politics of recognition” and the “expansive range” of “models of liberal pluralism” to accommodate “Indigenous identity claims in some form of renewed legal and political relationship” (p. 3). A politics of recognition and its “contemporary liberal form”, however, “promises to reproduce the very configurations of colonialis[t, racial, patriarchal state power” that Indigenous identity claims have “historically sought to transcend” (Coulthard, 2014, p. 3). Battiste and Henderson (2009) explain how “recognition” when referring to education becomes a “purposeful” and “political act of empowerment by Indigenous peoples” to “affirm and activate holistic paradigms of Indigenous knowledge” that have historically been “systematically excluded” (p. 5). As Battiste and Henderson (2009) explain further, recognition requires a “synthesis” of Indigenous knowledge with Eurocentric knowledge in education premised on “Indigenous languages, worldviews, teachings, and experiences” (p. 5).

Considering the “concept of reconciliation” in relation to “Qallunaat teachers working in Nunavut schools”, McKechnie (2014) describes how “naturalized epistemologies” continue to hinder the potential for a synthesis that resists “colonial hegemony” (p. 60). In appreciation for the concept of reconciliation Qallunaat teachers should be oriented in the direction of humility towards Inuit culture. Being oriented in the direction of humility towards Inuit culture is considered necessary to subsequently support Inuit youth in the development of “analytical and interpretive abilities, their research skills, their epistemological consciousness, and their sense of
identity” (Kincheloe, 2010, p. 13). The development of epistemological or critical consciousness, McKechnie (2014) argues, will assist those who are “struggling to negotiate” what is referred to as “a sense of double consciousness” (p. 73).

Double consciousness, McKechnie (2014) explains, is a symptom of belonging to a “culture of hybridity”, which is a “direct consequence of contact and transition into modernity” (p. 73). McKechnie (2014) explains further how “Qallunaat teachers”, as fundamental actors within education in Nunavut, can help transcend this double consciousness, but first “need to engage in a critical pedagogy of reflection” (p. 74). The notion that Qallunaat teachers need to engage in critical pedagogy of reflection is also acknowledged by Berger (2007) who argues that “for Qallunaat teaching Inuit, good intentions alone do not challenge the status quo that risks harm to students and Inuit culture” (p. 4). For Qallunaat teaching Inuit, “neutrality is not compatible with caring”, which is never passive and demands “an active political stance” (Berger, 2007, p. 4). An active political stance, according to Berger (2007), “sometimes requires breaking rules” by contesting and altering the curriculum based on a “knowledge of his or her students” and a knowledge of “Inuit history, culture, and the geography” (p. 4).

When informed by genuine engagement and respect, contesting and altering the curriculum can become an influential means of liberation. Indeed, genuine engagement and respect is embedded within Frierian understandings of liberation. McKechnie (2014) uses Frierian understandings to discuss the importance of a “unified” pedagogy to enable a partnership between the “oppressor and the oppressed” (p. 74). This proposed partnership is premised on the opinion that the oppressor must recognize both the “subtle” and overt aspects of assimilation since “it cannot be expected that Inuit bear sole responsibility for resisting oppression” (McKechnie, 2014, p. 74). Both subtle and overt aspects of assimilation, however,
have become so institutionally embedded that they are routinely invisible to anyone who is not negatively affected by them. In response, McKechnie (2014) advocates for “a shared narrative of colonization between Inuit and Qallunaat” to depart from “hegemonic dominance” (p. 76).

A shared narrative of colonization is examined in later scholarship by McKechnie (2015) when arguing for solidarity between Inuit and Qallunaat informing an awareness of the “historically situated issues” attendant to Nunavut (p. 63). McKechnie (2015) continues to discuss several general principles for change, which include “learning” or “creating personal meaning”, perceiving change as a “journey”, developing “creative solutions”, additional “resources, effective “leadership” and “communication”, and a “focus on structure, policy, regulations, and culture” (p. 63). The last of the principles is an underlying principle suggesting that any and all advances be implemented locally through daily interactions. Accompanying this underlying principle is also a request for collective praxis and patience. Together, collective praxis and patience, McKechnie (2015) concludes, can overcome the “failure of education to facilitate civic participation” and “empower Inuit youth to feel they have a constructive role in the future of their communities” (p. 65).

The underlying paradigms

The underlying paradigms that I will now discuss direct the criticisms of education in Nunavut regarding language rights and bilingual schooling and will also function as a preamble for my upcoming methodological decisions. Each of the underlying paradigms, which include positivism, interpretivism, and a critical approach, inform a unique relationship to the criticisms of education in Nunavut centring on truths, understandings, or emancipation respectively. It is important to acknowledge that underlying each relationship is a series of Enlightenment philosophies that “embrace humanist values, share a belief in progress, and posit that the
meaning of social phenomena can be discovered, albeit by different means” (Strega, 2005, p. 205). Such Enlightenment philosophies are further grounded in hierarchies and dualisms that contribute to a variety of social inequalities. Although these hierarchies and dualisms might be refuted, relying on theory and practice from related frameworks that centre a rational foundationalism will inevitably reinscribe and reaffirm social inequalities since it is from a place of inequality that the frameworks originate. It is in an endeavour to decentre a rational foundationalism and depart from a place of inequality that I will also be presenting and discussing the concept of coloniality.

**Positivism.** Firmly enmeshed within Enlightenment thought is positivism. Enlightenment thought marked a hierarchical distinction between what became viewed as scientific knowledge and all other types of knowledge. This distinction placed scientific knowledge as superior in the sense that it was deemed reliable and all other types of knowledge comparably unvarifiable and unreliable. It is an emphasis on rationality and neutrality that made the former superior. The aim, then, is to comprehend rationality and reality as objective in ways that can be measured, quantified, and proved. Since reality is objective and can be measured there is a desire to build upon what has already been verified to refine an understanding of what is factual and inkeeping with an absolute truth. Underlying such a desire is a “belief in progress” and that an absolute truth must be provable and void of any “logical contradictions” (Strega, 2005, p. 205).

**Interpretivism.** Predicated on questioning the positivist tradition, interpretivism departs from a desire to discern the relationship between scientific knowledge, reality as objective, and the notion of an absolute truth in terms of exploring social phenomena and human behaviour. Rather than searching for facts related to social phenomena and human behaviour there is an emphasis on understanding. For instance, Neuman and Kreuger (2003) describe how the
emphasis is placed on “the systemic analysis of socially meaningful action through the direct, detailed, observation of people in natural settings in order to arrive at understandings and interpretations of how people create and maintain their social worlds” (p. 78). This systemic analysis is further predicated on the perspective that there are multiple realities, that these are socially constructed, and that knowledge is tied to particular interpretations, which would include the researcher and the subject. For instance, the researcher positions their worldviews in relation to the subject with an acknowledgement that the research itself is never neutral and only true if the conclusions being drawn make sense to the subject or subjects themselves. As Strega (2005) describes, the intention of such research is “to give those who read the research a feel” for the reality of others “by illuminating the meanings, values, interpretive systems, and rules of living they apply” (p. 206).

A critical approach. Strega (2005) argues that a critical approach is underlined by a general belief that there is a “reality that can be discovered” (p. 207). Reality is considered to be created by social, political, cultural, economic, and other factors giving rise to actions that are seen to guide a view of truth through the exercise of reason. To reveal truth, “sites of conflict, contradiction, and paradox are the best places” to interrogate how the exercise of reason has different effects on various segments of society to potentially benefit one while negatively impacting another (Strega, 2005, p. 207). Beneath such a desire to interrogate is often an explicit set of values closely associated with a commitment to justice that is further guided by a belief in specificity rather than universality of knowledge. This commitment to justice challenges researchers to think about how their research might support or resist existing power structures to enable the emancipation of those being observed or involved in the study. A researcher is
therefore guided by a desire to understand not only what people do, but also why they do what they do and how they perceive their doing to enable opportunities for emancipation.

**The concept of coloniality.** For Mignolo (2011), underlying modernity, a “complex narrative whose point of origin is Europe”, is the concept of coloniality, the “darker side” that is often dismissed (p. 2). This darker side is purveyed at the expense of “disqualifying all coexisting and equally valid concepts of knowledge” and by “ignoring” any and all contradictory concepts (Mignolo, 2011, p. 11). While Western ways of knowing were advanced all equally valid concepts of knowledge attached to particular places and local histories became “subjugated knowledges”, ridiculed as primitive and “buried and disguised in a functionalist coherence or formal systematization” (Foucault, 1980, p. 81). It is through this process that Western ways of knowing, “conceived imperially as true”, became a “commodity” to be exported for the “modernization” of all “those whose knowledge” is considered less than (Mignolo, 2011, p 13). Specifically, it is beneath the guise of “salvation” and “progress” that colonial logics have been exported and subsumed (Mignolo, 2011, p. 14).

As Grosfoguel (2008) explains, colonial logics are embodied within a “European, capitalist, military, Christian, patriarchal, white, heterosexual, male” worldview (p. 5). “Coloniality allows us to understand”, Grosfoguel (2008) explains further, how this worldview and the “continuity of colonial forms of domination” are both “produced” and maintained by “colonial cultures and structures” (p. 8). For Kerr (2014), coloniality scholarship “provides a useful lens to understand the ways that colonial relations and practices are affirmed and perpetuated through the domination of Western epistemic perspectives” (p. 87). By concentrating on the “place of enunciation of thought”, such scholarship stresses the “epistemic requirement to centre thought” away from Western epistemic perspectives (Kerr, 2014, p. 87). The objective,
then, is the overcoming of “epistemic injustice” (McConkey, 2004, p. 198). Overcoming epistemic injustice involves identifying and attending to traditions of thought that have been buried and disguised within a “system of inequity and privilege” that is “perpetuated through material and discursive epistemic practices in social and institutional spaces” (Kerr, 2014, p. 88).

It is within a system of inequity and privilege that hierarchies on the basis of race, class, gender, and sexuality have been imposed. Together, these hierarchies provided the basis for the “classification” of “new social identities using physiognomic traits” and their social placement (Quijano, 2007, p 171). Such social placement has occurred within expansive categories of pathological knowledge assigning subjectivities from the fit to the degenerate, which captures an “important element in coloniality theorizing” (Kerr, 2014, p. 89). The assigning of subjectivities in coloniality theorizing was “initiated and sustained”, by Europeans as the “gatekeepers of Western and Modern knowledge” (Mignolo, 2011, p. 45). Europeans positioned themselves and their Western and Modern knowledge as neutral to settle and map the “world and its problems”, classify everyone else, and also decide “what is good for them” (Mignolo, 2011, p. 118). Benefitting from being able classify everyone else without being classified themselves meant that they were able to establish control and colonize others.

Both the theory of natural selection and the idea of “survival of the fittest” as found in evolutionary biology helped to establish control and colonize others becoming both an “excuse” and means “for any kind of organized racism” (Saul, 2014, p. 9). Organized racism or “rank racism” was in effect “institutionalized within the fundamentals of European philosophy and culture” and “no break with rationality or the Enlightenment or individualism” could be tolerated (Saul, 2014, p. 10). As Stoler (1995) argues, rank racism has not merely arisen “in moments of crisis” or in “sporadic cleansings” (p. 69). Rather, as Saul (2014) argues further, elements of
racialization “remain in place today” and are “woven seamlessly into our concepts of progress and democracy” (p. 10). Elements of racialization are closely connected to the “coloniality paradigm” because the “invisibility of this structure of domination and oppression” is “supported by modernist epistemology” (Kerr, 2014, p. 89). The coloniality paradigm can therefore be used to interrogate modernist epistemology as a “point of view that conceals itself as being beyond a point of view” (Grosfoguel, 2007, p. 214).

**Engaging a poststructural perspective**

Engaging a poststructural perspective can enable an alternative means of thinking about and approaching education in Nunavut and language rights and bilingual schooling. For Strega (2005), a poststructural perspective enables a departure from Enlightenment philosophies that can be usefully applied “for the political purposes of researchers concerned with social justice” (p. 211). This is because it endeavours to fundamentally challenge inherent dichotomies in the form of rational and irrational, subject and object, and self and other to expose what is masked by these dichotomies. How reality is interpreted depends not only on context or circumstance, but how one is positioned or constituted within a specific context. There is subsequently a desire to disrupt or unravel how reality might be interpreted to unveil how understanding itself is “contextual, historical, and penultimately, produced by rather than reflected in language” (Strega, 2005, p. 212). It is with such a desire that I will now discuss discourse, subjectivity, and power and the epistemological questions that they inform regarding how I situate myself and my research.

**Discourse.** From a poststructural perspective, discourse and language constructs our reality since reality can only be described and our experiences understood through the language and the “terms of available discourses” (Davies, 1991, p. 42). A poststructural perspective also
suggests that discourse not only constructs our reality, but also the self. Foucault (1980) describes the relationship between discourse and truth and how at specific times these can coalesce having an affect on the self, being and doing:

Each society has its regime of truth, its “general politics” of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctified; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true. (p. 131)

The relationship between discourse and truth is not predicated on a “single” truth, “but many different truths situated in different discourses, some of which are more powerful than others” (Ramazanoglu, 1993, p. 210). Each discourse is thus partial representing one of an infinite number of “possible versions of meaning”, yet representative of “particular interests” (Weedon, 1997, p. 94). Strega (2005) explains how discourse “does this through how it organizes and constitutes inclusions and exclusions, by noticing and valorizing some forms of knowledge while obscuring and devaluing other forms of knowledge” (p. 219). Although as Strega (2005) explains further, it is within such “sanctioning” that discourse becomes “vulnerable”, particularly in terms of its exclusions and what is not included (p. 219). Indeed, it is within the “gaps, silences, and ambiguities” that discourse enables the “possibility for resistance, for a questioning of the dominant discourse, its revision and mutation” (Hekman, 1990, p. 189).

It is towards an alternative to the dominant discourse and the possibility for resistance whereupon “alternative, oppositional, and counter discourses might emerge” that I situate myself and my research (Strega, 2005, p. 220). Before I can consider an alternative though, I must first
ask what is the dominant discourse or hegemonic discourses that constitute me a white male
settler teacher? Then, as Lather (1992) writes, I must ask how I can begin to disrupt and unravel
both “what is opened up and what is closed down” by these discourses (p. 94)? It is only after
these questions have been asked that I can start investigating what alternatives might be opened
up and what opportunities they might provide? As I do so, however, I must be aware of the
potential ramification of these alternatives and query in what ways they might resist colonial
logics as well as in what ways could they be rendered complicit?

**Subjectivity.** From a poststructural perspective, subjectivity and the notion of
autonomous self is rejected. In a poststructural perspective, subjectivity is “precarious,
contradictory and in process, constantly being reconstituted in discourse each time we think or
speak” (Weedon, 1997, p. 32). As a result, a different perspective regarding the relationship
between subjectivity and choice emerges. This relationship between subjectivity and choice, as
Davies (1991) explains, enables “choices” to be “understood as more akin to forced choices”
because of how the subject is positioned within specific discourses (p. 46). As Davies (1991)
explains further, subjectivity and the presence of forced choices suggests that the decided “line
of action” is the “only possible action, not because there are no other lines of action but because
one has been subjectively constituted” within specific discourses to “want that line of action” (p.
46).

Strega (2005) discusses how “such an analysis” of subjectivity is both helpful and
“appealing” because it informs a perception of “how and why we are being complicity without
pathologizing it or attributing it to an underdeveloped consciousness” (p. 222). Subjectivity from
this perception, however, does not mean the absence of agency. Rather for Davies (1991),
subjectivity and agency do not denote “freedom from discursive constitution of the self, but the
capacity to recognize that constitution and to resist, subvert and change the discourses themselves though which one is being constituted” (p. 51). This conception of subjectivity thereby “acknowledges that our choices are constructed for us through discursive practices, and that we can choose only from these discursively constituted choices, but suggests that it is our understanding of these options that guides conscious choice of how we position ourselves” (Strega, 2005, p. 222).

It is towards a conception of subjectivity and a related awareness of the discursive practices that enable an understanding of certain options whilst inhibiting that of others that I situate myself and my research. My subjectivity and how I perceive my experiences is structured by discursive practices and so recognizing that I describe my experiences through the discourses and subjectivities available to me is essential. What subjectivities are available to me? How is experience and therefore the knowledge that arises from it constructed? What are the effects of this knowledge in terms of including or excluding various alternatives? In what ways does everything I “do or do not do, say or do not say, write or do not write” reflect either complicity or resistance (Weedon, 1997, p. 83)? How might my subject positions as a white male settler teacher be oriented to give rise to resistant options and in what ways might such an orientation be “policed” (Strega, 2005, p. 225)? Lastly, what are the potential consequences of this orientation for myself and for others?

Power. From a poststructural perspective power is “understood as something that is circulated and dispersed throughout society rather than being held exclusively or primarily” by individuals or groups (Strega, 2005, p. 225). Moreover, from a poststructural perspective, power is a “form of action or reaction between people which is negotiated in each interaction and is never fixed and stable” (Mills, 1997, p. 39). People are thereby positioned in power since power
operates everywhere as a network of power relations, which form a view of power as productive, particularly as it relates to knowledge. For Michel Foucault, “power and knowledge directly imply one another: there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations” (Usher & Edwards, 1994, p. 87).

As Strega (2005) explains, struggles for power about what “version of knowledge will prevail” and “knowledge disputes are also power struggles” (p. 226). Furthermore, disciplinary knowledges are knowledges that power has seized to discipline and control the individual. When such discipline “is effective, power operates through persons rather than upon them” (Usher and Edwards, 1994, p. 92). Occurring through a set of discourses that “contain instructions for how to be, think, and do”, these instructions are typically bestowed by an alleged “expert” or holder of power, such as “psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, university professors,” and educators in general (Strega, 2005, p. 227). It is within power “as a network which operates everywhere” and on everyone in “contradictory ways” that “can therefore be strategically resisted everywhere” that I situate myself and my research (Gunew, 1990, p. 23). How does power operate on and through me as a white male settler teacher? In what ways does it present me with different rationales for resistance? What are the disciplinary mechanisms that I have internalized and that subsequently guide my actions and adherence?
Chapter Three

Methodology

For decades, “Inuit leaders in all regions” of Nunavut have sought “fundamental and complementary changes” to the education system (National Strategies for Inuit Education, 2011, p. 8). Specifically, Inuit leaders in Nunavut have sought changes to the education system to replace the imperialist standards attendant to an “origin” in the “residential school era” with a “bilingual curriculum” (National Strategies for Inuit Education, 2011, p. 67). As a result, concerns have been shared regarding the relationship between imperialist standards, a bilingual curriculum, and language and cultural inclusion policy. In this chapter, I will present a research design centring on how I will begin the process of decolonizing my experiences with language and cultural inclusion policy as a white male settler teacher. As I present the research design, I will begin by characterizing decolonization and decolonizing research before discussing my decolonial approach as a white male settler teacher so to reason “from the senses” (Mignolo, 2011, p. 208). To reason from the senses, “literary ambiguity, writerly vulnerability, institutional bravery, difference, and artistry” is to be coalesced with “larger social, cultural, and political concerns” (Adams & Jones, 2008, p. 374). It is through “analysis and evocation” then, that “reflexivity” and “aesthetic merit” are to be coalesced further in what intends to become an emotionally and intellectually “productive conversation” (Adams & Jones, 2008, p. 375).

Characterizing decolonization

Battiste (2013) when characterizing decolonization refers to the “process of unpacking the keeper current” consisting of “cultural racism as a justification for the status quo”, the “narratives of race and difference”, and “powerful Eurocentric assumptions” (p. 107). The
process of unpacking the keeper current thereby requires “advocacy for Indigenous knowledge as legitimate” and “disrupting” both “normalizing discourses and singularities” to welcome “diverse voices and perspectives” (Battiste, 2013, p. 107). Discussing advocacy for Indigenous knowledge and the tendency for misappropriation, Tuck and Yang (2012) argue for a distinction to be made between “questions of what will decolonization look like” and “an ethic of incommensurability” (p. 35). Indeed, Tuck and Yang (2012) argue that questions of what will decolonization look like function to reaffirm “settler futurity” and will persist “as long as decolonization remains punctuated by a metaphor” as opposed to an ethic of incommensurability that prioritizes the repatriation of Indigenous lands and life (p. 35).

To depart and disassociate from decolonization as a metaphor, it is helpful to consider decolonization in relation to anticolonialism. Lowman and Barker (2015) explain that “decolonization is more than anticolonialism”, it is about “ending colonization and also the act of becoming something other” (p. 111). As Lowman and Barker (2015) explain further, if decolonization is more than anticolonialism, it is because it assumes a longstanding “struggle” to ending colonization, rather than a current and present “opposition” to colonization (p. 111). For Waziyatawin and Yellow Bird (2012), “decolonization is engaged” for the “purpose” of “realizing Indigenous liberation” (p. 3). In comparison, for Archibald (2006), decolonization is engaged for the “individual” and “collective” purpose of “healing” from “post traumatic stress disorder” and “historic trauma” to bring Indigenous “history and culture together” (p. 26). As a form of individual and collective healing, a “decolonization consciousness” is discussed by Battiste (2013) as a means to confront and eliminate “whiteness and dominance” (p. 125).

A decolonization consciousness, as discussed by Battiste (2013), also involves an aligning of decolonial and anticolonial critiques to “unpack” how “locations and privileges” are
“concealed” by whiteness and dominance (p. 127). Indeed, when “critical, feminist, multicultural, and Indigenous” critiques compliment decolonial and anticolonial critiques, relevant “epistemologies of research” can emerge to unpack how locations and privileges are concealed (Absolon, 2011, p. 29). “Pluriversal projects” are relevant epistemologies of research that can emerge where hegemony, which devalues and disqualifies all other forms of knowledge, interacts with local knowledges (Mignolo, 2011, p. 208). While pluriversal projects can necessitate resistance to hegemony in the establishment of alternative subjectivities and ways of being, a project will differ whether or not it is initiated on behalf of the colonized or the colonizer. For example, Kempf (2009) argues that if resistance is a project or “tool” for the colonized to “invoke” against oppression, then for the colonizer it is a “tool” of “accountability” in research (p. 14). As a tool of accountability, a respect for “Indigenous intellectual traditions” becomes elemental to any and all attempts at “political mobilization” in research (Simpson, 2004, p. 381).

**Decolonizing research**

Dynamic and compelling, decolonizing research has culminated in a myriad of discussions regarding “what makes decolonizing research decolonizing” (Swadner & Mutua, 2008, p. 33)? What makes decolonizing research decolonizing, for Swadner and Mutua (2008), is a reluctance to adhere to a particular type of research, an awareness of how research “outcomes” might “reify” the “role of colonization”, and a commitment to “activism” (p. 33). This reluctance, awareness, and commitment can accentuate strategies capable of troubling previous conceptions of “qualitative research” as a “metaphor for colonial knowledge” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 4). For qualitative research to dissociate from this metaphor, strategies are required to investigate how colonial knowledge authorizes binary oppositions and validates
misrepresentations of the other. In addition, strategies are required to convert Western epistemology from the primary inquiring apparatus to an object of inquiry.

To convert Western epistemology to an object of inquiry, it is necessary to deconstruct Western epistemology to open new understandings and perspectives that have been foreclosed and to unveil underlying presumptions. In order to do so, however, a point of entry is necessary to not only to deconstruct, but to also contribute to the possibility of different understandings and perspectives. Writing that consists of “descriptions of everyday situations and anomalies” and “multiple narrative digressions” represent such a point of entry (Tomaselli, Dyll, & Francis, 2008, p. 352). Particularly, writing that consists of “personal, concrete, and mundane details” can provide an abstract, open, and flexible “window” into “relationships” and “experiences” (Jones, 2005, p. 766). This, as Swadner and Mutua (2008) describe, can also provide a window into the “discourses that produce ascriptive identities that are disabled, colonized, voiceless, powerless, nameless, and hence presumed known and therefore dismissible” (p. 36).

**My decolonial approach**

Consisting of various “alternative” and “systematic approaches”, I have developed my decolonial approach in an attempt to welcome the “complications and contestations” that emanate from a desire to begin “working against colonization” (Swadener & Mutua, 2008, p. 41). As Adams and Jones (2008) explain, combining alternative and systematic approaches when working against colonization requires a “tactic for departure” to thoughtfully alter “ways of being, knowing, and acting in the world” (p. 376). The “binding and alliance of autoethnography and queer theory”, Adams and Jones (2008) explain further, is a tactic for departure that enables:
transformation of the identities and categories, commitments, and possibilities that autoethnography conjures and writes, as well as the identities and categories, commitments and possibilities of autoethnography itself. (p. 376)

The alliance of autoethnography and queer theory and the transformation of identities and categories necessitates a relationship between individual, other, and context. It is “toward less traditional texts” in the form of “personal narratives” that a relationship between individual, other, and context can be directed to establish “fractures” capable of “interrupting” the “hegemonic practices” of colonialism (Spry, 2006, p. 339). Less traditional texts and in particular personal narratives, when directed at interrupting the hegemonic practices of colonialism, are able to establish openings in the “descriptions, recitals, and plots” of “everyday narratives” (Sandoval, 2000, p. 140). Such openings may “rupture” the “linear concepts of meaning” associated with everyday narratives by rearticulating and rearranging “fragments of experiences” in a “collage or bricolage of form” (Spry, 2006, p. 341). Rearticulating and rearranging fragments of experiences advances the importance of implicating the researcher self in counterhegemonic work. In what follows, I will discuss implicating the researcher self in counterhegemonic work, I will discuss applying the procedure, and I will discuss ethics and responsibility.

Implicating the researcher self. Implicating the researcher self involves “deconstructing” both “identity and history” to necessitate a “rethinking of what constitutes violence as well as a close investigation of its more nuanced forms” (Regan, 2010, p. 5). Furthermore, it involves accounting for oneself and acknowledging how the self is “constituted relationally” in resisting, maintaining, or perpetuating violence in a “performative” sense insofar as the researcher as “activist” is always becoming “in the moment of acting” (Adams & Jones,

Accordingly, the “lived experience” of autoethnographers becomes “unhinged” from “linear narrative deployment” to “collide” in the “breaking and remaking of histories” (Spry, 2006, p. 342). When lived experience is unhinged from linear narrative deployment, “the text becomes a diaspora of dialogic engagement” that “resists closure and offers comfort in the inconsistency and partiality of knowing” (Spry, 2006, p. 342). While the text that offers comfort in the inconsistency and partiality of knowing may contain “stories of pleasure, of gratification”, and “of the mundane”, it may also “intersect” with “stories of subjugation” and “oppression” (Adams & Jones, 2008, p. 384). By subjecting stories to what Spry (2006) refers to as “linguistic dismemberment”, what is referred to as “heretic agency” is conceived to interrupt “dominant cultural narratives” in relation to subjugation and marginalization (p. 344).

Heretic agency entails “constructing a representation” of the “writing self” that is “incoherent” and indicative of the “copresence between selves and others in contexts” (Spry, 2006, p. 344). This representation of the writing self can be investigated further by orienting the copresence between selves and others in conversation through the concept of “multivocality” (Mizzi, 2010, p. 2). Multivocality is predicated on the “interrelationships” between “authorial
speech, the speeches of narrators”, and the “speech of characters” as considered by Bakhtin (1981) to permit a “multiplicity of social voices” (p. 263). The “value of multivocality” is in discerning that a multiplicity of social voices “merge” within the writer as they “layer” in ambiguity, conflict, harmony, vulnerability, or merely “stand alone” instances to be considered “as part of a chorus” (Mizzi, 2010, p. 8).

Multivocality in analysis necessitates consistent interrogation and revision to manifest selves that vary, alter, are interconnected, and emerge alongside rather than inside conventional subjectivites. Analysis, then, necessitates tentative and playful supporting descriptions of selves that are undone and free to convey personal feelings, emotions, and reactions. Concerned with “reconstituting the self” as undone and free, Spry (2006) argues for a “researcher positionality with the ears to listen” through the “silences of hegemony” and with “the heart to engage a critical empathetic epistemology” (p. 345). Together, this researcher positionality and empathetic epistemology is capable of defying “certainty” and “stability” and the subsequent “flattery of legitimacy” (Adams & Jones, 2008, p. 387). It is in actively defying certainty, stability, and the flattery of legitimacy that, for Adams and Jones (2008), the “willingness to become undone” resides (p. 387).

**Applying the procedure.** Applying the procedure consisted of reassembling descriptions of appearances, behaviours, discussions, events, and institutions in three journal entries entitled a Government of Nunavut infomercial, invite a guest, and a professional development session. By embedding narrative vignettes within the three journal entries as the original scripts, compiled during my first years teaching in a small community, I have recovered memories of the past and coupled them with present thoughts and feelings. The narrative vignettes, named to represent such memories, thoughts, and feelings, interact with the original scripts through persistent
questioning to irritate constrictions, deficiencies, and deviations. It is through persistent questioning that every vignette functions to interrogate the inconsistencies and tensions within the text, within myself, between myself and other settlers, and between myself and the community. Below I have provided an example whereby every vignette endeavours to depart from the familiarity of meaning, what is happening or what has been, towards the unfamiliarity of meaning, what could be happening and what could be.

Example. Taken from the journal entry entitled a Government of Nunavut infomercial, my example includes three excerpts from the journal entry and three narrative vignettes referred to as the voice of support, voice of problem, and the voice of reluctance.

Journal entry. It was in the form of a cartoon and it concentrated on a young boy going to school and coming home to parents who asked him about his day, helped him with his homework, taught him how to make a boat, took him for a trip on the land, and then read to him before bed. After a few years the boy had grown and was shown receiving a diploma.

Voice of support. The message was directed at parents, Inuit parents in particular, and suggested that they be responsible for supplementing the education of their children at home and supporting them through school. What are the values and value judgments that might underlie the message being directed at Inuit parents? Also, what and whose values are being privileged and what cultural and linguistic assumptions might there be regarding the characteristics and appearance of support for children? What assumptions are there regarding child behaviour, instruction and learning, scheduling, and what and whose standard do they privilege? Could child behaviour, instruction and learning,
scheduling, and the subsequent standards be interpreted as a quiet appeal for further assimilation?

Journal entry. His parents were clearly proud when the boy received his diploma. The involvement of parents was also being presented as the potential solution to the small number of young people who would receive their diploma each year in the territory.

Voice of problem. Although parents were being presented as the potential solution, were they not also being presented as the potential problem? In what ways might a tenuous claim for school neutrality be being made by placing the onus on parents as both the potential solution and the potential problem? How might a tenuous claim for school neutrality function as an omission of accountability on behalf of the school? What connections could be made between such an omission of accountability and imperialists presumptions of equality, meritocracy, and the construction of failure as a choice?

Journal entry. I thought about the parents of my students and my interactions with them. They had always seemed pleased to talk with me during community events and I felt as though my presence was always appreciated, but when it came time for the teacher conferences only a couple would attend.

Voice of reluctance. Why had the parents been pleased to have conversations with me during community events, but were seemingly reluctant when it came time for the teacher conferences? The conversations I would have with them during community events would be pleasant, but despite maybe mentioning something positive about their children, I would not discuss specific details about their children in the school. Was I afraid of how they might react to what I would say and I wanted the comfort and protection of the
school to say it? Could it be that they were afraid of what I might say about their children? Did they believe that if I had something to say that I would say it? Were they perhaps anxious or embarrassed to enter? How would they describe their experience as students, what was their level of education, had they themselves graduated, and had they or their family members attended residential schools? What type of affect would the history and legacy of residential schools have on their perception today?

**Responsibility and ethics.** Responsibility and ethics, as Butler (2005) describes, concerns not only a combination of encounters, feelings, and memories, but also an openness to be made accessible and vulnerable:

> precisely at moments of unknowingness, when what forms us diverges from what lies before us, when our willingness to become undone in relation to others constitutes our chance of becoming human. (p. 136).

Ethics, as Butler (2005) describes further, advocates not only for the chance of becoming human, but also for the chance to be “addressed, claimed, bound to what is not me, but also to be moved, to be prompted to act” and to “address myself elsewhere” (p. 136). To be moved and to be prompted to act I have strived to create passages that unfold and enliven through perpetual inquiry and revision. What is more, I have strived to create passages that through ongoing examination establish identity as consistently shifting, changing, and in constant negotiation to address issues of colonization and the self and to be held “personally, institutionally, and ethically responsible” (Adams & Jones, 2008, p. 386).

To address issues of colonization and the self and to be held personally, institutionally, and ethically responsible I am “making work that advocates for trouble”, that “disrupts” my
“normalizing stories”, and “posits more open” and “more just ways of being in the world” (Adams & Jones, 2008, p. 387). In making work that advocates for trouble I have made the decision to ground my investigation in a manner that is inconclusive, multifocal, and fundamentally unsettled. While the decision to ground my investigation in a manner that is inconclusive, multifocal, and fundamentally unsettled establishes the domain necessary to weaken the objectivity of Eurocentricism, my authority remains. Indeed, as I apply “reflective pedagogies” to “unpack” and weaken the “politics of knowing” and the objectivity of Eurocentricism from my privileged “white location”, my authority remains (Battiste, 2013, p. 127).

As Smith (2012) explains, I have an ethical obligation to account for my privileged white location and consider who and what I am representing, “whose interests does it serve”, and “who will benefit from it” (p. 10). Furthermore, as Smith (2012) explains, I have an ethical obligation to position myself with honesty and “integrity” as the recipient “of a larger set of judgements” to be made regarding, for instance, my clearness of spirit and kind heartedness (p. 10). To position myself with honesty and integrity I am responsible for my persistent questioning as I engage a “project of deconstruction” to “expose” what each journal entry may have disguised or “ignored” to “preserve the illusion of truth” (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012, p. 18). What is the relationship between my being responsible for my persistent questioning and my endeavour to engage a project of deconstruction wherein I am deciding what might be ignored? How may I shift from using myself as the means and object to deconstruct to taking what I have learned to continue to unsettle the subjectivity of settler and the complex sites of contestation that are attendant to colonization? Both questions, which will be discussed in detail in my concluding chapter, inform
the basis for a pedagogy of praxis necessary to begin to deconstruct my role in colonial oppressions and to unsettle the subjectivity of setter.
Chapter Four

Analysis

Concentrating on the “tension between memory” and “fidelity”, deconstruction involves negotiating the “preservation of something that has been given” with something that “at the same time” is “absolutely new” (Derrida, 1997, p. 6). Deconstruction or a deconstructive approach is thereby “not a method or some tool that you apply to something from the outside”, but is “something which happens and which happens from the inside” (Derrida, 1997, p. 7). In this chapter, a deconstructive approach is applied to entangle my past and present self in my colonial experience as a white male settler teacher in a primarily Inuit community in Nunavut. To entangle my past and present, I have intentionally inserted narrative vignettes into three journal entries, entitled a Government of Nunavut infomercial, invite a guest, and a professional development session, which I wrote during my first years as a white male settler teacher in Nunavut.

To be critical, interrogating, introspective, and thoughtful rather than understanding, the narrative vignettes function to agitate, bother, and disjoin the journal entries as my original scripts. Each vignette has been named in an endeavour to become embedded alongside and within my original scripts in what is a coupling of feelings, recollections, and thoughts. It is in resistance to the tendency to make easy sense that each vignette adheres to the “sneaking” suspicion that “something may be wrong” with what is being assumed and “that something else, something other, still to come, is being missed” (Derrida, 1997, p. 73). The sneaking suspicion that something may be wrong enables a disturbing of the absent presence, “that which was never there” in an actual sense, but “that which is always already there” (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012, p. 17). At moments abrupt, directionless, circular, contradictory, incomplete, repetitive, and partial,
a disturbing of the absent presence informs accounts that remain fundamentally unresolved as “competing, shifting, and differing voices” emerge (Mizzi, 2010, p. 9).

As competing, shifting, and differing voices emerge, an “autoethnographic praxes” is advanced between “sociocultural representations of the other” and “those of the self” (Spry, 2016, p. 30). This autoethnographic praxes involved writing “over, on, and through the boundaries” of the texts and the self towards “opacity, particularity,” and “indeterminateness” (Adams & Jones, 2008, p. 387). By writing over, on, and through the boundaries of the texts I share anxieties, concerns, and considerations to demonstrate my varied consciousness in ways that are at times emotional and provocative. It is through persistent questioning that I demonstrate my varied consciousness and irritate and open multiple constrictions and deficiencies. Furthermore, it is through persistent questioning that I interrogate the tensions and inconsistencies within myself, between myself and other settlers, and between myself and the community that I reside.

Government of Nunavut infomercial

The journal entry centres on a moment when I was travelling with my students to a futsal tournament in Iqaluit and I came across a Government of Nunavut infomercial. In the journal entry I describe my feelings and thoughts as I was watching, which was intended to encourage parents to support their children as they attended school. The narrative vignettes that I have inserted as I read and reread my original script include voices of memory, support, problems, reluctance, irresponsibility, negativity, cooperation, disappointment, acknowledgment, and reflection.

Voice of memory. Although I was somewhat uncomfortable in my new surroundings when I arrived in the community in early August, I was met with numerous questions, smiles,
and waves. When I entered the school on that first day I arrived I felt the cold comfort and familiarity of the long hallways, the classrooms, and the gym. The school was just like any that I had attended before and though it had always been a positive space for me, I had felt welcome and had enjoyed being a student, how might those who had greeted me feel? Would they be made to feel welcome as well?

Journal entry. It was in the form of a cartoon and it concentrated on a young boy going to school and coming home to parents who asked him about his day, helped him with his homework, taught him how to make a boat, took him for a trip on the land, and then read to him before bed. After a few years the boy had grown and was shown receiving a diploma.

Voice of support. The message was directed at parents, Inuit parents in particular, and suggested that they be responsible for supplementing the education of their children at home and supporting them through school. What are the values and value judgments that might underlie the message being directed at Inuit parents? Also, what and whose values are being privileged and what cultural and linguistic assumptions might there be regarding the characteristics and appearance of support for children? What assumptions are there regarding child behaviour, instruction and learning, scheduling, and what and whose standard do they privilege? Could child behaviour, instruction and learning, scheduling, and the subsequent standards be interpreted as a quiet appeal for further assimilation?

Journal entry. His parents were clearly proud when the boy received his diploma. The involvement of parents was also being presented as the potential solution to the small number of young people who would receive their diploma each year in the territory.

Voice of problem. Although parents were being presented as the potential solution, were they not also being presented as the potential problem? In what ways might a tenuous claim for
school neutrality be being made by placing the onus on parents as both the potential solution and the potential problem? How might a tenuous claim for school neutrality function as an omission of accountability on behalf of the school? What connections could be made between such an omission of accountability and imperialists presumptions of equality, meritocracy, and the construction of failure as a choice?

Journal entry. I thought about the parents of my students and my interactions with them. They had always seemed pleased to talk with me during community events and I felt as though my presence was always appreciated, but when it came time for the teacher conferences only a couple would attend.

Voice of reluctance. Why had the parents been pleased to have conversations with me during community events, but were seemingly reluctant when it came time for the teacher conferences? The conversations I would have with them during community events would be pleasant, but despite maybe mentioning something positive about their children, I would not discuss specific details about their children in the school. Was I afraid of how they might react to what I would say and I wanted the comfort and protection of the school to say it? Could it be that they were afraid of what I might say about their children? Did they believe that if I had something to say that I would say it? Were they perhaps anxious or embarrassed to enter? How would they describe their experience as students, what was there level of education, had they themselves graduated, and had they or their family members attended residential schools? What type of affect would the history and legacy of residential schools have on their perception today?

Journal entry. Recently I had overheard several Qallunaat teachers communicating that the parents here were irresponsible for not attending teacher conferences.
Voice of irresponsibility. What ideology might underlie why Qallunaat teachers perceive parents as irresponsible? How might a classist ideology intersect with and further manifest a racist ideology to inform why Qallunaat teachers perceive parents as irresponsible? Could it be that the manufactured importance of the teacher conference functioned to capture and reaffirm whiteness? Why did I and others conclude that the teacher conference had to be within the school and how might the school represent a refuge or sanctuary for whiteness? If I and others wanted to have a teacher conference could it not have been conducted in a different location, beyond the confines of the school, and not based or decided primarily on our terms? What if I had made that proposal and recommended that we consult the community? How would my peers have responded, how would the community have received the request, and what might have happened regarding parental attendance?

Journal entry. The Qallunaat teachers then began communicating about the types of incentives that were necessary to bring parents into the school for teacher conferences, which included door prizes, providing food and snacks, and offering games.

Voice of negativity. How do the Qallunaat teachers and the incentives advance and maintain negative stereotypes about parents and what would my Inuit colleagues have felt they had overheard? In what ways, do the Qallunaat teachers and the incentives embody a significant ignorance or insensitivity regarding not only parents, but also the community and Inuit culture? What are consequences of such ignorance and insensitivity? How might sympathy as the opposite or reverse produce comparable consequences?

Journal entry. As I continued watching I remembered an instance when I sought to speak with the parents of a student of mine who was having difficulty with other students, refusing to participate in activities, and at times crying at her desk. I was told from the guidance counsellor
to communicate with the grandparents as the parents were going through a divorce and when I
did the grandmother agreed to meet with me. The guidance counsellor helped to translate in
English for me since the grandmother primarily spoke Inuktitut. She had nodded in agreement as
I described how her granddaughter was behaving and when her words were translated for me I
was told that she had seen her granddaughter behaving similarly at home. I asked her if she had
any ideas for me and she recommended that I give her grandchild a hug whenever I sensed that
she was sad or upset.

Voice of cooperation. To assist and help nurture a student of mine I had sought to
cooperate with the parents, but when they were not available I met with the grandmother who
told me to give her grandchild a hug. What are the spoken and unspoken guidelines and
restrictions that I am required to adhere to as a teacher and how did they both encircle and
enclose what was possible regarding the grandmother and her kind and simple suggestion that I
give her grandchild a hug? How and where were the guidelines and restrictions conceived, how
were they perceived by the community, and how were they perceived by the school? Could it be
that I had received permission from an Elder in the community to ignore them and should that
permission not exceed or replace what may or not be acceptable in the school?

Journal entry. While I appreciated that the grandmother had met with me when the
parents could not I knew that I could never give her grandchild a hug and had thoughts about
being taught how to avoid receiving a hug when studying to become a teacher.

Voice of disappointment. Is it not disappointing that I as teacher feel unable to provide a
student with the care and nurturing that they may require even with the parents or primary
caregivers consent? What happens to the student when care and nurturing are reduced to words
in a language that we may not share? If my students are transitioning to the English language, my
first and only language, from Inuktitut, then what happens if we cannot discuss how or what they may feeling? First, how might my students suffer from being compelled to use the English to express themselves and second, how might Inuktitut suffer as well?

Journal entry. An older athlete sat next to me and interrupted my thoughts with a description of her parents. I think she could tell what I was watching and thinking about and told me that she was looking forward to her upcoming high school graduation and never would have been able to graduate without her parents. She told me that although she was nervous to give a speech, she wanted to be sure to thank her Mum and Dad. Without her Mum and Dad, she told me, she never would have awakened every morning and that they helped a lot by meeting with teachers over the years and checking in on how she was doing. My classmates are not as lucky she said, they are not supported in the same way by their families so they pretend not to care about reading or graduating and then they just quit and drop out. I asked her what she thought could be done to help young people like her classmates and she laughed and said maybe parental training.

Voice of acknowledgment. The older athlete acknowledged how important her parents were in providing support and said that to help young people like her classmates parental training might be necessary. How would parents feel about parental training and who would create it? What parenting practices would be approved of and what would be disapproved of? How might certain parenting practices be renounced as a form of indoctrination and what might it mean for Inuktitut and Inuit culture? Would students benefit and if so, at what potential harm to Inuktitut and Inuit culture? How might the school and community collaborate to the benefit of students, Inuktitut and Inuit culture, and the school? Are there any alternatives that could require change or transformation on behalf of the school?
Journal entry. As we left, she pointed to the screen and reiterated that it was true, and then joked about being better at reading than her parents and everyone else in her family. I asked her what her plans were after she graduated. Maybe go to the Arctic College, she said, because there are not many opportunities for people when they stay in the community.

Voice of reflection. I am left with a number of questions regarding the relationship between parents and the school, how it is currently, and how it could be. As I discuss the relationship between parents and the school I seem to advance a position that orientates the parents and the school as decidedly opposed, which also ignores those parents who might be in support of the school. What are the potential consequences of this position, what mistrusts and misperceptions does it maintain, and how am I subsequently positioning myself as an intermediary? By positioning myself as an intermediary, how am I empowering myself as mediator, and who am I accountable to? How can I be accountable to both my employer, the Government of Nunavut, to each parent and family in the community, and to the young people I teach? Where might the young people I teach be neglected within the arrangement and how do I endeavour to support student achievement? Also, what form should student achievement take and to what criteria is it measured? How might the criteria be predicated on and respond with either deference or subjugation to the presence of the Inuktitut and Inuit culture? In what ways am I able to resist either deference or subjugation and ensure the presence of Inuktitut and Inuit culture and in what ways can I not?

Invite a guest

The journal entry centres on an instance wherein my Grades 6 and 7 students and I decided to invite a guest to have a discussion to get a perspective about climate change and polar bear migration that was other than that of our Science textbook. In the journal entry I describe
how we decided to invite a guest who was an Elder and well respected hunter in the community. 
The Elder was also the father of one of the student support teachers and she agreed to accompany 
him and translate his words from Inuktitut to English. The narrative vignettes that I have inserted 
include voices of memory, invitation, preparedness, deferral, gatekeeper, admiration, frustration, 
timekeeper, embarrassment, defeat, uncertainty, and reflection.

Voice of memory. The Elder is deemed to embody Inuit ways of knowing and culture and 
the presence of an Elder is consistently requested on behalf of my administration to supplement 
the curriculum. When I and other teachers would determine creative and interesting ways to 
supplement the curriculum, which is typically developed for white, Western, and middle class 
young people, we receive acclaim not only from our principals and regional superintendents, but 
also from the community. Doing so, is considered to not only advance student learning, but to 
also help bring money into the community through the provision of honorariums for requested 
visitors. How might the relationship between student learning and the provision of honorariums 
for requested visitors manifest contemporary notions of colonial goodwill? Furthermore, how 
might contemporary notions of colonial goodwill function as a form of exclusion indicative of 
comparing, contrasting, and potentially discrediting an Indigenous perspective with what is being 
taught by those of us designated as professionals? In what ways am I able to negotiate inclusion 
to circumvent discrediting an Indigenous perspective?

Journal entry. Several of my students and I prepared for the arrival of an Elder by 
rearranging the desks and chairs in the classroom into a talking circle. We also set out some cups 
for juice and snacks and students were asked to serve the Elder first before helping themselves.

Voice of preparedness. The talking circle was taught to me as an Indigenous approach to 
sharing so I assumed that it would make the Elder feel comfortable and it is how I decided to
prepare. I remember being anxious about the arrival of the Elder and considering the different options that I had to make the Elder feel comfortable. For instance, I remember considering leaving the students in their rows of desks, as was typical, but thought that doing so would not be welcoming. I thought that to be welcoming the classroom had to be reconfigured. The classroom was familiar to me because it was a classroom, a place where I had spent decades of my life as a student. I did not know much about our guest and did not know about his experience with or in the school, but I considered him a relative outsider like the term guest implies. The school, myself, and other educators, represented the inside and since he was an outsider I felt responsible and perhaps obligated to create conditions that pushed against the confines and the culture of the conventional schoolroom. As I pushed against the confines and the culture of the conventional schoolroom I sought what could be argued as a typical alteration to incorporate Inuit ways of knowing. What does my decision to select a typical alteration to incorporate Inuit ways of knowing say about my attitude and my understanding of Inuit ways of knowing or lack thereof? How would an atypical incorporation have been different, what appearance would it take, and what does my decision say about both my capacity and that of the schools to transition beyond mere incorporation? Can atypical incorporation, however, cease to be merely an alternative form of incorporation? Am I able to recognize, respect, and integrate Indigenous knowledge as a viable alternative without burying it in Eurocentrism or positioning it neatly on the surface?

Journal entry. The Elder arrived and my students were excited and gave him a warm welcome.

Voice of deferral. After giving the Elder my desk chair, I chose to sit on the floor as a member of the group to defer my role as teacher because I wanted the Elder to be able to speak freely, answer questions, and interact with the group. There is an underlying sense, then, that if I
did not do so then the Elder would not have been able to speak freely and would have been restricted by the class rules. I wanted my students to be able to sit freely and to see me differently as well so I relinquished my role as the one responsible for administering the rules. While the conscious decision might reflect a willingness to change, another way of interpreting it is to ask whether such a willingness would actually relinquish my presence and subsequent power in terms of overseeing and enforcing particular behaviours? Was it really realistic for me to expect them to see me differently as I tried to transfer my role as the one responsible for administering the rules so that I could become the student, the learner, and the other? Perhaps, it was extraordinarily naive as my desire to become the student, the learner, and the other resembled a superficial gesture with all the influence designated to me remaining only slightly beneath the surface? How might my presence and the location of our meeting ensure that my students would never completely be able disassociate from what is expected within the school? Since my students still had to ask me to use the washroom and to get a drink of water, did I not maintain a colonizing paternalism? How might this colonizing paternalism reaffirm an informal exchange indicative of conformity for acceptance, support, and the opportunity to learn? Furthermore, how might this informal exchange reproduce a sense of superiority on my behalf that continue to marginalize and replicate inequities?

Journal entry. I asked the Elder if he was okay if I took notes and described how notetaking would help me to talk to my students about what had been discussed later on.

Voice of gatekeeper. Occupying the privileged position of educator it was I who was bestowed the responsibility for gatekeeping, that is, it was I who largely decided when the Elder was able to enter classroom and the conditions upon how he entered. Indeed, I viewed it as my classroom and therefore it was I who largely determined, as both mediator and facilitator, how
various knowledge and understandings are brought in and shared alongside the curricular content and that of my own. Although I recognized the limitations of the science course to disseminate knowledge and understandings that are alternative to my own, I did not consider my own limitations. How can I begin to consider my own limitations regarding how my attitudes, behaviours, and preconceptions might be complicit in maintaining the false perception of schooling as neutral?

Journal entry. As the Elder began to discuss his thoughts on climate change and polar bear migration patterns the students listened intently. The Elder presented his thoughts patiently, calmly, and at times animated and I was pleased with my students.

Voice of admiration. I admired the demeanour of the Elder and how the students responded to him and his combination of patience, calmness, and animation. As the Elder told stories I hoped that one day I would also be able to command such esteem and respect.

Journal entry. Although students listened intently for the first ten or fifteen minutes and asked questions primarily in English that were translated into Inuktitut, a number of them then began talking amongst themselves and playing with the Styrofoam cups that they were provided.

Voice of frustration. As the students began to lose interest, the feelings of pride that I had in regards to how they had initially responded to the Elder were transformed into feelings of frustration. While the behaviour of the students did not seem to bother the Elder, I believed that it was my responsibility as the teacher to ensure that they were listening and behaving respectfully. What, though, counts as listening and behaving respectfully and who decides? I certainly had a particular belief regarding what it means for young people to listen and behave in a respectful way, but might he not have had a different belief? My belief that young people should sit quietly with their eyes forward and their hands to themselves certainly aligned with the
expectation of the school. I viewed this expectation as the only valid option and even went as far to consider it universal, as uncompromising, and was myself closed to the possibility of alternative ways of being and acting. What would have happened if I had relaxed and accepted the possibility of alternative ways of being and acting?

Journal entry. When I asked the students to listen respectfully, they would for a moment and then continued to play with their Styrofoam cups.

Voice of timekeeper. I had consistently monitored the clock and was hoping that the he would captivate the attention of the students for at least the forty minute time period that was allotted. Did my monitoring of the clock ignore the social and cultural circumstances of the Elder and the students in a way that delineated between what constitutes legitimate and illegitimate learning? Whose social and cultural circumstances were being prioritized and what is the relationship between my concern with the time and the underlying rules and routines of the school? Also, what norms, values, and beliefs are associated with my concern with the time and the underlying rules and routines of the school? How are certain norms, values, and beliefs reproduced to sustain relations of dominance and exploitation? If I had refused to be held to a particular schedule or set of constraints how would the discussion have gone differently? Lastly, if I had refused to be held to a particular schedule or set of constraints would I have felt differently, if so, how, and what sorts of implications would this have had for myself and everyone involved?

Journal entry. As I went to collect one cup from a student nearby, the student accidentally broke off a piece of the cup and it hit the Elder. The Elder smiled as his daughter politely reminded the student to sit quietly.
Voice of embarrassment. I was left feeling embarrassed because I imagined that he and his daughter would perceive me in a negative way. So I began communicating with students individually in a quiet manner to collect the Styrofoam cups to reclaim responsibility for administering expectations. At that instant, traces emerge regarding what it means to be an educator in the historical sense insofar as I stood up, walked around, and began invoking a variety of authoritative steps to remedy what I perceived as a problem.

Journal entry. I continued asking students to sit quietly, before I asked his daughter to ask the Elder it if we could postpone the conversation for another time. She turned to her Dad, spoke in Inuktitut, and then turned back to me to say that was fine. He continued to smile as I shook his hand, said thank you again for coming, and then apologized to him on behalf of my students. I think that the Elder could tell that I was embarrassed and disappointed in how my students had behaved.

Voice of defeat. I intended to involve the Elder to make education meaningful, but I was left feeling defeated. Not only did I feel this way from the perspective of the Elder and his daughter, but I also felt that my students had also failed me. I had intended to make education meaningful in a way that transitioned from what I believed to be a monotonous pattern of instruction, but I had the expectation that my students would maintain that same habits despite this transition. How are my actions, words, beliefs, and values embedded within this contradiction and how did I possibly depart from one pattern of instruction only to reinforce another? What would I have considered to be a success and if I had been successful would this contradiction have been any less apparent? How did I promote agency and independence only to simultaneously take it away?
Journal entry. When the Elder and his daughter had left, the students and I rearranged the
desks and chairs into their usual rows. I could tell that my students were aware that I was not
pleased with how they had behaved when the Elder was present. After school I kept about ten of
them in the classroom to write a letter of apology.

Voice of disciplinarian. I used detention and a letter of apology as means for students to
consider their conduct towards the Elder and provide the discipline that I felt was necessary. By
doing so, however, did I not position myself as the moral authority and my insecurities and
validation as central to the request for students to write a letter of apology? While the students
were quiet and seemed to be apologetic, did I not make the situation about me by reinstating my
esteem and command? I never thought to ask if they thought what had happened was wrong and
if they felt that apologizing was necessary. Conceivably, the offense and the perception of
wrongdoing was entirely my own. What would they have said if I asked for their thoughts on
what had happened? Would they have answered freely or would they have been concerned with
offending me further? Could I have empowered them in some way?

Journal entry. While they were working on their letter for the Elder I went into the
hallway as his daughter was passing by and explained what I was having them do. She did not
say much and I was not clear whether she supported my decision or not.

Voice of uncertainty. While passing by I told her about the letter of apology that I was
having the students write to her father the Elder, but was left uncertain as to what she thought
about it. I remember hoping that she and the Elder would respond positively and wondering what
they would have said if I asked them if they thought an apology was necessary. Did I tell her
about it for support or because I wanted her to be aware that I was capable of being in control
and holding the young people in my care accountable? What is the relationship between a desire
to be perceived as being in control, the appearance of being in control, and what constitutes a
cOMPETENT teacher who is respected, appreciated, and even feared? Had I been too strict or had I
missed something? Perhaps it was I who offended them with how I chose to handle and respond
to the situation? Again, what would they have said if I asked them?

Journal entry. When students were finished I had them leave the letters of apology to the
Elder on my desk. My students and I never talked about the letters of apology afterwards.

Voice of reflection. I am left with a number of questions regarding the implications of my
decisions, what I could have done differently, and the potential implications of that doing. There
were several instances whereby my endeavour to create different conditions to enable my
students to learn differently seemed only to reinforce a form of governance or habit training. Did
I unfortunately misrepresent Inuit ways of knowing as simply a timeless and unchanging
tradition? What was communicated either directly or indirectly about Inuit ways of knowing,
Inuit language, and progress? How about morality, values, and Eurocentric standards? What
values did I assign and what discursive or denial practices did I engage and continue to engage? I
comprehend with apprehension about what the activity actually accomplished, about the
unintentional consequences of my actions, about what my students actually learned from the
activity, about their experience with authority, and how the activity could have been changed.

What would I have learned from my students if we had discussed with them prior about
interacting with Elders? In what ways might I have been able to reconcile what I learned from
my students with the hidden curriculum and what is considered acceptable or normal by the
school? How would this process have looked, what forms would resistance take, what would be
the potential results of such resistance, what structural silences would persist, and finally what
contradictions would remain?
Professional development session

The journal entry centres on an instance wherein several presenters from our regional school board came to the school that I was teaching at to deliver a professional development session about the residential schools. In the journal entry I describe how the presenters had been mandated by the Department of Education and the Government of Nunavut to deliver the professional development session to all of the communities in the region. The narrative vignettes that I have inserted include voices of memory, integration, authority, exclusion, unity, insubordination, silence, empathy, contrast, censorship, unease, burden, sameness, disagreement, insincerity, struggle, and reflection.

Voice of memory. The residential school system was barely discussed when I was a student. It was not until university that I began learning and reading about the residential school system, but I would not meet any residential school survivors until I became a teacher. When I was told that I was to participate in a facilitated dialogue with several of my colleagues, who were themselves survivors, I had a variety of emotions. I was concerned about how I would participate and remained curious and uncertain. How should I approach my participation? What if I was asked to speak? Should I and if so, what would I say and how would I say it?

Voice of integration. As I walked into the classroom myself and several other staff members were told by the presenters that local and Southern teachers, a reference to Inuit People and white teachers respectively, were required to integrate and sit together. Why the reference and reluctance to use the words Inuit People and white or Qallunaat as I was referred to in the community? Furthermore, why did they believe that we would choose not to be seated together?

Journal entry. When the presenters said that we had to be sitting in groups that included local and Southern teachers, the presenters seemed to sense that we were potentially slighted and
explained that they wanted us to hear a diversity of perspectives. They then introduced themselves by concentrating on the places they were from, their education, and their titles, before explaining that they would be teaching us about the residential school system.

Voice of authority. Why did the presenters elect to explain that they were from Ontario and Saskatchewan, that they had a variety of degrees, and that they held prominent titles at the regional office? Did the presenters feel that this was needed to authorize themselves and their position to address us? They were not from the territory so did they believe that their credentials absolved them from any inherent problems associated with presenting about the residential school system? What credentials and what qualities are necessary for presenting about the residential school system? Might an apparent willingness to disclose qualifications also be the consequence of a fundamental insecurity? Was the inservice developed and informed through consultation with Inuit People? How would the inservice respect Inuit People who had suffered in the schools and those who continue to suffer today?

Journal entry. My principal raised his hand and asked the presenters if we would be able to invite our students and Elders to participate in a few of the discussions. They glanced at one another and clearly seeming agitated as they said no. An Inuit staff member pressed further and argued that it was in the best interest of everyone if the conversation could be made available to the community. We were told that the mandate was to only have the conversation with the staff members at the school. Anything that we learn, we were told, could potentially be used in our teaching, but the residential school system should not directly be discussed by those of us that were not teaching in the high school. This was because only young people of a certain age were capable of understanding and processing what happened during the residential school system and
that there was a Social Studies module created in the high school for that purpose. Several people raised their hands to press further, but we were abruptly instructed that we would be continuing.

Voice of exclusion. Why were the presenters made to feel agitated when communicating to us that community members would be excluded from participating in discussions about the residential school system? Furthermore, who should decide when and how students learn about the residential school system? When a student of mine in Grade 5 asked me in front of his peers about it and the role of Qallunaat teachers earlier in the year I had responded honestly about the relocations, removal of young people from their families, and how young people were treated by teachers without discussing specific details. I believed that my student deserved an honest response and an Elder had shared parts of her story with me. Did listening to an Elder and her story give me the right to discuss it with my students? Should I have censored myself or should I have referred my students to their parents and Elders? Why did I not openly suggest that they speak with their parents or Elders about it? Did I fail to understand the importance of openly making that suggestion because I was afraid that our dialogue might be perceived as inappropriate? Was there a certain arrogance on my behalf that my explanation was somehow final and that there was no more that could be said on the matter? How would my colleagues have responded if I had shared my experience with them? Would I have been reprimanded or supported?

Journal entry. The presenters endeavoured to redirect us by pointing to the box of tissues in the middle of each table. We were told that the tissues were there because the conversations in other communities always became quite emotional. They then discussed at length that it is important for all of us to remember what we all went through regarding the residential school
system. I thought that they made a mistake when they said what we all went through, but then they used the phrase again.

Voice of unity. Why did the presenters claim that we were all united in having gone through the residential school system? How does referring to what we all went through devalue the suffering of all those who endured the residential school system and those whose lives continued to be impacted by its legacy? Could they have been referring to our shared history? If so, why did they not acknowledge how this history is significantly different for Inuit People and Qallunaat? What did my Inuit and Qallunaat colleagues think?

Journal entry. When the presenters were concentrated on the whiteboard, I whispered to the Qallunaat teacher beside me that it made me feel uncomfortable that they had referred to what we all went through. As I whispered to the Qallunaat teacher beside me, one presenter turned and gave me a rude look.

Voice of insubordination. Did I receive the rude look from one of the presenters because I was being insubordinate by whispering or was it because it was evident that I was mildly opposing the direction and substance of the presentation? Why I had chosen to communicate with the Qallunaat teacher and not the Inuit teacher that was sitting on the other side of me? Could it be because I was unsure how the Inuit teacher would feel about it or could it be because I wanted confirmation and support for how I was feeling from another Qallunaat teacher? It is possible that I would have received the same confirmation and support from both?

Journal entry. Each group received a piece of paper from the presenters that had The Power of Apology emboldened as the heading on the top. Afterwards, everyone was asked to share in our small table groups what we thought about the apology made by the Prime Minister several years earlier. There was a series of questions about the apology that we were supposed to
use to guide our small table groups in discussion. Such questions included what is the significance of having the Canadian Government ask Indigenous leaders to help write it, whether or not we felt it was sincere, and why it is important for Canadians? A final question asked us what we thought the Canadian Government might be doing today that it might have to say sorry for in fifty years. I was taken aback by this final question because I did not feel that it was in keeping with the discussion thus far.

Voice of silence. I was fairly silent in my group because I was concentrating on the final question regarding what the Canadian Government might be doing today that it might have to say sorry for. Would we be saying sorry for slowly eroding the Inuktitut language in the schools by providing compulsory language models that were inhibiting Inuktitut language acquisition? How about the lack of Inuit culture in the schools because it did not merge well with the curriculum or with the demand for classrooms in an increasingly crowded building? Or how about the lack of Inuit culture in the school because a qualified educator could not be found and that it was repeatedly regarded as too difficult since it required careful, thoughtful, and committed planning? Maybe it would be for some wrongdoing destined to be committed in the future? How would I and other Qallunaat educators be viewed in the future? Also, how was I viewed currently and how would I personally be remembered?

Journal entry. When asked by the presenters to share our thoughts about the apology with the larger group, one Inuit teacher said that it was better than nothing, but still not good enough. The Inuit teacher then described a story of her being walked to school by her father and how he would always encourage her to do well in school and to learn. As a young child she did not want to go to school because she would be hit at school and talked to rudely by the Qallunaat teachers and that one was really mean and has probably died because it was so long ago.
Voice of empathy. The Inuit teacher provided an account that made me feel empathetic as I began to envision how she would have felt as well as sympathetic as I could not help feeling sorry for her. What direction do empathetic and sympathetic feelings usually flow? Is the flow reciprocal? Are Qallunaat teachers ever the recipients of commiseration and pity or do we have a monopoly on benevolence? What might the relationship be between a monopoly on benevolence and justifications for the desire or duty to help?

Journal entry. The Inuit teacher then looked at the presenters and said that she remembered a couple of nice Qallunaat teachers. One woman would let her come over to her house and have a bath because there were only a few homes with baths in them and they usually belonged to the priest, the principal, and the educators.

Voice of contrast. The Inuit teacher contrasted a perspective of Qallunaat teachers as being cruel with a perspective of Qallunaat teachers as nice. What are the low expectations that might constitute a Qallunaat teacher as nice? Is it kindness and respect? How about a concern for equity and social justice? Despite having a concern for equity and social justice and perhaps having good intentions and motives, can one ever be a good settler? What are the gratifying and soothing consequences of conscience for one who claims to be a good settler? Should it be claimed or should it be bestowed? Whether claimed or bestowed, what realities does the designation condone and disregard? How could discussions about the designation both assist and detract from further discussions about the individual and institutionalized colonialism and racism?

Journal entry. The presenters let a few more staff members share their feelings, but we did not get to the final question. When it was time to discuss the final question we were told that
it was time to go for a break. I asked if we would be able to discuss it after the break and was told that there would not be time.

Voice of censorship. Was our discussion about the final question censored? If so, why did they include the final question in the first place? Did they not want to address it because they were afraid of what might be said? Why had the entire presentation seemed to be founded on an assumption that the past was over and that the present was different?

Journal Entry. After the break the presenters began an exercise by sharing a timeline depicting the history of the schools in Canada. Each of us was asked to write our feelings about it on a piece of paper and then stick it onto a board to be read aloud. Although our names were not included, as I heard the feelings read aloud I had a sense of who wrote what. I could tell when I heard words like anger and disgust that it was likely the Qallunaat teachers because those words had seemed to be obvious choices. Conversely, when the comments included the word pain accompanied by brief personal anecdotes about themselves or family members and their suffering it was clear that those had been written by Inuit teachers or staff members.

Voice of unease. I had felt uneasy participating in the exercise and initially wrote the word uncomfortable. Underneath the word uncomfortable I tried to explain my thoughts, but after getting frustrated and running out of space I took another piece of paper and just wrote the word uncomfortable. I remember feeling coerced into responding in a particular way and was not surprised when I heard words like anger and disgust coming from the Qallunaat teachers. Why did words like anger and disgust seem obvious choices to me on behalf of the Qallunaat teachers? Is it because they were relatively benign or safe insofar as they enabled personal declarations of blamelessness and a disassociation from the past? Could it be because they alleviated the potential for introspection regarding colonial culpability in the present? Perhaps
both, but what dialogue might have emerged if I had tried to explain why and how I felt the way I did? What dialogue would have emerged if expressions of guilt, regret, or another synonym that implied some form of responsibility were shared? Did the failure to talk about such expressions simple enable us to receive reassurance and remain in relative comfort by comparison to the pain that our Inuit colleagues had described? Or did this failure merely maintain a commentary that functioned to validate us and Western knowledge at the expense of our Inuit colleagues?

Journal entry. After the presenters read each piece of paper they requested that everyone explain why they felt the way they did. There was a long period when no one spoke, but then one of the presenters decided to intervene and explain why sharing how we felt would help all of us heal. We were then told that such sharing is important for all of us to be able to move on.

Voice of burden. We were referred to once again in solidarity and as requiring some form of collective healing to be able to move on as though reflecting and remembering were debilitating, burdening, and a hindrance. Debilitating, burdening, and a hindrance for whom though? For the department of Education? Could it be that the Department of Education, managed primarily by Qallunaat educators, was having difficulty conciliating the reality that Qallunaat educators were continuing to benefit from the historical and current underrepresentation of Inuit People? Was it easier to send Qallunaat educators to briefly talk about previous events so to permanently relegate them to the past tense rather than consider the intersection of historical and current conditions that underlie the underrepresentation of Inuit People?

Journal entry. Before we were finished for the day the presenters wanted everyone to brainstorm all of the positive characteristics about education currently in Nunavut and how it has
changed. After a few minutes the presenters seemed irritated that we were not contributing
enough positive characteristics. Sensing this irritation one of the Inuit teachers said that it is not
as bad as it used to be. When asked to explain, she said that the students are able to speak
Inuktitut, live at home, and that teachers are not allowed to abuse students anymore.

Voice of sameness. We were asked to discuss the positive characteristics of education
currently in Nunavut and how it had changed, but what would have been said if we were asked to
think about how it remains the same? How might the Inuit teachers and in particular the teacher
who had said that it was not as bad as it used to be argue that it remains the same? Beyond being
able to speak Inuktitut, live at home, and ensuring that teachers are not allowed to abuse students
anymore, what other forms of colonial violence still remain? Is it necessary to consider what
forms of colonial violence still remain so to directly confront them?

Journal entry. One of the presenters gave the example of the Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit
principles to demonstrate a positive change and explained how they were created by Inuit People
and how they are now a central part of education. In response, one of the Inuit teachers said that
the Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit principles are only on the walls in the school classrooms and that the
curriculum is still primarily from Alberta.

Voice of disagreement. How did the presenters and the Inuit teacher perceive the
relationship between the Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit principles and education differently? What is
the relationship between the Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit principles and the potential to decolonize
education? Furthermore, what colonizing attributes have to be guarded against to advance the
potential to decolonize and prevent misappropriation and obscurantism?
Journal entry. The presenters explained that the onus was on the teachers and staff to determine how to integrate the Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit principles into what we teach and into the school.

Voice of insincerity. Had the presenters been referring to the Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit principles insincerely to declare the presence of agency amongst Inuit People and equal participation in the school? In what ways might the presence of agency amongst Inuit People and equal participation be reduced to a form of mere tokenism? Could such tokenism be a subtle form of exclusion that while advancing a rhetoric of educational autonomy functions to privilege the purportedly objective and standardized Southern curricula?

Journal entry. A Qallunaat teacher told the presenters that she was new to Nunavut and described how it is difficult to integrate the Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit principles because no resources or materials are provided to do so. A presenter said that it requires creativity and teamwork and then tried to pronounce Innuqqatigiitsiarniq, but did so incorrectly and after giving up referred to the writing underneath that described it as the principle of respect.

Voice of struggle. When I listened to the presenter struggling I thought to myself about whether my Inuit colleagues were offended when the presenter did not know the Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit principles? The presenter had argued shortly prior about the merit of the Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit principles, but did not know how to properly pronounce them or understand their meanings. Community members and Elders had frequently spoken to me in Inuktitut and had said on several occasions that Qallunaat educators should be trying to speak Inuktitut. Why was there no expectation on behalf of the administration or school board that Qallunaat educators learn Inuktitut? Does it not seem perfectly reasonable that we would receive training and support to learn? Furthermore, is it not our ethical or moral responsibility to commit to learning and why
should we have to wait to be told? What excuses had I heard to justify failing to take the
initiative and commit to learning and what excuses had I myself made?

Journal entry. The presenters concluded the presentation by asking that we all take
sometime to reflect on what we discussed throughout the day and asked if anyone wanted to
share their final thoughts. One of the Inuit teachers said that every year we welcome Qallunaat
teachers to come into our homes and spend time with us and our family to learn our language and
about our culture, but only a small few ever do. I looked around and saw that all of the Qallunaat
educators including myself were unnerved by her message and it was on this message that the
presentation was concluded.

Voice of reflection. I am left with a number of questions regarding the various
discussions, my involvement or lack thereof, what was said, what was not, and the myriad of
concealed and coercive subtleties. While I am decidedly skeptical of the presenters, I
consistently found myself immersed within layers of internal conflict concerning my complicity
with the practices and structures that I am dubious about. How should I approach the residential
school system and what is and should be my part in reconciliation? What if I had been asked to
create and facilitate the inservice about the residential school system? I might have refused, but if
I had not, is there a combination of approaches and strategies that I could assemble to establish
the ethical space necessary for different worldviews to come together in mutual concert? How
about the limits of such an ethical space and the prospective benefits and harms that might
result? What about my limits and would I able to open myself to truth from the perspective of
Inuit People and be able to recognize, recentre, and uphold the Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit
principles? What discursive and denial practices, normalizing biases and prejudices, and
rationalizations would I have to overcome so to equally recognize, recentre, and uphold the Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit principles?
Chapter Five

Conclusion

Battiste (2013) describes how educators will “continue to be the disease” until “Canadian education can be reformulated in a manner in which Indigenous science, humanities, and treatment strategies can flourish in an integrated” and systemic “synthesis” (p. 139). Educators in Nunavut find themselves in a particular Canadian education context wherein educational strategies are being devised to oppose colonialist and imperialist impositions on Inuit culture and languages. In consideration of “what will decolonization require” of me I have sought to interrogate three journal entries wherein colonialist and imperialist impositions on Inuit culture and languages intersect with my subjectivity as an educator (Tuck & Yang, 2012, p. 35). While Tuck and Yang (2012) believe that the “answer is not fully in view”, decolonization will require a “dangerous understanding of uncommonality” to “unsettle innocence” and my subjectivity as an educator (p. 35).

To unsettle innocence and my subjectivity as an educator my research question has enabled me to begin identifying and naming “colonial forms” of denial, empathy, guilt, and ignorance (Regan, 2010, p. 11). In particular, my research question, which centred on how I may begin the process of decolonizing my experiences with language and cultural inclusion policy as a white male settler teacher, has enabled me to look to my own past to both ask and complicate questions of complicity. For instance, what are the implications underlying my attempt to begin the process of decolonizing my experiences as a white male settler teacher and how may I begin to “transform the settler” and confront the “colonizer that lurks within” (Regan, 2010, p. 11)? How might my narrative vignettes and in particular my persistent questioning function to both reaffirm and resist the colonizer that lurks within and related “settler normalcy” (Tuck & Yang,
2012, p. 35)? Relatedly, how am I accountable to my narrative vignettes, my persistent questioning, and how may I transition from what I have learned from dwelling within myself to inform subsequent actions that resist settler normalcy? In what follows, I will discuss the above questions in relation to my responsibility and my emerging epistemology, before discussing what I intend to do with all of the chasms that emerged and formed as I dwelled within myself towards decolonial praxis.

**My responsibility**

It is my responsibility to consider how complicity and resistance intersect with the dominant ideology that I have attempted to subvert in my endeavour to begin the process of decolonizing my experiences with language and cultural inclusion policy. The relationship between complicity and resistance is complicated by my precarious subjectivity, which is consistently being constituted and reconstituted whilst enabling certain perspectives and foreclosing others. My narrative vignettes and in particular my persistent questioning established openings to contribute to a variety of perspectives that were necessitated by a constellation of emotions, feelings, memories, and thoughts. For the persistent questioning to be unnerving and unsettling I was committed to trying to identify and maneuver within the boundaries of my thinking and personal undoing without providing explanations and solutions. By trying to avoid providing explanations and solutions and a collapse into a colonizing tradition or trap, however, I potentially collapse into another trap that involves rebounding my obligation to act onto the reader.

There is a certain authority, comfort, and privilege required to pose questions from a distance, which disassociates from my obligation to act, and reaffirms my control as both the researcher and researched. As autoethnographer, researcher, and researched, it is important to
acknowledge how what I asked, what I did not, where my pathways of thought took me, and where they did not, together do not persist in isolation. Rather, as autoethnographer what I asked, what I did not, where my pathways of thought took me, and where they did not, together influence how the teachers, staff members, community members, the Elder, and students will be perceived. There was certainly also an ease and safety in relying on autoethnography and my own journal entries and not requesting participation from the teachers, staff members, community members, the Elder, and students. A fundamental limitation in relying on autoethnography and my own journal entries, then, is that it is only my voice, the voice of a white male settler teacher that is being shared in the writing.

For Smith (2012), the relationship between my voice as a white male settler teacher and writing is inherently “dangerous” because of how it can “reinforce and maintain a style of discourse” and prejudice that is “never innocent” (p. 36). Although prejudice is never innocent or removable in entirety, Walia (2012) discusses the importance of sustaining a delicate balance “between being too interventionist and being paralyzed” (p. 1). I found sustaining a delicate balance between being too interventionist and being paralyzed to be difficult and perhaps my reluctance to move in the direction of intervention meant that I remained within a relative paralysis. Going forward, how I will decide to negotiate intervention and paralysis is a query that has both ethical and moral implications. Furthermore, it is a query that I will continue to be accountable to, that I will continue to grapple with, and that I will continue to pursue as I remain on what will be an endless path of introspection.

My emerging epistemology

To apply what I have learned from my endeavour to begin the process of decolonizing my experiences with language and cultural inclusion policy I will describe my emerging
epistemology as I lived the topic of study and I am always already becoming as I continue to listen, read, think, and write. While I do not claim that my endeavour is resolved, I do believe that I have begun to reach, reveal, and press against the limits of my knowing. Having begun to reach, reveal, and press against the limits of my knowing I was able to enter into a realm of possibilities regarding how I might approach and conceive of myself and my role as a white male settler teacher differently. In particular, it was by blending caring and imagination in my deconstruction of the self that I was able to enter into a realm of possibilities regarding how I might approach and conceive of myself and my role as white male settler teacher differently.

To “rebel against” the “injustices” of schooling, Battiste (2013) argues, it is necessary for educators to not only have caring and imagination, but to also be concerned “deeply about learning, and accept it as a legitimate process for growth and change” (p. 190). As Battiste (2013) argues further, if educators accept schooling as is they “betray it”, therefore to accept “education without betraying it” they “must love it for those values that show what it might become” with the “courage to remake it, imagine it, and teach it” (p. 190). By being weary of the “idea of universal knowledge”, when I might presume to be the knowing subject, and by asking “who, when, and why is constructing knowledges”, a potential is established between education, love, and the courage to remake it, imagine it, and teach it (Mignolo, 2009, p. 160). Furthermore, by asking who might benefit or who might take advantage, a conceptual and “imperative practice” is established to disengage from the “imperial” and “colonial subjections of subjectivities” (Mignolo, 2011, p. 208).

Referring not to my classroom, school, or library, but to the place that has been configured for me in a citational and reiterative practice is the principle “I am where I think” (Mignolo, 1999, p. 235). Indeed, it is only from such a place that I will be able to genuinely
apply the principle I am where I think and continue to learn to “address” and identify “the ways” that Inuit People “continue to be colonized” (Dua, 2008, p. 31). Continuing to learn to address and identify the ways that Inuit People continue to colonized “demands delinking” by bringing “careful attention to the silences of Western epistemologies” (Desai & Sanya, 2016, p. 712). For Mignolo (2009), delinking directly corresponds with “epistemic disobedience”, which involves both an “unveiling” of the silences of Western epistemologies and an “affirming” of the “epistemic rights of the racially devalued” (p. 162).

Towards decolonial praxis

My personal journey towards decolonial praxis and my endeavour to begin the process of decolonizing my experiences with language and cultural inclusion policy sought to unravel how I see myself and how I am implicated in the “settler nationalist project” (Dua, 2008, p. 32). To continue to unravel how I see myself and how I am implicated in the settler nationalist project will involve interrogating my decisions and preexisting beliefs in response to the “tendency to not name, know, or otherwise mark” my privilege (Cannon, 2012, p. 33). In response to the tendency to not name, know, or otherwise mark my privilege, Dei and Simmons (2010) describe the necessity to “acknowledge” my “limitations as well as the possibilities” of my “whiteness” (p. 112). While my limitations correspond with an appreciation for the situatedness of knowledge, the possibilities of my whiteness correspond to how I negotiate my experiences with language and cultural inclusion policy in the future by being both against yet within the “ongoing project of settler colonialism” (Dua, 2008, p. 35).

How I negotiate my experiences with language and cultural inclusion policy in the future will be determined by my capacity to use reflection to work “with as well as in the gap between words and deeds” (Ahmed, 2012, p. 116). My capacity to use reflection to work with as well as
in the gap between words and deeds will be premised on a willingness to receive direction and guidance from Inuit People. It is with a willingness to receive direction and guidance from Inuit People that my teaching practice may be fundamentally altered by “insight of the other” in what is a “decolonial step forward” to teach with rather than teach to the community (Mignolo, 2011, p. 208). To teach with rather than teach to the community, Tuck (2011) explains an “approach for participatory decolonizing educators and scholars” who would “choose to consider” their practices “in community, not on communities, and in ways that are anticolonial and not imperialistic” (p. 35). As Tuck (2011) explains further, the approach would consist of the following:

- A remembrance of the true purpose of knowledge for a community
- Uncovering the quiet thoughts and beliefs of a community
- Mapping the variety of ideas in a community
- Make use of home languages to express ideas, and to bring new language to new and recovered ideas in a community
- Making general knowledge of Elders, youth, parents, warriors, hunters, leaders, gardeners, fishers, teachers, and others available to other generations in a community
- Honouring all relations by engaging in the flow of knowledge that reflect cosmologies and relationships to the land in a community (p. 36).

For Tuck (2011), such “alternative aims” are founded on a respect for the “deep history, present, and future of a place” and a people (p. 36). What I have learned about my deficiencies and vulnerabilities as a white male settler teacher can enable me to align myself with a respect for the deep history, present, and future of a place and a people that I am beholden. Indeed,
confronting and naming my own assumptions and complicities as a white male settler teacher can enable me to align myself to oppose fellow settlers who too are complicit in reifying “ideologies of settler colonialism” (Tuck, 2011, p. 36). By modelling “relational ways of being and knowing” I believe that I will be able to oppose fellow settlers in a humble manner that is “committed to disrupting forgone conclusions” and the related ignorance that is maintained by ideologies of settler colonialism (Desai & Sanya, 2016, p. 722).
References


